

Who's bad? Attitudes to re-settlers from post-Soviet South vs. other nations in the Russian blogosphere

Today, content of social media may serve as a proxy for online public opinion, including public attitudes to immigrants in host societies. Russia of 2010s, being top2 world's immigrant attractor, has seen growing ethnic tensions to result into violent on-street conflicts and hostility towards *migranty* ('migrants') – a label attached to re-settlers from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Opinion polls and media content suggest that, of all ethnicities, *migranty* cause the biggest amount of ethnic-oriented public discussion and are perceived by Russian-speaking communities as the most dangerous and aggressive. We apply mixed-method text mining, regression analysis, and interpretative reading to a dataset of 363,000 *Livejournal* posts to map ethnic attitudes and compare those towards *migranty* to those to other nations most spoken about. Our results suggest that *migranty* neither provoke the biggest amount of discussion yielding to many other nations, nor experience the worst treatment by the Russian bloggers in which Americans take the lead. We also find that North Caucasians and Central Asians are treated very differently, thus making *migranty* more a media construct than a shared social imaginary.

Keywords: blogosphere; ethnic attitudes; migrants; Russia; topic modeling; big data

Introduction

Public discussions on immigrants have been proven to influence popular attitudes to immigration (Boomgaarden&Vliegenthart 2009), as well as to form negative stereotypes and prejudices (Allport 1954). The latter, in turn, are closely connected to on-the-ground inter-group conflict (LeVine&Campbell 1972). Those include hate crime and violence between migrant and ethnic groups (Hall 2013), although this connection is not absolute (Dancygier 2010). Thus, research on attitudes to migrants and ethnic minorities has been gaining growing attention of communication scholars and other social scientists. However, it has been traditionally done via polling (Ju et al 2016), qualitative field research, or media discourse analysis (King&Wood 2001; Geissler&Poettker 2009).

Social media analysis may broaden our knowledge about public attitudes, notably to ethnicity and migration, in a number of ways. First, user utterances are an example of bottom-up 'oral-written speech' (Lutovinova 2008) free from restrictions experienced by media texts and from pollster-generated agendas. User content thus presents a naturally emerging public opinion; simultaneously, in such countries as Russia it is also an embodiment of "alternative public sphere" (Kiriya 2012). Moreover, social media as large repositories of publicly uttered attitudes, by virtue of being public, may influence offline attitudes and behavior, which makes them an even more important object of study (Bagozzi et al 2007).

Second, since the early years of Internet research on migration, diasporas, ethnicity, and race (Nakamura 2002) till today (Santana 2015), the evidence has been growing that online communication reproduces, rather than smoothes offline power disparities. Reconstructing attitudes from large user post collections may help verify or question this evidence, but also reveal contexts of perceptions of various migrant groups, i.e. self-generated topics related to migration and ethnicity that never emerge from formalized and pre-determined structure of surveys and/or editorial agenda setting priorities. Studies of online public perceptions of migration and ethnicity based on big text collections are still rare (Pietraszewska 2013; Bodrunova et al. 2014; Bartlett&Norrie 2015). A certain number of works is dedicated to the analysis of online hate speech and cyber-bullying towards migrants (Ben-David&Matamoros-Fernández 2016), but neither of the fields allows for comparative analysis of ethnic attitudes in user-generated content.

This paper seeks to partly cover this gap by reconstructing the attitudes of the Russian-speaking online community to a range of ethnic groups labeled *migranty* ('migrants') in public discourse, as compared to other most widely discussed ethnicities. Despite being the second biggest world's attractor of immigrants (Trends 2013), Russia has so far been a rare case in English-language studies of attitudes towards migrants and ethnic minorities (Alexseev 2010; Foxall 2014; Gorodzeisky, Glikman, Maskileyson 2015; Bessudnov 2016; Herrera&Kraus 2016). The Russian word *migranty* used throughout this paper captures the phenomenon of perceived migrants – those who 'look like' newcomers (mostly from the post-Soviet South) independently of their real story of relocation. It is seldom used to mark Belarussians or Ukrainians, and, furthermore, it indicates that migration and ethnicity are inseparable in the Russian public discourse.

All these considerations lead us to formulate our research questions on migrants in their relation to other ethnicities: in user texts, are *migranty* discussed more than other ethnicities? Are they perceived worse than other groups, and in which aspects? Are they depicted stereotypically and/or with prejudice? In what contexts are they discussed? And are there notable differences in attitudes between various ethnicities within *migranty*?

To answer these questions, we adopt a post-Allport approach (Allport 1954) that links emergence of prejudice to underlying perceived threats (Stephan&Stephan 2000; D'Ancona 2015). Our starting assumption is

that *migranty* would be perceived as a threat due to their growing social visibility, and thus would be covered more intensely and negatively than other ethnicities, and also stereotypically and uniformly. Further, we distinguish between different types of threats. In literature on migration, they are usually divided into economic and cultural (D'Ancona 2015), or, in a more nuanced way, into realistic (connected to social and economic well-being) and symbolic (connected to values and beliefs) (Stephan&Stephan 2000). Building on this we also distinguish perceived political threats (connected to the position and security of one's ethnic group / nation among others at the international arena). Here, we not only deal with immigrant ethnicities available for face-to-face communication, but also compare them with external groups that reside in their nation-states and enter people's imagination predominantly through international news. Thus, we discern four major semantic contexts in which threats may be constructed by users: social, economic, cultural, and political. We expect political context to prevail in the coverage of external nations, while *migranty* would be de-politicized and 'socialized'.

Below, we discuss the relevant literature and briefly reconstruct the recent history of immigration to the European Russia and the discourses surrounding it, to formulate our hypotheses. To test them, we employ a mixed methodology applying big data methods, statistical analysis, and interpretative reading to a dataset of over 363,000 user posts from *Livejournal* blog platform published in February – May 2013. At that period, *Livejournal* was the leading online platform for political discussion in Russia.

