

THE PRESTIGE COST OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

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Abstract

This study applies open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods to determine how right-wing extremism in the United States affects the prestige of the U.S. and democracy in Russia. The goal of this study is to expand the current understanding of right-wing extremism as a national security threat into the sphere of international politics. Raw text data was aggregated from four Russian-language Telegram channels, filtered by terms specific to the United States and democracy, and tokenized into 722,131 discrete text elements to which a novel, ternary Russian-language sentiment lexicon was applied. Incorporating data from the Anti-Defamation League, this study finds a statistically significant negative regression coefficient between right-wing extremist attacks in the United States and Russian public sentiment towards the U.S. and democracy, demonstrating an international prestige cost for right-wing extremism in the United States.

Introduction

The national security threat of right-wing extremism (RWE) forcibly broke into the conscience of mainstream America on January 6th, when a mob of Trump supporters and members of the radical right stormed the United States Capitol building.¹ For many, this event punctuated the recent intensification of RWE driven in part by the Trump Administration's nativist policies and rhetoric. Indeed, terrorism and violence inspired by RWE ideology has steadily increased as a proportion of all terrorist attacks and plots since 2016, reaching the highest proportion of all attacks (over 90%) in over two decades in 2020, even as attacks by both non-RWE religious terrorists and left-wing terrorists also increased.²

RWE-inspired terrorism, orchestrated by white supremacist, sovereign citizen, and anti-government movements, has long been a concern of the U.S. national security establishment. The federal law enforcement and intelligence communities identified RWE as the principal domestic threat to national security in the early 1990s.³ The modern strains of RWE they

¹ Bennhold, Katrin & Michael Schwartz, "Capitol Riot Puts Spotlight on 'Apocalyptically Minded' Global Far Right," *New York Times*. Jan. 24, 2021

² Jones, Seth G. *et al.* "The Escalating Terrorism Problem in the United States," *CSIS Briefs*, Center for Strategic and International Studies. Jun. 2020, pp. 3-4

³ Watson, Dale L., "The Terrorist Threat Confronting the United States," *Testimony Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Feb. 2, 2002

identified, as FBI Assistant Director for Counterterrorism Dale L. Watson testified to Congress in 2002, increasingly utilize “new information technology and the Internet to formulate plans, raise funds, spread propaganda, and engage in secure communications,” posing a uniquely elusive and insidious threat to U.S. security.⁴ The security community has reiterated that message to this day. FBI Director Christopher A. Wray testified in early 2020 that racially motivated and ethnonationalist organizations are “the top threat we face from domestic violent extremists,” and the Department of Homeland Security issued a bulletin in January 2021 to highlight the increasingly emergent threat of domestic terrorism inspired by RWE ideology.⁵⁻⁶

Foreign adversaries have been quick to capitalize on the rise of RWE and its newfound attention in the U.S. domestic media. The day after the Jan. 6 storming of the U.S. Capitol, the Russian state-owned media outlet RIA Novosti published an article that compares the United States political system to that of the Central African Republic and questions what such violence suggests about the U.S. government, “which positions itself as the capital of world democracy.”⁷ The article has been read more than 360,000 times, according to site metadata. Alexei Pushkov, the Russian senator and former head of the Russian parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, gleefully declared the same day that the Capitol riot spelled the end of civil peace in the United States and delivered “a powerful blow to the leader of the Western alliance, [and] also to the entire liberal world order.”⁸

The foreign media’s current focus on RWE in the United States fits a long pattern of adversarial propagandization of American civil strife, especially of racially and ethnically motivated violence. Although modern RWE is not always white nationalist in nature, as it incorporates additional elements of Christian fundamentalism, nativism, and anti-government sovereign citizen movements, a useful analogy is the Soviet propagandization of American racial inequality

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3

⁵ Auger, Vincent A. “Right-Wing Terror: A Fifth Global Wave?” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Terrorism Research Initiative, Vol. 14, No. 3. Jun. 2020, p. 87

⁶ Department of Homeland Security. *National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin*. Jan. 27, 2021

