

КОНФЛИКТОЛОГИЯ

UDK 1(091)

Communities, discursive practices and behavioral patterns of digital vigilantism in Russia: Politico-axiological approach**T. A. Kulakova, A. V. Volkova*St Petersburg State University,
7–9, Universitetskaya nab., St Petersburg, 199034, Russian Federation

For citation: Kulakova T. A., Volkova A. V. Communities, discursive practices and behavioral patterns of digital vigilantism in Russia: Politico-axiological approach. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies*, 2022, vol. 38, issue 1, pp. 64–81.
<https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu17.2022.106>

This article studies vigilantism, a specific form of civic activity whose history can be traced back to the nineteenth century and which in the era of digitalization has acquired new characteristics. Digital vigilantism, as a well-established social phenomenon not only in world practice, but also in Russia, needs an analysis of its structure, goals, motivations, and interests and values of members of various communities to determine trends and changes in civil society in the context of digital transformations. Digital vigilantes seeking to regulate ideas about the “normality” of behavior, using interactions in social networks that are aggressive and even bordering on extremist, claim to be a significant actor for public policy. Legitimizing an alternative system for identifying violators, criminals, victims and punishments (by increasing the number of likes), they not only seek to co-opt the initiative to form public values, but often ignore and replace governmental structures. At the same time, they increasingly turn out to be not nameless avengers, but rather individuals seeking to declare themselves and achieve through creating the conflict not only their own goals, but also a certain popularity or “network power”, which is well monetized. The authors analyze behavioral patterns of the most famous communities — “Lev Protiv” (Lion Against), “StopHam” (StopBoor), “Hrushki protiv” (Piggies Against), and “AntiDealer” — and their activities in the VKontakte social network and on YouTube to typologize Russian vigilantism. The possibility of interaction with such movements (both online and offline formats) is not excluded for the system of public power, if a framework (procedures, rules) can be established for them that determines their auxiliary functions (notification, informing, propaganda). The proliferation of vigilante movements and their demonstration of direct violence is a significant indicator of the inefficiency of the

* The research was undertaken with funding for the project of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research and EISR no. 21-011-31445 «Digital vigilantism and the practice of creating public values: hijacking network civil society?».

public administration system, a decrease in the level of legitimacy and support for its institutions, and indicates an increased risk of loss of state governability.

Keywords: digital vigilantism, public policy, public values, citizen participation, social networks, discursive practices, conflicts, uncivil society.

Introduction. Articulation of the issue

Intensive digital transformations contribute to the fact that not only public service institutions and electoral processes, but also the structures of traditional civil society are undergoing significant changes: citizens more often seek to solve their problems through social networks and specialized sites; network activity is being structured, and sustainable communities and practices are being formed. The pandemic and forced isolation have only accelerated this process, transferring many life situations and spheres of activity to an online format. For this reason, the implementation of digital policies, and its patterns, features and risks, and ontology and ethics of the digital world are a priority area of modern Western European research [1]. The implementation of digital technologies contributes to the diversity of communication and overcoming many obstacles, and to the development of international partnerships, online education, and even virtual tourism, but, on the other hand, this has been accompanied by increased electronic control, and it is not by chance that modern scholars point to threats to democratic values and warn of a crisis of democratic development. At the present stage of development, “the building of a new ideal of civilizational development is fixed through the disclosure of a complex developing ethical system, where the inevitable component is a value conflict” [2, p. 105]. In the digital media space, “discursive practices of hostility” are spreading and intensifying, which according to their results always correlate with the current, relevant political and social context [3, p. 43]. In this aspect, the phenomenon of digital vigilantism is of particular importance, when a group of citizens initiatively takes on the function of a “supervisor” for compliance with certain norms, using all modern possibilities of digital communication.

The study of the social phenomenon of “vigilantism” has a long history. There are reasons to associate the formation of vigilantism with the peculiarities of the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition in the nineteenth century, when, in the absence of a centralized police service, a private initiative to catch criminals (“bounty hunters”) was encouraged financially and supported by public morality. In the American Wild West, the practice of extrajudicial killings became widespread, mainly due to racial or economic motives (lynch courts). In South Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, residents of urban slums who lacked access to “civilized” forms of repelling the onslaught of criminal gangs, were forced to create groups to protect the lives of their families and to use methods of force, replacing civil and criminal justice systems. White defenders of apartheid used self-defense methods in the 1980s, and after the end of that regime, the practice of vigilantism became widespread as a form of fighting crime [4]. The problem is international. Further, historical incidents show that political and legal authorities at different times and in different countries encouraged violence by vigilantes, and used their power to ensure manageability and control. However, these historical examples allow us to identify at least two scenarios for the development of such civic initiatives. If the British “bounty hunters” acted on the terms of cooperation with state structures and implemented their “mandate for violence”, which was both legitimate and legal in the conditions of that time, citizens who participated in lynchings in the

American states or in massacres in urban slums of African countries acted differently. They formed an alternative state of power, a parallel reality with their institutions: they replaced the entire system of justice (from the search for criminals, their conviction to the execution of sentences), guided not by legal norms, but by subjectively understood justice or the “common good”. Despite possible good goals, the borderline (near-criminal nature) of such civic groups’ activities, which compensating the weakness of the state, is colored today by both research strategies and practices of communities calling themselves vigilante [5–7].

The growth of research into various aspects of the vigilante movement in foreign social sciences has grown since the 1990s. One of the first of these scholars, E. Moncada, identified the factors that make it possible to attribute the activities of a spontaneous or organized public association to vigilante: social organization, target, repertoire, justification, and motivation. This allowed him to define vigilantism as a collective use of extralegal violence or the threat of its use in response to an alleged or real crime not proven in court. Moncada proposed that such repertoires include both light types of violence (sexual violence, beatings, infliction of psychological and physical suffering) and murder. For justifications and social explanations of the reasons for the actions by vigilantes, he noted public values or the values of the local community, which served as motivators of the action (while the motivations may actually be different). The motivators of both vigilantes’ activities are to strengthen and support the officially established order, and alternative motivations support both gender, religious, racial, ethnic, and group values, which gives a value / moral evaluation to communities. Public associations can be situational, arising to solve a specific problem, and can exist in parallel with the main activity of the organization, complementing it. Moncada’s concept continues to be relevant to modern scholars, even though he addressed developing countries, where the weakness of states is obvious. These definitions ignore the significant features of vigilantism that distinguish it from other types of planned group violence [8].

