



ANALYSIS

A WAR OF THE FINAL SOVIET GENERATION

RUSSIA'S DEMOGRAPHY, SOCIETY, AND AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

| IGOR GRETSKIY |

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Cover page photo: Participants wearing historical uniforms ride in a WWII-era motorcycle adorned with a sticker of the letter Z, which has become a symbol of support for Russian military action in Ukraine, during a military parade in Novosibirsk on May 9, 2022. (Photo by Rostislav Netisov / AFP / Scanpix)

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Russian state-backed VTsIOM, 68% of the population approve of Russia’s war against Ukraine.¹ The independent Levada Center reports an even more impressive 81% approval rate for what the Kremlin calls a “special military operation”.² But, given the increasing state repression against people with divergent views, all public opinion poll results in Russia should be taken under extreme caution. In addition, sociologists admitted that up to 90% of Russian respondents regularly refused to answer questions related to politics, even before the war.³ Also not to be overlooked is the fact that under Vladimir Putin’s rule, the authorities use opinion polls to promote favourable narratives. Nevertheless, today, many Russians appear to support Putin’s “special operation” in Ukraine. Regardless of the pollsters’ affiliation, the surveys show one trend: the older the respondents, the more they tend to support the war against Ukraine.

Analysis of socio-demographic peculiarities of Russian society could be very helpful in understanding that opinion polls results are not that far from reality. Russia’s demographic pyramid differs from many European countries in that it has very wavy sides (Figure 1). World War II, Stalin’s terror, and mass starvation left deep traces in the structure of the Russian population. In the figure, one can clearly distinguish the demographic waves that form the two largest macro-groups: the older generation, born between the late 1940s and

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the early 1960s, and millennials, born between the late 1970s and the early 1990s. Together they total approximately 87 million people – the vast majority of 110 million adult citizens. This paper aims to explain how demographic features of the Russian population generate demand for a certain political agenda and impact people’s attitudes toward the war against Ukraine.

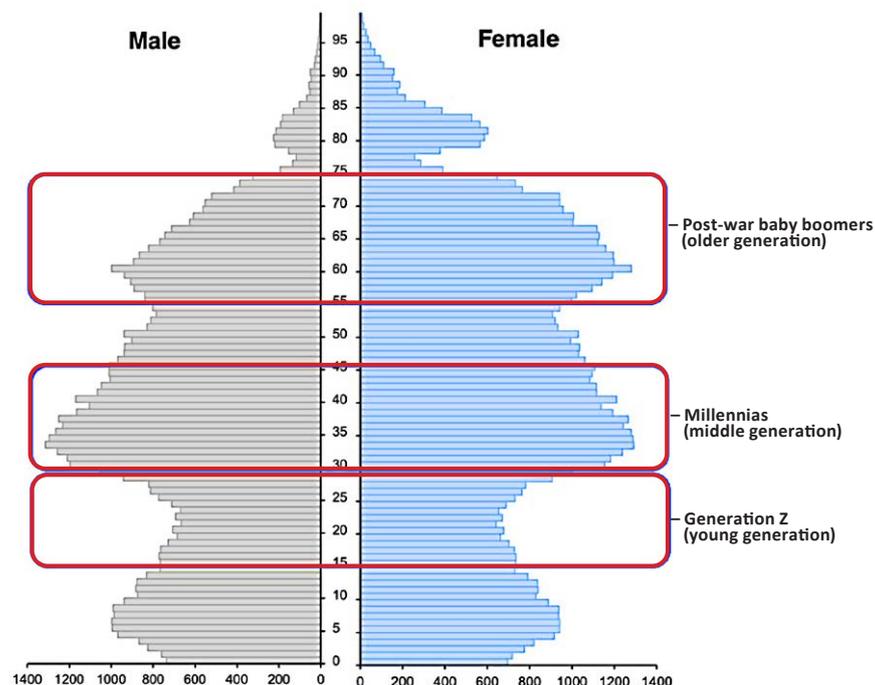


Figure 1. Demographic pyramid of the Russian population as of 1 January 2021. Source: Rosstat

¹ “Spetsial’naya voennaya operatsiya v Ukraine: otnoshenie i tseli [Special military operation in Ukraine: attitudes and aims],” VTsIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center), 28 February 2022.

² “The Conflict With Ukraine,” Levada-Center, 11 April 2022.

