Deep Russia:

A ONE-SIDED TRUCE

What Russians discussed on "VKontakte" and on "Telegram" from 12 to 18 October

Period 12 - 18 October 2026

Platforms VKontakte, Telegram (regional communities)



Key Findings

During the week, **Donald Trump's public rhetoric and diplomatic initiatives** around the Russian-Ukrainian war were marked by several high-profile statements, in which he:

- accused Volodymyr Zelensky of insufficient eagerness to end the war quickly and suggested that Ukraine might need a new president to achieve peace.
- said that Russia was behaving "fine" toward Ukraine and refused to back new sanctions against the Russian Federation, explaining this by his reluctance to push Moscow away from the negotiations.
- claimed that the end of the war had come closer, citing his conversations with Vladimir Putin and a possible meeting during the G20 summit.

In the discussions of Russian Telegram and VKontakte users, fatigue with Trump's constantly shifting statements is noticeable. Trump himself was called inconsistent, and people expected yet another change in his position.

A possible rapprochement with the US was assessed mostly through its practical consequences for people themselves. Commenters ask whether prices and taxes will go down, whether wages will rise and what ordinary people will get out of diplomatic successes at all. Claims about Volodymyr Zelensky's supposed unwillingness to end the war, the need for elections or his replacement in the negotiations were repeated quite often. Commenters expressed their support for this position through insults, mockery or claims that the problems were caused by Zelensky's presidency, and praised Trump.

Positive assessments did occur, but did not dominate the overall body of comments. They appeared mainly where Trump's statements coincided with the desire to put pressure on Ukraine, stop the war or ease sanctions. Some commenters welcomed the possible Starlink restrictions, expecting that this would hamper Ukrainian drones and help the Russian military.

On the night of 18 October, **Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast came under a large-scale Unmanned Aerial Vehicle attack**. Fires were reported at the Petersburg Oil Terminal and the "Ruchyi" oil depot; a substation and power lines were damaged, more than 20 thousand residents were left without power, and a VK data center, an Ozon warehouse complex and some sections of the Western High-Speed Diameter were hit. Flights at Pulkovo Airport were delayed and canceled.

The comments combined fear, mutual support and gratitude to air defense with criticism of the authorities over inaccessible shelters, late alerts, insufficient protection and the hushing-up of the consequences. Views on the war were split between calls for negotiations, demands to intensify strikes on Ukraine and support for the Russian army.

1. A ONE-SIDED TRUCE

Trump's statements, Starlink

During the week, Donald Trump's public rhetoric and diplomatic initiatives around the Russian-Ukrainian war were marked by several high-profile statements.

Pressure on the Ukrainian leadership and rhetoric about a "new leader"

In his remarks to journalists, Trump stepped up his criticism of the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, accusing him of insufficient eagerness to end the war as soon as possible. Trump publicly suggested that, to achieve peace, Ukraine "may need a new president".

Statements on negotiations, sanctions and rhetoric toward Putin

On 19 October, answering journalists' questions, Trump stated that "Russia, frankly, is behaving fine toward Ukraine and isn't doing anything excessive right now". Trump also confirmed his refusal to sign new sanctions packages against the Russian Federation, explaining it by a desire "not to push Moscow away from the negotiating table".

At the end of the week, Trump assured the media that the end of the war was "closer than ever before", citing his phone conversations with Vladimir Putin and preparations for a possible meeting of the leaders during the upcoming G20 summit.

Starlink/Starshield restrictions for Ukraine

On the night of 14 October 2026, SpaceX introduced technical restrictions, without prior warning, on terminals operating on the move (in particular those of the Starshield military network). In Kyiv, the incident was described as a critical factor that weakened defense capability in the air.

Donald Trump initially avoided direct assessments of who exactly had ordered the restrictions, telling journalists that he "doesn't know the details" but trusts Elon Musk and considers him "a fair person".

Russians' reaction to Trump's statements on Telegram and VKontakte

The comments show noticeable fatigue with Trump's constantly shifting statements. People recall his previous promises and "turning points" and doubt that yet another statement will really change anything. He was called a huckster, a windbag and an unpredictable person. People assumed that he would quickly change his position or that he was acting in his own interests. Most often, the discussions voice the expectation of yet another reversal: that he "will flip-flop a hundred more times" or that it will only last "until next Monday".