The emphasis on the criminal aspect of activities of such communities was highlighted by L. Johnston, who proposed clarifying definitions of vigilantism, which today can be understood as “classical”: 1) the organizers plan violent actions; 2) the participation of individuals is voluntary; 3) the community has an act of “autonomous citizenship” that recognizes vigilantism as a social movement; 4) the use of violence or threats of violence; 5) the action of the group is a reaction to a real or alleged violation of institutional norms; 6) the actions of the group are read as a public signal of support and preservation of the accepted / traditional order [9].

There is an assumption that vigilantism can be understood as a movement involving various participants, whose actions depend on many different factors. There you may find individual activists, groups that resemble primarily a conglomerate of individuals (spontaneously emerging groups of vigilantes and those who want to commit lynching), and communities that have organizational features, often not of a formal nature.

Some modern researchers equate vigilantism with the refusal of certain groups of citizens, parties, from certain state norms. Their main goal is to obtain political resources not available to them. At the same time, the additional theme is the phenomenon of political violence by these groups of the population. It is the subject of works related to the political process in African and Latin American states [6; 10–12]. Discussing the causes of the emergence and growth of vigilante groups, modern scholars disagree inside the community, but almost everyone recognizes the weakness or absence of formal institutions,

their unwillingness to respond promptly to threats as important factors. That is why the activation of vigilante communities is a warning for modern states and a kind of indicator of the effectiveness of the public administration system.

An attempt to consider this phenomenon from the point of view of rituals, in the context of E. Durkheim's theory, was made by Dutch researchers M. Asif and D. Vinik, although even here scholars found themselves within the framework of the correlation of legal norms and illegal initiatives. They think "...when people perceive the police and legal authorities to be legitimate and effective, they cooperate and obey the directives of the authorities... but, when they regard them as illegitimate and ineffective, they tend to employ their own style of self-justice, including vigilante violence" [13, p. 1–2]. Authors identify main problems and do not go deep into the analysis of the cultural component of the phenomenon, however, the hypotheses proposed by them look very convincing.

The works related to the specifics of the digital environment and the value bases of vigilante groups, especially taking into account their existence within social networks, are still in the minority [14]. For example, R. Bateson points out that, although vigilantism is a central problem of political science, since it is directly related to the implementation of power, at the moment the researches of vigilantism are mainly outside of political science, in related disciplines, along with traditional legal analysis, researches in such branches of knowledge as computer science or psychology are actively developing [15]. It is necessary to join the opinion of foreign colleagues and focus on the interdisciplinary nature of this problem.

Formation of digital vigilantism: dark side of digital transformations?

The occurrence of digital platforms has significantly changed both the practices of vigilante communities and approaches to the study of this social phenomenon. A significant contribution in this direction has been made by Dutch scholars. In a series of publications, D. Trottier focuses on the use of alternative justice by vigilantes with use of digital technologies [16]. For D. Trottier, this is a process of collective action of vulnerable and offended people by the actions of another group of citizens, organized as countermeasures in the social networks of the digital space [17]. It should be recognized that digital vigilantism is a phenomenon that represents *coordinated actions of civil groups in virtual space (often going offline), in response to imaginary or real actions and threats of third parties or moral indignation against an event that was recorded in the real world and transmitted via mobile devices, through social platforms*. Digital vigilantism acts as an informal institution of a network civil society, regulating behavior and punishing citizens for actions or intentions unacceptable from the point of view of vigilantes.

Digital vigilantism today is exceptionally multifaceted, it is known today as "Internet vigilantism", "netilantism", "cyber-vigilantism", "online vigilantism", and "digilantism" [18]. Today we can already separate institutional vigilantism (organized, constantly active groups in social networks) and demonstration of spontaneous vigilantism: cyberbullying, searching and publishing information about a person for the purpose of revenge, harassment and blackmail (doxxing) [19], online shaming. This problem is international [20–21] and, as studies show, the population of megapolises around the world is more prone to fascination with vigilantism.

According to one of the existing research hypotheses, reasons for the active spread of digital vigilantism lie in the relatively weak institutionalization of the network, which is considered as a “wild network” [22]. Coupled with the rapid spread of personal gadgets, this creates illusions about the world of digital media and social networks, which are presented as a global “all-permissive space”. This factor causes great risks of the digitalization of vigilantism: instead of strengthening civil control, it contributes to the growth of anarchy and multidirectional aggression, because Internet activity is too difficult to regulate [18].

Due to the fact that social networks today are platforms that most vividly express the ideals of the public sphere, vigilantism acquires a special role there. In the digital space, it is easier to “disperse” not local norms and values, but values that are significant for the “population” of social networks, i. e. unified, blurred, or shared by certain age or group segments. Modern researchers raise the question that digital vigilantism as a form of network civic activity claims to transform the mechanisms of formation of public values, promote models of “uncivil” behavior and takeover of network civil society not by chance [23]. The aggressiveness of actors is increasing and the range of topics that become the reasons for the mobilization of groups is expanding. These may be improper parking and aggressive driving, refusal to clean up garbage, defiant and aggressive behavior that violates public order, a terrorist act. Those who act outside the accepted norms rarely seek to violate them defiantly (although this happens more and more often), because they do not suspect that they have become a party of a conflict. But in the digital world anonymity has been abolished, because digital vigilantes use the tactic of “naming and shaming” [21], posting the data of the violator on network platforms, including financial and medical information, personal data of relatives and friends, using publicity as a weapon, forcing to live up to the generally accepted and even legal norms. It happens that in this way, unverified, false information is also distributed, which is not easy to stop. This issue is discussed today by the European Commission, which is concerned about the dependence and vulnerability of Europeans to the aggressive policy of social media, the dominance of foreign IT giants in the formation, and the promotion of information flows and the avalanche nature of disinformation in networks as a new technology threatens the governability of European states and the whole EU. The analytical report “Mechanisms that Shape Social Networks and their Impact on Society — Report on the State-of-the-Art in Research. Shaping Europe’s digital future”¹ gives a complete picture of the scale of the problem. Spontaneous mobilization in the digital space does not require a real community unification based on a certain motive, the development of strategy and tactics, or the correct definition of the object. Nevertheless, digital technologies and social networks accelerate the organization and coordination, ensures independence from law-enforcement agencies, since social networks are open to collecting information, which may be the reason for organizing vigilante actions; social networks spread information about an act in the real world and on a specific territory to an unlimited circle of people, to spaces that have no borders; digital space does not cancel real / physical violence, but virtual violence dominates, which often seems to ordinary people as quite harmless entertainment. Meanwhile, virtual violence is no less, and sometimes even more tangible for the victim, because reputational losses

¹ Available at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/mechanisms-shape-social-media-and-their-impact-society-report-state-art-research> (accessed: 09.11.2021).

can be very painful because of appearing into the public space misdeeds which attracted attention and hurt people who profess certain values and have the will to protect them.

