



## OPPOSITION POLITICS IN RUSSIA: WHERE ARE THEY?

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## Calculus of Dissent: How the Kremlin Is Countering Its Rivals

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### Abstract

The murder of Boris Nemtsov on 27 February 2015 dealt an enormous blow to the Russian opposition. Regardless of whether the Kremlin was responsible, the assassination marked a turning point in its policy toward its rivals. In essence, the brutal and conspicuous political violence against one of the Kremlin's most visible critics just two days before scheduled major anti-regime rallies was a clear sign that the regime had adopted a strategy for increasing the use of coercion vis-à-vis organized political dissent in Russia. This article examines why these tendencies recently began to dominate Russia's political landscape and what to expect for the future.

### From Cooptation to Coercion

Russia's authoritarian regime is hardly unique. In the face of increasing resistance from the opposition, many dictatorships adopt measures to contain their detractors. The menu of authoritarian strategies includes coopting real and potential rivals, the use of propaganda for discrediting critics, and the politics of fear, which may include varieties of coercion or threats to use it. These strategies address both opposition activists and potential supporters, who do not agree with government policy, but see anti-regime activities as a costly venture. In the case of cooptation, regime critics may ultimately benefit from their conversion to loyalty; in the case of coercion, the price of disloyalty may be high (as Nemtsov's tragic murder ostensibly demonstrated). Indeed, not all authoritarian regimes are blatantly bloody: for a number of reasons, some dictators tend to use coercion as an option of last resort. Up until now, Russia also fit this category.

The late-Soviet practice of political control, which in many ways serves as a role model for Russia's current leadership, was not overly repressive by international standards. The Soviet coercive apparatus preferred to rely upon "preventive work" (*proflakticheskaya rabota*), which included monitoring disloyal citizens and intimidating them: the risk of being punished for open anti-regime activism was perceived as high, so it was no wonder that most people limited their disloyalty to kitchen conversations. Under these conditions, the narrow milieu of devoted dissidents found it hard to broaden their ranks, despite a large number of sympathizers. At the same time, the regime used a wide range of "active measures" (*aktivnye meropriyatiya*) to punish its loudest and most dangerous rivals: even though the number of political prisoners in the late-Soviet period was relatively low, coercive techniques, ranging from job loss to forced emigration, were pervasive. Thus, Soviet citizens received clear signals that being involved in organized dissent would lead to trouble, and largely abstained from it, until the period of perestroika. To some extent, post-Soviet rulers learned some lessons from this experience.

The decline of the political opposition of various colors during the 2000s made the task of containing organized political dissent in Russia relatively easy for the Kremlin. Even though the threat of importing "color revolutions" to Russia was widely exaggerated by pro-regime loyalists, the strategy of preemptive counterrevolution bore fruit for the Russian leadership. On the one hand, the Kremlin used various carrots, seeking to incorporate moderate critics into loyalist systemic parties (such as Just Russia), state-supported NGOs and other regime-driven projects. On the other hand, the regime wielded sticks by toughening its regulation of rallies and meetings, pressuring irreconcilable opponents, and deploying divide-and-rule tactics. When the opposition was driven into a nearly hopeless political ghetto, its public support dropped to negligible levels, and its noisy events, at best, brought together hundreds of irrelevant freaks.

Ultimately, the preference for cooptation over actual coercion served to bolster the Kremlin's dominance. However, this strategy was short-sighted. The growing demand for political changes, which occurred during Medvedev's presidency, greatly contributed to the post-election protests of 2011–2012, and raised questions about the effectiveness of the previous strategy.

In the wake of 2011–2012 "rebellion," the Kremlin faced several new challenges. Not only did the opposition renew its ranks and experience an inflow of activists from the post-Soviet generation, but leaders who were about 40 years old, ranging from Alexei Navalny and Sergei Udaltsov to Vladimir Milov, came to the forefront. Moreover, some new organizational forms and techniques, such as crowdfunding and social media platforms used as mechanisms for coordinating anti-regime activism, at least partly compensated for the shortage of resources and the lack of organizational capabilities among the Kremlin's rivals. Thus, the wave of protests became a wake-up call for the Kremlin: the day after the presidential elections in March 2012, Vladi-

mir Putin announced a “tightening of the screws” vis-à-vis the opposition. Over the next three years, he kept this promise.