⁷ Nikiforova, Victoria. “Американцы восстали против режима,” *trans.* “Americans rebel against the regime,” *RIA Novosti*. Jan. 7, 2021

⁸ Pushkov, Alexei. “Когда-то ‘учили демократии’. Пушков констатировал ‘конец мира’ в США,” *trans.* “They once ‘taught democracy’. Pushkov declares the ‘end of the world’ in the USA,” *Radio Sputnik*. Jan. 7, 2021

and Jim Crow laws during the Cold War.⁹ Reports of racist, anti-Black violence in the United States were exploited by the Soviet Union to undermine the soft power appeal of the U.S. and democracy. It was, as one foreign service officer wrote in a 1948 dispatch to the Secretary of State, “the greatest propaganda gift any country could give the Kremlin.”¹⁰ Racial violence also opened the U.S. up to destabilization and disinformation tactics. The Kremlin repeatedly weaponized American racial inequality during the Cold War through forged KKK pamphlets, letters to foreign diplomats and U.N. representatives, and magazine articles that mixed factual accounts of racist, anti-Black violence in the U.S. with fictional embellishment.¹¹

More important than giving fodder for adversarial propaganda, however, racial injustice and ethnically motivated violence have long been reputational stumbling blocks for the U.S. government. The legacy of racism and white supremacy has challenged U.S. efforts to build relationships among potentially democratically inclined populations abroad, who may otherwise be seen as natural allies. W.E.B. du Bois captures this sentiment in a NAACP petition to the U.S. government in 1947, writing, “the disfranchisement of the American Negro makes the functioning of all democracy in the nation difficult; and as democracy fails to function in the leading democracy in the world, it fails the world.”¹² This sentiment was reproduced, somewhat belatedly, by the U.S. State Department itself in an *amicus curiae* brief to *Brown v. Board* in 1954. The Department observes, “the hostile reaction among normally friendly peoples... is growing in alarming proportions. In such countries the view is expressed more and more vocally that the United States is hypocritical claiming to be the champion of democracy while permitting practices of racial discrimination here in this country.”¹³ These historical accounts demonstrate the capacity of racial inequality and violence to diminish the prestige of American democracy abroad. As the government assesses the impact of the contemporary wave of white supremacist and far-right violence, these historical lessons can give some idea of what to expect from foreign populations.

⁹ Jackson, Sam. “A Schema of Right-Wing Extremism in the United States,” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*. Feb. 2019

¹⁰ Dudziak, Mary L. “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative,” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1. Nov. 1988, p. 83

¹¹ Rid, Thomas. *Active Measures*. Farrar, Straus, and Girrou, New York. 2020, pp. 134-141

¹² Dudziak, p. 95

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 111

This study connects the concern of the U.S. national security establishment about RWE with the implications of RWE in our foreign relations. Principally, this study seeks to answer how the increasing incidence of RWE on U.S. territory may be linked to the public opinion of the U.S. and liberal democracy among the general populace abroad. This genre of public opinion, distinct from dominant editorial voices or official state media narratives, serves as a benchmark for the international prestige of the United States and democracy—a soft power metric that is often discussed but rarely quantified.

Methods

Russia was chosen as this study's sample population for three reasons. First, the opinion of the Russian populace serves well as a benchmark for other high-value populations abroad. The most recent National Security Strategy (2017) identifies Russia as one of the principal competitors for the United States in international politics, and its population is therefore one in which the U.S. government might prioritize cultivating support for democracy and liberalism.¹⁵ Second, Russia played a central role in the propagandization of U.S. racial inequality and violence during the Cold War, and has continued to do so in the post-Soviet period. Many of the state apparatuses and much of the strategic thinking that enabled the Cold War effort still exist today and are evidently focused—at least partially—on the incidence of American RWE. Third, the Russian population is very sensitive to political developments in the West. According to a 2018 Pew study, 48% of Russians self-report closely following U.S. politics and news, which is the highest proportion of any country in Europe, the Middle East, or Asia that is not a major U.S. military ally.¹⁶ Those three reasons combine to make Russian public opinion both uniquely important for the U.S. global outlook and uniquely responsive to U.S. domestic events. One caveat is the prevalence of RWE in Russia, itself. Indeed, “Russia has seen much more right-wing violence than any other comparable country in the past 25 years,” which has included over 495 incidents