Rostov

"We all know it, trump changes his tune in a flash, and all this drags on because they're laundering some money, and someone doesn't want to lose their seat...🙄" — October 12 at 23:20, ♡98

Moscow

"By 'evening' he'll take back his words" — October 17 at 9:33, ♡10

Samara

"Does anyone take what he says seriously?" — October 19 at 10:57, ♡2

Novosibirsk Oblast

"'Russia is a huge country, it can lose a million men, and after them it will still have millions more.'
Holy crap😡🤬 I'm speechless" — October 16 at 10:16, ♡27

Criticism of Zelensky

Claims about Volodymyr Zelensky's supposed unwillingness to end the war, the need for elections or his replacement in the negotiations were repeated quite often. Commenters expressed their support for this position through insults, mockery or claims that the problems were caused by Zelensky's presidency, and praised Trump.

Krasnodar

"So maybe we should test the Kyiv Reservoir dam after all." — October 19 at 19:08, ♡2

Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions

"☝️And what if, instead of Volodymyr Zelensky, the people of Ukraine elect Kyrylo Budanov as president? Then Zelensky will seem like a sweet, good-natured little bunny 🤣" — October 17 at 18:46, ♡10

In Lipetsk and Kursk Oblasts, such messages did not spark any discussion. In Tatarstan and Samara Oblast, the anti-Ukrainian comments were seen as bot-like and received no noticeable support in reactions. In Kuzbass, Moscow Oblast, the Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Temporarily Occupied Crimea, attention partly shifted from criticism of Zelensky to doubts about the adequacy, consistency or motives of Trump himself.

Novosibirsk Oblast

"Of course they didn't confirm it, putin is too chicken to meet Zelensky. putin needs the hustle-war, and at a meeting he could be pressured into ending the war, since there are no reasons for this conflict other than putin's imperial ambitions. that's why the great one dodges personal meetings and direct negotiations in every way he can. It's all obvious and clear as day" — October 17 at 20:09, ♡19

Moscow

"It's funny to read that Zelensky is to blame. He is just a puppet and says what he is ordered to say. I think he has regretted a million times that he agreed to become president. An artist's life is far more interesting than all this dirt... And it's amusing to read that he's bad, when the US was supplying Ukraine with weapons and military personnel together with Europe. Before his election, Trump promised peace with Ukraine, and then he deceived everyone. Is Trump to blame too? Of course, he is also a puppet and started saying what he was told to say... It's a great pity that political realities are so much worse than they could have been... I feel sorry for Ukraine, I feel sorry for Russia... Apparently the US wants us to kill each other off, so that later Europe can hit us with a war and grab territory from us this time..." — October 19 at 8:23, ♡22

Friendship with the US

Many assess the possible easing of sanctions and trade rapprochement with the US in terms of their own benefit. Commenters ask whether prices and taxes will go down, whether wages will rise and what ordinary people will get out of diplomatic successes at all. Part of the audience views rapprochement with the US positively if it helps bring negotiations closer or increases pressure on Ukraine. At the same time, people expect concrete actions from Washington, above all an end to weapons supplies. It is by these actions that they propose to judge how serious the statements about peace are.

Rostov

"Just don't kid yourselves that Trump suspended the 'hellish tariffs' out of love for Russia. The main reason for the suspension is that such tariffs boomerang on the US itself. If there were no backlash, he would be doing everything to harm Russia as much as possible." — October 17 at 9:36, ♡14

Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions

"They're lulling us into complacency. And we melted right away, like - our little trumpy 😆 Blessed is he who believes the Yanks." — October 17 at 15:42, ♡7

Samara

"Somehow prices haven't fallen, wages haven't risen, and app purchases still aren't possible, maybe the Lada Vesta got cheaper, or more likely apartments got cheaper, or maybe taxes went down. For ordinary people it makes no difference either way." — October 17 at 7:40, ♡44

Users are also being ironic about how important US decisions remain for Russia against the backdrop of constant statements about its independence from the West. Not everyone agrees with Trump's claim that it is Zelensky who does not want the war to end either; in response, questions are raised about Putin's position as well.

