

## Cheburashka, Soros, Hillary's Fly: Dispatches from the June 2020 Twitter Inauthentic Activity Takedown

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## 1 Introduction

On June 12, 2020, Twitter announced the takedown of 1,152 accounts engaged in coordinated inauthentic behavior, attributing the activity to actors affiliated with Current Policy. These 1,152 accounts represented several clusters of activity pursuing various political, commercial, and promotional aims. The politically engaged accounts, which revolved around the @Current\_policy account, were primarily engaged in publishing pro-Kremlin, anti-opposition, and anti-Western content. The largest and most popular accounts in this takedown, however, appeared to be tied to twishop.ru, a website that sold retweets and tweeted links.

### 1.1 Key Takeaways

- Twitter attributed this takedown of 1,152 accounts and 3,434,792 tweets to actors affiliated with Current Policy. The Current Policy Twitter account (@Current\_policy) began tweeting in early 2013 and tweeted almost 58,000 times, gaining over 150,000 followers before it was **taken down in November 2019**.
- The politically engaged accounts in the network focused on amplifying pro-government activity and cheerleading for President Vladimir Putin and his party, United Russia. Several of the accounts purported to represent official government offices, such as the Moscow Construction Bureau and the Voronezh branch of the United Russia party. Others purported to represent United Russia politicians, including members of the State Duma and the Moscow City Duma.
- Accounts purported to be the official Twitter accounts for Federal initiatives such as Leaders of Russia, a contest intended to identify “future leaders” and reinvigorate various branches of government, and Open Innovations Startup Tour, a nationwide “project aimed at developing technological entrepreneurship and discovering promising innovative projects.” **Subsequent reporting** and investigation has confirmed that many of these were official accounts.
- Anti-opposition activity was additionally present in the form of caricature accounts, attacks on Navalny and the Anti-Corruption Foundation, and amplification of allegations that the opposition cheated in last year’s contentious Moscow City Duma elections. One of the accounts posed as a polling company “independently studying Russian public opinion” and used leading questions to elicit pro-government and anti-opposition responses.
- One small cluster of accounts, which periodically retweeted influencer accounts from within the data set, additionally amplified content related to geopolitical topics of interest created by likely persona accounts on social media sites including Quora, LiveJournal, Facebook, and others. The topics these persona accounts focused on and wrote about included Ukraine, Armenia, NATO, Skripal, and MH-17, among others.
- Another group of accounts was tied to a network of news sites aimed at several Russian cities: Ufa, Voronezh, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, and

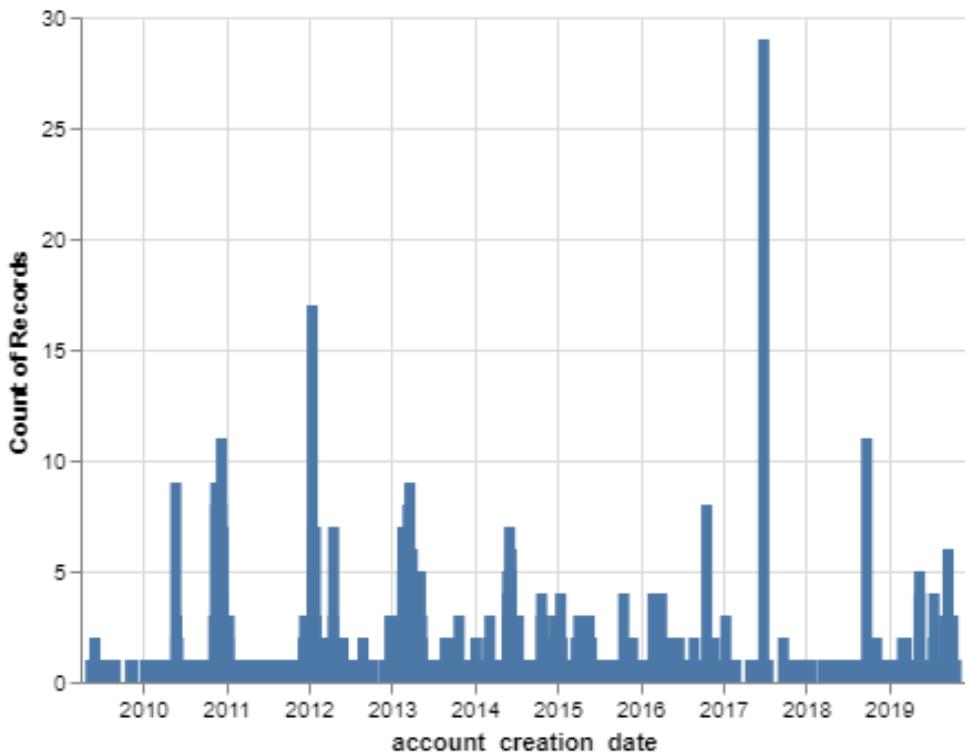
Arkhangelsk. This network is owned and operated by the media conglomerate Hearst Shkulev Media; while some of the affiliated Twitter accounts for sites in this network were included in the takedown, others were not, and the connection between Hearst Shkulev Media and the actors behind Current Policy is presently unclear.

- Finally, many of the most popular accounts were involved in a commercial operation called twishop that sold retweets and tweeted links. These accounts ranged from humor accounts to photography accounts and were typically not politically engaged.

## 1.2 Summary Stats

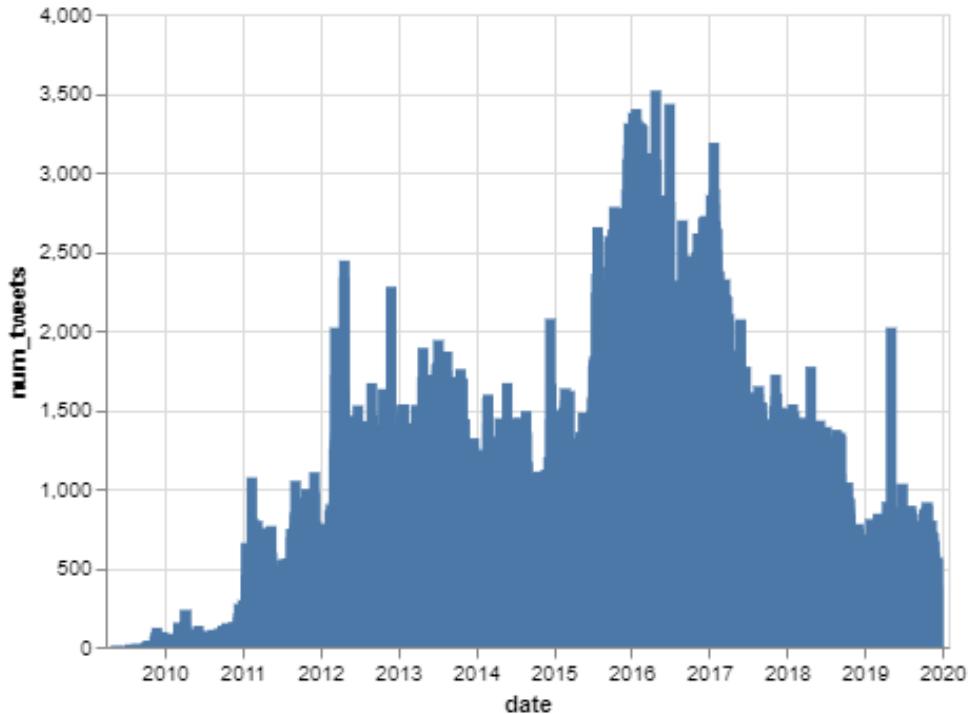
The data set consists of 3,434,792 tweets from 1,152 accounts, with an average follower count of approximately 13,200; this is skewed by the account with the greatest number of followers, an influencer by the name of @SamantaDarko, who had 2.9MM followers. 264 of the accounts had under 10 followers. The vast majority of the accounts were Russian-language accounts, though 55 had English as their primary language.

Accounts were created sporadically over a multi-year period spanning May 2009– October 2019. The presence of early creation dates is interesting; Russia has been known to leverage online influence operations with fake social media accounts dating back to the early 2010s. There is a notable spike in accounts created on one date, June 29, 2017; on that day, 29 accounts were created, and subsequently used in concert to amplify some curious content (discussed in this report as “Network of 33”).



Many of the accounts were high-volume tweeters. The greatest activity from

the network occurred in the 2016–2017 timeframe.



Tweets had an average of 38 engagements (likes + retweets + comments); the highest-engagement tweet, from a comedy account, had 20,156. The largest account by followers, @SamantaDarko, was also the leader in overall engagement (48,667,765 across 104,991 tweets); several of the apolitical influencer accounts ranked among the highest in engagement. Current Policy's own account, @Current\_policy, was 4th, with 5,793,431 engagements, 49,651 tweets, and 152,107 followers.

Domains shared included a range of URL shorteners and links to popular social platform VK as well as Instagram, YouTube, Foursquare, and Facebook. 438,611 URLs shared were via dlvr.it, an auto-posting service, indicating potential automation; tweet clients included onedio.com, Hootsuite, and a few other auto-posting services as well. News sites such as profile.ru, newkaliningrad.ru, lenta.ru, tass.ru, and ria.ru were represented among the top 25 most shared. Russia.rt.com and antimaidan.ru appear as well.

Prominent hashtags included many regional cities: Ufa, Yaroslavl, Arkhangelsk, Rostov, Moscow, and Voronezh, as well as political terms such as politics, United Russia, and Putin.