The turning point occurred on 6 May 2012, when some protest rally participants in Moscow clashed with the police. More than two dozen attendees (not all of whom were activists) were accused of breaking the law and imprisoned; some activists left the country. The random nature of the arrests served the goals of intimidating a broad pool of opposition supporters and citizens who might have become supporters if it were not so dangerous. Also, claims that members of the opposition beat the police and engaged in other disruptive actions legitimized the tendency to adopt increasingly repressive legal norms, which gave the law enforcement agencies broad discretion and allowed arbitrary implementation. In 2012–13, the Kremlin pursued several legislative initiatives aimed to deter opposition activities, including:

- The “foreign agents law,” which required Russian NGOs with funding from abroad to register as “foreign agents” if they performed “political functions.” This term was formulated deliberately vaguely and often applied to any form of organized civil and social activism. The media portrayed the targets as members of a “fifth column” or “national traitors.” The latest version of the law allows law enforcement agencies to label any NGO as a “foreign agent,” even without a court’s decision.
- New regulations on Internet use, which allows state officials unilaterally to block websites and social media applications for numerous real or imagined transgressions—again, even without a court order (this clause was applied against opposition-leaning websites, such as grani.ru and ej.ru, which criticized the Russian annexation of Crimea);
- Amendments to the criminal code making defamation in the media a crime (previously, under Medvedev, these issues were qualified as matters of civil rather than criminal procedure);
- Amendments to rules on financial transactions, which limited the size of anonymous financial donations and the quantity of financial transactions by individuals (with the pretext of combatting terrorism); and
- The broadening of regulations with regard to combating various forms of “extremism,” including “insulting religious feelings” and “separatist claims”: not only has the legal definition of these practices been made vague, but also punishment for violations of these norms has become more severe, including not only fines, but also incarceration.

### “Tightening the Screws”

The post-2012 combination of stricter regulations and more arbitrary implementation in Russia contributed to the consistent and wide-ranging politics of fear, which targeted not only journalists, bloggers and civic activists (who were perceived by the Kremlin as real and potential members of the opposition), but also some academics, such as former rector of the New Economic School Sergei Guriev, who fled to Paris after being interrogated by prosecutors, or Professor Mikhail Savva from Krasnodar, who was accused of espionage by the local branch of the FSB, and then escaped from Russia to Ukraine. Overall, the Kremlin encouraged its rivals to leave the country, rightly considering that beyond Russia’s border they would be less dangerous for the regime. Still, the number of political prisoners in Russia remained relatively low for a dictatorship: Memorial counted about seventy names in late 2013.

By mid-2013, the Kremlin had seemingly minimized the threat from the opposition on the electoral front. At best, regime opponents could win individual seats in regional legislatures and make no more trouble for the Kremlin than the “loyal” systemic parties. But these expectations proved to be wrong in the case of the Moscow mayoral elections. On the eve of the city’s mayoral campaign, Navalny, the most popular and capable leader of the new generation of the opposition, had very little support among Moscow voters. The Kremlin calculated that a landslide victory in fair elections for its candidate would greatly discourage the opposition, and show voters that there were no viable alternatives to the status quo. Assuming that such an outcome was inevitable, Navalny, who was undergoing a criminal trial during the campaign, was allowed to register as a candidate and released from prison the day after a court had sentenced him. Apparently, the Kremlin wanted to imprison Navalny after the polls, but it underestimated his potential; he organized an energetic electoral campaign based around a young, dynamic, and creative staff, attracted a large number of devoted volunteers, effectively used crowd-funding techniques, and mobilized a sizeable number of voters beyond the opposition’s core supporters. The election results exceeded virtually all predictions: Navalny received more than 600,000 Muscovite votes. Most probably the Kremlin’s strategists deeply regretted their decision to hold fair elections instead of adopting the previous practices of arbitrarily excluding rivals and manipulating the results. The outcome of the 2014 mayoral election in Novosibirsk was even more stunning: a coalition of five opposition candidates threw their support to the local Communist leader, Anatoly Lokot, who won the race against the incumbent, backed by United Russia.