Today, the analysis of the growth of violent digital vigilantism increasingly focuses on the conflictual and “uncivilized” nature of society. Foreign authors, interpreting this phenomenon, often turn to the work of C. Tilly, especially “The Politics of Collective Violence” [24]. Vigilantism is seen as a return to the forcible maintenance of local order, or even as a way for individual groups to fight for their share of rent and patronage resources. The negative assessments of a number of foreign researchers come from both the excessive criminal connotation of the vigilantes’ activities, their disregard for procedural issues of maintaining law and order, the lack of independence in developing both an agenda and objects of actions, and a selfish interest in gaining fame and expanding the possibility of influence in the digital environment [25], which gives grounds for fear of the takeover of civil society by digital vigilantes and their destruction of the traditional value paradigm. In addition, structured, organized or spontaneous groups of “civil fighters” turn out to be a significant force and can be used in political struggle both online and offline. D. Trump’s aggressive and scandalous electoral campaign during the 2020 presidential election confirms this thesis.

Nevertheless, digital vigilantism is a difficult phenomenon of public policy to be evaluated: depending on the specific case of vigilantism and the position of experts analyzing the acts of vigilantism, this phenomenon can be viewed both positively and sharply negatively. For example, in Singapore, which has relied on the use of social networks to increase state governability, “online shaming” is considered as an opportunity for self-regulation of society through the deterrence of deviant behavior and a form of civic participation in law-enforcement activities via the Internet [20]. Thus, digital vigilantism can be considered as a variant of socially significant activity of citizens based on such public values as responsibility, participation, openness, cooperation, using modern tools and attractive methods to involve young people in a discussion about civic responsibility and public values [26], it complements the activities of public administration bodies.

In this context, the interactions of digital vigilantism with government agencies which applied law-enforcement practices are complex and changeable. Solidifying with the goal of law-enforcement agencies, but acting independently, without coordinating specific measures, digital vigilantes, nevertheless, can form an ideology of protecting the moral values of the population by support groups that neither the elite, nor the state bureaucracy, nor the atomized population can protect. Much more often digital vigilantes exist in a reality parallel to the state, which is formed by themselves, using all the available technological achievements of the 21st century and the influence of such dispersed associations does not decrease, but popularity is growing, because they independently determine the scope of what is allowed. Being created and including the masses of people, concentrating and spreading without any resistance, these massive virtual associations can both materialize and go online again without any difficulty. The elusiveness of such swarm communities can have consequences in the long term, which are still little observed. But in any case, the main losers will be the state, unable to be a guarantor of security (digital, moral, intellectual, physical, and not only external), and the citizens themselves, who are deprived of the right to determine what is good and what is bad on the basis of upbringing, culture, education, the right for independent decision-making on a wide range of issues. The state and traditional society become the main object of criticism and ridicule (often fair), not

being able to build communication with the digital crowd, a crowd of atomized individuals raised in a digital environment that allows everything to everyone.

Studying the real practices of organized vigilante strategies in a digital environment helps to understand the complexity of the phenomenon but makes vigilantism a vague and contested concept. Despite the growing popularity of this topic and the concern of the expert community about the obvious increase in the activity of “vigilant citizens” in Western European and domestic scientific literature, there are not so many attempts to determine the phenomenon of civil vigilance, the criminological approach dominates. Vigilantism, which is rapidly spreading in social networks, social media, is increasingly viewed by foreign colleagues in the context of negative consequences and effects. Megan Ward wonders how “The concept of visible political violence as spectacle provides a useful framework for understanding why vigilante groups publish their violence on social media, and how this vigilante content functions on these platforms as arresting political discourse” [14, p.3]. In modern foreign studies, the emphasis is on the issue of the legality of vigilantes in an already formed civil society, but the value component falls out of the field of view of the problem.

Probably, values are an important factor in the formation of new groups in the network civil society, which by their actions have a significant impact on the transformation of the national value paradigm of the state. Relying on the exceptional resilience of civic ideas about justice, promoting the values of order, equality, honesty, and the “common good”, vigilantes seize the initiative to form the agenda from state structures, political parties and civil organizations that are held within the framework of norms, and it turns out that even the positive desire of citizens to comply with norms acquires excellent lexical and pictorial forms corresponding to modern methods of communication in social networks, for which scandalousness, catchiness, and entertainment are important, attracting and absorbing the attention of content consumers and increasing the income of owners of digital platforms.

Russian vigilantism: on the issue of a typology of communities

The origin of vigilante communities at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century in Russia is a response of socially active citizens to the increased complexity and conflict of the social structure of society, to the invasion of new values, to weak and untimely reactions of the state to antisocial manifestations in various segments of society.

Within the framework of this study, four of the most well-known and viable communities were selected. Data on their numbers are given in Table 1.

The uprising of these groups begins with the period after 2010, when the activity ends or the transformation of large-scale pro-government youth projects (“Nashy”, “Molodaya

Table 1. The numerical composition of communities in VKontakte and the number of user subscriptions

Communities	Number of followers	Number of user subscriptions
StopHam	406 649	5 101 376
Lev Protiv	309 956	52 752 100
Hrushy Protiv	49 600	11 617 173
AntiDealer	1230	175 685

Gvardia”, etc.) takes place, as a result of which ambitious activists were forced to look for new places of use of force. Active youth from the “commissar community” forms structures organized with the network principle, which support, and then intercept from state bodies the initiative to censure violators and retaliate for this or that offense, which they consider to be such. The accelerated distribution of personal gadgets and new technical capabilities of network resources make it possible to expand the practice of distributing photos and videos on social networks, turning surveillance of lawbreakers and retaliation into a real performance.