An overview of the most frequently retweeted accounts in the data released by Twitter:

Account Name	Retweets	Replies	Mentions
Current Policy (@Current_policy)	16,700	110	6,440
Илиас Меркури (@imerkouri)	13,089	1,029	11,471
Коффбой (@koffboy)	11,781	3,063	3,350
Пьяный Твиттер (@drunktwi)	8,411	1,069	1,227
Общероссийский народный фронт - ОНФ (@ornfront)	7,339	10	126
Лепра (@lepratorium)	6,523	1,054	1,143
Разрыхлитель Мозгов™ (@crazy_kutas)	4,734	1,111	1,231
Samanta (@SamantaDarko)	4,655	589	717
Живая История (@livinghistoryRU)	4,490	1	9
Архив студии карикатуры “Чебурашка” (@Of_Cheburashka)	2,197	8	48

These figures suggest a difference between the true influencer accounts in black (with the exception of @ornfront, which is a United Russia account) and the Current Policy accounts in red. @Current\_policy, @livinghistoryRU, and @Of\_Cheburashka, in particular, were retweeted often but did not otherwise receive much engagement; accounts in the network did not, as a rule, mention these accounts or reply to their tweets. This is in contrast to the influencer accounts, which received relatively high engagement across the board. One way to interpret these figures is that these three accounts were using retweets to amplify their content inauthentically.

## 2 Context

In November 2019, Twitter took down an account calling itself Current Policy (the Russian name, “Aktualnaya Politika,” can mean both “Current Politics” and “Relevant Politics”). Current Policy described itself as offering “current news about politics in Russia and the world.”



Figure 1: An archived version of the Current Policy Twitter profile. Via archive.org.

The operators of “Current Policy” responded by publishing a lengthy [open letter](#) accusing Twitter of “blocking accounts that spread good news about Russia” and ignoring infractions by “anti-Russian” accounts. A [number of news outlets](#) came to the defense of Current Policy and amplified its operators’ claims of unfair treatment. These reports tied Current Policy to other “good news” accounts that had been blocked by Twitter — specifically Good Events (@good\_events\_), an account that Twitter included in the Current Policy network takedown, and Release the Kraken (@rlz\_the\_kraken), a social-media outlet that [Znak.com has tied to Aleksandr Malkevich and Evgeny Prigozhin](#).

In the aftermath of Twitter’s [June 12 takedown announcement](#), state media and [figures in the Russian government redoubled](#) their campaign in Current Policy’s defense. Perhaps the most significant statement came from Anton Gorelkin, an MP from the United Russia party, who has [advocated limiting access to Western social-media platforms](#). Pointing to mentions of the pro-Kremlin political aims of the “Current Policy” network in Twitter’s announcement and in SIO’s [initial analysis](#), Gorelkin cried foul and again called for “regulating” platforms to “direct them into legal channels.” It is important to note that none of these statements acknowledged the reasons Twitter [explicitly gave](#) for taking down the Current Policy network, which were related to manipulative behavior on the platform, not viewpoint: “cross-posting and amplifying content in an inauthentic, coordinated manner for political ends.”

### 3 Political Dimensions

What were these “political ends”? While this network consisted of accounts created for many different purposes—some were tied to commercial schemes, some to government entities, and some to internet subcultures—there is a definite political project discernible in the accounts that engaged in political

activity. This political project consisted of a) buttressing the Kremlin's policies and its worldview more generally and b) attacking opposition figures and movements within Russia and the Kremlin's ideological opponents abroad. The accounts within this network relied on a number of discrete tactics to carry out this political project on Twitter.

### 3.1 The Kremlin Line

Some of these tactics were transparent. @Current\_policy, for example, was engaged primarily in posting—or re-posting, since many tweets were taken from other accounts—“patriotic” human-interest content. In fact, despite the fact that @Current\_policy purported to be devoted to “current” events, its most popular posts were actually devoted to Soviet nostalgia and World War II commemoration.



Figure 2: A Soviet-nostalgia tweet on the Current Policy page. “Stalin’s formula – ‘If you don’t agree, criticize. If you criticize, suggest something. If you do something, answer for it!’” Via archive.org.

At other times, however, @Current\_policy did touch upon current affairs. When it did, it hewed closely to the Kremlin line. Thus, one of the primary concerns for this account was the **annexed territory of Crimea** and what the Russian government was doing there:

- Comrade Commander-in-chief, I admire your operation in Crimea [Товари щ главнокомандующий, я восхищен вашей операцией в Крыму] — 50 replies, 1995 likes, 693 retweets (5/9/2019)
- Laying down asphalt for the Crimean bridge. Just don’t show anyone from Ukraine [Крымский мост, укладка асфальта. Только никому

из Украины не показывайте] — 113 replies, 1174 likes, 996 retweets (9/5/2017)

- Crimea continues to set records. In 2018 the peninsula had almost 7 million visitors. [Крым продолжает ставить рекорды. За 2018 год полуостров посетило почти 7 миллионов человек] — 31 replies, 852 likes, 322 retweets (3/15/2019)

Other popular tweets supported the Russian occupation of the Donbass and derided Ukrainians and the Ukrainian government.

@Current\_policy also commented on Russian domestic politics. In the midst of the contentious 2019 Moscow City Duma elections, the Kremlin's heavy-handed response to which brought large protests into the streets, @Current\_Policy weighed in on the side of the Kremlin:

- Election commission officials spoke with the relatives of dead citizens whose signatures have turned up in the signature lists for a number of candidates for the Moscow City Duma. The position is clear: these candidates must be removed from the election [Сотрудники избиркома пообщались с родственниками умерших граждан, подписи которых оказались в подписных листах ряда кандидатов на выборах в Мосгордуму. Позиция однозначна: таких кандидатов нужно снимать с выборов] — 15 replies, 191 likes, 165 retweets (7/15/2019)
- “Dead Souls” in the Moscow City Duma elections 2019 [”Мертвые души” на выборах в Мосгордуму 2019] — 1 reply, 47 likes, 34 retweets (7/12/2019)
- The candidates supported by Navalny in the Moscow City Duma elections have managed to register not only with ‘dead souls’ in their signature lists but with financial support for their campaigns from illegal sources [Поддерживаемые Навальным кандидаты в депутаты Мосгордумы успели отметиться не только “мертвыми душами” в подписных листах, но и финансированием избирательных кампаний из незаконных источников] — 2 replies, 39 likes, 56 retweets (7/12/2019)

Nor was this the only election in which @Current\_policy threw its weight behind Kremlin narratives. After a surprisingly strong performance by the Communist candidate Ishchenko in the 2018 gubernatorial election in the far-east Primorski Krai, which led first to suspicious arithmetic and then a rescheduled election, @Current\_policy worked to undermine Ishchenko:

- A. Ishchenko caught falsifying signatures again [А. Ищенко в очередной раз уличили в фальсификациях при сборе подписей] — 8 replies, 27 likes, 23 retweets (11/22/2018)
- Ishchenko and Ko used their whole arsenal of falsifications in the elections in Primorye. What are polling stations with 100% of the vote worth. And then the wounded candidate has ended his hunger strike which didn't make any sense to begin with. [Ищенко и Ко использовали на выборах в Приморье весь арсенал фальсификаций. Одни только участки со 100% результатом чего стоят. Да и голодовка обиженного

кандидата закончилась толком так и не начавшись] — 14 replies, 26 likes, 27 retweets (9/18/2018)

- A call by A. Ishchenko, candidate for governor in Primorye from the CPRF, to protest the election was answered by only 30 people out of 200, 000 who cast votes. By the way, many people are saying he bought votes. A coincidence? [На призыв кандидата в губернаторы Приморья от КПРФ А. Ищенко выходить на протестную акцию откликнулось только 30 человек из более чем 200 тыс. проголосовавших. Кстати, в его адрес посыпались многочисленные обвинения в скупке голосов. Совпадение?] — 11 replies, 19 likes, 16 retweets

@Current\_policy was the core of the overtly political account of this network—see summary stats above—but it was not the political account with the greatest number of followers. This honor belonged to an account known as Cheburashka (@Of\_Cheburashka\_), after the **popular Soviet animated-film character**. The account purported to belong to the Cheburashka Caricature Studio, which publishes pro-government political memes and cartoons and has made a special point recently of attacking Aleksei Navalny, a leading opposition figure in Russia.



Figure 3: A post on the Cheburashka Telegram channel accusing Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation of laundering money.

@Of\_Cheburashka\_ also posted frequently about international issues of importance to the Kremlin, such as the **2016 hack-and-leak attack on the World Anti-Doping Agency** and Russian operations in Syria. It expressed special hostility for the United States:



Figure 4: An archived tweet on the “Cheburashka” account in which “a retired Rear Admiral describes the potential of the ‘Zircon’ rocket.” “No need to build a wall,” the tweet adds. Via archive.org

While @Of\_Cheburashka\_ mocked Navalny and the Kremlin’s other domestic opponents and engaged in saber-rattling for international rivals, it described anything connected to Putin’s government with a kind of reverent enthusiasm recalling socialist realism:

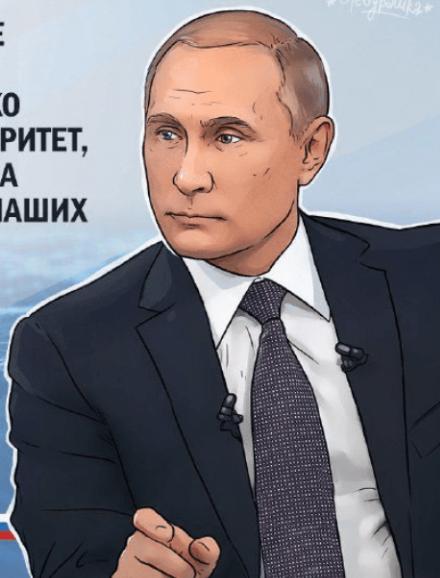


Чебурашка | Мастерская Карикатуры

НЕСМОТРЯ НА СКРОМНЫЕ  
ВОЕННЫЕ РАСХОДЫ, МЫ  
ОБЕСПЕЧИВАЕМ НЕ ТОЛЬКО  
ВОЕННЫЙ И ЯДЕРНЫЙ ПАРИТЕТ,  
НО ОКАЗЫВАЕМСЯ ЕЩЁ НА  
ДВА-ТРИ ШАГА ВПЕРЕДИ НАШИХ  
КОНКУРЕНТОВ.