The Kremlin, however, also learned some lessons about the risks of letting the opposition compete in electoral campaigns and the potential for its unexpected success. During the new round of subnational elections in September 2014, the Kremlin corrected its mistakes and almost no serious opposition candidates were allowed to run anywhere in the country.

The annexation of Crimea marked a new round of Kremlin screw tightening. Efforts to publicly discredit the opposition in the media became more intense and universal, while the politics of fear materialized in the more active and systematic harassment of leaders, activists, and organizations. Navalny (who previously was given probation after being found guilty in a manufactured criminal case) was put under house arrest; his right hand and fundraiser, Vladimir Ashurkov, was accused of criminal wrongdoing and fled the country; and his brother was incarcerated for three and a half years, thus becoming a kind of hostage. In addition to using the media and law enforcement as tools of coercion, violence against the opposition became more widespread: some regime critics were severely beaten by unknown mobsters (such as Pskov regional legislator from Yabloko Lev Shlosberg, whose whistleblowing about casualties among Russian soldiers in the Donbass annoyed the Russian authorities). Moreover, in early 2015 a group of pro-Kremlin activists and militants announced the emergence of Antimaidan, a new GONGO-like organization, focused on preventing anti-regime mass mobilization through the use of force. In the light of these developments, Nemtsov's assassination may be per-

ceived as a logical extension of what the Russian regime achieved vis-à-vis the opposition so far.

The immediate effect of Nemtsov's murder was quite straightforward: the opposition was heavily demoralized, and even though opposition rallies in Moscow and St. Petersburg scheduled on 1 March 2015 gathered a large number of participants, their purpose in the eyes of the broader public shifted to mourning Nemtsov rather than promoting anti-regime stances. Overall, this assassination sent a strong warning to elite and middle class representatives who may sympathize with the opposition that they should abstain from unauthorized and unconventional political activism. To what extent this message will be taken seriously remains to be seen.

It is difficult to judge the degree to which the use of political violence against the regime's opponents will become a major Kremlin tool for repressing its rivals and society at large. The implementation of a harsh coercive strategy is possible (yet not predetermined) if the authorities perceive a threat of mass mobilization or regime overthrow. In other words, if the Kremlin's politics of fear do not achieve their goals, the regime could resort to various types of force. But these perceptions may be affected by numerous factors which are hardly predictable. Authoritarian regimes, including Russia's, often suffer from a lack of correct information about the situation in their respective countries. Accordingly, their calculus of dissent and choice of coercive strategies may be risky for the rulers themselves. Certainly, these developments potentially are even more hazardous for Russian society.

#### *About the Author*

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#### *Further Readings*

Gel'man, Vladimir, 2015, "Political Opposition in Russia: A Troubled Transformation," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67 (2): 177–191.

## An Uphill Battle: Maintaining Political Opposition in the Context of Russia's Nationalist Turn

By David White, Birmingham

### Abstract

In September 2013 Russian political opposition activists in Moscow were basking in the glory of Alexei Navalny's mayoral campaign and discussing what they saw as the very real possibility of taking seats in the September 2014 Moscow parliamentary elections. Eighteen months on and in the wake of the 'nationalist turn' in Russian politics spawned in part by the annexation of Crimea and support for Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, the political conditions in which opposition operates have significantly worsened. This article analyses the challenges in mobilising opposition and protest to the Putin regime in the current political environment and the options open to opposition activists. Ultimately the most realistic scenario for the opposition is simply to stay in existence until more conducive conditions present themselves.