³ “Raskryta tekhnika oprosov [Survey Technique Revealed],” Levada-Center, 6 June 2019.

1. SOVIET GENERATION: MARCHING FORWARD WITH HEADS TURNED BACK

According to the aforementioned opinion polls, the most active and dedicated supporters of the war with Ukraine are people of (pre-) retirement age, or post-war baby boomers.⁴ They are one of the two largest demographic macro-groups in Russian society: about 43.3 million people.⁵ Their views were mostly shaped in times of “Brezhnevian stability”. What distinguishes them from the rest of Russian society is political inertia and a heavy reliance on the state, which in Soviet times was expected to meet almost all needs – from employment and education to housing and kindergartens. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the cumbersome and ineffective system of social support disappeared. They had to learn to take care of themselves and to compete for social goods, access to which seemed to be guaranteed not so long ago.

On the whole, the older Soviet generation – the post-WWII baby-boomers – was moving forward with their heads turned back, with their eyes fixed on the past, which, in comparison with the unpredictable present, seemed to them a lost paradise. Until the age of 35–40, they lived believing that the state would fully ensure all their needs. After the collapse of the USSR, they failed to create a financial cushion and most of them have no savings. Their main fear has always been growing old in absolute poverty. Now, they are afraid of losing the meagre pensions that the state pays them. Therefore, they are more tolerant of lies disseminated by the government-controlled media. Despite the fact that Vladimir Putin has repeatedly lied to them, saying that he would not increase the retirement age, and has

adapted the constitution to his political needs, they continue to believe him.

The older generation could not accept the collapse of the Soviet Union as a *fait accompli* and has always been arrogant and highly sceptical about the aspiration of the former “brotherly nations” to restore their statehood. In 1992, 69% of Russians wanted to retain Russia’s great power status, even if this resulted in worsening relations with neighbouring

The older generation could not accept the collapse of the Soviet Union as a fait accompli

countries.⁶ Even decades later, they still cannot come to terms with the fact that many post-Soviet republics were able to maintain their political independence from Moscow. It’s not surprising that, in 2014, 90% of Russians aged over 55 welcomed the annexation of Crimea.⁷ Similarly, the older generation looks at Putin’s war against Ukraine through the prism of old Soviet ideological stereotypes. They never considered Ukraine to be a truly foreign state, rather seeing it as a territory that temporarily broke away from the large country in which they once lived.

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From the outset of his rule, Vladimir Putin, in order to legitimise his highly autocratic regime, successfully exploited the phobias and traumas of the older generation. He reinstated the Soviet national anthem, monopolised the myth of Victory in the Great Patriotic War and considerably re-Sovietised the Kremlin’s official rhetoric. Putin heavily relied on old propaganda slogans and clichés that take people of his age

⁴ In 2018, Vladimir Putin signed into law a bill envisaging a gradual increase of the retirement age from 55 to 60 for women, and from 60 to 65 for men within a 10-year period. According to the Russian legislation, pre-pensioners (or people of the pre-retirement age) are those who have less than 5 years left before retirement.

⁵ *Chislennost’ naseleniya Rossiyskoy Federatsii po polu i vozrastu na 1 yanvarya 2021 goda. Statisticheskiy byulleten’ [Population of the Russian Federation by gender and age as of January 1, 2021. Statistical Bulletin]* (Moscow: Federal Service for State Statistics (Rosstat), 2021).

⁶ “Согласны ли вы с теми, кто говорит, что Россия должна сохранить себя как великая держава, даже если это ухудшит ее отношения с окружающим миром? / *Soglasny li vy s temi, kto govorit, chto Rossiya dolzhna sokhranit’ sebya kak velikaya derzhava, dazhe yesli yeto ukhudshit yeye otnosheniya s okruzhayushchim mirom?* [Do you agree with those who say that Russia should maintain its status as a great power, even if it exacerbates its relations with the rest of the world?],” *Moskovskie Novosti*, 26 July 1992, 2.

⁷ Aleksandr Yankovskiy, ““Krymnashizm” vyvetritsya neskoru: dovol’ny li rossiya ne anneksiyye poluoostrova? [“Krymnashizm” will not disappear soon: are the Russians satisfied with the annexation of the peninsula?],” *Krym. Realii*, 3 April 2019.

back to the irrevocably gone epoch, including geopolitical confrontation with the West and sweeping criticism of the moral foundations of European liberal democracies. But the most important symbol of that era was the Soviet Union itself. Even many years later, the older generation regrets its demise and perceives the independence and sovereignty of the post-Soviet states as a temporary phenomenon.