**В.В.ПУТИН**

ПРЯМАЯ ЛИНИЯ С ПРЕЗИДЕНТОМ



Во время прямой линии Владимир Путин назвал  
отличие России от других военных держав

[t.me/cheburashkart/1180](https://t.me/cheburashkart/1180)

802 0 Jun 20, 2019 at 07:21

Figure 5: A Telegram post on the Cheburashka channel conveying Vladimir Putin's remarks during his annual "direct line" show. "Despite our modest expenses, we are ensuring not only military and nuclear parity, but are two or three steps ahead of our rivals." The tweet for this cartoon received 8 replies, 94 likes, and 33 retweets.

In this respect, @Of\_Cheburashka\_ and @Current\_policy essentially replicate the dual tone that has become the trademark of the Russian Foreign Ministry, which is noted for the “sarcasm, contempt, and defiance” with which it responds to its perceived foes. Indeed, this duality—sarcasm and contempt for our enemies, reverence for our own—was perhaps the most important characteristic of the political content in the Current Policy network. Some accounts were more sarcastic than others, however. Two accounts in particular, “Mukha Khillary” (@MuhaHillary — “Hillary’s fly,” after the **fly incident** during the 2016 presidential debates) and “Deti Sorosa” (@DetiSorosa — “Children of Soros”), were particularly vociferous towards the Russian government’s perceived opponents:



Figure 6: An archived anti-Navalny tweet from the “Children of Soros” account: “Today’s march ended without any arrests.” Via archive.org.

Whereas @DetiSorosa tended to focus on Navalny and the Anti-Corruption Foundation, @MuhaHillary looked outward as well. Some of the account’s most popular tweets mocked the UK government’s response to the Skripal affair:

- In her Christmas address May thanked the army “for defending the country from Russia” [Мэй в рождественском обращении поблагодарила армию “за защиту от России”] – 39 replies, 951 likes, 405 retweets (12/24/2018)
- “Did you miss me?”: Putin’s smiling face projected onto the side of Britain’s Foreign Ministry building [«Скучали по мне?»: световая проекция с улыбающимся Путиным появилась на здании МИД Великобритании] – 40 replies, 829 likes, 593 retweets (3/19/2018)
- From Moscow Vladimir Vladimirovich requested they put on “London Goodbye” for Theresa Ultimatovna [Владимир Владимирович из Москвы попросил поставить для Терезы Ультиматовны песню “Лондон гудбай”] – 20 replies, 576 likes, 284 retweets (3/14/2018)

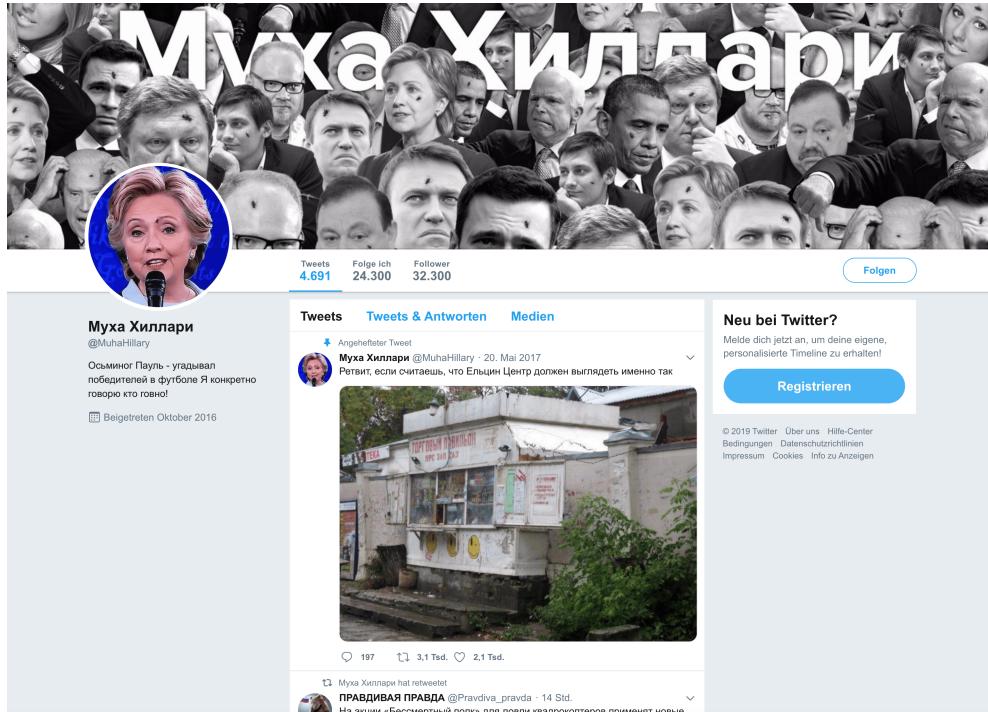


Figure 7: An archived version of the “Hillary’s Fly” profile page. The pinned tweet reads “Retweet if you think the Yeltsin Center should look just like this.” Via archive.org.

How did these accounts (and others that revolved around them) coordinate to amplify their content? Retweet counts (see above) make it clear that @Current\_policy was amplified by other accounts in the network, and network analysis illustrates the extent to which it was the dominant account in this cluster:

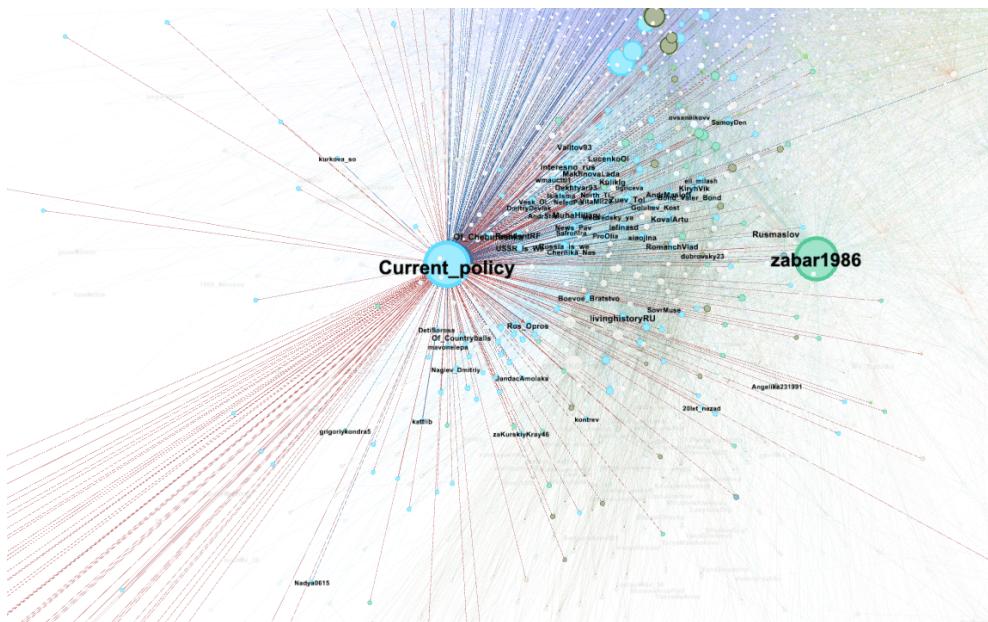


Figure 8: @Current\_policy was at the center of a cluster of accounts that retweeted it heavily.

### 3.2 United Russia Accounts

A number of the Current Policy accounts were engaged in pushing the Kremlin line on Twitter, whether through “positive” news posts, Putin panegyrics, or attacks on the opposition and Russia’s international rivals. Other accounts, however, actually purported to represent political figures from the United Russia party:

Account Name	Significance	Followers	Tweets
Людмила Гусева (@GusevaLIMGDuma)	Representative in Moscow City Duma from United Russia	30,886	3,559
Вячеслав Володин (@VolodinOfficial)	Chairman of the Duma, from United Russia	10,545	241
ЕР Воронеж (@ervrn)	Voronezh branch of the United Russia party	5,037	16,670
Дмитрий Саблин (@dmitriy_sablin)	Representative in the Duma, from United Russia	3,779	1,121
Игорь Бортников (@ibortnikov76)	Municipal Representative in Yaroslavl	679	903
Сергей Кириенко (@KirienkoRF)	First Deputy Chief of Staff of the President	517	3
Татьяна Сапрыкина (@t_saprikina)	Representative in the Duma from United Russia	410	132
Виктория Ватутина (@vikavatutina)	“Volunteer” for United Russia in Voronezh	7,445	4,253



Figure 9: An archived version of the account purported to represent Liudmila Guseva, a representative in the Moscow City Duma. Via archive.org.

It is difficult to say whether or not these were in fact “official accounts,” but there is some evidence that they were indeed connected to these political figures in some way. Google’s knowledge panel for Dmitry Sablin, a United Russia Parliamentarian with connections to the Anti-maidan movement and Chairman of Battle Brotherhood (the account for which, @Boevoe\_Bratstvo, was also in the “Current Policy” network), links to the account taken down by Twitter:

# Dmitry Sablin (Дмитрий Вадимович Саблин)

Politician



 [sablin.ru](http://sablin.ru)

Dmitry Vadimovich Sablin is a Russian politician who has served as a member of the State Duma since 2003, for the United Russia party. He previously served as a member of the Federation Council. He is the first deputy chairman of the Fighting Fraternity veterans organizations. [Wikipedia](#)

**Born:** September 5, 1968 (age 51 years), [Mariupol', Ukraine](#)

**Spouse:** Alla Sablina

**Education:** [Voyennaya Akademiya General'nogo Shtaba Vooruzhennykh Sil Rf \(2015\)](#), [MORE](#)

## Profiles

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Figure 10: The Google Knowledge Panel for Dmitry Sablin showing the suspended Twitter account (circled in red).