Novosibirsk Oblast

"Politics is a delicate matter, of course... But we must have some dignity, right?! They hit us with sanctions and throw every kind of spanner in the works, and we go, here, take our fuel... It's even kind of unpleasant. Maybe at least they'll demand that something be lifted for us in return?!" — October 17 at 21:01, ♡17

Samara

"And why is our Sun-faced putin actively, pardon me, kissing the ass of our enemy trump, who supplies ukraine with weapons that destroy the civilians of Russia? 🤦‍♂️🤦‍♂️🤦‍♂️" — October 17 at 22:46, ♡30

Chelyabinsk

"the cozy little deal in action, if there's no diesel, there'll be nothing to fuel military equipment with, then hostilities will stop, and that can't be allowed, it wouldn't pay off" — September 14 at 18:27, ♡79

Starlink

Some commenters welcomed the possible Starlink restrictions, expecting that this would hamper Ukrainian drones and help the Russian military. There were even calls to switch the system off completely for Ukraine. At the same time, there were also sharply negative reactions to possible US actions.

Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions

"The US is Russia's number one enemy, and with double standards too, they can't be trusted." — October 15 at 13:27, ♡6

The news also brought the discussion back to the mobile internet shutdowns in Russia itself. Users asked how convincing the explanations were that Russian communications are restricted to protect against drones, if some of the drones can use Starlink.

At the same time, expectations of a quick effect from the restrictions ran up against reports of new attacks. Commenters remarked ironically that strikes on Russian facilities were continuing and recalled the oil refineries, depots and data centers that had already been damaged.

Samara

"Strange, how did 900 drones get to Moscow last night without Starlink? Must have been via T2 Wi-Fi😂😂😂😂😂😂" — October 14 at 10:17, ♡9

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle attack on Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast (18 October 2026)

On the night of 18 October 2026, Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast came under a large-scale air attack by unmanned aerial vehicles. According to statements by Leningrad Oblast Governor Alexander Drozdenko and estimates by local media, air defense and electronic warfare units neutralized more than 120 drones in the skies over the region.

Despite the Russian military department's claims of mass downing of targets, several Unmanned Aerial Vehicles managed to reach industrial and critical infrastructure facilities. In Saint Petersburg, strikes hit the Petersburg Oil Terminal and the "Ruchyi" oil depot, where the hits caused large-scale fires, and Ministry of Emergency Situations units were brought in to put them out. In Leningrad Oblast, the attack damaged the

"Vostochnaya" substation and power lines, which led to emergency power outages for more than 20 thousand residents in Vsevolozhsky and Lomonosovsky Districts.

Significant damage was also caused by the strike on the VK data center in Leningrad Oblast, which triggered a massive outage of the social network of the same name and related digital services across Russia. In the south of the agglomeration, a hit on an Ozon warehouse complex was recorded, along with sporadic damage to infrastructure elements of the Western High-Speed Diameter. Because of the threat to civil aviation, the "Carpet" plan was temporarily introduced at Pulkovo Airport, which led to delays and cancellations of dozens of flights.

In their coverage, Russian federal media shifted the main emphasis to dry figures on the work of air defense forces and the "suppression of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles by electronic warfare", minimizing coverage of the actual damage to oil and digital infrastructure. Regional outlets, by contrast, covered the situation in more detail, focusing on dealing with the aftermath of the fires, restoring the power supply, disruptions to public transport and the deployment of temporary accommodation centers for affected residents.

How did the network react?

The news of the night drone attack on Saint Petersburg spread far beyond the region. Altogether there were 662 publications from 194 Telegram channels and VK communities, covering 59 regional categories. As a result, the posts gathered 17.9 million views on Telegram and 14.5 million on VK.

The flow of information changed over the course of the day. At night, it all started with brief, alarming signals about the threat, explosions, air defense activity, restrictions at Pulkovo Airport and the first damage to buildings. In the morning, detailed summaries appeared with information about the injured, fires and infrastructure failures. Local media set the tone, after which the regions picked up the wave. Many channels simply duplicated ready-made blocks of text, and many posts included calls to switch to the MAX messenger.