Representations of migrants in old and new media: a literature review

Public discourse on migration and migrants has been long studied, originating in research on coverage of migrants in traditional media (Triandafyllidou 2013; Migration 2013), developing to online media (Miloni, Spyridou, Vadratsikas 2015) and finally user-generated content (Bartlett&Norrie 2015). The latter studies are still particularly scarce, but some valuable insights may be drawn from traditional media research. Most of it finds that the prevailing stance on migrants is negative. According to the Oxford Migration Observatory (Migration 2013) and Rasinger (2010), most often migrants are connected with illegality, (lack of) security, water metaphors (like inflow and influx), and sometimes economy-related concepts. Gemi and colleagues (2013) reveal that coverage of migrants, as European journalists state, is overwhelmingly political and negative, while a minority of non-political frames is positive and related to getting aid, integration and success; similarly, Foster and colleagues (2011) show a counter-discourse challenging negative stereotypes about Muslim and Arab immigrants in Australia. Summarizing these works, we can see that migrant-related connotations are easily grouped into four aforementioned contexts: political (merging with international relations), economic (e.g. costs vs. benefits for locals), social (e.g. crime and infections vs. integration and success), and cultural (e.g. disobedience to local traditions vs. multiculturalism). We also observe that media studies do not relate their findings to the respective types of threats developed in prejudice theories. Also, we have not found any media research trying to differentiate between ethnicity-based hostility and migrantophobia: in most cases, it is hard to say whether immigrants are treated negatively due to their ethnicity or newcomer status.

Research that links migrants to Internet is dominated by studies of e-diasporas, including migrants' online behavior, their use of online resources for their specific needs, online migrant communities, (re)constructing ethnic identities at a distance, and, generally, empowerment of minorities via Internet (Brinkerhoff 2009; Oiarzabal&Reips 2012). The literature on online ethnic, racial and religious minorities follows this agenda. Since we focus on representation of migrants and ethnicity by the dominant group of Russian-speaking users, we leave the important topic of e-diasporas outside this overview.

Another large stream of related literature discusses detection and countering online hate speech and cyber-bullying against migrant, ethnic and religious groups. Many of those studies develop methodological approaches to the problem (Hughey&Daniels 2013) and methods of automatic hate speech detection (for overview, see Agarwal&Sureka 2015), while others raise ethical questions (Cammaerts 2009; Douglas 2007). But even those who study hate groups or hate discourse in depth (Gemignani&Hernandez-Albujar 2015; Ben-David&Matamoros-Fernandez 2016) aim to find specifically negative content rather than to map the entire spectrum of attitudes towards many ethnicities. As an exception to this trend, Santana (2015) investigated online comments to the news on a stricter migration law in Arizona and found that nearly all were emotional, the majority supported the law, and uncivil comments were much more frequent among the law supporters. Latin American immigrants were described as cockroaches, scumbags, rats, bloodsucking leeches, dogs, to name a few metaphors. He concludes that incivility undermines democratic deliberation potential of Internet. Bartlett and Norrie (2015) who apply automatic methods to analyze British Twitter, though, come to very different conclusions. They find that the majority of tweets opposed stricter regulation of migration, were supportive of immigration and quite neutral in tone. Thus, attitudes to migrants expressed online may vary greatly depending on country or platform, while relevant research is still too scarce to detect universal trends.

Research on the Russian media is mostly in line with negative findings. The press portrays migrant communities as problem-related (Blokhin 2013) connecting them to crime, additional expenses for local population (Mal'kova 2006), and dangerous infections (Regamey 2011). Karpenko (2004) finds that Caucasians (*kavkaztsy*) are often portrayed as 'unwelcome guests' vs. 'hosts', while only rarely journalists find some excuses for immigration. Regamey (2011) also argues that, by 2010s, the images of *kavkaztsy* got replaced with those of unskilled foolish Central Asian workers with poor command of Russian, all of them termed Tajiks. Analyzing news bulletins on *Pervy Kanal* and *Rossiya 1* federal TV channels, Hutchings and Tolz (2015: 4, 46) come to a slightly differing conclusions: they reveal hushing-up of ethnic tensions, diversion of attention to other countries, avoiding ethnic topics in election periods, and 'media's embarrassment' in reporting ethnic crises when the Kremlin is facing controversies in its own nation-building policy. Salimovsky and Ermakova (2011) find hate expressions in online comments to Russian news, including direct appeals that representatives of certain ethnic, religious and social groups should be beaten, killed, hanged, shot, or their graves desecrated. Other Russian scholars argue that empowering via Internet is not working for ethnic migrants in Russia, while nationalist groups lead public discussions on migrant-related issues both online and offline (Verkhovsky 2011; Bodrunova et al. 2014). The origins of this situation partly originate in the recent past of Russia.

Migration and immigrants in late USSR and new Russia

Soviet and post-Soviet policy and discursive context

Russia's contemporary situation in the sphere of migration has been strongly influenced by the USSR's policies on migration and ethnicity and their subsequent semi-abolition. In the late Soviet time, the re-settlement regulation combined the 'iron curtain' policies with country-wide compulsory residence permit (*'propiska'*), which created the well-known difficulties in individual and group resettlement within the USSR. Additionally, 'national-territorial delimitation' policy provided each officially recognized ethnic group its territory but significantly limited relocation outside it. All this contributed to higher levels of ethnic homogeneity within regions. Today, importance of visual attributes of ethnicity in the discourse on migration stems from it, as well as from the highly primordialist Soviet policy on ethnicity ('nationality'). The Soviet elites had to grant some rights

to multiple ethnic groups while preventing them from acquiring true political independence or impact. Therefore, they actively institutionalized 'nationhood' and 'nationality' as 'fundamental social categories sharply distinct from statehood and citizenship' (Brubaker 1994: 49). At the same time, they promoted the umbrella concept of 'the Soviet people' as the equivalent of political nation designed to cement the heterogeneous society.