The older generation reacts calmly and even positively to Western sanctions because they believe that the restrictions will only affect rich people and oligarchs

The older generation reacts calmly and even positively to Western sanctions because they believe that the restrictions will only affect rich people and oligarchs. Their ideal world is the old Soviet reality in which everyone was equally poor but “had what they needed”. Many of them really believe that the West seeks to enfeeble and humiliate Russia, and that Ukraine, which they believe to be controlled by neo-Nazis, has been turned into a Western tool to destroy the Russian great power status. The Soviet older generation’s loyalty is the cheapest for the Kremlin, as it can be almost guaranteed solely by the use of propaganda.

After the collapse of the USSR, many of this generation found themselves at the bottom of the social ladder, watching with envy how young and enterprising people quickly adapted to new realities, which in turn provoked chronic vacillation, self-doubt and an inferiority complex. Generally, the post-Soviet reality, with elements of a market economy and competition, remains a completely alien environment for the older generation. And they seem to be ready to sacrifice it, as well as the future of younger generations, for the illusion of the restoration of the Soviet empire.

2. MILLENNIALS’ CONFORMISM

Millennials, citizens currently aged approximately 30 to 45, are the largest macro-group of Russian society – about 45.5 million

people. Their views about the USSR were greatly influenced by their grandparents, with whom they spent much time while their parents worked hard to make ends meet during the extremely challenging time of post-Soviet economic transformation. Not surprisingly, they, in general, have a positive view of the USSR, but they are not especially nostalgic for the Soviet epoch, because they can barely remember that time.

In their attitude toward the Kremlin’s politics, Russian millennials are less sentimental and much more pragmatic, if not cynical, than their parents. Their worldview was shaped in the troubled period of the 1990s, when state institutions proved unable to provide security and justice for citizens. During this time, the main thing was not the law but the right of the strong, which was fixed at the heart of the worldview of the millennials. The usual way for them to survive is to take a nothing-depends-on-us stance, to admit their weakness and inability to assert their rights. The law, including

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international law, has a very conditional and highly relativised – not absolute – meaning for them. They are sure that no matter what the strong do, they will never be judged and held responsible. Therefore, they tend to support any exercise of military force, regardless of whether it is legitimate or not. For most millennials, Russia’s superior military might justifies the brutal attack on Ukraine.

But perhaps the most common fear among the millennial generation of Russians is that of losing their jobs, which in turn makes them justify the war in Ukraine. The state is the main employer in Russia and generates up to 70% of the country’s GDP.⁸ Also, at the end of 2021, Russia had a record high level of household debt. Today, in mid 2022, 31% of bank borrowers spend about 80% of their monthly

⁸ Olga Soloviova, “[Dolyu gosudarstva v ekonomike otsenili ponovomu \[The share of the state in the economy was assessed in a new way\]](#),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 26 December 2018.

income on loan repayments.⁹ Given that 57% of the economically active Russian population have loans and borrowings, potentially 11.2 million people are in a pre-default state.¹⁰ The overall situation may be even worse, since 63% of Russians have no savings and live pay cheque to pay cheque.¹¹ The loss of a job for these citizens would be a catastrophe. In such circumstances, the fear of being jobless makes many Russians take a conformist position with regard to state authorities. In general, people have become indifferent to arbitrary actions of the state and restrain themselves when critically assessing state policies.

Among the millennials, there are few ardent supporters of the war against Ukraine. In effect, their support is inert and passive

Among the millennials, there are few ardent supporters of the war against Ukraine. In effect, their support is inert and passive. News of Western sanctions, atrocities of Russian soldiers, inevitable responsibility and reparations make them feel very uncomfortable, as they are well aware that the consequences of the war will radically change their lives for the worse. But instead of accepting reality and actively engaging with it, they wall themselves off from it, desperately trying to glue together the fragments of war-torn stability using false analogies and logical errors. Most often, they explain things in terms of a puppet–master dichotomy and are extremely susceptible to conspiracy theories.