September 2013 marks the highpoint in the fortunes of political opposition in Russia. In the Moscow mayoral elections the opposition candidate, Alexei Navalny, achieved a highly credible 27.9 per cent of the vote, almost forcing the incumbent, Sergei Sobyenin into a second round. I was in Moscow in the immediate aftermath of the election to renew acquaintances with a number of my contacts in the so-called 'non-systemic' opposition, to assess opportunities and to hear about future strategies in the light of Navalny's 'success'. The mood amongst opposition activists, including many who had participated in Navalny's campaign, was more buoyant than I had experienced in fifteen years of researching political opposition in Russia. There was plenty of evidence of Navalny's campaign as I travelled around the capital. A week after the election Navalny's team was still handing out newsletters outside metro stations and, what's more, people were going out of their way to actually pick them up. Cars bearing Navalny's name on the familiar blue background, echoing the placards held aloft by his supporters during the demonstrations in July 2013 following his sentencing for alleged embezzlement, were a common sight. I talked to one of Navalny's closest aides in a Vietnamese restaurant which appeared to be full of his supporters. Planning had already started for the Moscow Duma elections of September 2014. Navalny intended to register his own party and agreement was reached with other parties and individuals to contest the elections together. It might seem like hopeless optimism now but activists were talking then about what they saw as the real possibility of getting their people elected to the Moscow Duma, even possibly holding a majority.

Long before the elections of September 2014, however, Russia's political landscape looked a very different place. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the subsequent conflict in eastern

Ukraine, the distinct nationalist, anti-Western turn in Russian politics fostered by the Kremlin's rhetoric was clearly not conducive to an opposition largely comprising of pro-democracy, pro-European, pro-Western forces. By the summer of 2014 the opposition's best laid plans for competing in the autumn elections had also gone awry. One by one the 'For Moscow' coalition candidates were barred from standing. In March the State Duma passed legislation introducing legislation requiring all independent candidates to obtain signatures from three percent of their constituents in order to compete. For the coalition candidates, who were all standing as independents, this meant gathering around 5,000 signatures in thirty days. Most were unable to do so and those that managed the task, including Maria Gaidar (daughter of former Prime Minister, Egor Gaidar) were later prevented from standing on the grounds that the electoral commission found that too many of their signatures were fraudulent or otherwise inadmissible. Only three candidates belonging to the liberal Yabloko party, already registered from the previous election, were left standing. Moreover, the opposition's talisman, Alexei Navalny, was once more under house arrest facing fresh charges. Vladimir Ashurkov, one of Navalny's closest aides, was seeking asylum in London having also been charged with embezzlement.

How political opposition in Russia is defined needs some clarification here. It has become common place to think of Russian political opposition as being neatly divided into 'systemic' and 'non-systemic' categories, the former being represented by parties in parliament, the latter being those excluded from or unable to gain entry to the Duma. Such a conceptualisation is increasingly outdated and it makes rather more sense to think in terms of *systemic parties* (those represented in the legislature and who all provide a role in sustaining the regime) and *non-systemic parties* (by virtue of not being

part of the system, such parties and movements are *de facto* opposition organisations). Opposition politics in Russia is therefore much more the politics of the street than of the ballot box or legislature. Regardless of the setback for the 'For Moscow' coalition, a truer indication of the declining fortunes of political opposition came not from an inability to contest elections, opposition parties in Russia have become accustomed to electoral exclusion, but from dwindling numbers of people prepared to take to the streets. The stark fact for Russian political opposition is that the mobilisation of supporters has become ever more difficult.

### Why Aren't People Protesting?

The first thing to explain is that they are, to an extent. Around 30,000 people joined an anti-war protest in Moscow in September 2014 and regular smaller-scale demonstrations and pickets have been held in Moscow and other major cities. On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2014, an estimated 5,000 Muscovites turned out in freezing temperatures to protest the sentence handed down to Navalny and his brother, Oleg (a suspended sentence for Alexei and a two-and-a-half year custodial sentence for Oleg—the charges are to all intents and purposes, entirely spurious). These are, however, nothing like the numbers who protested in 2011–12 after the parliamentary elections. Mobilising large numbers of formerly passive opponents to the regime has clearly become a major challenge for the opposition—why is this the case?