Replacement accounts for these political figures have not appeared as of time

of writing, and an article from November 2019 ascribes the removal of the accounts for Volodin and Kirienko to the same takedown that affected “Good Events” and “Current Policy.”

These accounts behaved like “official” accounts. The content they shared was generally positive and concerned measures United Russia was taking to improve life in Russia:

- @GusevaLIMGDuma: Important information for families with multiple children! You can take advantage of new property- and land-tax subsidies. The important thing: that there are three or more minors in your family. [Важная информация для многодетных семей!]

Вы можете воспользоваться новыми льготами по имущественному и земельному налогам.

Существенный момент: в вашей семье растут трое и более несовершеннолетних детей.] — 0 replies, 11 likes, 2 retweets (7/29/2019)

- @VolodinOfficial: Volodin: the main achievement in the reunification of Crimea with the Russian Federation belongs to its people [Володин: главная заслуга в воссоединении Крыма с РФ принадлежит его народу] — 6 replies, 109 likes, 67 retweets (3/17/2017)
- @dmitriy\_sablin: Dmitry Sablin intends to request that prosecutors look into Bykov’s remarks about Hitler [Дмитрий Саблин намерен попросить прокуратуру проверить высказывания Быкова о Гитлере] — 4 replies, 27 likes, 8 retweets (1/14/2019)

### 3.3 English-Language Content

Although the vast majority of the accounts in the Current Policy takedown were Russian-language, there was a cluster of 55 accounts that were identified as English-language (although, overall, 727 bilingual accounts tweeted in English at least once). These 55 accounts produced 28,383 tweets of which 5,829 (20%) were retweets. Some of the prominent influencer accounts and business-related accounts, such as @SamantaDarko and the Open Innovations Forum, had dedicated secondary English accounts (@SamantaDarkoEN, @OpenInnoEN). The hashtag “#forinnovations” was the #1 hashtag in the English language data set.

Among the tweets from the English accounts was some soccer- (football-) related content and individuals promoting their personal Instagram accounts using bilingual hashtags (#beard, for example, for one who had recently grown a beard). Overall, many of the English-language tweets were spammy, pushing follow-back rings, contests, and adult content. A majority of the URLs involved automated posting tools and follower-acquisition related sites.

Mixed in with the spam and personal Instagram content was some political activity. There was mild English-language cheerleading for President Vladimir Putin, such as tweets linking to a Time Magazine poll with the text, “I think Vladimir Putin should be on 2015 TIME 100 Vladimir Putin for #time100.” There was also a very small amount of English-language content related to Donald Trump and to Hillary Clinton; the post volume was relatively

low, but multiple accounts acted in unison to amplify the stories, several of which included links to conspiratorial sites such as off-guardian.org (which still prominently features an alternate-reality narrative for the Skripal story on its front page). A small number of accounts additionally retweeted @realdonaldtrump and occasionally prominent supporters. Overall, engagement with English-language content was low, and largely limited to the apolitical influencer and commentary accounts such as @SamantaDarkoEN and @HorrorTwits.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.3.1 The Network of 33

There is one unique cluster of 33 bilingual accounts that produced approximately 3500 tweets that emerged in the course of our investigation into English-language content. They are covered in this section because they appeared to be leveraged at times for pushing political content to English-speaking audiences. This network of accounts was used to amplify social media posts and articles created by suspicious—likely fake—personas on FB, Quora, and LiveJournal.

Screen Name	Followers	Following	Creation Date	Tweet Text	Tweet Time	URL
dsvyosheva	47	44	5/8/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/K2P4zw5M4v">https://t.co/K2P4zw5M4v</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
KavryskayaVera	47	37	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/BZCvIHGZE">https://t.co/BZCvIHGZE</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
anzh_filmohina	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/p09K58xyQ">https://t.co/p09K58xyQ</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
BerdyshevaAlila	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/256uv2e0dN">https://t.co/256uv2e0dN</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
AnnaPerventseva	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/UHdd8pxcgRv">https://t.co/UHdd8pxcgRv</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
Ivanyshkina7	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/ckvjhjDyo">https://t.co/ckvjhjDyo</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
DianaRybacheva	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/ahWt52JNj">https://t.co/ahWt52JNj</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
InesVetch	46	58	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/yUkkivoEqQ">https://t.co/yUkkivoEqQ</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
abriko_s	3946	3931	8/14/11	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/RqZxCPuPUH">https://t.co/RqZxCPuPUH</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
Beginzamnoytm	2268	857	2/4/11	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/Wsb7sWWKJ">https://t.co/Wsb7sWWKJ</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
GražinėnėYar	643	1268	6/19/12	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/er04djT0c">https://t.co/er04djT0c</a>	2018-06-14 10:23:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
OlesyaKhlopko	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/GCS9PH29z">https://t.co/GCS9PH29z</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
MilanaLepashina	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/qRMg9eH4dh">https://t.co/qRMg9eH4dh</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
Paranokhinalra	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/PuJutUjrrv">https://t.co/PuJutUjrrv</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
nastyayurin4	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/3abyoeBc">https://t.co/3abyoeBc</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
OlesyaUllyakhina	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/HWWR70kf">https://t.co/HWWR70kf</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
LobbykinaAvg	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/lEqvOOvOA">https://t.co/lEqvOOvOA</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
LizaLutoshina	46	56	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/PuJutUjrrv">https://t.co/PuJutUjrrv</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
KhluodinaKseniya	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/FekAOOCU6X">https://t.co/FekAOOCU6X</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
MerkushinaDina	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/oJSQ54rnwdk">https://t.co/oJSQ54rnwdk</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
MPen5	48	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/newZGU6">https://t.co/newZGU6</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
PiskunovaS2	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/ue7m9eNoCh">https://t.co/ue7m9eNoCh</a>	2018-06-14 10:24:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
StebakovaVnika	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/NiMUPH">https://t.co/NiMUPH</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
YanaSinyavina	40	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/sHCSpw4jEm">https://t.co/sHCSpw4jEm</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
TatyanaVasyaeva	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/HggOOkpke9z">https://t.co/HggOOkpke9z</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
YanaGrischina3	47	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/AoIghGrp">https://t.co/AoIghGrp</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
trukhavalevar6	47	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/UrEySL3WMj">https://t.co/UrEySL3WMj</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
shchuplamar6	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/FMM8avmjwe">https://t.co/FMM8avmjwe</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
StrokiavaEv7	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/JNSMwvNT0z">https://t.co/JNSMwvNT0z</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
VasNst7	47	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/QBRZU0PtPq">https://t.co/QBRZU0PtPq</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
YakimovaAnna	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/Tfn1Siukli">https://t.co/Tfn1Siukli</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
SheborshinaPol2	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/00HspX4NUK">https://t.co/00HspX4NUK</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>
YulyaMarshakova	46	38	6/29/17	What's up in Armenia? <a href="https://t.co/PnPfhB0tos">https://t.co/PnPfhB0tos</a>	2018-06-14 10:25:00	<a href="https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1">https://www.quora.com/Whats-up-in-Armenia/answer/Eugen-Strijenok-1</a>

This cluster is interesting because of its behavioral similarities to other observed Russian influence operations in which a handful of relatively thin personas serve as bylined authors or social-post creators on one platform or website, and other persona accounts serve as amplifiers on other platforms, particularly Twitter and Facebook; both the GRU<sup>2</sup> and the as-yet-unattributed actor that DFRLab<sup>3</sup> and Graphika<sup>4</sup> termed “Secondary Infektion” have been observed to operate in this capacity.

In the June 2020 Twitter takedown data set, 29 of the amplifier accounts were created on the same date—June 29, 2017—and share similar username patterns (FirstNameLastName; see figure above). One account was created in May 2017, one in June 2012, and the two oldest accounts were created in February and

<sup>1</sup><https://web.archive.org/web/20191208212153/https://twitter.com/horrorwtws>

<sup>2</sup><https://cyber.fsi.stanford.edu/io/news/potemkin-pages-personas-blog>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/operation-secondary-infektion/>

<sup>4</sup><https://secondaryinfektion.org/>

August 2011. The 2011 accounts have bios consisting primarily of #Followback spam hashtags. They spent much of their early activity tweeting #Followback spam, occasionally tweeting identical posts at the same time, and occasionally retweeting another large account in the Current Policy takedown data set, @Rusmaslov. The verbatim and simultaneous content posting became more regular in 2015, and by 2016 the three original accounts in this subcluster—@abriko\_s, @begizamnoytm, @grazhdaninYar—demonstrated this behavior daily, often multiple times a day, with a newfound focus on politics. Some examples:

- The USA’s National Security Agency had a wiretap on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [Агентство национальной безопасности США прослушивало премьер-министра Израиля Беньямина Нетаньяху] — (1/27/2016)
- IN LITHUANIA THEY’RE PUTTING SOVIET SOLDIERS ON TRIAL [В ЛИТВЕ НАЧАЛСЯ СУД НАД СОВЕТСКИМИ ВОЕННЫМИ] — (2/1/2016)
- RUSSIA-KYRGYZSTAN: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP OR FOREIGN-POLICY GAMES [РОССИЯ-КЫРГЫЗСТАН: СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКОЕ ПАРТНЕРСТВО ИЛИ ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ИГРЫ” — (2/1/2016)

Following the creation date of the rest of the cluster, beginning on July 7, 2017, all of the 33 accounts operated similarly on a near-daily basis, with simultaneous verbatim postings of political content from news sites, Facebook profiles, YouTube channels, LiveJournal accounts and small blogs. There were 563 unique links in all, including some produced by what appear to be thin persona profiles, several of which have been recently shut down by the platforms their content appeared on.