In their rapidly collapsing world, millennials want to grasp at any positive perspective. And they find it in Russian propaganda

That is, they tend to believe that Ukraine is directly governed from Washington, and the West pays all the Russians who disagree with the military intervention into Ukraine. In their rapidly collapsing world, millennials want to

⁹ “TSB nazval dolyu rossiyan v kreditnoy kabale [The Central Bank published the share of Russians in credit bondage],” *Vesti.ru*, 28 December 2021.

¹⁰ Olga Sherunkova, “V dolgakh pod zavvyazku [In debt to the eyeballs],” *Kommersant*, 12 January 2022.

¹¹ “Ob otsutstvii sberezheniy v svoikh sem'yakh zayavili 63% rossiyan [63% of Russians said they had no savings in their families],” *Interfax*, 15 February 2022.

grasp at any positive perspective. And they find it in Russian propaganda, which daily broadcasts a consistently favourable picture of both the present and the future.

3. ANTI-WAR YOUTH

Back in 2014, Russian youth was the least supportive of the annexation of Crimea. Already at that time there were frequent cases of children trying to convince their parents of the fallacy of Vladimir Putin’s decision to “restore historical justice”. The 2022 military attack on Ukraine provoked a much deeper split within many Russian families, especially those living in the largest cities, such as Moscow, St Petersburg, Novosibirsk and Yekaterinburg. As Putin’s imperial policy is mostly opposed by people aged under 30, it is no exaggeration to say that the Russian anti-war protest has a young face. Even according to polls conducted by the state-controlled VTsIOM, the majority of young people do not support the

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“special military operation” in Ukraine.¹² The condemnation of war is especially strong in large cities such as Moscow and St Petersburg, where the majority of Russian universities are concentrated.

For the older and middle generations, working for the state is far preferable to self-employment. Unsure of themselves and their own ability to compete for a place in the sun, they usually avoid taking “unnecessary” risks. Young people whose worldview has been formed during the years of Putin’s rule have a different life strategy. From the beginning of the 2000s, the greatest competition in Russian universities was for programmes related to public service. A stable salary, as well as numerous official

¹² Aleksei Bessudnov, “Yesli verit’ gosudarstvennym sotsoprosam, bol’shinstvo rossiyan podderzhivayut voynu v Ukraine. No mozno li im verit’? [According to state opinion polls, the majority of Russians support the war in Ukraine. But can they be trusted?],” *Meduza*, 5 March 2022.

and unofficial benefits, attracted applicants. But since 2017, the situation has changed dramatically. In 2020, the civil service attracted only 19% of young people, which is half the level it was three years earlier.¹³ During the years of Putin's rule, public service began to lose prestige because of low salaries and high levels of stress and the routine nature of jobs.

Moreover, young Russians are more self-reliant and less dependent on the state, as the internet opens up broad business opportunities for them. Only 27% of young Russians are afraid that they cannot live without the support of the state, while 70% of the post-WWII generation shares that fear.¹⁴ The number of those who want to become freelancers or entrepreneurs significantly increased to 31%. However, widespread corruption, the need to pay bribes and lack of start-up capital complicate doing business and discourage many from even trying.¹⁵ Therefore, today the most desirable job (41%) for Putin's youth is a position in foreign corporations, which potentially opens up the possibility of emigrating abroad.¹⁶

In general, Russian youth are more sceptical than the older generation about the authorities and are noticeably more inclined to support protests (38% versus 16%).¹⁷ However, Russian authorities tend to neglect the voice of Generation Z, as it is the smallest layer of Russian society. There are 22.6 million Russians aged 15 to 30, which is less than half the number of the older Soviet generation.¹⁸ It will take quite some time for the current young generation to become a serious electoral force. In addition, the youth protest is completely unorganised, and the authorities demonstrate their determination to suppress it by force. After Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation was outlawed and disbanded, youth protest

activities were left without any meaningful organisational support.

There are several more reasons why youth are more inclined not to support Russia's war against Ukraine. Unlike their parents, the new generation of Russians doesn't watch TV, actively uses electronic gadgets and is much more fluent in foreign languages. Hence, they are not big fans of Vladimir Putin. The "digital generation" has its own heroes, most of whom are very famous among internet users, for example, the imprisoned opposition politician Alexei Navalny and YouTube blogger Yury Dud. Young people are more tolerant of other cultures and migrants and more

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often go abroad than the older generations.¹⁹ Propagandist clichés about the USSR do not have such a strong effect on young Russians as they are not familiar with the realities of the Soviet epoch.