Saint Petersburg

The local authorities reported the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle attack on Telegram, and screenshots of these messages were shared on VK. They promised compensation for damaged and destroyed property, but the comments expressed distrust of these promises. People reported that shelters were inaccessible in some residential complexes, and residents were outraged by late alerts and the insufficient protection of the city. They also thanked the military and supported one another, while criticizing the authorities' inaction and the dragging-out of the war. Some commenters blamed Ukraine and the US. Recruitment to mobile fire groups was actively advertised under the news posts. Publications about the vulnerability of the data center were accompanied by mocking memes about Putin; there were also calls to leave the country.

Saint Petersburg
"the main thing is, the diesel flows where it should" — October 18 at 8:38, ♡22

"Anyone from Kalininsky District who didn't sleep all night (((." — October 18 at 8:26, ♡20
"someone was bored, wanted some hustle (" — October 18 at 8:25, ♡34
"Lord save and protect us!" — October 18 at 8:23, ♡16
"A very big fire can be seen from Rybatskoye toward Shushary, what's burning?" — October 18 at 8:17, ♡8
"Why do the sirens only howl during drills? But when they're needed, nothing..?" — October 18 at 11:34, ♡75
"So is everyone just going to keep quiet? Soon they'll be brazenly coming into our homes, robbing, killing civilians - women, children! And we'll keep quiet? Since they already do whatever they please, that's how it will be soon! And there's hardly much time left before then!" — October 18 at 10:39, ♡48
"Yesterday my child saw drones flying over our house. She got dressed and said, mom, we have to get out of this country. But where to?" — October 18 at 21:14, ♡8
"Putin: The goal of the Special Military Operation is to protect people and Russia itself 👍🏻🇷🇺" — October 18 at 10:22, ♡75
"Did Putin sleep peacefully? Probably was talking to Trump on the phone." — October 18 at 13:50, ♡10

Regions

Outside Saint Petersburg itself, the attack on the VK data center became the most resonant story. Other notable topics included the fire at the Ozon warehouse, damage to residential buildings, power outages and disruptions to air travel. It was the delayed flights that gave the news a "second wind" in the regions, in particular in Arkhangelsk, Orenburg, Kaliningrad and other cities.

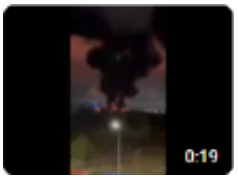
Altai Krai
"Non-war, pops, technical malfunctions, stability, we're bored, we need some hustle, but not horror-horror-horror, come on 🤷‍♀️ (c) kike-führer" — October 18 at 12:03, ♡1

In the discussions themselves, commenters admitted to feeling afraid, supported one another, sympathized with the victims, urged others not to panic and thanked the military for the work of air defense. Yet alongside this came harsh criticism of civil protection. People were outraged by locked basements, missing keys or the absence of shelters in some residential complexes and late SMS alerts, and asked what shelters were being talked about at all. Passengers at the airport refuted official claims that they had supposedly been given water and mats.

Kaluga
"Every evening waiting for attacks, it's become scary to go into the night" — October 18 at 11:55, ♡19
Samara
"They shoot down many Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. Only there's something strange: Some of them hit important Infrastructures.🙄" — October 18 at 7:04, ♡10

Samara

"In the fifth year of the war, everything is going according to plan. Especially the demilitarization of Ukraine. Some runt from a Piter back alley says Ukrainians are Nazis. And people have been believing him for 27 years now. So who is really the Nazi?" — October 18 at 9:58, ♡15



Distrust of official statements and irritation that the authorities tried to hush up the events became a sore subject. Users complained about the silence on TV and the authorities' assurances that "everything is fine". Wording about "minor damage", "debris" or "normal operation" only provoked arguments, because it diverged from what people had seen with their own eyes or felt through service outages. **For many, sarcasm about "stability" and official successes became the main way to express their outrage.**