Topically, some of the content was local, focused on Yaroslavl. Other content was international, focused on a wide range of topics of strategic interest to Russia including ISIS, Syria, Armenia, NATO. This coordinated tweeting behavior continued until October 2018, gradually growing increasingly less frequent. There was a yearlong hiatus from activity between Oct 26, 2018 and September 5, 2019. On that date, the accounts reactivated to tweet once more about local programming in Yaroslavl.

International Volkov Festival 2019, Yaroslavl – date and venue, event program. [Международный Волковский фестиваль 2019, Ярославль – дата и место проведения, программа мероприятия.] — 9/5/2019

The 563 distinct URLs tweeted by this subset of accounts ran the gamut across over 200 domains, from LiveJournal blogs, to state media sites and YouTube channels, to social media profiles. While many of the domains appeared only one or twice, there were 70 distinct URLs from the domain sm-news.ru, and then over 30 URLs each from kremlinpress.ru, notum.info, and a LiveJournal blog, leonkuravson.livejournal.com.

While sm-news, kremlinpress, and notum are nominally news sites, the LeonKuravson livejournal is more unique. It’s in English, while most of the rest of the content this bilingual network shared was Russian-language. Many of Kuravson’s posts are verbatim reposts of RT articles with links to the original: insinuations that Turkey was assisting ISIS in the Syrian

conflict<sup>5</sup> articles related to NATO's treatment of Russia,<sup>6</sup> US spy plane activity,<sup>7</sup> President Obama's visit to Hiroshima,<sup>8 9</sup> etc. Some of the LiveJournal posts are unattributed plagiarizations of articles that appear elsewhere, such as content from political commentary site Counterpunch.<sup>10 11</sup> Other articles, however, appear to be original creations - including, for example, an April 31, 2018 post about Armenia<sup>12</sup> that is topically tied to past Russian influence operations activity.



leonkuravson ( leonkuravson) wrote.  
2018-04-30 16:31:00

Armenia protests: USA appears to divide Armenia into parts. Here's why they're in the streets



FILE PHOTO: Armenia's former President Serzh Sargsyan attends a session of the parliament in Yerevan, Armenia April 17, 2018. REUTERS/Vahram Baghdasaryan/File photo

This month, mass protests in the ex-Soviet republic Armenia have forced the prime minister to resign. The unrest began in March after Serzh Sargsyan, leader of the ruling party, tried to circumvent limits on his power. Facing term limits as president, Sargsyan changed the government to a parliamentary system and stepped into the position of prime minister.

Nikol Pashinyan, a member of the Armenian legislature, launched a public campaign to stop him. Intense street protests forced Sargsyan to resign after less than a week in the post of prime minister.

So what is going on?

The LiveJournal bio indicates that Mr. Kuravson is a political scientist, though searching does not return any additional sites or scholarly references featuring his work. A LinkedIn stub profile clarifies that he is a political scientist *adviser* based in the San Francisco Bay Area, while a Facebook profile that primarily serves as a repository for reposting LiveJournal posts says Washington DC. His profile photos on Livejournal and Facebook are of an actor, Leonid Kuravlev (Kuravlyov), and his Facebook friends include a high percentage of spam and

<sup>5</sup> <https://leonkuravson.livejournal.com/80376.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://leonkuravson.livejournal.com/102046.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://leonkuravson.livejournal.com/103055.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://leonkuravson.livejournal.com/103445.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.rt.com/news/344571-obama-hiroshima-apology-okinawa/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://leonkuravson.livejournal.com/36206.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/01/07/the-death-of-american-democracy/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://leonkuravson.livejournal.com/187836.html>

adult-content accounts, themselves with stolen profile photos. Most of the photos on the Facebook profile relate to news events, with several presenting dubious or disproven theories related to the downing of Malaysia airlines flight MH-17 (a topic that has been the subject of numerous Russian influence operations). There is the possibility that Mr. Kuravson is writing under a *nom de plume*, though the biographies on his web presences give no proactive indication of this, and the inauthentic amplification from the fake-persona Twitter network remains.

The image shows two side-by-side screenshots. On the left is Leon Kuravson's Facebook profile, featuring a circular profile picture of an older man with glasses and a mustache. The timeline shows basic information like 'Intro' and 'Photos'. On the right is Leon Kuravson's LiveJournal page, titled 'Леонид Куравлев'. It includes a larger profile picture, a bio section, and a post titled 'British govt must explain its behavior case. Syria strikes' with a thumbnail image of a building.

The image shows two posts from Leon Kuravson's LiveJournal. The top post, dated July 17, 2015, features a photograph of a soldier standing next to the wreckage of a plane. The text discusses the MH17 crash and claims it couldn't have been shot from rebel areas. The bottom post, dated August 7, 2015, features a photograph of a missile launcher. The text discusses the Tonkin Gulf incident and claims it was used to justify the Vietnam War.

Based on SIO's prior investigations indicating that Russian Twitter influence networks amplify persona accounts, we additionally investigated the Quora, Instagram, and Facebook posts that were directly tweeted by this network of 33 accounts.

In a second instance of amplification of likely-persona content also related to Armenia, on June 14, 2018 the network of 33 tweeted a Quora answer to the question "What's up in Armenia?" by an account named Eugen Strijenok. There had been two posts by Strijenok on Quora, who additionally had social profiles on The Petition Site,<sup>13</sup> YouTube, Reddit, and NewsStreet.ru, and a suspended Twitter account.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of our *Current Policy* takedown investigation period, Quora deleted the answer and banned Strijenok's account.

This account has been banned. Learn more about [Quora's Term of Service](#).



**Eugen Strijenok**

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---

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0 Answers
0 Questions
0 Shares
0 Posts
0 Followers
0 Following
Edits
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Eugen hasn't shared, answered or posted anything yet.

The now-deleted answer to the Quora question (written on April 30, 2018, the same date as Kuravson's livejournal post) was reproduced in its entirety on Reddit as well, by the user estrijenok. Additionally, the Quora answer was reposted on Medium by a now-suspended account named @Semeontozz, who has been linked to the Russia-affiliated Secondary Infektion information operations network by Graphika.

[twitter.com › belenov93 - Translate this page](https://twitter.com/belenov93)

[Aleksei Belenov \(@belenov93\) | Twitter](https://twitter.com/belenov93)

What's up in Armenia? 4 Answers Eugen Strijenok Answered Apr 30 Developments in Armenia resemble a famous movie ...

<sup>13</sup><https://web.archive.org/web/20200618003600/https://www.thepetition-site.com/785/805/889/protect-wild-life-in-the-arctic/>

<sup>14</sup>[https://twitter.com/e\\_strijenok](https://twitter.com/e_strijenok)

[medium.com](#) › [whats-up-in-armenia-41231f195c15](#)

## What's up in Armenia? - Semeon Tozz - Medium

May 12, 2018 - Developments in Armenia resemble a famous movie featuring a team of superior illusionists who pull off bank heists during their performances, ...

[–] [estrijenok](#) 2 points 2 years ago

Developments in Armenia resemble a famous movie featuring a team of superior illusionists who pull off bank heists during their performances, playing cat and mouse with FBI agents. However as the movie goes on, it becomes clear that the FBI agent investigating the case is in fact the chief villain there.

Armenia's Parliament is going to elect Nikol Pashinyan an interim Prime Minister on May 1. Afterwards they will start preparing for early parliamentary election to choose a new head of the government. This is the outcome of numerous protests held by Pashinyan's supporters over the past weeks.

Of course, the Armenians have got a lot to grumble about and criticize the ruling Republican Party and Serzh Sargsyan who has already stepped down as Prime Minister. The republic's economic development has stalled, personal income is falling. Yet there has been no indication that people feel ready to take to the streets to cast the government down. Making an unbiased appraisal of the situation in Armenia, it is clear that the protests have been perfectly organized, planned and financed. Conventional slogans proclaiming fight for democracy, freedom and against tyranny are only a cover-up. Leaders of the protests copy the scenario of colored revolutions, creating a déjà vu impression. E.g. unjustified arrest of the opposition leader, a thong demanding that he be released, Pashinyan's heroic return from prison, as well as calls for the election of 'people's Prime Minister' right there on the square.

All this is no more than a game, an illusion created for ordinary people to assure them of the opposition's just cause aimed at bringing a commoner to power, who will make it possible for the Armenians to live prosperously and happily. All these expectations are unfortunately a sad mistake. In fact, what is happening in Armenia now is that oligarchic clans are trying to get their piece of the political pie.

Pashinyan is being promoted by the opposition party of the most influential billionaire in Armenia Gagik Tsarukyan, a key business partner of former Armenia's President Robert Kocharyan. Serzh Sargsyan served as Prime Minister when Kocharyan was President. In practice, Sargsyan and Pashinyan have been in harness for many years.

In other words, the gallery play of Sargsyan and Pashinyan during their 3-minute meeting, Pashinyan's imprisonment and subsequent release has most likely been orchestrated by Sargsyan himself.

What does he need it for? The thing is that despite their formal pro-Russian rhetoric, Armenia's oligarchs are greatly dependent on the United States, since most of their financial assets are kept there. They have given a clear signal to Sargsyan that it'd be inappropriate for him to stay in power any longer. Obviously, people in Washington have different plans for the political Olympus in Yerevan. That is the reason why Sargsyan failed to stay in power as Prime Minister after his presidential term ended. The only point of interest of the former head of state now is preserving his financial assets – which he keeps in the West – to live comfortably.