With the fall of the USSR, most of these policies collapsed. Although access to most public goods is still connected to *propiska*, the latter no longer controls flows of rural-urban and/or westward migration within Russia. Furthermore, Russia has visa-free regimes with most post-Soviet countries. As a result, for the last 25 years Russia has accepted the second biggest immigrant population after the US (Trends 2013), ex-Soviet countries being its main donors (Rosstat 2016). To be fair, the share of immigrant population (7.7%; Trends 2013) and the intensity of internal migration (6-10%; Esipova, Pugliese, Ray 2013) have been moderate compared to other countries. Thus, Russia ranks only 55th worldwide as for the share of migrants in the population (Popescu 2012). However, migrants became very visible against nearly absent ethnic migration of the Soviet times. That is why mostly cultural, not economic threats, have been reported as factors of hostility. The most important among them are on-street visibility based on phenotypical and behavioral differences, low command of Russian and religious differences, (Regamey 2011: 224; Bessudnov 2016).

In the USSR, external ethnicities with their own statehood were easily politicized in the Soviet public discourse by being described as either political enemies or friends, while internal ethnicities, deprived of any political component, were 'ritualized' and 'culturalized'. Though this 'politicized' vs. 'ritualized' division is still inherent to perception of ethnicity in the trivial public mind (Krejčí&Velimsky 1981; Eriksen 1993), it is still unclear whether it persists in Russian public mind and whether it feeds the respective perceived threats – political or cultural.

Attitudes to migrants: Russia as a case

Research on attitudes to migrants has been gaining importance globally (for overview of cross-country comparative studies, see Ceobanu&Escandell 2010), but also particularly in Europe where the number of immigrants has been growing together with the feeling of threat (Sari 2007), both economic and cultural (D'Ancona 2015). Compared to other societies, Russia is not the most intolerant to migrants (Mayda 2006); however, as in many European countries, the trend has been negative. According to World Values Survey, from 1995 to 2011, in Russia the proportion of people not willing to have migrants as neighbors tripled (from 11% to 32%, WVS 2016). National pollsters report a 15%-growth of negative attitudes to migrants between 2006 and 2012, while the proportion of those favoring stricter immigration laws is reported to have grown by 13% in nine years (VCIOM 2013). Although by 2012 fewer respondents claimed they felt hostility to people of any other ethnicity (19% against 34% in 2002), about 60% throughout the entire decade kept thinking that inflow of some ethnic groups to the respondents' regions were to be restricted (FOMnibus 2012).

The major change in attitudes seems to have happened around 2006; that year, a violent conflict between migrants and locals in the town of Kondopoga gained all-Russian resonance (Foxall 2014), giving a start to recurring similar conflicts in other places, including Moscow (Bodrunova et al. 2014). EAs some xpersts note, recent grassroots nationalism is additionally supported on the state level forming 'state/elite xenophobia' (Shlapentokh 2007; Regamey 2011). In popular mind, migrants have often been associated with 'stealing' jobs from locals (economic threat), disrespect to local traditions (cultural threat), crime and infections (social threat), while virtually the only positive effect – mentioned by a visibly smaller proportion of people – has been

migrants' readiness to fulfill unattractive work for low payment (FOM 2014; Pokida&Zybunovskaya 2013). We seek to see if these connotations are reproduced in the blogosphere.

According to the existing research, perceptions of migrants vary based on the ethnicity of the assessed migrant group (Weber 2015; Bessudnov 2016); Pokida and Zybunovskaya (2013) show that the most negative attitudes are expressed to migrants from both in-Russian and foreign Caucasus, and Central and South-East Asia, while migrants from Ukraine-Belarus-Moldova triangle, Europe and other parts of Russia are mostly perceived neutrally. The only welcome group are migrants from the respondents' own provinces. Bessudnov (2016) who uses 2011 data by Public Opinion Foundation (FOM) draws a less nuanced but virtually identical picture. When an open question is asked, all the top 'hated' ethnic groups mentioned by respondents, except Chinese, happen to be either from the Caucasus or Central Asia (FOMnibus 2012). Given that Chinese and other East-Asian migrants mostly settle east to the Urals, and most blogs are produced in the European part of Russia where East-Asians are not widely mentioned, we dare leave out Chinese and define the group of *migranty* as follows:

- 1) Central Asians, or *aziaty* (Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyzs, Turkmen – but not Kazakhs as 'a different scenario' (IRIN 2004));
- 2) North Caucasians – Dagestani, Chechens, Ingushi, Ossetians, and the pejorative *kavkaztsy* (Caucasians);
- 3) South Caucasians – Azerbaijani (*azery*), Armenians, Georgians, and the pejorative *kavkaztsy*.

Research hypotheses

We assume that the ethnic groups with whom locals, including bloggers, engage into direct interaction, will attract more attention than distant ethnic groups. It should be especially true given that this interaction is problematic, which follows from negative media representation of *migranty*.

H1. In Russian-speaking *Livejournal*, the biggest volume of ethnic-oriented discussion is dedicated to *migranty*, especially to North Caucasian and Central Asian ethnicities.

Similarly, we assume that *migranty* will be portrayed in the most negative way. In measuring negativity we rely on our earlier work on discursive intolerance (Koltsova&Taratuta 2003) which we view as ranging from polarized hierarchical division (construction of 'superior us' vs. 'inferior them') to direct calls for violence. To operationalize negative portrayal, we suggest six indicators that capture presence of: general negative vs. positive attitude to a group / its representative, statements of a group's superiority vs. inferiority, victimization of a group vs. its 'aggressorization', solidarization vs. alienation, group's perceived peril, and call for violence against a group or its representative.