¹⁴ Nye, Joseph S. “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616. Mar. 2008, p. 103

¹⁵ The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. President of the U.S. Dec. 2017, pp. 25-26

¹⁶ Mitchell, Amy *et al.* “Publics Globally Want Unbiased News Coverage, but Are Divided on Whether Their News Media Deliver,” *Pew Research Center*. Jan. 2018, p. 26

of RWE-inspired violence in the last two decades.¹⁷ As such, it is possible that any relationship found between the incidence of RWE in the U.S. and Russian public sentiment towards the U.S. and democracy actually under-represents the true relationship between American RWE and democratic prestige costs abroad.

The raw text data used in this study was aggregated from public Russian-language channels on Telegram, the encrypted messaging and social media platform created in 2013 by the former developers of VKontakte, Pavel and Nikolai Durov. Telegram was chosen after comparison with two other platforms for text data: Russian news websites and VKontakte, the largest social media platform in Russia. Russian news sites, in both their official editorials and publicly-posted user comments, are an inaccurate representation of public sentiment, especially towards the United States and liberal democracy. The Kremlin exerts strict control over media narratives, for which Reporters Without Borders ranked Russia in the lowest 20% of countries globally for media freedom in 2020.¹⁸ VKontakte suffers from similar government surveillance and control. Since “the hostile takeover in 2013-2014 by Kremlin-associated businessmen,” VKontakte has been repeatedly targeted by state security services and its users subjected to content censorship.¹⁹ The Kremlin further intensified its censorship and surveillance of VKontakte through a series of regulatory measures passed in 2018 and 2019. These measures include requirements for Russian internet service providers and social media platforms to install government monitoring equipment, store user data for government use, and provide security services “encryption keys to decrypt user communications without authorization through any judicial process.”²⁰

Telegram, on the other hand, is a media platform that is both popular with the Russian public and resistant to government censorship. Despite a temporary ban by the Russian government in 2018, Telegram reported in 2020 to have 30 million active monthly users in Russia and has continued to grow since then in popularity among Russian internet users.²¹ User data and communications

¹⁷ Due Enstad, Johannes. “Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Putin’s Russia,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Terrorism Research Initiative, Vol. 12, No. 6. Dec. 2018, p. 89

¹⁸ 2020 World Press Freedom Index. “Russia,” *Reporters Without Borders*. 2021

¹⁹ Sanovich, Sergey *et al.* “Turning the Virtual Tables,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 3. Apr. 2018, pp. 435-454

²⁰ “Russia: Growing Internet Isolation, Control, Censorship,” *Human Rights Watch*. Jun. 2020

²¹ Khurshudyan, Isabelle. “How the founder of the Telegram messaging app stood up to the Kremlin — and won,” *Washington Post*. Jun. 2020.

are protected through “a complex of transnational shell companies” that conceal the physical location of Telegram server, alongside digital security mechanisms like the local storage of end-to-end encrypted messages on users’ own devices.²² This security allows Russian nationals to practice political speech more openly, which in turn provides a more accurate gauge of Russian public sentiment than state-sponsored media or heavily surveilled social media platforms like VKontakte.

The data of four public Russian-language channels were aggregated to create the raw text used in this study’s sentiment analysis. These channels—Snob, StalinGulag, Legitimniy, and Nezygar’—hold approximately 35,000 total messages and a combined subscriber pool of over 900,000 users. It is important to note, however, that the number of total subscribers does not indicate the number of total discrete users, but rather serves as an upper limit for the number of real users. The messages were then filtered with an inclusive list of keywords, including but not limited to “США” (USA), “демократия” (*demokratiya*, democracy), “Трамп” (Trump), and “экстремизм” (*ekstremizm*, extremism). The remaining messages were disassembled into 722,131 tokenized words for sentiment analysis.