Kaluga

"Piter has been attacked! While I was cooking in the morning,Rossiya was on,the news..About ukraine,how key directions,factories,etc. are being destroyed there.20 minutes.And about Piter getting a lot of damage,not a word!not a single video.It feels as if people have no internet,and nobody knows anything about anything." — October 18 at 18:39, ♡5

Temporarily Occupied certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions

"Either Russia will wreck Ukraine or the other way round, but the outcome will be the same, both countries thrown back a hundred years economically. Will there be a new Marshall Plan?" — October 19 at 7:50, ♡8

The discontent was directed at officials and at Putin personally. The public questioned the effectiveness of air defense, the city's readiness for such attacks and the truthfulness of the official rhetoric. Comments criticizing Putin, calling for his resignation and recalling the start of the war in 2022 received strong support from readers.

Rostov

"So what kind of special military operation is this? A special operation for what? To smash Russia to pieces? They went to protect Russians over there, but in fact we have problems with protection at home. And I'm sure that everything could have been ground into dust long ago so we could sleep peacefully. But that's my personal opinion." — October 18 at 9:16, ♡90

Tatarstan

"I can imagine what they're calling one of their fellow countrymen..." — October 18 at 9:10, ♡11

Rostov

"They can't protect strategically important facilities???🤔 Protecting the state and its citizens is a direct constitutional duty of the authorities!!!!!!!!" — October 18 at 10:16, ♡33

Commenters' views on the "Special Military Operation" turned out to be very diverse:

- **Anti-war sentiment** – calls to stop the war and sit down at the negotiating table, as well as mentions of its devastating consequences for both countries.
- **Demands for tougher action** – the authorities were criticized for the city's vulnerability, but the demand was not for peace, but for an even stronger military response, up to intensified strikes on Ukraine (in particular on Kyiv) and the destruction of its infrastructure. There were also narratives about the need for the "demilitarization" of Ukraine and about the US being the main adversary.
- **Support for the army with confidence in victory.**

Rostov

"Here's a thought, maybe the war shouldn't have been started? Maybe the old grandpa has been lying all along and is still lying? Maybe it wasn't worth 300k killed? Maybe we should ask grandpa to leave?" — October 18 at 9:13, ♡25

Rostov

"They've been meeting for five years,I think they're just messing with our heads,we need to pound harder, fear is the only thing that stops people" — October 19 at 23:10, ♡12

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

Resonant news of the week

1. *Outages at "Yandex" and "Sber"*

"Yandex". Taxis were discussed most actively. Drivers complained that their earnings were inaccessible, while fuel and car rental had to be paid for every day. Passengers were outraged by prices and long waits. Not everyone found a convenient alternative, as competitors were also short of cars and child seats, and rides could cost more. People complained that in "Yandex Pay" some payments go through, but it is impossible to withdraw their own money. Assurances that the funds were safe did not reassure those who need the money now. Users of "Yandex Disk" feared losing work files and personal archives and countered reports that the service was working properly with their own experience. Commenters demanded that the companies compensate for losses and ensure backups, and that the state protect facilities from attacks.

Tyumen
"Yandex isn't responsible for anything, a strange organization we have in Russia" — October 14 at 17:02, ♡30

"Sber". Here, people talked more about the possible consequences of the attack. Some advised withdrawing cash, others reported that payments were working and urged people not to panic. Advice to keep a financial cushion was met with jokes that there was nothing to put aside. People quipped that the bank would surely keep the debts safe, but would hardly protect deposits in the same way. The statement about the bank's normal operation was set against reports of a person killed and damaged buildings.

Omsk
"Must have been boring, living well-fed and safe with the best internet in the world." — October 14 at 11:08, ♡25

Overall, discontent with the consequences of the attacks was combined with differing views on the war itself: some demanded that it be stopped, while others supported its continuation and justified strikes on Ukraine.