Further, we use indirect markers of discursive discrimination borrowing them from the theory of discriminative minority coverage. Thus, Van Dijk (1988) who focuses on race, ethnic and migrant groups coverage in news, summarizes typical discursive strategies of discrimination, including: us-them opposition, generalization, and selective quotation ('we' are given voice, while 'they' are given coverage). Bell (1998) emphasizes importance of characters' actions for understanding news structures, while Koltsova (2011), building upon both theories, suggests that the proportion of cases in which characters of a certain group are denied speech or action can indicate the degree to which this group is discriminated. Developing such indicators of discrimination as speech and action, we suggest to differentiate, first, between direct, indirect and no speech, as

well as between individual action, aggregated action and no action, since aggregated action is a type of overstatement leading to (negative) stereotyping.

H2. Migrant are under-represented in terms of speech and action. They are represented by indirect speech and aggregated action, rather than by direct speech and action of individuals. *Migrant* receive the most negative coverage of all ethnic groups and are portrayed as the most alien and aggressive.

Given the types of perceived threats and the typical contexts of coverage of migrants discussed above, we think that purely political coverage would be more typical of distant ethnic groups associated with their countries in posts on international relations, while *migrant*, who engage in direct relations with the locals, will be discussed on a more personal level and thus employ contexts other than politics.

H3. Discussions on *migrant*-related topics go within socio-economic and cultural contexts. Discussions would link *migrant* to public spaces (markets, customs, construction areas), social problems (diseases, crime), and cultural practices (celebrations, religious feasts) and not to political issues.

As we stated above, there is mixed evidence whether *migrant* in Russia are perceived as a unified group or as a constellation of ethnicities provoking different attitudes; but the level of negativity towards some of them in polls does not vary much.

H4. Migrant provoke similar attitudes by bloggers.

Method

Finding ethnicity-related posts

To compare attitudes of bloggers to *migrant* with those to other ethnic groups, we needed to form a sample of posts on ethnicity that would be in some sense representative of the blogosphere or at least of *Livejournal* and would include all ethnic issues that were indeed covered by bloggers. Finding texts on ethnicity among multiple user posts is much harder than on such well-defined issues as brands or personalities, as it is harder to express through a set of keywords due to high lexical variability of this topic.

Topic modeling is a group of mathematical algorithms that aims at addressing such tasks: it automatically mines topics in large text collections analyzing word co-occurrence in individual texts, without demanding any keywords or other prior knowledge from researchers. In the output, researchers get lists of so-called 'top-words' and most probable texts for each topic. We have given the detailed description of topic modeling and its limitations elsewhere (authors1 2013; authors2 2013). Here, we briefly note that we use latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) algorithm with Gibbs sampling (Griffiths&Steyvers 2004) (authors' C++ implementation). To fight the algorithm's instability, we performed five runs with 400 topics each. For each topic of the first run, we found its closest equivalent in other four runs using Kullback-Leibler and Jaccard similarity metrics. Topics that matched with the value exceeding a certain threshold were considered identical and were grouped into 'bunches' used for further manual interpretation. Topics that repeated multiple times were given preference as more stable and thus more reliably representing the 'really existing' discourse.

Sampling and processing of the datasets

Our dataset consists of all the posts by 2,000 top bloggers ranked by the Russian *Livejournal*'s blogger rating and posted within 11 weeks (February 4 to May 19, 2013). This period was selected as it did not contain large-scale political or ethnic-colored events that might have distorted the results. Top *Livejournal* bloggers were selected as 'influencers' who, in earlier research, had been proved to produce meaningful and politically relevant discussion (Etling et al. 2010; Koltsova&Koltcov 2013), in contrast to users of more trivial social networking sites.

The sample included 363,579 posts. From our earlier research we know that smaller collections (e.g. 25,000) are not sufficient for mining ethnic discourse as a relatively rare discussion phenomenon, while larger ones (e.g. 1,000,000) are hardly feasible. After cleaning, lemmatization and stop-words deletion the corpus contained 1,072,283 unique words and 103,933,786 instances.

From five 400-topic runs we obtained 2,000 topics that produced 952 'bunches', 1 to 5 topics in each. Of them, 137 (14,4%) were ethnic-related. These were defined by finding ethnonyms among the top-words with probability of $\geq 0,002$. The list of ethnonyms was formed from the Russian census, UN and other official data and supplemented by para-ethnonyms (e.g. *Cossacks*, *Asians*) and ethnic pejoratives (ethnophaulisms). The list did not differentiate between stateless ethnic groups, nations and nominations by country (i.e. *Gypsies*, *Italians* and *Egyptians* were all included). The 137 relevant 'bunches' accumulated 341 topics (17% of 2,000 topics in five runs). This exceeds the levels that we had reported earlier on different datasets with 100-topic runs: 11-12% (authors1 2013) and 8,5-9% (authors2 2013) – and confirms our assumption that ethnic discourse should be mined at the level of ≥ 400 topics. After manual inspection of ethnicity-related bunches we found out that some topics within them were not quite identical (e.g. a French-related bunch contained two topics on French cuisine and three topics on Gerard Depardieu moving to Russia). We divided some bunches into sub-bunches, thus obtaining 154 units.

Of those 154, we selected 33 most stable ones and performed manual coding of 30 posts in each documenting topic/post metadata (ten variables), topics (three variables per topic), posts (five variables per post), and all ethnonyms in the posts (twelve variables per ethnonym). As a result, we received codings for 990 posts and 1872 occurrences of 264 ethnonyms in them; after grouping ethnonyms for statistical analysis, we received 126 ethnic groups coded. Then, we filtered out the posts with no ethnic characters and non-interpretable codings (when an ethnicity was just mentioned but could not be coded substantially); the final dataset contained 492 posts with 1119 ethnonym coding entries.

Thus, we received the following datasets:

Dataset1 ('full download') – 363,579 posts, 1,072,283 stems, 952 bunches, 137 ethnic-related bunches, 154 single ethnic-related topics;

Dataset2 ('ethnicity-related sample') – 990 most relevant posts in 33 most stable ethnicity-related topics, 264 found ethnonyms, 126 grouped ethnonyms, 1872 ethnonym mentionings;

Dataset3 ('ethnonym-containing subsample') – 492 posts with coded ethnonyms, 1119 interpretable coding entries for 101 ethnonyms (25 ethnicities of Dataset2 were those just mentioned).