The tokenized, Russian-language text was then transformed into a measure of sentiment. The lack of publicly available Russian-language sentiment analysis tools impeded progress at this step. According to a 2020 study by a research fellow at the Moscow Higher School of Economics, up to fourteen Russian lexicon datasets have been developed for research purpose, but none are currently available for download.²³ The few lexicons listed in the study as publicly available are either no longer accessible, hosted on sites without secure connection and downloading protocols, or—in the striking case of the lexicon RuSentiment, published in 2018 by a team at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell—have been taken offline by a copyright complaint from VKontakte. Extant Russian sentiment analysis tools, including one now linked on the UMass study webpage, are pre-trained, machine-learning based models that are not compatible with the objectives and parameters of tokenized sentiment analysis.

²² Clarence, Jessica. “The trouble with Telegram,” *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Jul. 2018

²³ Smetanin, Sergey. “The Applications of Sentiment Analysis for Russian Language Texts: Current Challenges and Future Perspectives,” *Moscow Higher School of Economics*, IEEE. Jun. 2020. p. 697

A custom, tokenized, Russian-language sentiment lexicon was accordingly created. A sentiment analysis lexicon is essentially a coded dictionary; there is a list of words, columns of associated word derivations (Russian is an inflectional language, so a word's suffix changes as a function of its position in a sentence), and an associated sentiment. The base list of Russian words was compiled from an open-source Russian dictionary, openrussian.org. Over 2250 adjectives and 2250 nouns were selected by frequency of use and applied to a ternary system of sentiment as either positive, neutral, or negative. For words with highly contextual variation in meaning, a sentiment was assigned that best fits the context of both social media and political commentary. For example, one of the most challenging words to encode in the ternary system was *страстный* (*strastnyj*, passionate); it is certainly never neutral, but its strong positive or negative meaning is highly dependent on context. It carries a negative coding in this lexicon because of its application in Russian political commentary and its antonymic relationship to positively coded words like *спокойный* (*spokojnyj*, calm).

The next step of the study, after integrating the sentiment lexicon with the tokenized text data, was to compile data about the incidence of RWE in the United States. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) provided this data with content downloadable from its Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, and Terrorism Map. The ADL resources allow the user to select data by geographic location, incident type, ideology, and date. The data used in this study encompasses both attack and event incidents throughout the United States that are associated with right-wing ideology (anti-government, white supremacist, and other) and occurred between the beginning of 2016 and the end of 2020. The RWE incidence data was then grouped by monthly totals and merged with the monthly average sentiment data to form a dataset of 60 monthly observations.

Three observations were removed as extreme outliers from the integrated dataset. The first was the observation from May 2016. The Russian-language Telegram channels used to construct the raw text data first went online in 2016 and 2017, and only one of the four channels was operating by May 2016. Since the sentiment data included in the integrated dataset was an average drawn from the raw Telegram text data, the very small sample of messages in May 2016 and the unrepresentative source of a single channel returned an average that is many multiples higher

than the next highest monthly average. The second outlier was the observation of March 2017. This period saw the largest pro-democracy and anti-corruption protests in Russia since 2012 and the arrest of the Alexei Navalny after his organization, the Anti-Corruption Foundation, published an expose on Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev.²⁴ As the Telegram text data was filtered with the keyword “democracy,” it is likely that a large quantity of messages regarding the March 2017 pro-democracy movement within Russia was included in this month and influenced the measure of public sentiment. The last outlier was the observation of June 2017. This outlier is harder to explain than the previous two, which each have relatively probable exogenous causation. A possible hypothesis is that the U.S. investigation into Russian election interference, which began in earnest in the previous month with the appointment of Robert Mueller as Special Counsel to the Department of Justice, shaped commentary abroad as it passed high-profile and widely publicized milestones, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee.²⁵ In any case, the measure of average Russian public sentiment on Telegram in June 2017 was highly aberrant and was removed as an extreme outlier. Regression analysis was subsequently conducted across the remaining set of 57 monthly observations. The results of the study, including of the regression analysis, are discussed below.