2. *Referring women who do not plan to have children to a psychologist*

The recommendation to refer women who do not plan to have children to a psychologist provoked mostly irritation. Commenters explained that they give up on parenthood because of expensive housing, insufficient incomes and uncertainty about the future. In

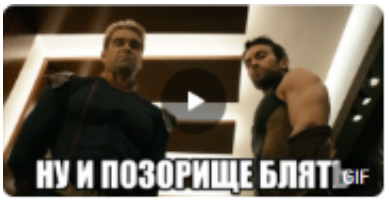
their view, a conversation with a psychologist will not solve these problems. There was also distrust of state support because of the risk of being left alone with one's difficulties despite the calls to "give birth". Another part of the criticism concerned interference in private life. The public defended a woman's right to decide for herself whether she wants children, and sarcastically suggested that the authors of the recommendation see a specialist themselves. People also asked about men: why the focus is only on the woman, if the decision to have a child and the responsibility for its upkeep concern both partners.

3. *Putin's statements on continuing the war and strikes on logistics*

Putin's statements on continuing strikes on Ukraine provoked mixed reactions. Some commenters wrote about fatigue with the war, asked how many more people have to die and demanded results from the negotiations. Others recalled previous promises and reports of successes and mocked how the goals of the war and the explanations for its length keep changing. The conversation also turned back to life in their own regions, namely shelling, rising prices and housing and communal services problems. People discussed what these decisions would bring for their safety and well-being.

Perm

"'The goal is to ensure the absolute security of Russia's border areas' Ahahaha. Meanwhile Finland (land border with the Russian Federation of just over 1000 km), which joined NATO already during the special military operation:" — October 16 at 19:50, ♡18



↳ *Reply: "Andrei, let me remind you, one of the strategic goals of the Special Military Operation was to prevent NATO expansion))" — October 16 at 19:51, ♡17*

The comments also contained active support for continuing hostilities, seizing territories and "victory". Criticism of Putin's statements does not mean a desire to end the war.

Omsk

"2022: 'The decision to conduct the Special Military Operation was made BY ME' 5 years later: 'Kyiv should have thought about the consequences' Grandpa has totally lost it 🤦‍♀️" — October 15 at 23:23, ♡20

Samara

"He used to give the impression of a real Strategist and Warrior, but he has sunk to an Uncle who only talks Beautifully. The country is on the brink.🤒" — October 15 at 22:22, ♡10

Geographically the most widespread discussions of the week

- **The start of the heating season** provoked outrage over the gap between officials' glossy reports and the reality in people's homes. Instead of a quality service, people got temperature chaos: while some freeze in damp apartments and

switch on heaters, others are forced to heat the street through radiators that "blast" regardless of the weather. The situation is aggravated by sky-high bills, which are growing much faster than wages and force people to demand recalculations. All of this boils down to sharp criticism of the housing and communal services system, where the summer reports on network readiness turned out to be paper promises, and the quality of services in no way matches their price.

- **Air raid alerts** during the week became a reason for complaints about locked basements, unclear instructions and SMS messages that arrive only after the explosions. Criticism of the warning system was accompanied by fatigue from the alerts, lack of sleep and constant danger. At the same time, some commenters stressed the need for warnings and expressed thanks for the downed drones. There were also calls to end the war, although there was no shared vision of how to do it.

Perm

"It's 5:00 in the morning. Fighter jets are flying, and at low altitude too, first time I've seen this. You, the authorities, elected by who knows whom, if you know something, then warn us! Where's the SMS, where's the siren?" — October 18 at 3:20, ♡9

Samara

"This is payback for the gas to Europe, we give them gas, fish, they give us missiles and drones back through Ukraine, mutually beneficial" — October 14 at 7:42, ♡7

Samara

"Thanks to grandpa for this." — October 15 at 12:02, ♡22

Samara

"Such joy, killing each other! And rejoicing!!! Our rulers." — October 17 at 15:25, ♡9

- Reports of the **lifting of fuel limits** were checked against the situation at people's own filling stations. Some saw an improvement, others were still standing in queues, so the news of normalization was received skeptically. People were outraged by prices that did not return to their previous level after the shortage eased. Commenters compared fuel prices between cities and filling stations and doubted reports of prices falling. Some placed responsibility for the queues on the buyers themselves, who stock up on petrol in canisters and fuel the frenzy. The regions are still discussing whether "Special Military Operation veterans" should be served without queuing. The veterans themselves are not very happy with such "privileges", since other participants in the war should have them too, and they also fear that the privileges may be extended to officials as well.

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.