To interpret the datasets, we used a range of methods, from word frequency analysis to binomial logistic regressions. For regressions based on Dataset3 where dependent variables were binary (e.g. Caucasian / not Caucasian), individual ethnicities were grouped due to scarcity of data resulting in the following aggregated groups: *migranty*, Europeans, Americans, Jews, Central Asians, other Asians, North Caucasians, other CIS,

indigenous Russian, Ancient, and other (not all of them shown further in Tables). South Caucasians were too few to form a separate group, but they were included into *migranty* together with Central Asians and North Caucasians. The results are presented below.

Results

H1: Volume of attention

We have looked at four metrics to judge whether *migranty* dominate the blog discourse: 1) absolute frequencies of ethnonym use, Dataset1; 2) number of mentionings in coding, Dataset2; 3) number of the topics in which they form top-words, Dataset2; 4) number of topics in which they are dominant ethnicities, Dataset2 (see Table 1 for *migranty* and some grouped ethnicities; data on individual ethnicities are available on request).

The results show that H1 should be rejected. Americans, Germans, and Jews are mentioned more often than any other nation in the entire collection. By top-words, continental Europeans, indigenous peoples¹, Britons, and Americans lead, while North Caucasians, South Caucasians and Central Asians are mentioned much less than West or CEE Europeans, a bit less than Britons or Americans, and comparable to Germans, Jews, East Asians, Cossacks, or Tatars. When *migranty* are mentioned in the ethnicity-related posts, they are also non-salient in absolute numbers, being mentioned in 161 cases out of 1872 (8,6% of Dataset2), while Euro-Atlantic, post-Soviet, and Middle East nations dominate (see Pic. 1).

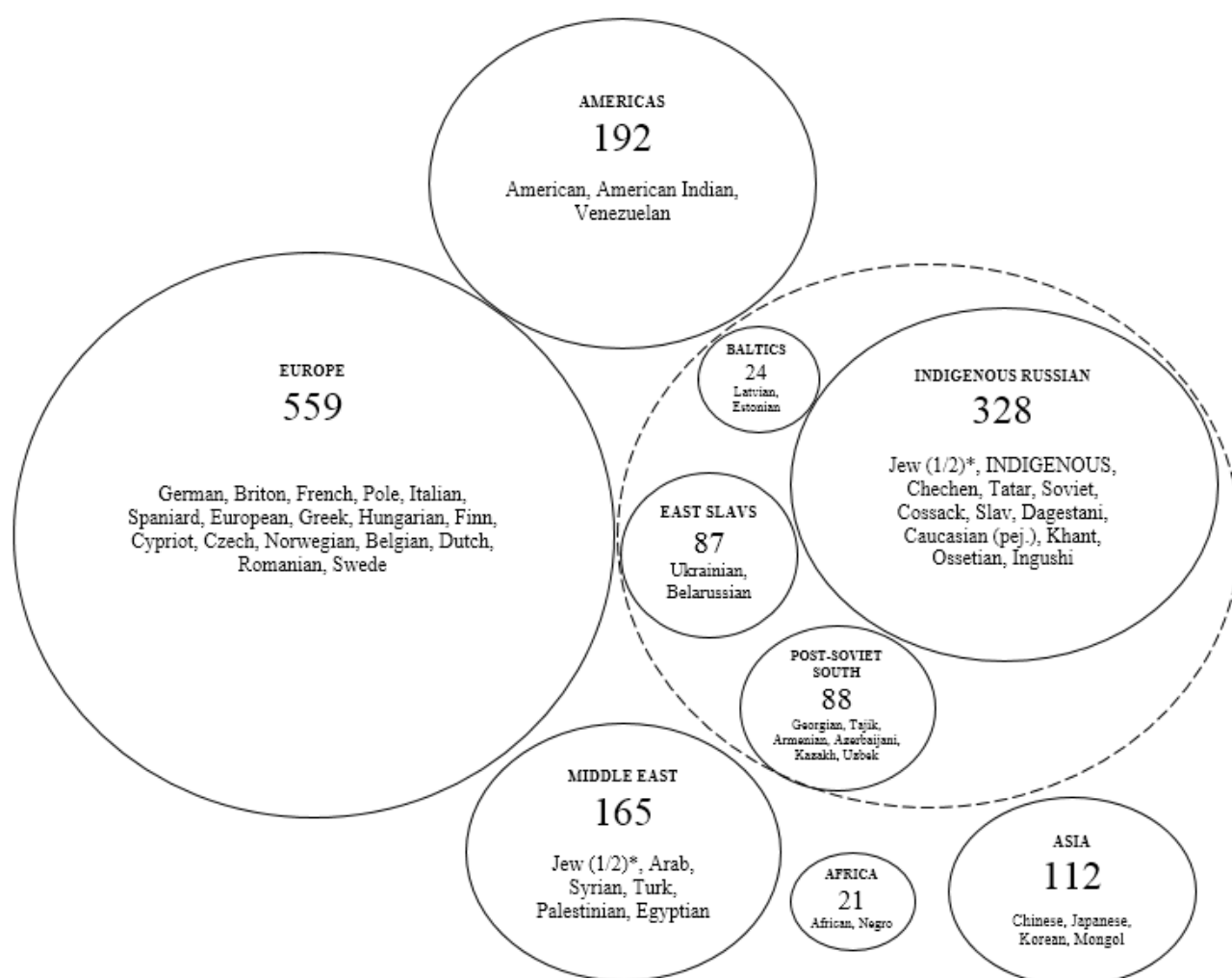
However, there are two considerations worth addressing.