### Change in Post-Crimea Political Environment?

As noted above, the changing political environment in which any critical voices of Russian policy towards Ukraine are promptly labelled as Western stooges or fifth columnists is clearly a factor. The broad opposition movement itself is divided over Crimea and the actions of pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Those on the left, for instance Sergei Udaltsov and Eduard Limonov have expressed support for the annexation (or, as they would view it reunification) of Crimea and for Russian separatists. Meanwhile the liberals have remained implacably opposed to both. Given the consistently high level of support thus far for the Kremlin's Ukrainian policy and the prevalent anti-Western and nationalistic mood in society, attempts at mobilisation by forces seen as favouring democratic, 'European' values have not been met with the kind of positive response which, for instance, followed the parliamentary elections in the winter of 2011–12. Anecdotal evidence from discussions with contacts in the opposition movement point to a growing disillusionment amongst activists faced with problems of mobilising support in the current environment.

### The Moby Dick Scenario?

Writing in the Moscow Times on 4<sup>th</sup> February, the businessman and journalist, Lev Kadik addressed the same question—why no protests? Was it because Russians are effectively slaves asked his European friends. Neither were they slaves, nor were they poisoned by propaganda, responded Kadik. Instead the Russian people had effectively become a Peqoud crew (the Peqoud being the whaleship in Melville's 'Moby Dick'). In the past, ships captains were seen as magicians, only they knew how to read maps and use sextants, the poorly paid and badly educated sailors had to accept the captain's will and mutinies were rare and very rarely successful. Ordinary sailors didn't know how to run the ship or where to go without their captain—neither, argued Kadik, do Russians today. Whatever they may think about their President, only he knows how to run the ship. Support for Putin and conversely the lack of support for opposition protest stems from the 'practical wishes of trapped people to stay safe in turbulent times'.

### Natural Part of Protest Cycle?

The decrease in street protest activity could be viewed as natural part of the protest cycle. As the social movement theorist Sidney Tarrow reminds us, we would expect to see mobilisation increase at times when the regime shows vulnerability and this would, of course, help to explain the spike in protest activity in the winter of 2011–12 following the fraudulent parliamentary elections and at a relative low-point in support for Putin. It is certainly true that common theme in conversations with opposition activists is that maintaining high levels of mobilisation outside election periods remains their major challenge and one that has yet to be adequately met.

### The Influence of Repression on Mobilisation?

Social movement literature points to a correlation between levels of repression and mobilisation although the linkage is often contradictory. Generally though we might expect to find opposition mobilisation increasing at times of lower repression. A number of opposition activists have suggested to me that we shouldn't underestimate Medvedev's period as president as a more relaxed period where opposition movements were able to develop strategy, build coalitions and prepare for action. The evidence in the Russian case tends to support the argument that increased repression leads to demobilisation. We do not have to search hard for those repressive measures during Putin's third term: the clampdown on NGOs; the hounding of key individuals such as Navalny and Udaltsov; the continued imprisonment of 4<sup>th</sup> May 2012 protesters; and the portrayal of opposition activists as fifth columnists and so on.

The long-term success or failure of opposition actions is dependent on the mobilisation of large numbers of passive opponents of the regime but increased repression clearly raises the costs of protest, a dynamic recognised by opposition activists. Referring to an earlier round of protests in 2010, the activist, Ilya Yashin told me that:

*On 23<sup>rd</sup> October [2010] we had about 1,500 people on Pushkin Square for an anti-Putin protest. We need more but people are really afraid. We say come along, the more there are, the bigger the rally, the safer you will be. But they are still not sure.*

One cannot discount genuine fear of the consequences of taking part in street protest as a major de-mobilising factor. Such latent fear can only have been exacerbated by the assassination of Boris Nemtsov on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015. If such a prominent figure can be targeted in this way, the logical thinking may go, then how safe are ordinary citizens who take part in protests? Speaking at a panel organised by former Finance Minister, Aleksei Kudrin's Civic Initiatives Committee in March 2015, the sociologist, Sergei Belanovsky, stated that there was a 'new factor of fear' in Russia and that people were afraid to lose what they have. As a result there was, in effect, a 'protest against protests'.