“StopHam” was created in order to combat “rudeness on the roads” in Russia. Among the frequent actions taken by members of the movement in recent years, it is possible to highlight the fight against parking in the wrong places. Parking in the wrong places is a common and predictable practice in Russia: the lack of parking spaces and the absence (or high cost) of underground parking in megacities makes it a routine violation, an informal institution, it is perceived as forced and expected rules of the game, which are shared by many car users. And this problem probably won’t be resolved soon. The absence of a system of strict sanctions by the authorities institutionalizes such behavior and forms a distorted idea of freedom and justice (“I am free to park where I want and where it is convenient for me”).

Actions that are taken by “StopHam” are often illegal: the unauthorized use of stickers on cars, the use of violence (pepper guns), and censure and shame achieved by capturing violators on videos and publishing these on YouTube. The organization does not use radical methods of digital vigilantism, although the publication of videos condemning the behavior of drivers who violate the rules can be called defaming, it is more important that this shame is not personalized. “StopHam” does not aim to disclose the identities of the violators (naming), and the activities of the group members themselves are not anonymous, typical for cyber vigilantes. Thus, activists and violators are potentially equal in terms of their identification, and therefore both can become both the object of criticism and attacks on social networks, and the subject of litigation.

The research data published in the media on the support of the StopHam movement testifies to the approval of the activities of these vigilantes. According to a study conducted by the Public Verdict Foundation, which critically evaluate the phenomenon of vigilantism in Russia, 52 % of respondents support StopHam’s actions of sticking stickers on the front window of a car and filming what is happening on video. At the same time, 39 % of respondents supported the drivers. The phenomenon of vigilantism itself (the coercion to order some citizens by others) was supported by 56 %, while 34 % recognized the monopoly of the police in this field. “StopHam” finds support, including from the police leadership: 52 % of police captains positively assess the activities of StopHam². However, there is no saying that StopHam is a correct example of a neoliberal transfer of powers to a social movement. The police does not always interfere with the actions of StopHam activists and, as a rule, acts as an arbitrator in the conflict between StopHam and violators of traffic rules. The StopHam movement was initially sanctioned by the Russian political elite, was supposed to play the role of a civilian policeman and even received presidential grants for a while, was supported by the government until a certain time, but over time it lost the status of an organization by a court decision³. Currently, the following statement

² Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4435194> (accessed: 08.11.2021).

³ Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2951179> (accessed: 10.09.2021).

is posted on the page on the social network: “We stand against rudeness associated with disregard for the law and the people around us. We record our actions on a video camera. Some of the records remain in the archive, some are sent to the police, and the most interesting ones are uploaded to the Internet. Subscribe to see everything with your own eyes”⁴.

“Lev Protiv” is a social movement that opposes smoking and drinking alcohol in public places⁵. Active members “Lev Protiv” regularly conduct raids to ensure laws and public order are followed. During raids on courtyards, squares near clubs and shops selling alcohol, they urge citizens not to violate the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation, not to drink alcoholic beverages, not to smoke, not to use obscene language in public places and look for violators. Having found violators, young people of athletic build insist on stopping illegal actions, seize and destroy alcohol, cigarettes, etc. Activists record their activities on video cameras and subsequently publish them on social networks.

The project “Hrushi Protiv”⁶ positions itself as a volunteer movement, “declaring as its civic goal the public struggle against substandard products in stores and markets”. The history of the “struggle for fresh goods” has begun since 2010, when Evgenia Smorchkova, who considered it unfair that buyers are “often confused with pigs”, created her own movement to protect consumer rights. Now the offices of “Hrushi Protiv” are opening every day in many Russian cities. In 2016 the branch of the project “Hrushi Protiv” appeared in the Republic of Belarus and the project became international⁷. “Hrushi” raids on grocery stores, and records of juicy proceedings and scandals with sellers, cashiers, administrators are posted online.

“AntiDealer” is a project that “united Russians who are not indifferent to the problems of drug trafficking and alcoholism in our country”. The creators of the project focus on the fact that “level of drug addiction among young people is at a high level, as well as the fact that recently the number of new synthetic drugs, the main consumers of which are young people, has been increasing”⁸. The project is aimed at reducing the number of drug addicts through the prevention of a healthy lifestyle, which is understood as “involving the public in the fight against drug addiction so that everyone realizes the importance of this problem and their own involvement in its solution, as well as carrying out various actions and activities directly to prevent crimes in the field of drug trafficking”⁹.

These communities can be classified as *institutionalized and managed* vigilante communities. Such a VKontakte group as the group of the movement “Sorok Sorokov”¹⁰ (idiom “a large number of”) can also be included in this category.

Another type of community includes *situational vigilante communities*, whose appearance and institutional design are caused by the arisen problem, usually acute and having a wide scope. Thus, public observers and patrols emerged during the period of severe isolation in the first wave of COVID-19 in Russia in 2020. Vigilant citizens went on raids, took photos and video materials denouncing illegally opened shops, food services and beauty salons. They disgraced citizens who violated regime requirements in transport and in other public places. These materials were sent to law enforcement agencies, hotlines and

⁴ Available at: <https://vk.com/stopxam> (accessed: 02.11.2021).

⁵ Available at: <https://vk.com/lionvs> (accessed: 04.11.2021).

⁶ Available at: <https://хрюши.рф/about> (accessed: 12.11.2021).

⁷ Available at: <https://vk.com/hrushigroup> (accessed: 03.11.2021).

⁸ Available at: https://vk.com/antidiler_official (accessed: 26.10.2021).

⁹ Available at: https://vk.com/antidiler_official (accessed: 26.10.2021).

¹⁰ Available at: https://vk.com/sorok_sorokov (accessed: 27.10.2021).

posted on the networks. In this way, vigilant citizens organized themselves in networks during the aggravation period of the situation with COVID-19.

Today, an example of such a situational group is the association of “Anti-Vaxxers”, which has a new impetus and scope in connection with the declared policy of mass vaccination, as well as groups acting on social networks against opponents of vaccines. Although the groups position themselves as “entertaining” and “not intended to offend,” their discourse is exceptionally aggressive (insults, curses, threats).

The study of Russian digital vigilantism allowed the authors of this study to identify not only its institutionalized forms, but also demonstrations of “spontaneous” (*non-institutionalized*) vigilantism. For this purpose, a sample of posts on the social network VKontakte from communities “Overhear”¹¹ over the past two years in 15 cities with a permanent population of one million or more (St Petersburg, Moscow, Rostov, Ufa, Yekaterinburg, etc.) was collected. “Overhear”¹² is a popular social project in which users anonymously publish their stories, raise problems and controversial issues, among its typical topics “concentration points” of vigilant citizens arise from time to time.