First, to assess the real salience of *migranty* in the blogs, it may be more informative to look at relative frequencies of use of ethnonyms in Dataset1 compared to those in colloquial speech. The results of the comparison with the colloquial-speech section of the National corpus of the Russian language (Lyashevskaya&Sharov 2009) provide less support for dominance of Euro-Atlantism, and the evidence for 'post-Soviet South' nations is mixed: South Caucasus nations are discussed notably *below* average (Armenians 0,96, Azerbaijani 0,95, Georgians 0,88), while North Caucasians and Central Asians – much *above* average (Tajiks 4,95, 'Caucasians' 2,21, Uzbeks 2,18, Chechens 1,34). Eight of top12 ethnicities discussed two to five times above average are 'border' ethnicities for Russians: Tajik, Ukrainian, Estonian, Chinese, Belarussian, Caucasian, Uzbek, and Finn.

Second, if North Caucasians and Central Asians are discussed much above average, why don't they form multiple salient topics? The point is that some ethnicities tend to appear in many topics without being their core content; rather, they are dragged into discussion as 'context'. We therefore have also looked at the ratio of core/contextual use of ethnonyms (see Table 1, Contextuality index).

Pic. 1. Geographical distribution of the ethnicities (with N of mentionings ≥ 8) discussed within Dataset2

¹ This group does not include North Caucasians, despite their location.



Note. ¹For 'Jew', the number of mentionings was divided in two, as this ethnicity was located approximately 50/50 in Russia and Middle East in the bloggers' posts.

Table 1. Visibility of ethnicities / ethnic groups in the datasets (*migranty* ethnicities vs. the most discussed ethnicities)

	Number of mentionings, Dataset2	Number of interpretable codings, Dataset2	K = number of topics with the ethnicity / ethnic group in top-words, Dataset1	K _f = number of topics focused upon the ethnicity / ethnic group, Dataset2	K _c = number of topics contextual for the ethnicity / ethnic group, Dataset2	Contextuality index (K _c /K, %)
North Caucasian	73	43	12	6	6	50
South Caucasian	53	14	10	9	1	10
Central Asian	36	24	8	2	6	75
American	159	125	15	8	7	47
German	149	96	11	8	3	27
Jew	116	79	9	5	4	44

Our analysis shows that all ethnicities clearly split into two groups: those with their own agendas and 'contextual' nations. For example, South Americans are always the focus of the topic; East Slavic, Tatar, Arabs, Turks, and Germans seem to have agendas centered around them, as well as South Caucasians. In sharp contrast to this, North Caucasians and Central Asians (similar to Britons, Americans, Jews, and East Asians) are dragged into the topics not directly related to them.

H2: Speech, action and negativity

Direct/indirect representation was assessed via variables 'Speech' and 'Action'. Absolute frequencies give the impression of *migranty* being well represented both with speech and action, albeit not always direct / individual.

A more nuanced picture is provided by binomial logistic regressions run on Dataset3 (see Table 2). We have contrasted the most discussed ethnic groups – Americans, Europeans, and Jews – to *migranty* on the whole, as well as to North Caucasians and Central Asians taken separately.

Table 2. The results of binomial logistic regressions for the variables 'Speech' and 'Action'

	No speech	Direct	Indirect	No action	Real action	Aggregated action
<i>Migranty</i>	-0,181	1,009**	-0,410	0,402	-0,300	0,007
North Caucasians	-0,146	1,106*	-0,658	-0,182	-0,057	0,196
Central Asians	-0,092	0,940	-0,583	1,051*	-0,772	-0,178
Jews	-0,407	0,013	0,504	0,341	-0,584*	0,361
Europeans	0,159	0,593	0,025	-0,226	0,257*	-0,131
Americans	-0,575**	0,298	0,609*	-1,607***	0,407*	0,322

Note. * - $p \leq 0,05$; ** - $0,05 < p \leq 0,001$; *** - $p < 0,001$.

Americans are the only group whose probability of not being speechless is statistically significant, but their speech tends to be indirect. North Caucasians and *migranty* may be equally speechless or speaking, but when they speak they are given direct voice. Americans are also the only group whose probability of not being deprived of action is statistically significant. Together with Europeans, they are granted coverage of their real actions, while Central Asians are clearly described as a non-acting group. Thus, we can see H2 to be partly proven for action and wrong for speech.

Positive/negative coverage. As stated above, treatment of the ethnicities by bloggers was coded with six 'interpretative' variables:

- Attitude ('negative/neutral/ambivalent/positive');
- Superiority ('superior/ambivalent/neutral/inferior');
- Aggression ('aggressor/ambivalent/neutral/victim');
- Solidarization ('non-stranger/neutral/alien-positive/alien-ambivalent/alien-negative');
- Menace ('dangerous'/'non-dangerous');
- Call for violence against an ethnic actor ('yes/no').

To test the aforementioned, we have conducted logistic binomial regressions for Dataset3 on these variables (see Tables 3a, b). We see that all *migranty* are covered negatively; especially North Caucasians who are, indeed, covered more negatively than Americans, Central Asians, and *migranty*. However, neither Americans nor Europeans are covered positively; American, North Caucasians and Europeans are never described as victims but often as aggressors. Also, North Caucasians and *migranty* are described as inferior.

The variable 'Solidarity' demonstrates significant divergence among *migranty*. Central Asians are described as alien but in positive terms, North Caucasians are definitely alien in negative terms; also, Americans are negatively alienated. Europeans, though, are neither close nor alien; the bloggers do not discuss them in solidarity/alienation terms. As to 'Danger', only Americans are perceived as definitely dangerous; Jews may be described as 'never dangerous', which is perhaps explained by the fact that many Russian-speaking Jewish authors of *Livejournal* write on themselves.