### Political Opportunities for Opposition Mobilisation?

Opposition movements in non-democratic systems the world over face the challenge of raising the costs of authoritarian rule outside of election periods but the post-Crimea political landscape which Russian political opposition now finds itself in poses fresh and possibly insurmountable challenges at least in the short to medium term. In these conditions do any political opportunities exist for opposition or should activists enter a period of enforced hibernation and await more conducive conditions?

### Ukraine, the Impact of Sanctions and the Failing Economy

The liberal opposition in the form of the Solidarity movement, Yabloko, Navalny's Progress Party and the Party of People's Freedom (RPR-PARNAS) have consistently opposed the Kremlin's Ukrainian policy and have had limited success in mobilising support for anti-war demonstrations. However, as noted above, the levels of support for the annexation of Crimea coupled with growing levels of anti-Western sentiment suggest this is not much of an opportunity at all. Some activists have talked about how the effect of sanctions may lead to declining levels of support for the regime but as long as the West is perceived as the villain, the appeal of a European-looking opposition appears to remain limited.

How stable though is support for the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine? Mikhail Dmitriyev, head of the Moscow-based Centre for Strategic Research think tank and a member of Kudrin's committee has argued that support for Putin has always been linked to how people felt about the economy. As public faith in the economy has declined Putin has had to rely on his stance on Ukraine and the demonization of the West over sanctions in order to maintain high levels of support for the regime. Should the 'Ukraine factor' fade away or if the conflict becomes 'frozen', argues Dmitriyev, we may see Putin's ratings decline sharply bringing it into line with attitudes towards the economy. Such a shift in the political environment may, in turn, present political opposition with an opportunity to challenge a weakened regime.

### Unity of Opposition—the Key Variable

These are undoubtedly difficult times for political opposition in Russia and unity is going to be a clear challenge. As scholars such as Alfred Stepan and Marc Morjé Howard and Philip Roessler have argued, unity, and specifically the ability to create and maintain broad opposition coalitions is a key variable in successful opposition challenges to a non-democratic regime. Thus far Russian political opposition, by focusing on *procedure* rather than *policy*, has maintained a surprisingly high degree of unity. It used to be common at protests and demonstrations to see the liberals, Ilya Yashin and Boris Nemtsov together with the communist, Sergei Udaltsov, and the liberal-nationalist, Aleksei Navalny.

The coalition of *liberal* opposition appears to be holding together despite a history of fractious relations between the social and economic liberal tendencies. Boris Nemtsov had been attempting to launch a formal coalition to be known as 'European Choice' (possibly not the most appealing of names given the current anti-Western hysteria in Russia). At the beginning of April 2015 opposition leaders (including Alexei Navalny, Mikhail Kasyanov and Vladimir Ryzhkov of RPR-PARNAS, the Just Russia deputy, Dmitry Gudkov, former economy minister in Gaidar's government, Andrei Nechayev, and leader of the Democratic Choice party, Vladimir Milov) reached a tentative agreement to field candidates on a single ticket for the 2016 parliamentary elections. However, in order to comply with Russian electoral legislation they will have to compete as a single party. In the past the challenge of dissolving the myriad of opposition parties and creating a single and united liberal-democratic party has proved too great, such initiatives breaking down over ideological and programmatic differences and clashes of personality. Speaking after the meeting Dmitry Gudkov hoped that other opposition forces, particularly the Yabloko party would join the new

initiative. To bring Yabloko, Russia's longest established liberal party, on board would be something of a coup although in the past the party's leadership has strenuously resisted such moves.

### Conclusion

As Andreas Schedler reminds us, electoral authoritarianism, whilst built to withstand transformation, is not entirely impervious to an effective opposition challenge. The *electoral* component can and has facilitated successful challenges to such regime. Similarly, Larry Diamond points to potential opposition openings in hybrid regimes. Opposition breakthroughs are possible but require "a level of opposition mobilisation, unity and skill, and heroism", way beyond what would be required to bring about change in a consolidated democracy.

*Unity* has been something of an issue for political opposition forces in Russia, particularly amongst the liberal-democratic forces but the post-election protests of 2011–12 did, however, see a greater degree of collabora-

tion amongst opposition forces, a trend which appears to be still in place, evidenced by the latest coming together of liberal-democratic forces.