Social platforms have the potential to consolidate the population and elements of their business models that contribute to the formation of a split society on value grounds, but with unified patterns of behavior. The influence of the forms of organization of the activities of civil associations used in the world, the similarity of activities, methods of communication, methods of interaction with government agencies and the public is obvious. Thus, not only vigilante communities are formed, but also groups of their opponents (“those who are against those who are against us”). Communities acting in Russia today can be attributed to the “vigilante communities” group and to the “anti-vigilantes” group (the Public Verdict Foundation¹³, anti-vaxxer fighters,¹⁴ etc.).

For example, the Public Verdict Foundation¹⁵, with the financial support of the European Union, makes research on the problem of vigilantism, initially treating it as an illegal form of civic activity, being influenced by the ideas of E. Moncada, L. Johnston, and D. Trottier. The information resource provides citizens facing “real violence on the streets” with information support for effective legal protection. The methodology of the Public Verdict Foundation offers instructions, samples of complaints and explanations of normal regulations. Citizens are given algorithms for fixing and collecting evidence of illegal actions for subsequent appeal against illegal actions of officials and other persons; algorithms of making videos, audio recordings, or photos of what is happening on a smartphone, attracting eyewitnesses, fixing their data, evidence of damage/destruction of property, consequences of violation of rights and harm to health. The organization provides the legal assistance services of a lawyer for a human rights organization which will increase the chances of protecting violated rights. The actions in case of direct contact with vigilantes are described in detail with the recommendation to avoid direct conflict, shooting the vigilante’s uniform, asking for the name and personal data of the head of the organization. If the vigilante performs as the police (“City without drugs”, “Lev Protiv”), the manual advises to ask for documents, to remind that

¹¹ Available at: <https://vk.com/overhear> (accessed: 26.10.2021).

¹² Available at: <https://ideer.ru/> (accessed: 26.10.2021).

¹³ Available at: www.myverdict.org (accessed: 23.10.2021).

¹⁴ Available at: https://vk.com/wall-57264056_518100 (accessed: 22.10.2021).

¹⁵ Available at: www.myverdict.org (accessed: 23.10.2021).

it is allowed to help the police only under their control and at their request. The manual gives an approximate qualification of offenses to which actions against a citizen can be attributed, so that he can apply to certain judicial authorities or a police department, samples of procedural documents.

Behavioral patterns and value orientations of russian vigilante communities

Russian vigilantism has many faces and has not been fully observed as an organizational form of civic initiatives. The study of behavioral patterns and value orientations of Russian vigilante communities allows to get closer to understanding such a complex socio-political phenomenon as digital vigilantism.

As part of this research project, using the VKontakte API (application programming interface), posts and comments were uploaded over the past two years, as well as subscribers of four typical vigilante communities on the social network VKontakte (such as “Lev Protiv,” “StopHam,” “Hrushki Protiv,” and “AntiDealer”). The array of text, iconographic, and video messages published by communities and users formed the basis for the empirical data of the study, and subscriptions (groups in which members of vigilante communities follow) were also collected and systematized.

The absolute majority of groups in VKontakte that are subscribed by participants of the four vigilante communities belong to the category of entertainment, and many of them have a rather vulgar nature. In general, in the first place among the subscribers of the vigilantes are groups of a humorous nature (“Smeysya do slez” (Laugh to tears), “Chyornyy Yumor” (Black Humor), “Joker”, etc. The next section of groups unites film and music lovers of various directions and a significant part of which has a “muscular orientation”, such as “Academia Poryadochnyyh Parnei” (Academy of Decent Guys), “Myzhskie Mysli” (Men’s Thoughts), “Armiya — myzhskoe soobshchestvo” (Army — men’s community), and so on. Subscriptions to sports-related groups are common: football fan clubs, mixed martial arts. Subscriptions to groups that could be attributed to the political sphere (official pages of political parties and movements), as well as protest groups (for example, associated with well-known opposition leaders) were not found.

There is also no vigilantes’ interest in the pages of Russian and foreign media. Table 2 shows all subscriptions to media groups that exist in the vigilante environment. Liberal and opposition media (Radio Liberty, Echo of Moscow, Rain) are not on the list of subscriptions. Thus, the activities of these communities are non-political in nature, and participation in them can be considered by analogy with participation in entertainment groups of network.

With the help of the YouTube Data API, text transcripts of at least 200 (50 for each community) of the most popular videos of vigilante communities over the past two years were collected to identify behavioral patterns and discursive practices of the selected movements. Using collocation analysis and Latent Dirichlet allocation, LDA in the R computing software environment, transcripts of YouTube videos, posts and comments in VKontakte of selected vigilant groups were analyzed for thematic modeling of the corpus and identification of value orientations of vigilantes. The preprocessing of the corpus texts included lemmatization, clearing of non-text elements, and creating a list of stop words. The processing data of the video materials of the “Lev Protiv” movement is shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Subscriptions of four vigilante communities' members to VKontakte media groups

Media pages	Number of followers
TNT Channel	65 907
RIA News	31 002
Channel One	21 488
Russia Today (RT) News	19 652

Table 3. Frequency distribution of concepts in the video materials "Lev Protiv"

Rank	Feature	Frequency
1	alcohol	243
2	take away	186
3	speak	179
4	please	166
5	easy	154
6	be able	151
7	give	135
8	park	135
9	child	135
10	do	134
24	public	72
56	law	46
76	citizen	39
3116	legislation	1

"Lev Protiv" is a movement that sets itself the main goal of fighting for a healthy lifestyle, however, the interests and priorities of the vigilantes become more clear from the description of the videos, which have a fairly similar nature: "A raid of the public movement Lev Against like StopHam against alcohol and smoking in the center of Moscow on Bolotnaya. A drunken crowd staged a horror in the park. Greyhound, drunk cattle threaten with a knife and arranges a brawl. Massive violations of the law. Brawl with drunk cattle. The battle for order in the park. Against aggressive drunks. A scuffle, threats with a knife"¹⁶.

¹⁶ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrhgLx41kMs> (accessed: 25.10.2021).