Table 3. The results of binomial logistic regressions:

a) for the variables 'Attitude', 'Aggression', and 'Superiority'

	Positive	Negative	Victim	Aggressor	Inferior	Superior
<i>Migranty</i>	-0,138	1,188***	0,010	0,259	0,825**	-0,563
North Caucasians	-0,087	1,421***	0,237	0,956***	0,805*	-0,230
Central Asians	-0,198	1,287**	-0,208	-0,357	0,852 (sig. 0,073)	-18,595
Jews	0,236	-0,050	0,381	-0,258	0,225	-0,066
Europeans	-0,541**	-0,123	-0,222	0,452***	-0,847***	0,015
Americans	-2,399***	1,061***	-1,793***	0,866***	0,281	0,087

Note. * - $p \leq 0,05$; ** - $0,05 < p \leq 0,001$; *** - $p < 0,001$.

b) for the variables 'Solidarity' and 'Danger'

	Close	Alien positive	Alien negative	Alien (aggreg.)	Dangerous
<i>Migranty</i>	0,414	0,933*	1,049***	1,177***	0,096
North Caucasians	-1,366	0,104	1,408***	1,261***	0,466
Central Asians	0,993 (sig. 0,075)	1,765**	0,407	0,793 (sig. 0,067)	0,024
Jews	0,673	0,984*	0,053	0,391	-0,662*
Europeans	-0,783**	-1,140*	-0,512*	-0,762***	0,208
Americans	-18,668	-17,950	0,712**	0,542*	0,723***

Note. * - $p \leq 0,05$; ** - $0,05 < p \leq 0,001$; *** - $p < 0,001$.

Variable correlations. The Attitude correlates significantly with other 'interpretative' variables but with varying strength. It correlates with Menace (Cramer's V 0,399), Solidarization (0,376), and Aggression (0,306). Thus, alienation and aggression are important for interpretation of how negative attitudes towards an ethnicity may be constructed. Counter-intuitively, Superiority, Speech, Action, and Call for violence do not help in deconstructing Attitude, as Cramer's V is 0,184, 0,168, 0,132, and 0,116, respectively.

H2 proves partly true. *Migranty*, indeed, are covered negatively; North Caucasians ('Caucasians', Dagestani and Chechens, as seen from absolute numbers) are the most negatively perceived groups described as the most aggressive, alien, and also inferior and active, thus having a 'barbarian' image. Central Asians, on the contrary, are represented in a mixed way: treated negatively but as non-active and not much alienated. But it is not *migranty* who get the worst overall coverage: Americans are unambiguously negative, aggressive, negatively alien and dangerous. Europeans are also treated as disliked and aggressive, while Jews are non-dangerous and perceived positively, even if alien. Thus, the relation between an ethnic group's menace and the migrant status of this group is questionable: in fact, some external nations may appear equally menacing.

H3. Context of discussion

We have created the 'Context' variable that coded posts (not ethnicities) as 'political/economic/social/cultural/mixed/other/non-definable'.

In absolute figures, political context dominates the coverage of every aggregated ethnic group, except Central Asians (see Table 4). Cultural context is the second popular but very unevenly spread among ethnicities. Economic context is nearly absent. Central Asians, besides having the lowest share of political texts (more than twice lower than the closest competitor), so far exceed other groups by the share of social posts. This feature gets strong support in the regression results (see Table 5). North Caucasians are behind external nations in the share of political posts, albeit ahead of all the others, and they possess the second largest share of social posts, which is also seen from the regression: they are not unlikely to be politicized and their belonging to social context is weaker than that of Central Asians. When both are grouped into *migranty* and united with South Caucasians,

social context wins. The most politicized are Europeans (62% of posts) and Americans (64% of posts, their politicization being marginally insignificant). Cultural context is reserved for ancient and indigenous Russian ethnicities, while Europeans and Jews are not unlikely to be covered in the cultural context either.

Table 4. Context of discussion of ethnic groups, in % of codings, and context ratios

	Political context	Socio-economic context ¹	Cultural context	Social to political context ratio	Cultural to political context ratio
<i>Migranty</i>	42,9	35,7	11,2	0,83	0,26
North Caucasian	54,5	29,1	7,3	0,53	0,13
South Caucasian	52,9	5,9	35,3	0,11	0,67
Central Asian	11,5	69,2	3,8	6,00	0,33
American	64,0	20,0	7,2	0,31	0,11
European	62,1	6,3	21,3	0,10	0,34
Jew	50,6	10,1	20,3	0,20	0,40
Indigenous Russian	33,8	12,7	45,1	0,38	1,33
CIS nationalities	63,9	11,5	9,8	0,18	0,15
East Asian	65,6	3,3	19,7	0,05	0,30
Ancient	26,4	0,0	66,0	0,00	2,50
Other	61,8	5,7	26,8	0,09	0,43

Note. ¹The figures for economic and social contexts were grouped, as figures for economic context were low and the contexts merged in qualitative reading of blog posts.

Table 5. The results of binomial logistic regressions for the variable 'Context'

	Political	Economic	Social	Cultural
<i>Migranty</i>	-0,606**	-0,662	2,040***	-0,888*
North Caucasians	-0,086	-0,034	1,463***	-1,349*
Central Asians	-2,345***	-17,270	3,323***	-2,003*
Jews	-0,257	-0,425	-0,010	-0,139
Europeans	0,359**	1,728***	-1,777***	-0,108
Americans	<i>0,349 (sig. 0,076)</i>	-0,181	0,988***	-1,423***

Note. * - $p \leq 0,05$; ** - $0,05 < p \leq 0,001$; *** - $p < 0,001$.

Variable correlations. Context is significantly, but not very strongly, related to the general attitude: social context takes the lead in negativity, followed by political context, while the cultural is the least negative. This means that Americans get negatively politicized, Europeans are politicized ambivalently, and negativity towards Central Asians and North Caucasians is related to social problems (this relation being stronger for Central Asians).

In general, association of a certain context with ethnicity is significant but modest (Cramer's V 0,161 to 0,334) which means that contexts within the coverage of each ethnicity do mix, albeit in different proportions. To illustrate this, we qualitatively describe a few topics devoted to Central Asians and North Caucasians.