Sargsyan has decided against resisting the United States. Instead, he made an arrangement with Armenian oligarchs and Pashinyan – who was long ago made a puppet opposition leader by the ruling party – to stage a dramatic performance by imitating a colored revolution in Armenia. As a result, the new government will be dominated by the representatives of those financial circles which stand for integrating Armenia in the Caspian-Turkey project of the United States even though it entails territorial losses and renouncing Yerevan's claims to Ankara and Baku. People in Armenia will unlikely see any improvement in living conditions. They will most probably suffer from sudden weakening of political institutions and intensifying the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

And what about Sargsyan? After exchanging Pashinyan's assumption of power for his impunity, Sargsyan will watch further dismantling

Our look at the Facebook posts tweeted by the network of 33 accounts revealed a profile by the name of Игорь Баронов (Igor Baronov). On November 8, 2017, links to three distinct Facebook posts by Baronov were tweeted by the network, with approximately a minute between each cluster of tweets:

1. New information about the connections of the killers of Voronenkov and Nemtsov [Новая информация по связям убийц Вороненкова и Немцова]
2. Nobody needs Orthodox activists anymore [Православные активисты стали никому не нужны]
3. Europe has a choice. It can abandon a politics of double standards or it can step on its own throat. [Европа стоит перед выбором. Или уйти от политики "двойных стандартов" или наступить себе на горло]

Ten days later, on November 18th, a fourth cluster of tweets promoting another Baronov post appeared:

4. About the threat of Kazakhstan's switch from Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet. [Про угрозу перехода Казахстана с кириллицы на

латиницу]

The Facebook posts on Baronov's profile were long, but created approximately one minute apart, suggesting the text was perhaps pasted in. Baronov's other Facebook profile activity followed a similar pattern - overall sparse content, except for occasional days with multiple political posts created minutes apart (this happened on three separate dates). The account's Friends appear to include accounts with profile photos taken from prominent figures; its own profile picture is a group photo of a woman at a beach with friends.

... Игорь Баронов November 8, 2017 ...

Европа стоит перед выбором... или уйти от политики "двойных стандартов" или наступить себе на горло

Недавно в Каталонии проходили всем известные события. Это стало ярким следствием политики Брюсселя, которые продолжают урезать полномочия местных правительств и пытаются создать крупный централизованный центр, что встречает большое недовольство на местах.

Одним из факторов ситуации в Каталонии стали европейские «двойные стандарты» в вопросе по отношению к моментам, связанным с правом народов на самоопределение. В Косово, Крыму, Абхазии, Донбассе, Приднестровье...

Отметим, что за последние годы в Каталонии ничего Европе не даст. Там есть большинство своих ситуаций — это Пакетон, Годзидри и Венченти в Италии, Корсика во Франции, Фландрия в Бельгии, Трансильвания в Румынии и многие другие... Это мы еще не говорим об Великобритании и Шотландии.

Так что Европе пришла пора или перестать жить по двойным стандартам или платить по счетам... И то и другое будет для Брюсселя крайне муторно, но выбор придется делать.

Europe is facing the choice. Or walk away from "double standards" policy or step on your throat

Recently in Catalonia, there were famous events to everyone. This has been a vivid name of Brussels policies that continues to cut local governments and administrative units from the centralized center, which meets great dissatisfaction on the ground.

One factor in the situation in Catalonia was European "double standards" regarding the issues related to the right of peoples to self-determination (in Kosovo, Crimea, Abkhazia, Donbas). Let us note that freedom in Catalonia will not give anything to Europe. There are a large number of similar situations: Piedmont, Lombardia and Venice in Italy, Corsica in France, Flanders in Belgium, Transylvania and many others. This is not talk about the UK and Scotland yet.

So it's time for Europe to stop being by double standards, or paying bills. There will be extremely painful for Brussels, but the choice will have to make.

Rate this translation

... Игорь Баронов November 8, 2017 ...

Православные активисты стали никому не нужны

В последнее время резко активизировались так называемые православные активисты. Есть версия, что их координируют из-за рубежа, чтобы дискредитировать РПЦ, ну и накануне выборов 2018 года, конечно же, оговорить сразу несколько фактов.

- Называя организацию «Христианское государство Святая Русь» крайне похожее наименование террористической организации «Исламское государство».

- В руках автора этой организации есть активист майдана Радаренко, продвигающие темы «православного терроризма» отечества извеcкой пропаганды, которая представляет Россию как часть Азии, а не Европы.

Ну а так очевидно, что подобные православные активисты абсолютно не коррелируют с общественными настроениями в нашей стране. Согласно опросам, большинство населения, считает их своего рода фриками, радикалами, которые не нужны ни обществу, ни сама РПЦ.

Orthodox activists are not needed by anyone

Recently, the so-called Orthodox activists have been dramatically intensified. There is a version that they are coordinated from abroad to discredit the ROC, and the eve of the 2018 election, of course.

Some facts talk about this at once:

- The name of the organization "Christian state of Holy Russia" is very similar to the name of the terrorist organization "Islamic State".
- In the leadership of this organization there is an activist of Maidan R. Monzko.
- Promotion of the theme of "Orthodox terrorism" is responsible for the idea of Kiev propaganda, which represents Russia as part of Asia, not Europe. Well, it is obvious that such Orthodox activists absolutely do not correlate with public sentiment in our country. According to polls, the majority of the population considers them as kind of freaks, radicals that do not need the system nor society. Everyone gets away from them. Both the state and the society and the ROC itself.

Rate this translation

... Игорь Баронов November 8, 2017 ...

Спецслужбы ДНР раскопали интересные материалы о жизни на Украине

Дениса Воронкова и Марии Максаковой

После бегства из России супруги, были обеспокоены теми вопросами, что обструкция, легализовать свои доходы в России и вопросы безопасности.

Год назад в ДНР было создано тайны на черный день примерно в 10 миллионов долларов, но общее состояние, учтывая все активы доходило до 100 миллионов. Вот такой вот депутат.

Для решения своих проблем, им нужны были серьезные покровители, которые довольно быстро нашли. Депутаты вступили в контакт с американской разведкой и взяли их под свое крыло. Ну а кому еще это делают на Украине?

До супругов донесли, что у них будет все хорошо, если они будут говорить «правильные» слова в отношении Кремля. Кураторами Воронкова и Максаковой стали президент ЦРУ в Киеве Джейсон Сток и его заместитель Томас Тилерсон. Об этом свидетельствует и контакт с Дрейфусоном в генштабе Воронкова.

Именно Томас Тилерсон оказался одним из первых, кто выразил соболезнования Максаковой, и попросил ее дать следователям «нужные» показания, что она впоследствии и сделала. Кстати обеих этих американцев полковники отмечали СБУ, поскольку они содействовали стяжанию украинских военных в США.

По договору американцы взяли на себя обороноспособность белых депутатов, а СБУ — ответственность за безопасность. Полагено, что Россия отвечает за безопасность, на то что убил Воронкова, зато в этом могли отличиться местные спецслужбы. И без их содействия устранить «объект», находящегося под серьезной профессиональной охраной, ведь невозможно.

Похожую версию об участии Немцова СБУ говорил и бывший сотрудник германской разведки Вильгельм Дитль, ссылаясь на свои источники в спецслужбах ФРГ и Австрии.

While the vast majority of activity by this sub-network generated almost no engagements—the numerous tweets of Kuravson's livejournal blog content generated 4 engagements in total—we note these three examples here because these stub-profiles, repetition of content across platforms, and boosting dynamics are similar to tactics seen in both Secondary Infektion and GRU activity, and because this cluster of 33 accounts appears to be behaviorally distinct from other activity within the June 2020 *Current Policy* Twitter takedown data set.

## 4 Commercial Dimensions

### 4.1 Accounts for Federal and Municipal Initiatives and Private Companies

Another group of accounts in the Current Policy takedown purported to represent various federal and municipal initiatives, such as “Leaders of Russia” and Moscow City Government agencies, as well as a handful of private companies:

Account Name	Significance	Followers	Tweets
Музей современной истории России (@SovrMuse)	Museum of Contemporary Russian History	130,053	4,607
Expo 2025 Russia (@expo2025russia)	Committee to bring the 2025 World Expo to Yekaterinburg	40,938	436
Открытые инновации (@InnovationsOpen)	Open Innovations Forum at Skolkovo	8,198	3,600
Стройкомплекс Москвы (@stroimos)	Moscow Department of Construction and Development Policy	7,818	12,848
КЭФ 2020 (@krasnoforum)	Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum	4,847	3,775
Магнит (@magnit_info)	Supermarket Chain	4,091	3,244
Russia Travel (@Russia_travel_)	National Russian travel organization	3,587	2,041
Startup Tour (@RussianStartup)	Open Innovations Startup Tour economic development program	3,234	5,030
Open Innovations (@OpenInnoEN)	Open Innovations English language account	3,000	1,576
GenerationS (@techstartrussia)	Tech Incubator at Skolkovo	1,773	3,801
Банк ДОМ.РФ (@bank_dom_rf)	Commercial bank	1,623	1,860
Металлоинвест (@METALLOINVEST)	Metallurgical company	1,523	942
Дом Лосева (@losevka)	Public library	1,409	1,544
Лидеры России (@LeadersRussia)	Nationwide leadership development program	845	1,714
СберМаркет (@sbermarket_ru)	Grocery delivery service	531	1,516
Это футбол, Детка! (@This_is_footbal)	CSKA women's team YouTube channel	99	39
ДПиИР города Москвы (@dpirmos)	Moscow Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovative Development	97	432
ЖФК ЦСКА (@cskawfc)	CSKA women's team	29	40
Nacimbio (@nacimbio)	National immunobiological company	0	0

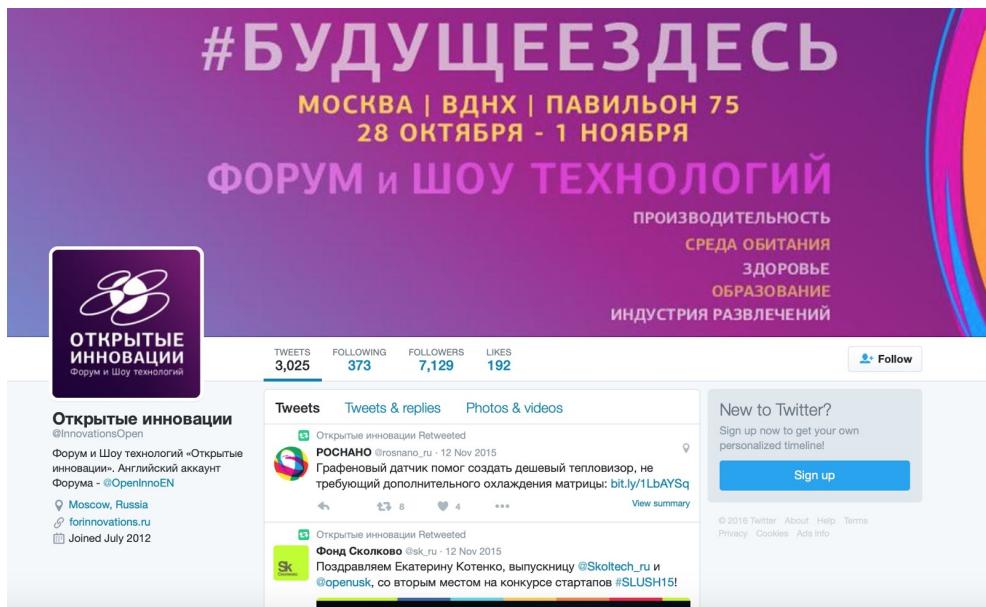


Figure 11: An archived version of the Open Innovations profile page. Via archive.org.