The posted videos are mainly devoted to: raids by activists of the movement led by the leader (Mikhail Lazutin) against citizens who smoke and drink alcohol in unintended places, investigative videos directed against drunkenness¹⁷, M. Lazutin with media personalities¹⁸ (“Sobolev vs Lazutin Fight. Brawl at the conference,” “Lev Against — schizophrenic deputy inquiry and Khovansky’s clippings”)¹⁹.

Video reports are presented in the form of notes (the logo of the channel “Lev Protiv” is indicated at the top). The action begins with the inscription: “Coming up in this ed” and a short prologue-excerpt, and then direct action. Each video is edited in a technique resembling a live broadcast play by play. The only point that suggests that this is not a spontaneous (random) shooting is the interviews taken from the participants of the events.

Shooting scenes mostly take place in the evening or at night, so the dark range is common, and only light from streetlamps gives a special atmosphere of a “haunt of vice,” even if the action takes place on a bench in the city center. It is very noteworthy that the main emphasis is not only on showing the illegality of citizens’ actions: activists of the movement seek to show the actions of violators and themselves in a particularly unsightly form. It is not only about fixing fights and preserving obscene language in the videos, but also about how the violators are called by the participants of the movement (usually this word is “cattle”). The deliberate politeness of activists (addresses “Good evening!”) in the context of a typical ritual presented in numerous video materials is rather an attack, a provocative moment preceding insults and aggressive actions.

The data obtained show that the activists of the movement, positioning themselves as fighters for public order and morality, practically do not use the corresponding concepts in their speech. The content and language in video and comments are characterized by an extreme degree of vulgarization, a high percentage of obscene words. A characteristic feature of this YouTube channel is conciseness and expressive presentation of the material. Attempts to emotionally influence the audience in order not so much to arouse their sympathy, but to involve them in their own activities can be traced. The phrase “Share reposts in social networks and likes if you are also against this horror and lawlessness in public places” appeared after each video and looks very contrasting with the rest of the text and visual information. There are also calls to help with donations and an advertising link to an online clothing store with a discount promo code.

If we turn to the classic characteristics of vigilantes, then “exculpatory” materials are also presented on YouTube: charitable initiatives of the movement (“Lev Protiv — Help a disabled person. Charity”²⁰, “Present tulips and sweets to grandmothers on March 8” from March 07, 2019, “Lev Protiv — Help homeless animals” from February 17, 2019, “Pay for food and medicines to grandparents”²¹, which have ostentatious nature, occupy a small part of the “airtime,” and do not have such popularity as scandals and fights. Sin and fear are sold more successfully.

The vigilante movements under study have a similar genesis and it can be said that a peculiar model of “managed” (loyal) vigilantism is widespread in Russia, which tries to keep within the framework of an auxiliary institution, making rare actions of a “substitute”

¹⁷ Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSncttt_IQ (accessed: 25.10.2021).

¹⁸ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KkHrPLclPk> (accessed: 28.10.2021).

¹⁹ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJUhrb6O4TM> (accessed: 28.10.2021).

²⁰ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=necRkADpsRU> (accessed: 14.09.2021).

²¹ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s98GKkRfQpG> (accessed: 14.09.2021).

institution in case of police inaction. The desire of citizens to comply with the norms, arising as a positive phenomenon, can take various forms up to deviant (in cases when the goal becomes an exalted attraction of public attention, when public censure turns into a network reality show, and retribution into a spectacle). In these cases, digital vigilance, as the dark side of online interaction, is shown through prosecution and harassment. The phenomenon of vigilantism in Russia captures a certain social split. It is caused by both an ambiguous attitude towards the police and a loyal attitude towards symbolic violence on the part of vigilantes.

The tools of the work of these rather popular pseudo-police organizations and movements that have assumed control over public order without formal permission are ambiguous. The raids of “Lev Protiv” or “StopHam” often provoke violence, fights, and not only do not lead to real solutions to the problems raised by them but have a destructive character. They create tension in society by demonstrating examples of rudeness to young people, preaching the attractiveness of aggressive behavior. In addition, the emphasis on rough entertainment, the high emotional intensity of the videos and the refrain-like call which is typical for all the groups studied (“Watch and share!”) contributes to the involvement of young people in the activities of these or similar groups. M. Ward thoughts that “videos are recorded from the vigilante’s vantage point, and then uploaded and spread directly through their social media connections without any initial framing by press. In this way, images of firsthand violence operate as arresting displays of political power and influence, as vigilantes visibly and successfully enact violence usually reserved for the State” should be accepted [14, p. 3].

The ambiguity and inconsistency of the phenomenon of digital vigilantism is that, on the one hand, digital vigilantism can act as an element of self-organization of civil society based on values such as responsibility, participation, openness, cooperation, and the like. Such movements are most often supported by state authorities and sponsors with explicit articulation of the public values declared by the movements in the real and information space as they are able to support “mechanisms of ideological coordination by the state of various interactions of social actors” [13, p. 160]. On the other hand, there may be a demonstration of practices of “non-civil” society (deviant forms of civic activism, interception of initiatives to censure violators and retaliation, virtual and physical violence), which attract the attention of the public, and then the governmental authorities [27].

Some of the hypotheses regarding the activities of vigilantes formulated by M. Asif and D. Vennik in the article “Vigilante rituals theory: A cultural explanation of vigilante violence” can be recognized as universal and fair in relation to digital vigilantism today:

— “The likelihood for people to engage in vigilante violence increases when perceived violations of moral imperatives arouse righteous anger and fear in them.

— The likelihood for vigilante violence increases when righteous anger and fear, aroused by perceived violations of moral imperatives, are mobilized and channeled through vigilante rituals.

— The likelihood for people to transform these emotions into violence through vigilante rituals increases when legal legitimacy is low.

— The likelihood for people to transform these emotions into violence through vigilante rituals increases when authorities encourage vigilante action”.

Similar hypotheses stay relevant in relation to digital vigilantism when it comes to people's attitude to digital vigilantes and the violence they carry out:

— “Low legal legitimacy is positively associated with the support for vigilante violence.

— Authorities' encouragement of vigilante self-help is positively associated with the support for vigilante violence” [13, p. 15].

— It should be added that the attitude towards virtual violence (bullying, shaming, doctored photos, etc.) in society is more tolerant by analogy with virtual violence in games.