4. PUTIN'S PREEMPTIVE MEASURES: FEAR, PROPAGANDA AND CENSORSHIP

Although Vladimir Putin's belligerent anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western rhetoric resonates strongly among his peers, it has far less effect when it comes to millennials, let alone young people. That is why Vladimir Putin reacts harshly to any public manifestations of dissent and introduces total censorship and brutal repressions. Today, one can be fined and even jailed for using the words "war" or "invasion" when describing the actions of the Russian army in Ukraine. The government also criminalised the dissemination of any information about the "special military operation" in Ukraine that

¹³ Polina Smertina, "[Pochemu molodezh' bol'she ne rvetsya na gosslyuzhbu \[Why young people are no longer eager for civil service\]](#)," *Vedomosti*, 26 February 2020.

¹⁴ "[Pokoleniye terpimykh i nezavisimykh \[Generation of Tolerant and Independent\]](#)," Levada-Center, 26 June 2017.

¹⁵ "[Not doing business v Rossii \[Not Doing Business in Russia\]](#)," Levada-Center, 23 March 2020.

¹⁶ Polina Smertina, "[Pochemu molodezh'.](#)"

¹⁷ [Aleksey Naval'nyy i yego potentsial'nyye storonniki \[Alexei Navalny and his potential supporters\]](#)," Levada-Cente, 1 March 2021.

¹⁸ "[Chislennost' naseleniya Rossiyskoy Federatsii.](#)"

¹⁹ [Andrei Kolesnikov, Denis Volkov, "Molodezh' ot Moskvyy do Bryanska. Privedet li smena pokoleniy k modernizatsii strany? \[The youth from Moscow to Bryansk. Will the change of generations lead to the modernization of the country?\]](#)," Carnegie Moscow Center, 22 November 2021.

does not come from the official sources. As a result, the remaining independent, as well as partially independent Russian media and their websites were blocked on Russian territory. Eventually, some decided to move abroad and resumed their activities there (*Novaya Gazeta*, *The Village*, *Pskovskaya Guberniya*, *TV Dozhd'*); some continued working, having imposed self-censorship and agreed not to continue covering events in Ukraine (*Snob*, *Republic*, *Taiga.Info*); and some forcedly or voluntarily stopped functioning completely (*Ekho Moskvy*, *Znak*).

Means of obtaining information play a huge role in how Russian society perceives the war in Ukraine. The older generation of Russians is addicted to television

Indeed, means of obtaining information play a huge role in how Russian society perceives the war in Ukraine. The older generation of Russians is addicted to television: 48% of the TV audience are people over 55 years old.²⁰ At the same time, this group of information consumers has a very poor command of the practicalities of the digital age. Only 52% use the internet on a daily basis, and only 23% have smartphones. Vladimir Putin projects an image of a person who is part of that conservative segment of society. The Russian President has repeatedly admitted that he does not have social media accounts or a smartphone and has also claimed that he does not use the internet because of his extremely busy schedule.²¹

Against the background of a constantly thinning TV audience in Russia, the popularity of social networks as a source of news has been steadily growing since the early 2010s. And here, too, generational features are clearly manifested. According to Deloitte, only 28% of young Russians use television as a source of news, while in the

45+ age group, 63–66% do.²² Moreover, the picture appears similar when it comes to social networks and blogs: 64% of Russians aged 14–34 use them as a source of news, and only 34–37% of those aged over 45 do.

After the outbreak of military assault on Ukraine in February 2022, social networks were subjected to severe pressure and censorship in Russia. The government has blocked all the most popular foreign social networks – Instagram, Facebook and Twitter – while the Chinese TikTok has suspended Russian users' access to live broadcasts and new content. Of the freely available social networks, only Russia-based VKontakte and Odnoklassniki, popular among the older generation, remain. Both are controlled by VK, the ultimate beneficiaries of which are the

Russian state and Vladimir Putin's associates.²³ Most recently, the company announced its new CEO, Vladimir Kiriienko, a son of Sergei Kiriienko, the First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration, who is responsible for ideology and domestic politics. VK is planning to take control of the Yandex. Zen social network and the Yandex.News news aggregator, with the aim of total control over Russian social networks and the broadcasting of completely censored news.