The mayoral campaign of 2013 was certainly *skilful* and, in Aleksei Navalny, the Russian political opposition has a charismatic and *heroic* leader who, despite lingering concerns about his sometimes overtly nationalist stance, might be seen as a fresh alternative, not tainted with the mistakes of the past.

However, the *mobilisation* referred to by Diamond remains the main challenge for Russian political opposition. Through mobilising civil society by capitalising on widespread discontent with the conduct of the 2011 parliamentary elections, political opposition proved that it was able to raise the costs of authoritarian rule.

A greater challenge, and one acknowledged by political opposition actor is to achieve similar levels of mobilisation *outside* the election period. In the post-Crimea landscape political opportunities are likely to be few and far between.

#### *About the Author*

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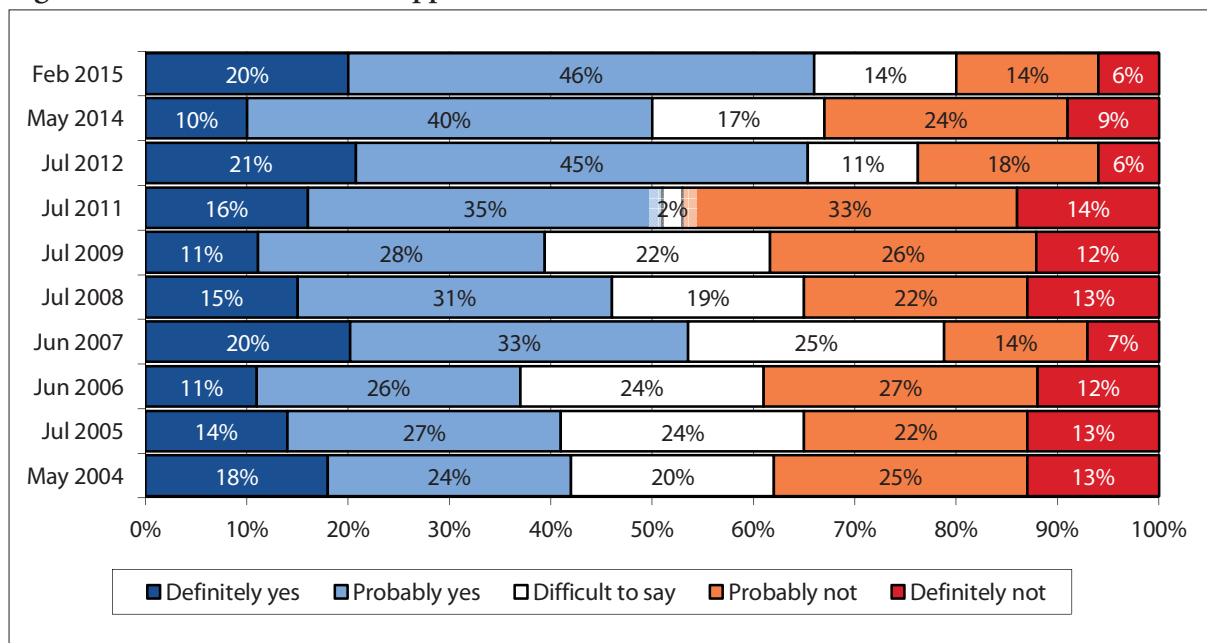