Thus, the repertoire of the vigilantes' network activity includes actions that compensate for the insufficiently effective activities of the state bodies, as well as actions that usurp state functions, up to the right for legitimate violence. Digital vigilantism in the implementation of discursive practices focuses on both established national values and mobile “universal” values introduced in social networks, illustrated by the phenomenon of “new ethics”. Digital vigilantism is an actual phenomenon for many modern states, not only in terms of the legal aspects of the activities of vigilantes, but also in terms of their participation in the process of forming public values via social networks. Vulgarization of language and communication practices in social networks becomes a tool of speech influence on the formation of people's consciousness and behavior. Instead of the bet on intelligence (knowledge and understanding), the bet in social networks is on the primitivization and manipulation of human biological behavior, and on its liberation from beliefs, knowledge, understanding, morality. The brightness, imagery, accessibility of visual and textual content of social networks makes groups living in networks a super-ideological digital community ready for external manipulation and management.

It is a common fact that the formation of public values involves the discussion of the most significant challenges and the joint formation of the public policy agenda, it is a joint activity of the state and civil society. A number of communities of “vigilant citizens” is really capable of interacting with the state, but among the vigilantes there are tendencies to ignore the state and law. We are talking about actions that replace legal justice, not only violating the freedom of others, but sometimes creating conditions for “opponents” and “violators” for physical violence and extra-judicial, extra-legal mechanisms and acts.

First of all, this concerns the practice of turning people into memes and using doctored photos and digital civil lynchings, often going from online to offline space. There are many examples of civic vigilance, when the initial act (an unsuccessful formulation, thought, quote) causes a reaction that, from a moral point of view, is much more dangerous and disproportionate to the act itself. For example, in October 2018 in the Sverdlovsk region, Olga Glatskikh, director of the Youth Policy Department of the Sverdlovsk region, addressing the youth, framed the infamous phrase “the state did not ask you to give birth” and enlarged the public base “Quotes from officials”²², where in the comments there are calls to kill, emotional and obscene expressions. As a reaction in the network, you can find photoshopped and doctored photos of an official (Olympic champion in rhythmic gymnastics in 2004) that are offensive and contain threats of physical violence. Despite the official inspection by the executive authorities, despite the explanations of the official about the words taken out of context, even after several years, links to mutilated photos and obscene comments accompany this surname in the search bar. Online activity is

²² Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1c_4BUoqvQ (accessed: 23.08.2021).

increasingly turning into offline actions, as was the case with the conflict in Yekaterinburg or the events in the Chemodanovka in 2019, digital vigilance is a spreading and mobilizing force that is simply impossible to ignore in modern conditions.

Based on numerous studies, it can be argued that digital vigilantes, seeking to regulate ideas about the “normality” of behavior, claim to be a significant subject in the formation of public values, using often aggressive, bordering on extremist forms of social interaction in the social networks of the digital environment. At the same time, they increasingly turn out to be not nameless avengers, but rather individuals seeking to assert themselves and achieve through inciting conflict not only their own goals (including making a profit), but also a certain popularity or “network power” that is well monetized.

The question arises about the correlation of protest practices and vigilantism. It seems that the defining issue is relations with the state. Most modern protest movements and initiatives are addressed to the state and are a form of interaction and polemics (up to demands of regime change), but not a dialogue. Digital vigilantes, claiming online to legitimize (by increasing the number of likes) an alternative system for identifying violators, criminals, victims, and punishments, are building an alternative process for the formation of public values that ignore and could replace the state. In the language of M. Foucault, visible political violence allows them to “deploy its pomp in public” [14, p.3]. The conducted research allows to conclude that vigilantism as a social phenomenon is and will be a specific form of civic engagement and involvement in publicity for certain groups of the population. The possibility of interaction with such movements (both online and offline formats) is not excluded for the system of public policy, if a framework (procedures, rules) will be established for them, which will determine their auxiliary functions (notification, informing, propaganda). The proliferation of vigilante movements and their demonstration of direct violence is a significant indicator of the inefficiency of the public policy system, a decrease in the level of legitimacy and support for its institutions and indicates an increased risk of loss of state governability.

Continuing to study various aspects of modern public policy in Russia and in the world, we are sure that “the civil organizations and citizens’ remoteness from the centers, political and governmental decisions channels of passing by bureaucratic procedures, regulations, legislative rules, have to be overcome not only by the interactions initiated by the power, but also by creation of conditions for development of the local citizens’ initiatives contributing to the development of society and multiplication of the public benefit (including using the ICT)” [28, p.345–346]. However, in the context of the problem of the development of vigilantism in Russia, the importance of the formation of “constitutionalism of citizens’ consciousness” as a factor of for preserving state governability is only increasing.

References

1. Smorgunov, L. V. (2019), Institutionalization of governability and the problem of veillance in the space of digital communications, *Iuzhno-rossiiskii zhurnal sotsial'nykh nauk*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 62–75. (In Russian)
2. Danilov, A.N. (2020), Return of the dictatorship: a new reading of modernity, *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 105–115, <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu17.2020.109>. (In Russian)
3. Sunami, A.N. and Trufanov, G. A. (2021), Hostility discourse on account in mediasphere and risk reflection frame, *Konfliktologiya*, no. 4, pp. 43–57. (In Russian).
4. Smith, N.R. (2019), *Contradictions of democracy: Vigilantism and rights in post-apartheid South Africa*, New York: Oxford University Press.