Under these conditions, the activity of Russian social network users has changed dramatically (Figure 2). A significant outflow of audience occurred, moving from Instagram and Facebook to Telegram, which the state censorship agency Roskomnadzor tried unsuccessfully to block from 2018–2020. At the same time, the number of downloads of VPN applications increased sharply and at the peak on 14 March 2022, when it was decided to block Instagram, it exceeded the daily average by more than 25 times.²⁴ As of the beginning of May 2022, the number of Google searches in Russia containing the word “VPN” is 2.5–3 times higher than the pre-invasion level (Figure 3).

²⁰ [Televideniye v Rossii v 2019 godu: sostoyaniye, tendentsii, perspektivy razvitiya](#) [Television in Russia in 2019: Condition, Trends and Perspectives] (Moscow: Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications, 2020), 26.

²¹ [“U Putina net akkauntov v sotsial'nykh setyakh, podverdil Peskov \[Putin has no accounts in social networks, Peskov says\],” RIA Novosti](#), 2 September 2021; [“Putin rasskazal, chto u nego net mobil'nogo telefona \[Putin says he has no mobile phone\],” TASS](#), 2 September 2021; [“Putin ob'yasn timer, pochemu ne pol'zuyetsya internetom \[Putin explained why he doesn't use internet\],” RIA Novosti](#), 17 December 2021.

²² [Mediapotrebleniye v Rossii \[Media consumption in Russia\]](#) (Deloitte, September 2021), 28.

²³ [“Kakimi media vladeyut novyye sobstvenniki VK \[What media are owned by the new owners of VK\],” RBK](#), 4 December 2021.

²⁴ Cat Zakrzewski, Gerrit De Vynck, [“Some Russians are breaking through Putin's digital iron curtain – leading to fights with friends and family,” The Washington Post](#), 19 March 2022.

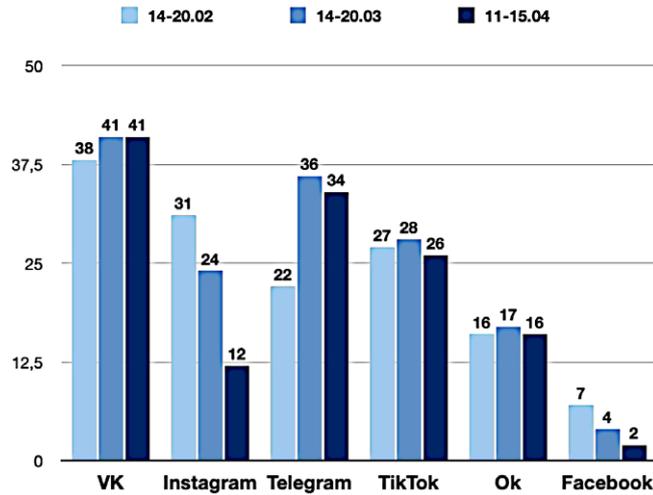


Figure 2: Average daily reach of Russian population aged over 12 years, in %
Source: Mediascope, 18 April 2022

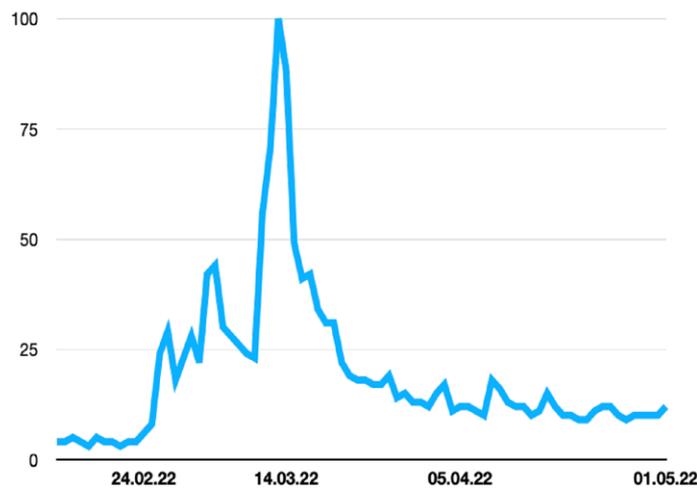


Figure 3. Popularity of the word “VPN” in search queries among Google users in Russia
Source: Google Trends

All the Kremlin’s media-restricting measures have two goals. The first one is escalation of the atmosphere of fear. Fear makes people believe that they are alone in their disagreement and powerless in the face of a repressive machine that can easily destroy their careers and lives. Putin’s second goal is to isolate Russian society from foreign media, putting it in an information bubble. Interestingly, among the proponents of war, there are many who have negative experiences of communicating with corrupt state institutions and, hence, treat government policies with great distrust. However, they support the invasion of Ukraine only because they have nothing but government-controlled media at their disposal. Alternative points of view do not reach them, and they, being used to consuming information passively by simply turning on their TV sets every evening, do not look for reliable sources of information themselves.