²⁴ Ioffe, Julia. “What Russia’s Latest Protests Mean for Putin,” *The Atlantic*. Mar. 2017

²⁵ Select Committee on Intelligence. “Open Hearing with Attorney General Jeff Sessions,” *United States Senate*, S. HRG. 115–94, Jun. 13, 2017

Results

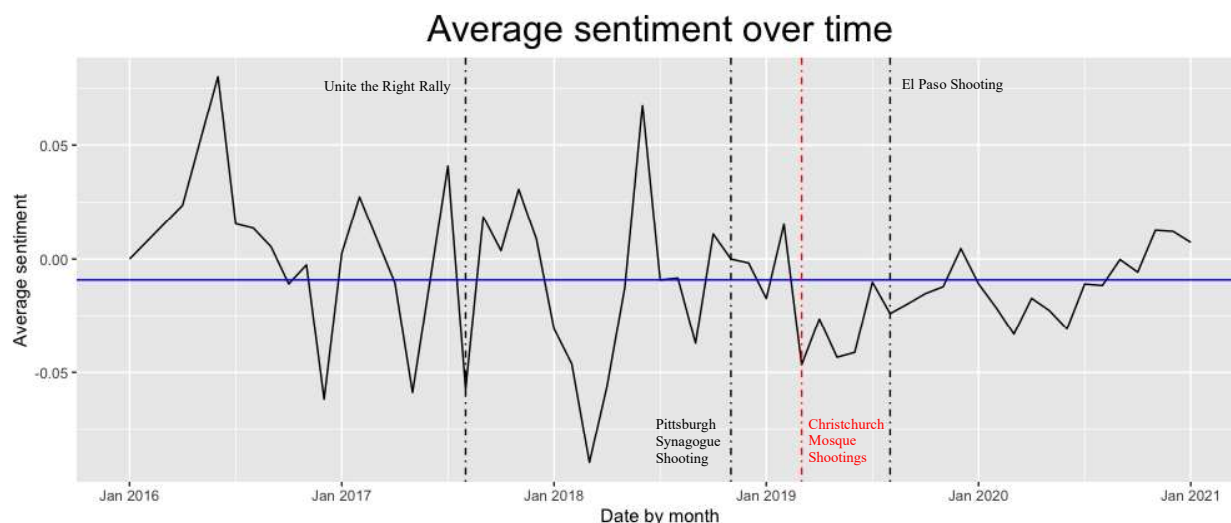


Fig. 1: Line graph of average monthly Russian sentiment towards the United States and democracy from 2016 to 2021. The data stabilizes over time as Telegram traffic increases and, with it, the monthly sample size of text data. Significant RWE-related attacks are shown in black dashed lines on the graph. The Christchurch Mosque Shooting, a significant non-U.S. RWE attack, is marked with a red dashed line.

Russian sentiment towards the United States and democracy fluctuates around a mean of approximately -0.009, indicating a slight baseline negativity. High variability in the earlier observations, resultant of smaller text sample sizes, gives way to greater stability in the data over time as monthly sample sizes increase with Russian Telegram traffic. Sentiment reaches its highest peak of 0.08 in June 2016, when the United States was holding its presidential primary elections but also while Russian Telegram traffic was still relatively light. Speculation about the cause of this peak cannot rule out the possibility of a sampling error. Public sentiment reaches its lowest point of -0.09 in March 2018. The cause of this trough could be the U.S. and NATO reaction to the poisoning of Sergei Skripal that month in London. The United States expelled 60 Russian diplomats tied to Russian state security services and closed the Russian consulate in Seattle, alongside similar measures taken by the United Kingdom and NATO allies.²⁶

²⁶ Wamsley, Laurel. "U.S. Expels 60 Russian Officials, Closes Consulate in Seattle," *National Public Radio*. Mar. 26, 2018