5. Lund, C. (2006), Twilight institutions: Public authority and local politics in Africa, *Development and Change*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 685–705.
6. Arrobi, M. Z. (2018), Vigilantism as 'Twilight Institution': Islamic Vigilante Groups and the State in Post-Suharto Yogyakarta, *PCD Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 213–237. <https://doi.org/10.22146/pcd.35215>
7. Nivette, A. E. (2016), Institutional ineffectiveness, illegitimacy, and public support for vigilantism in Latin America, *Criminology*, no. 54, pp. 142–175. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12099>
8. Moncada, E. (2017), Varieties of vigilantism: conceptual discord, meaning and strategies, *Global Crime*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 403–423.
9. Johnston, L. (1996), What Is Vigilantism?, *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 220–236.
10. Phillips, B. (2017), Inequality and the Emergence of Vigilante Organizations: The Case of Mexican Autodefensas, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 50, no. 10, pp. 1358–1389. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414016666863>
11. Kyei, J. R. K. O. and Berckmoes, L. H. (2021), Political Vigilante Groups in Ghana: Violence or Democracy?, *Africa Spectrum*, vol. 55, no. 3, pp. 321–338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002039720970957>
12. Schuberth, M. (2013), Challenging the weak states hypothesis: Vigilantism in South Africa and Brazil, *Journal of Peace, Conflict & Development*, no. 20, pp. 38–51.
13. Asif, M. and Weenink, D. (2019), Vigilante rituals theory: A cultural explanation of vigilante violence, *European Journal of Criminology*, vol. 19, iss. 2, pp. 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370819887518>
14. Ward, M. (2020), Walls and Cows: Social Media, Vigilante Vantage, and Political Discourse, *Social Media + Society*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 1–4.
15. Bateson, R. (2021), The Politics of Vigilantism, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 54, no. 6, pp. 923–955. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020957692>
16. Trottier, D. (2016), Digital Vigilantism as Weaponisation of Visibility, *Philosophy & Technology*, vol. 30, iss. 1, pp. 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0216-4>
17. Trottier, D. (2019), Denunciation and doxing: towards a conceptual model of digital vigilantism, *Global Crime*, vol. 21, no. 3–4, pp. 196–212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2019.1591952>
18. Chang, L. Y. C. and Poon, R. (2017), Internet Vigilantism: Attitudes and Experiences of University Students Toward Cyber Crowdsourcing in Hong Kong, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, vol. 61, no. 16, pp. 912–932. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X16639037>
19. Douglas, D. (2016), Doxing: A Conceptual Analysis, *Ethics and Information Technology*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 199–210.
20. Skoric, M. M., Wong, K. H., Chua, J. P. E., Yeo P. J. and Liew, M. A. (2010), Online shaming in the Asian context: Community empowerment or civic vigilantism?, *Surveillance and Society*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 181–199.
21. Dunsby R. M. and Howes L. M. (2019), The NEW adventures of the digital vigilante! Facebook* users' views on online naming and shaming, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 41–59.
22. Mclure, H. (2000), The wild, wild web: The mythic American west and the electronic frontier, *The Western Historical Quarterly*, no. 31, pp. 457–476.
23. Meagher, K. (2007), Hijacking civil society: The inside story of the Bakassi Boys vigilante group of south-eastern Nigeria, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 89–115.
24. Tilly, C. (2003), *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
25. Volkova, A. V. and Lukyanova, G. V. (2020), Communication strategies of digital vigilantes: in search of justice, *Proceedings of the 2020 IEEE Communication Strategies in Digital Society Seminar, ComSDS*, pp. 24–26. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ComSDS49898.2020.9101239>
26. Kulakova, T. A. and Kuznetsov, N. V. (2014), Manageability: mechanisms of ideological coordination of the modern Russian State, *Konfliktologiya*, no. 4, pp. 160–177. (In Russian)
27. Petrova, N. P. and Petrova, A. A. (2021), Violence as a mechanism of constituting social reality, *Konfliktologiya*, no. 2, pp. 172–179. (In Russian)
28. Kulakova, T. A. and Volkova, A. V. (2019), Ethical dimensions of anticorruption policy, *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 336–348.

Received: July 5, 2021

Accepted: December 27, 2021

Authors' information:

Tatyana A. Kulakova — Dr. Sci. in Political Sciences, Professor; koulakova812@mail.ru

Anna V. Volkova — Dr. Sci. in Political Sciences, Professor; a.volkova@spbu.ru

* Meta признана экстремистской организацией в РФ.

Сообщества, дискурсивные практики и поведенческие паттерны цифрового вигилантизма в России: политико-аксиологический подход*

Т. А. Кулакова, А. В. Волкова

Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет,
Российская Федерация, 199034, Санкт-Петербург, Университетская наб., 7–9

Для цитирования: *Kulakova T.A., Volkova A.V. Communities, discursive practices and behavioral patterns of digital vigilantism in Russia: Politico-axiological approach // Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Философия и конфликтология. 2022. Т. 38. Вып. 1. С. 64–81. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu17.2022.106>*

Авторы статьи обратились к изучению вигилантизма, специфической формы гражданской активности, историю которого можно проследить с XIX в. и который в эпоху цифровизации приобретает новые характеристики. Цифровой вигилантизм как достаточно оформившееся социальное явление не только в мировой практике, но и в России, нуждается в анализе его структуры, целей, мотивации, интересов и ценностей членов различных сообществ для определения тенденций изменения гражданского общества в условиях цифровых трансформаций. Цифровые вигиланты, стремящиеся к регулированию представлений о «нормальности» поведения, используя агрессивные, граничащие с экстремистскими формы взаимодействия в социальных сетях, претендуют на роль значимого субъекта публичной политики. Легитимируя (за счет наращивания числа лайков) альтернативную систему определения нарушителей, преступников, жертв и наказаний, они не только стремятся к перехвату инициативы по формированию публичных ценностей, но зачастую игнорируют и замещают структуру государства. При этом они все чаще оказываются не безымянными мстителями, а скорее индивидами, стремящимися заявить о себе и добиться через разжигание конфликта не только собственных целей, но и определенной популярности или «сетевой власти», которая хорошо монетизируется. Авторы анализируют поведенческие паттерны наиболее известных сообществ («Лев Против», «СтопХам», «Хрюши против», «АнтиДилер»), их активность в социальной сети ВКонтакте и в YouTube и предпринимают попытку типологизации российского вигилантизма. В статье делается вывод о том, что для системы публичной власти не исключена возможность взаимодействия с такими движениями (как в онлайн-, так и в офлайн-форматах) в случае, если для них будут установлены рамки (процедуры, правила), которые определяют их вспомогательные функции (оповещение, информирование, пропаганда). Разрастание вигилантских движений и демонстрация ими прямого насилия является значимым индикатором неэффективности системы публичного управления, снижения уровня легитимности и поддержки ее институтов, свидетельствует о повышении риска потери государственной управляемости.

Ключевые слова: цифровой вигилантизм, публичная политика, публичные ценности, гражданское участие, социальные сети, дискурсивные практики, конфликты, негражданское общество.

Статья поступила в редакцию 5 июля 2021 г.;
рекомендована к печати 27 декабря 2021 г.

Контактная информация:

Кулакова Татьяна Александровна — д-р филос. наук, проф.; t.kulakova@spbu.ru
Волкова Анна Владимировна — д-р полит. наук, проф.; a.volkova@spbu.ru

* Исследование выполнено при финансовой поддержке РФФИ, ЭИСИ 21-011-31445 «Цифровой вигилантизм и практики формирования публичных ценностей: захват сетевого гражданского общества?».