CONCLUSION

Although there is not the previous level of excitement that was generated by the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea, the so-called “special military operation” against Ukraine is widely supported within Russian society. Nevertheless, each demographic macro-group’s attitude to this invasion has its own characteristics. It would not be extreme to say that the older the generation, the greater the support for the war in Ukraine. A significant number of Russians aged over 55 years, who are used to the passive mode of consumption of information via television, share the Kremlin’s belligerent narratives for ideological reasons and because of psychological experience.

Russian millennials do not seem to be that enthusiastic in their backing of Russia’s military campaign for “de-nazification of Ukraine”.

They take a conformist stance mostly due to their almost total dependence on the state in terms of income and employment. It is also important to note that they account for the lion's share of the economically active population, which makes this cohort the most vulnerable to international sanctions. As the Russian economy deteriorates, more and more millennials will likely become even less supportive of the war. To maintain their inert loyalty, Putin will need to avoid a sharp decline in the quality of life in big cities.

Many millennials clearly understand that Russia is waging an aggressive war against a neighbouring state, but pretend to ignore the irrevocably changed reality, clinging to the remnants of a vanishing stability

Many millennials clearly understand that Russia is waging an aggressive war against a neighbouring state, but pretend to ignore the irrevocably changed reality, clinging to the remnants of a vanishing stability. In other words, the middle generation passively follows the general stance, and if it changes to a completely different one, they will probably easily change their views. Generally speaking, millennials tend to obediently follow any leader who can guarantee a minimum level of economic welfare.

The Kremlin's "special operation" in Ukraine is far less popular among young people. Propaganda is not that effective as they increasingly use electronic media and social networks as sources of news, not television. Vladimir Putin's ostentatious conservatism alienates Russian youth – for them, he has never been and never will be a leader. Most likely, Putin's defiant disdain for the voice of the youth comes from his understanding of political expediency, since this macro-group is only half the size of the oldest generation. Therefore, he is not at all interested in how young people see the situation in Ukraine and what future they want for themselves. Instead, Vladimir Putin tries to forcefully instil "correct views" through widespread censorship and control of the media, bringing the country closer to a state of neo-totalitarian dictatorship.

However, due to young Russians' demand for uncontrolled means of communication, uncensored information still continues to creep through barriers created by the authorities.

Currently, Russian society is undergoing a slow process of generational change, and Russia's war against Ukraine makes it even more evident. In both domestic and foreign policies, the Kremlin's master heavily relies on the unconditional support of post-World War II baby boomers. Many still cannot admit that they have been moving in the wrong direction for a significant part of their lives. Stunned by a post-imperial syndrome, the Soviet generation does not want to hear the voice of the youth and instead goes forward with its head turned back, dragging the whole country into the abyss. Most likely, they will continue buttressing the "special military operation" till its very end, and Vladimir Putin will keep on cynically exploiting their complexes and traumas to ensure he stays in power for life.

However, time is working against the Kremlin's dictator. The legitimacy of his political regime is gradually evaporating as, for natural reasons, the older generation is passing away; and the demand for change in Russia may gradually increase as the number of young Russian citizens grows. However, due to the specificity of Russia's demographic development, it will take at least 14–15 years for the cohort born after the Soviet Union's collapse to become as large (as a proportion of the total population) as the current middle generation. It means

In the mid-term perspective, millennials will retain their domination as the largest macro-group in Russian society – and it is the dynamics of their political views, sentiments and behaviour that will ultimately determine the near future of Russia

that in the mid term perspective, millennials will retain their domination as the largest macro-group in Russian society. And it is the dynamics of their political views, sentiments and behaviour - as well as Putin's ability to control them - that will ultimately determine the near future of Russia.

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