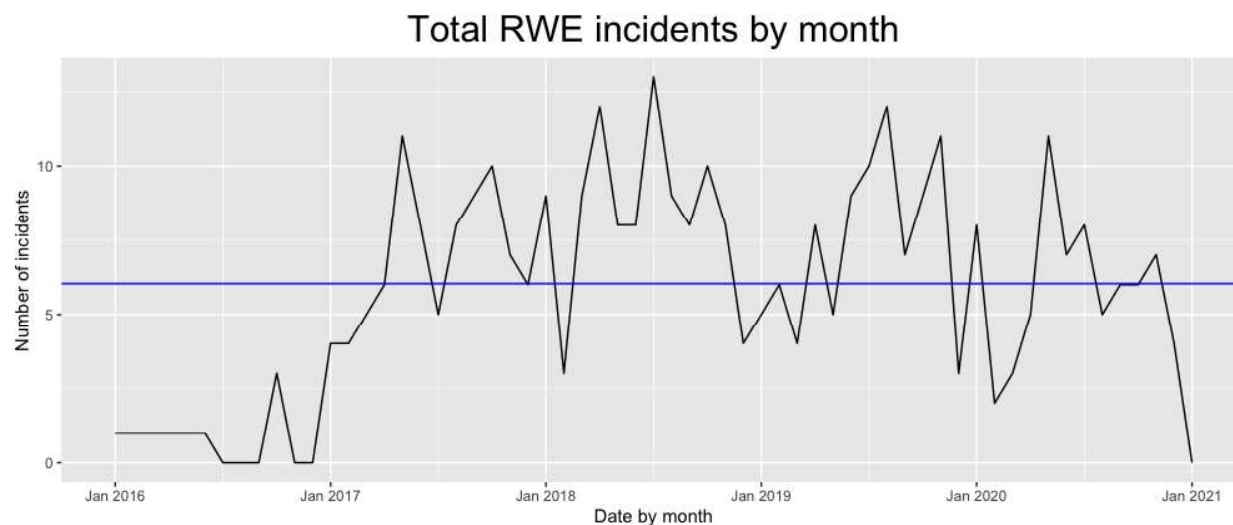


Fig. 2: Line graph of total monthly RWE-related attacks and events in the United States. Incidents generally rise from 2016 into 2018 and show high variability in 2019 and 2020. The average monthly total in 2016-2020 is shown in blue.

Right-wing extremist attacks and events are highly variable across the four-year period of 2016-2020. Total monthly incidents generally increase in number from 2016 into 2018 and remain relatively high through 2019 and 2020. The data used in this study was received largely as-is from the Anti-Defamation League in order to run a regression analysis, described below, with the novel data gathered about Russian public sentiment. See the Anti-Defamation League's own publications for further analysis specific to the incidence of RWE in the United States.

Regression analysis demonstrates a statistically significant, negative causal relationship between the incidence of RWE in the United States and public Russian sentiment towards the U.S. and democracy. The regression coefficient is estimated to be -0.00234 with a p-value of 0.0402. That is, for every RWE-inspired attack and event in the United States, Russian public sentiment towards the United States and democracy decreases by -0.00234 on a scale between -1 and 1, and the chances that this relationship appeared erroneously in the data are slim enough to discard. While this relationship is numerically small, likely due to the large quantity of other factors that also influence public opinion in Russia, it is still remarkable in context. For example, if the United States witnesses a single RWE-related attack or event in a month, then Russian public sentiment will decrease by less than a percentage point, but if the U.S. experiences ten

RWE incidents, as it did at least nine times in the four-year period between 2016 and 2020, then Russian public sentiment will decrease by over 2%. If the pattern holds over extrapolation, then 43 monthly RWE incidents will cause a decline of 10% in Russian public sentiment. Though such a rate of incidence surpasses that of the last four years, RWE-related terrorism has increased by approximately 800% since 2013. It theoretically could take just half of that proportional growth from today's rate of RWE incidence to reach the levels sufficient to cause a 10% decrease in Russian public sentiment.²⁷