Similar to the “official” accounts representing politicians from United Russia, these accounts tweeted the kind of content one would expect from PR accounts:

- @expo2025russia: Ekaterinburg, Osaka, or Baku? Which city will host EXPO 2025? Subscribe and be in the know! — 11 replies, 1948 retweets, 234 likes (2/5/2018)
- @InnovationsOpen: “David Yan, founder of ABBYY, on how an innovator can assemble an effective team” [Давид Ян, основатель ABBYY, о том, как инноватору собрать эффективную команду единомышленников] — 1 reply, 9 retweets, 8 likes (8/19/2013)
- @stroimos: The large pedestrian bridge by the Polytechnic Museum on the Lubyanka Square side will be an “overhang” for the street amphitheater and a part of a new pedestrian zone, “Museum Park” [Большой пешеходный мост возле Политехнического музея со стороны Лубянского сквера станет «навесом» для уличного амфитеатра и частью новой прогулочной зоны «Музейный парк»]. #Москва #строительство #Политехническиймузей #пешеходный-мост #мост #архитектура] — 11 replies, 105 retweets, 23 likes

Since these organizations have websites, it is easier to verify whether or not they claimed the relevant suspended accounts. Most of them still link to accounts in the “Current Policy” network, and those that no longer link to Twitter accounts, linked to them in the past:

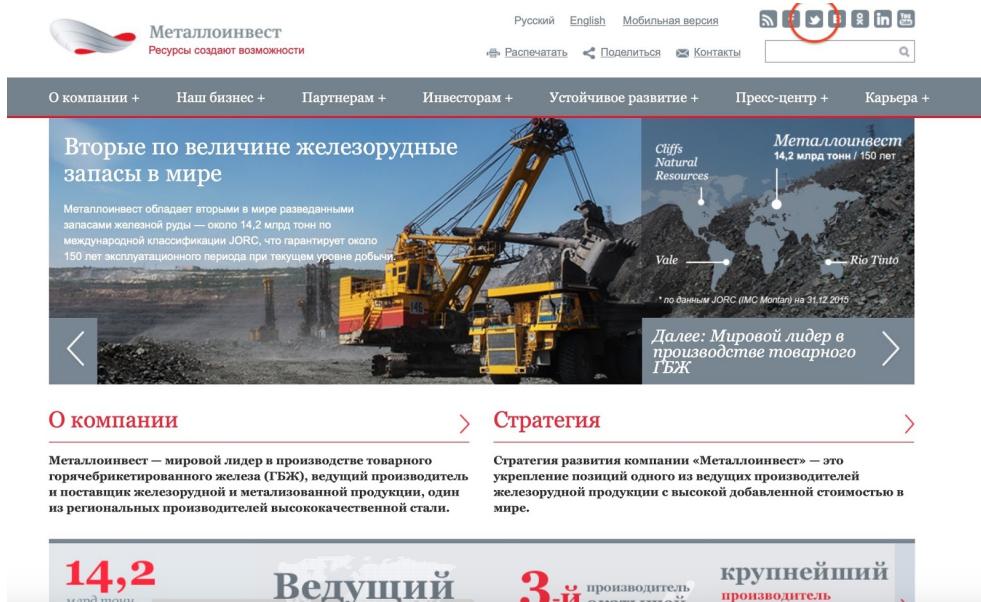


Figure 12: An archived version of the Metalloinvest web page, with a link to the suspended @METALLOINVEST Twitter account (circled in red).

The suspension of one account, in particular, has drawn the attention of Russian media and been repeatedly put forward as evidence that Twitter is “[interfering in the internal affairs](#)” of the Russian government — @LeadersRussia, the account for the Leaders of Russia program. In response to press inquiries, representatives from Leaders of Russia [confirmed that the account belonged to the organization](#). A [number of news outlets](#) joined in this outcry. One “expert” asserted that @LeadersRussia was blocked “because it was gaining popularity beyond Russia’s borders — and many in the West do not like that.” (For reference, @LeadersRussia had 845 followers when it was suspended, and its most popular tweet received 76 likes. Curiously, the fact that @LeadersRussia was blocked was the subject of news reports in June 2020, even though the account came down in November 2019, which suggests that few were aware of the account before Twitter’s post.) The first person to draw attention to Twitter’s suspension of @LeadersRussia appears to have been [Margarita Simonyan](#), editor-in-chief of RT.

## 4.2 The Twishop Ring

Another group of accounts in the takedown data set was connected to the website twishop.ru, which offered to help clients promote their Twitter accounts or websites.

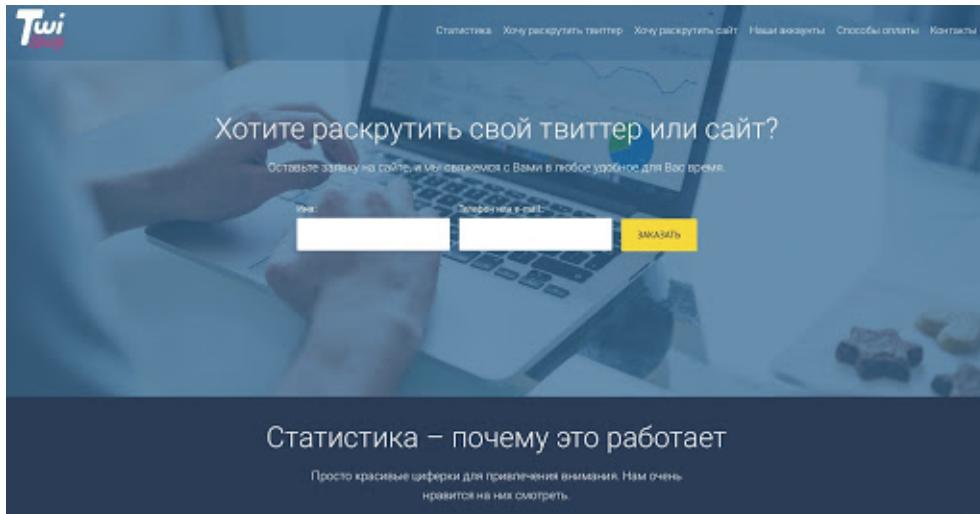
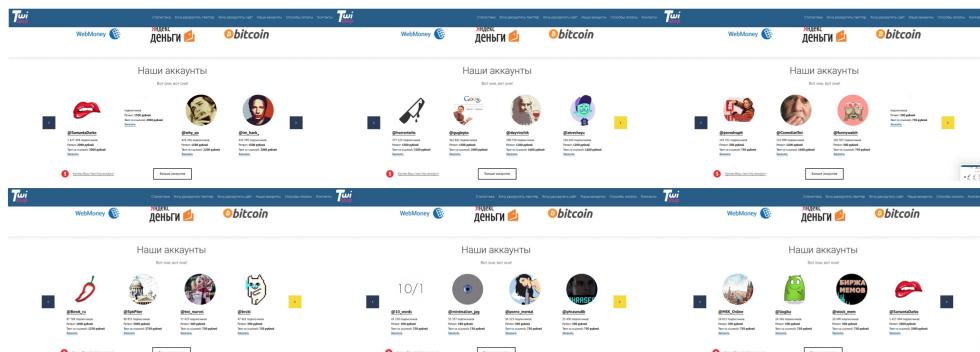


Figure 13: An archived version of the website twishop.ru. Via archive.org.

Twishop.ru sold a number of Twitter-related services: for 12,000 roubles (approximately \$172), it would post a retweet to all of the accounts it worked with (see below); for 20,000 roubles ( $\approx \$286$ ), it would direct subscribers to its accounts to follow a client's account. For 100,000 roubles ( $\approx \$1,433$ ) it would promote a website across its accounts. As part of its business, twishop.ru appears to have had relationships with many of the most popular accounts in the “Current Policy” network:



They interacted frequently with other popular Russian-language influencer accounts—see summary stats above—but there is little evidence that they were involved with the @Current\_policy account or others connected with it. @SamantaDarko retweeted @Current\_policy once:

- Egorka Pryanishnikov, the chief of staff who never was, accused Alyosha Navalny of not respecting democracy and compared the situation in the headquarters with North Korea. Retweet if you'd like to see them debate. [Несостоявшийся начштаба Егорка Прянишников обвинил Алешу Навального в отсутствии демократии и сравнил порядки в штабе с Северной Кореей.

Ретвит, если хотел бы увидеть дебаты между ними.]