In Topic 1-216 where 'migrant' is the top1 word, Central Asians are discussed within the issue of 'visas for compatriots'. A new version of the law 'On citizenship' of 2013 adopted an even easier entrance regime for Central Asians, have these claimed their 'compatriotism'. The topic discusses the reaction by non-systemic opposition (both liberal and nationalist); migrants are described in aggregated terms, a wide range of abstract social unease being attributed to them. Economic issues include damping on workforce market, economic barriers between local population and migrant diasporas, capital outflows from Russia to Central Asia, and additional burdens to Russian healthcare and education. Social issues include growth of crime because of the migrants' slavery-like working conditions, language and religious gaps, threats of radical islamization,

corruption in social services where low-profile jobs are occupied by migrants, heroin traffic, and diseases. The only event-based issue was violent killing of 8-year-old Vasilisa Golitzyna by an Uzbek but in most cases it was generalized to 'violence by migrants against our kids'.

All these socio-economic troubles have political implications: 'Uncontrolled migration undermines Russia's attempts of integration with Europe. European authorities apprehend an inflow of migrants to the EU territory and therefore block introduction of visa-free regime with Russia <...> Thus, European orientation of our country is put under question' (Petition by Coordination Council of Opposition). The topic also shows that the ruling elite is not monolith: State Duma and Federal Migration Office promoted the law but mayors of Moscow and St.Petersburg demanded introduction of foreign passports for Central Asian migrants.

Among North Caucasians, Chechens are mentioned most often. E.g., they are discussed in the same Topic 1-216 (quite torn into two separate ones because of that), but the discussion is centered around Gerard Depardieu's 'migration' to Russia and receiving a gift apartment from Ramzan Kadyrov, president of Chechnya. Topic 4-069 ('Islam-centered') depicts Chechens as radical Islamists and instigators of a religious war in Russia. In other topics, including the one on the Boston marathon, Chechens are mostly depicted as 'Chechen terrorists' – except for one text on how well Chechens and Ingushi served in Red Army and one text that described how Chechen refugees suffered from hostility in... Poland, while in texts on Russia there was no sign of moral support to the refugees or after-war re-settlers.

As to Dagestani, Topic 1-041 is dedicated to confrontation between them and Russians in the Russian North Caucasus. Cases of working slavery and kidnapping organized by Dagestani, scuffles of Dagestani youngsters with Russians, and domestic corruption are depicted. Dagestani and Ingushi are described as impudent, over-free, uncultivated, and mean – 'puppies biting the mother' Russia while 'winning dry' and enjoying privileged treatment by local authorities. Only two of 30 texts argued that Dagestani women were industrious and responsive, and Dagestani volunteers were working hard to save slaves. In this topic, Central Asians were juxtaposed to North Caucasians as more 'livable with'.

H3 is, in overall, confirmed. Cultural context, most prone to positive connotations, is manifestly absent from the coverage of *migranty*, while social context, indeed, dominates. At the same time, qualitative analysis shows that social problems are closely related to political issues, albeit other than those typical for international relations reserved for external nations.

H4. Uniformity of attitudes towards migranty

What *migranty* have in common is their exclusion from economic and cultural context of discussion, negative perception, and alienation. Despite that, there are clear divisions in how Caucasians and Central Asians are depicted by the bloggers. As we saw before, Central Asians are 'contextual', non-acting, and largely depoliticized. They are not treated as aggressors and are alienated mostly as 'livable' competitors; their inferiority is not proven well enough. North Caucasians are described as speaking directly, aggressive, inferior, and negatively alienated. Qualitative analysis shows that Dagestani are powerful barbarians and Chechens are terrorists, with rare exceptions, while Central Asians are inactive sources of social trouble. South Caucasians are placed mostly within political context, either domestic or international, although the data on them is too scarce. As discussed above, Central Asians appear to be the most 'contextual' (in 75% of cases), and North Caucasians are 'fifty/fifty' (50%), but South Caucasians appear as contextual only once (10%). Central Asians and North

Caucasians seem to have become the context for other discussion themes, while South Caucasians have their own agendas 'attached' to them. Thus, H4 should be rejected.

Discussion and conclusion

Our research confirms that "offline" prejudices are indeed reproduced in the social media that supposedly should serve as an alternative public sphere. At the same time, one of the most striking results not evident from "offline" polls is relative unimportance of migrant ethnic groups as compared to external ethnic groups / nations. Although polls reveal negative attitude towards *migranty*, the latter attract much lower attention of bloggers than Americans or Europeans; moreover, Americans are covered nearly as negatively and perceived as more dangerous. This, first, suggests that political and social threats cast by Americans are more disturbing than predominantly social threats coming from *migranty*. Second, this poses the question on whether the hostility towards migrants captured by polling is an attitude linked to their immigrant status or a manifestation of a more general hostility to out-groups.

Next, although it has been shown in surveys that immigrant groups differ by the level of hostility towards them, with North Caucasians taking the lead (Bessudnov 2016), it has not been clear what makes people think so. Our research sheds some light on that. It turns out that while Central Asians are deprived of agency and perceived as passive sources of social problems, North Caucasians are covered as active and aggressive, and not entirely de-politicized. At the same time, *migranty* are never linked to cultural context which suggests that cultural threats are of secondary importance compared to social (and to political). Surprisingly, political threats have never been singled out as a separate type in migration studies, and this might be an important addition to the threat theory. As for economic context, it actually blends with social and can be united with it in future.

Our analysis of alienation patterns shows that the mental post-Soviet borders do not fully correspond to the formal national borders. Thus, South Caucasus groups are already perceived as distant nations with their own political agendas, while North Caucasians are 'enfants terribles of mother Russia' too alien to be part of the nation (despite being formally within), and Central Asians are still 'not alien enough' (despite being formally outside). This confirms our presupposition that *migranty* are a perceived and constructed phenomenon.

Acknowledgements

withdrawn for anonymization purposes.

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