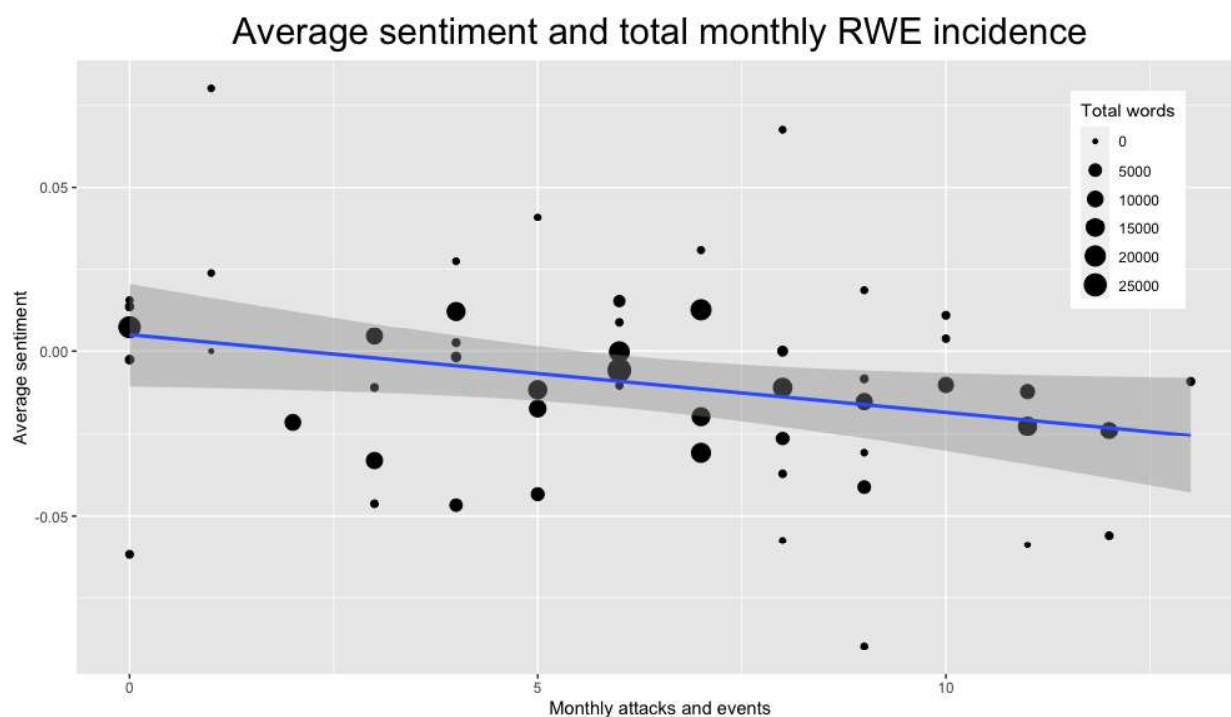


Fig. 3: Scatterplot of average monthly Russian sentiment and total monthly RWE-related attacks and events in the United States across a four-year period from 2016-2020. Points increase in size corresponding to the number of total text tokens included in the monthly observation. The linear regression is included in blue.

Implications

The implications of this study are significant. Methodologically, this study presents a new tool for the OSINT community. The Russian-language sentiment lexicon for tokenized text,

²⁷ Jones, p. 4

following in the footsteps of similar English-language lexicons and inspired by extant Russian-language sentiment analysis tools, provides OSINT researchers with a flexible and easy-to-use instrument for the future analysis of Russian public sentiment. There are two advantages to the presented Russian-language lexicon. First, it offers a tokenized approach to Russian-language sentiment analysis. It applies sentiment analysis to the most fundamental object in text data, which allows the researcher to tailor the data structure to their specific needs. Specific to this study, tokenization facilitated the ordering of most frequently used words for each sentiment, which opened up the processed data to be proofed and verified. Second, the Russian-language lexicon is modular and flexible. OSINT researchers will be able to adapt the lexicon to their project-specific needs, including the ability to add new vocabulary, remove existing observations, and edit the sentiment associated with specific words.

There are some shortcomings to the Russian-language lexicon that researchers should keep in mind. Primarily, tokenized text sentiment analysis in any language cannot interpret context. For example, a phrase as simple as “no freedom” would return a positive sentiment of 1 rather than the appropriate sentiment of -1, as “no” is uncoded and “freedom” is coded positively. Though this problem is largely corrected at scale with a sufficient volume of text data, it can cause significant errors when analyzing small sample sizes. Additionally, the hard-coded lexicon may not recognize colloquialisms or community-specific slang. It has been coded with a moderate quantity of current slang terms, but colloquialisms and idiomatic language evolve quickly and can be highly contextual. Researchers should be mindful to add subject-specific language to the lexicon before applying it for analysis in future projects. Lastly, this lexicon lacks coding for many Russian swearwords. This is not a problem inherent in tokenized sentiment analysis at all, but rather the product of my own limitations in Russian fluency. Researchers who are better versed in Russian swear words should make the necessary additions.