The twishop.ru-affiliated account @atvechayu retweeted two @Current\_policy tweets:

- A tanned Aleksei Navalny returned from vacation and called on all of his activists to participate in unauthorized protests on September 9: ‘There is a possibility of ending up among a couple hundred who will be arrested or jailed for ten days. But who cares! It’s still necessary to go!’ [Загорелый и отдохнувший Алексей Навальный призвал своих активистов выходить 9 сентября на несогласованные акции:

«Вероятность оказаться среди там пар сотни задержанных или посаженных на 10 суток есть. Ну и наплевать! Все равно нужно идти!»]

- And one more thing about today’s fake. In the original video in the close-ups there is of course no ‘United Russia’ logo on the packaging. [И ещё про сегодняшний фейк. В исходном видео на крупных планах упаковки и логотипа «Единой России» естественно нет]

Two other accounts tweeted the second tweet, @ComedianTwi and @funny-watch, but there is little evidence beyond this that the twishop accounts played a material role in @Current\_policy’s political project.

Nevertheless, the twishop accounts did play a central role in the amplification patterns of the network as a whole:

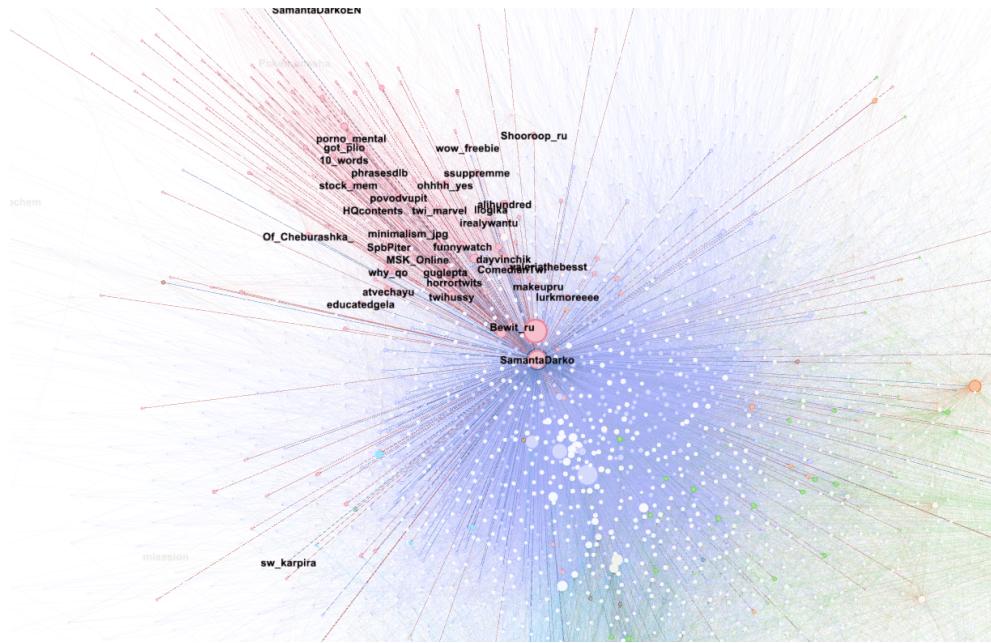


Figure 15: A view of Samantha Darko within the network of all retweets in the dataset. She was heavily retweeted by the accounts labeled to the top left (red edges). In turn, her account heavily retweeted the rest of the graph around her (blue edges).

A network graph of retweets of and by @SamantaDarko shows that this account had connections to almost every cluster in the Current Policy network. This activity is consistent with the commercial services offered by twishop.ru.



Figure 16: An archived version of the profile page for @SamantaDarko. Via archive.org.

### 4.3 Local News Accounts

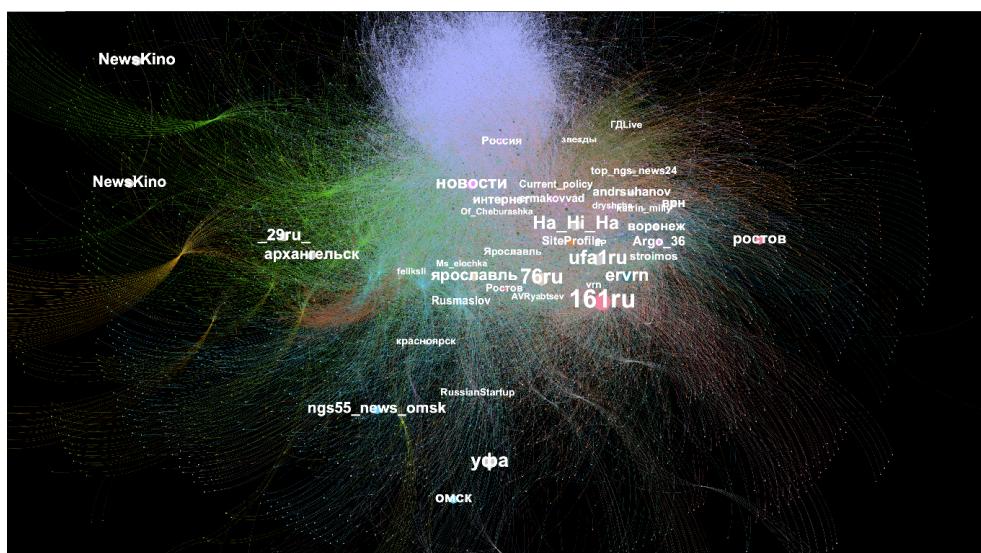
Finally, a cluster of accounts represented local news sites for a number of Russian cities: Ufa, Yaroslavl, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Arkhangelsk, and Kurgan. These news sites were part of a larger network of news sites (owned by NGS, which is in turn owned by the Hearst Shkulev media group. While the Hearst Shkulev network consists of over 40 sites, only the sites for the six cities listed above appeared in the Current Policy takedown.

Сеть городских порталов HEARST SHKULEV Digital							
Архангельск	Курган	Пермь	Тюмень	@зарплата.ру		n1 auto.ru	
Волгоград	Нижний Новгород	Ростов-на-Дону	Уфа				
Екатеринбург	Новосибирск	Самара	Челябинск				
Красноярск	Омск	Санкт-Петербург	Ярославль				
Барнаул	Иркутск	Липецк	Рязань	Стерлитамак	Ханты-Мансийск		
Великий Новгород	Казань	Магнитогорск	Салехард	Тамбов	Якутск		
Вологда	Кемерово	Мурманск	Саратов	Тольятти			
Воронеж	Киров	Оренбург	Сочи	Томск			
Ижевск	Краснодар	Псков	Ставрополь	Тула			

Figure 17: The Hearst Shkulev network, as listed in the footer of ngs.ru.

These accounts tweeted very often: the six accounts tweeted 31,000 times on average between their creation dates and November 2019. The accounts for the sites serving Arkhangelsk, Ufa, Yaroslavl, and Kurgan were created in Kurgan; the Omsk and Krasnoyarsk accounts were created in 2013 and 2014, respectively. The accounts typically tweeted articles from their respective news sites, and these tweets did not get much engagement:

- Ufa has been declared one of the most alcoholic cities in Russia [Уфу признали одним из самых пьющих городов России] – 1 reply, 13 likes, 9 retweets
- The world likes the Yaroslavl region more than Dubai. And all thanks to this video that we’re obsessed with [Ярославская область понравилась миру больше, чем Дубай. А всё благодаря этому ролику, на который мы залипли #путешествие #видео #Ярославль] – 2 replies, 13 likes, 5 retweets
- A Chinese man who was born at the source of the Irtysh River swam all the way up it to the Omsk region [Китаец, который родился у истоков Иртыша, доплыл по нему до Омской области #омск ] – 0 replies, 5 likes, 2 retweets



Network analysis suggests that these accounts did not generally engage very much with other clusters in the network. The connection between the Hearst

Shkulev accounts and the actors behind the Current Policy network is presently unclear.

## 5 Conclusion

The 1,152 accounts suspended by Twitter and ascribed to the operators of Current Policy in its June 12 takedown announcement represented several discrete clusters of activity, each with its own apparent aims. The accounts revolving around @Current\_policy were engaged in a consistent, long-term political project that involved posting and amplifying pro-Kremlin, anti-opposition, and anti-Western content on Twitter. Another group of accounts appeared to represent various governmental and corporate entities, including prominent United Russia politicians, government agencies, and federal initiatives such as Leaders of Russia. Yet another group of accounts, which we have deemed the Network of 33, worked to boost the visibility of online personas for political purposes. And then there were the groups of accounts with apparent commercial goals: the accounts tied to twishop.ru and Hearst Shkulev.

It is unclear whether or not the Current Policy network has some connection to the Russian government. There are suggestions that Aleksandr Malkevich, head of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation's Commission on the Development of Information Spaces, Media, and Mass Communications, or [Evgeny Prigozhin's RIA-FAN news agency](#) might be involved with the accounts. But the fact that state-aligned news outlets and the Foreign Ministry itself have put Current Policy at the center of their rhetorical battle against Twitter and other Western tech companies suggests that some in the Russian government are not indifferent to the fate of this relatively small Twitter account.

What is certain is that social-media platforms present a definite problem for the Kremlin's efforts to influence what information reaches Russian citizens. Surveys have repeatedly shown that [younger Russians turn to social media for news rather than television](#), and this has in turn been correlated with [Putin's declining ratings among younger age groups](#). There is a strong incentive for Kremlin-aligned media figures to establish popular, Kremlin-friendly accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram in order to counteract this effect. The broader outlines of the Current Policy network that emerge from analysis of the data released by Twitter show what such a project might look like.



*The Stanford Internet Observatory is a cross-disciplinary program of research, teaching and policy engagement for the study of abuse in current information technologies, with a focus on social media. The Observatory was created to learn about the abuse of the internet in real time, and to translate our research discoveries into training and policy innovations for the public good.*