The findings of this study carry many implications for American public policy. For one, it draws an explicit, quantitative link between domestic RWE in the United States and the perception of the U.S. and democracy abroad. This contextualizes RWE in a new way: contrary to “[c]onventional thinking about far-right extremism... [which] often frames it as a domestic problem within nation-states,” RWE is in fact a problem at the most foundational level

of international politics.²⁸ While this study only measures correlation, the causal implications are clear. The public sentiment towards the United States abroad creates the operational environment for our diplomatic missions, empowers democratic forces native to foreign countries, and is a force multiplier for America's greatest diplomatic asset—the soft-power appeal of a free and open society. This study suggests that domestic RWE may cause foreign public sentiment to falter or decline, which would reduce the effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy. Supporting the management and neutralization of RWE activity stateside, then, should be considered for prioritization by the U.S. foreign policy community.

This study also implies a more general principle about the relationship between foreign and domestic policy. A nation that prides itself on leading by example cannot exercise authority abroad without first creating a foundation of domestic stability. Indeed, in the debate between international engagement and retrenchment, where supporters of active foreign policy warn that “disengagement from competitions overseas would increase dangers to the United States... [enabling] threats to American security, prosperity, and influence” and proponents of retrenchment argue that “[i]t is finally time to deliver on the public's demand to do less nation building abroad and more building in America,” both sides miss the mark.²⁹⁻³⁰ Repairing the U.S. domestic environment is vital to our success abroad, and the importance of our foreign policy objectives supports the urgency of addressing domestic issues like RWE. A policy which splits that fundamental duality with either a myopic desire for retrenchment or a grandiose aspiration for U.S. global hegemony does a disservice to its own objectives.

This study also suggests questions for future research. First, the significance of right-wing extremism's effect on public sentiment in Russia, a majority white nation with its own culture of right-wing violence, draws speculation about the effect of RWE in nations that do not share Russia's demographic makeup or political environment. Many such countries have grown in strategic value as the United States increasingly seeks to address the aspirations of China in Asia and Africa. OSINT researchers should attempt to apply similar sentiment analysis techniques to gauge the degree to which opinion towards the United States in these populations changes as a

²⁸ Miller-Idriss, Cynthia & Daniel Koehler. “A Plan to Beat Back the Far Right: Violent Extremism in America Demands a Social Response,” *Foreign Affairs*. Feb. 3, 2021, p. 1

²⁹ McMaster, H.R. “The Retrenchment Syndrome,” *Foreign Affairs*. Jul. 2020

³⁰ Wertheim, Stephen. “Delusions of Dominance,” *Foreign Affairs*. Jan. 2021

function of RWE in America. Second, this study calculated the relationship between RWE and public sentiment with aggregated and instantiated monthly measures. While effective at determining the direct causality of RWE on public sentiment, this method does not attempt to capture the duration of effect of RWE events or their cumulative public sentiment damage. Future OSINT studies might seek to clarify these points.

Conclusion

This study applies new OSINT tools to establish a statistically significant correlative relationship between right-wing extremist activity in the United States and decreased Russian public sentiment towards the United States and democracy. It is our hope that the Russian-language sentiment lexicon developed in this study will serve the public good of increased access to information and help democratize Russian public opinion, allowing researchers to bypass state-sponsored editorials and statistics. This study's finding of a significant, negative correlation between the incidence of RWE in the U.S. and Russian public sentiment adds a facet to our understanding of a serious national security threat. All signs point, unfortunately, to the continued intensification of RWE in the United States, and only by understanding the threat RWE poses our national interests, both domestic and foreign, can we craft effective policy to ensure its containment.

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