OPINION POLL

## “Does Russia Need An Opposition?”

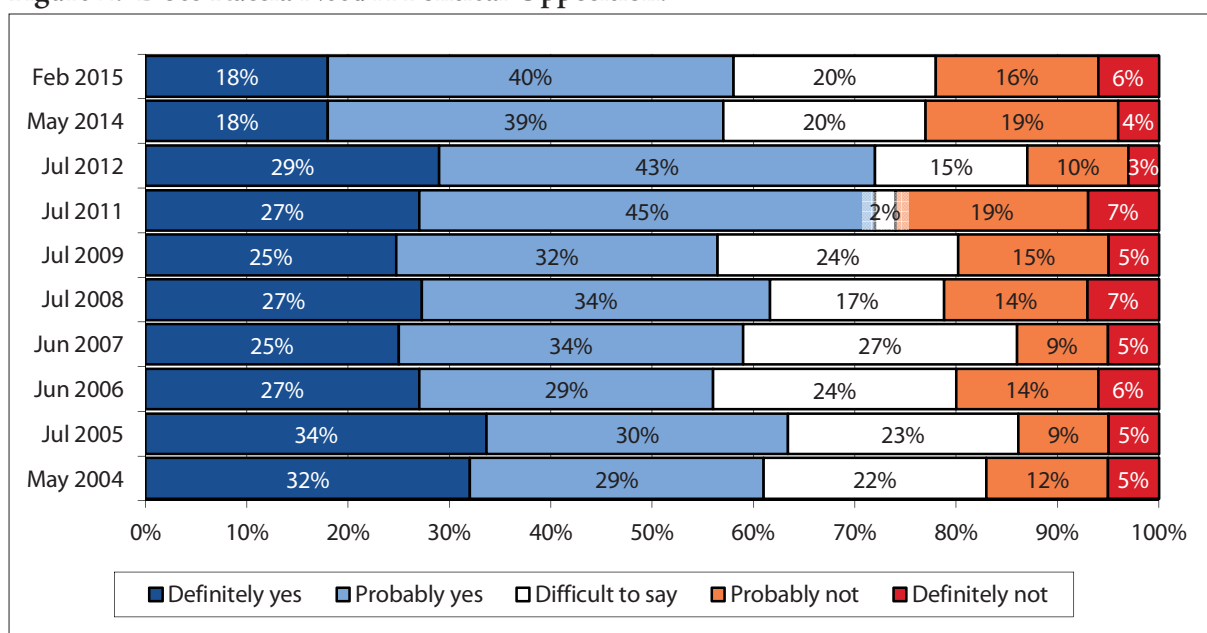
Results of Representative Polls of the Russian Population conducted by Levada Center

Figure 1: Is There A Political Opposition in Russia?



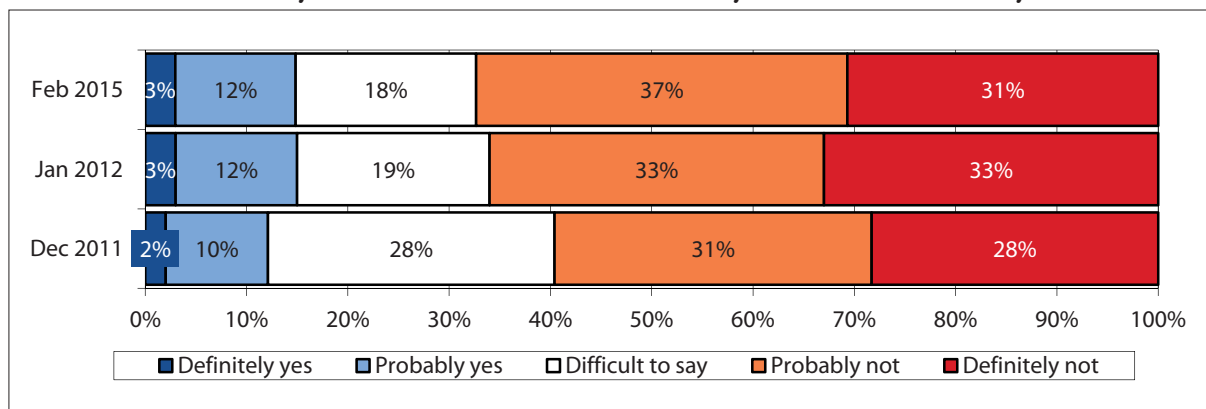
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center May 2004 – February 2015; N (for polls of 20–23 February 2015) = 1600. Published on 27 February 2015 on: <<http://www.levada.ru/print/27-02-2015/neobkhodimost-politicheskoi-oppozitsii-i-podderzhka-oppozitsionnykh-trebovaniy>>

Figure 2: Does Russia Need A Political Opposition?



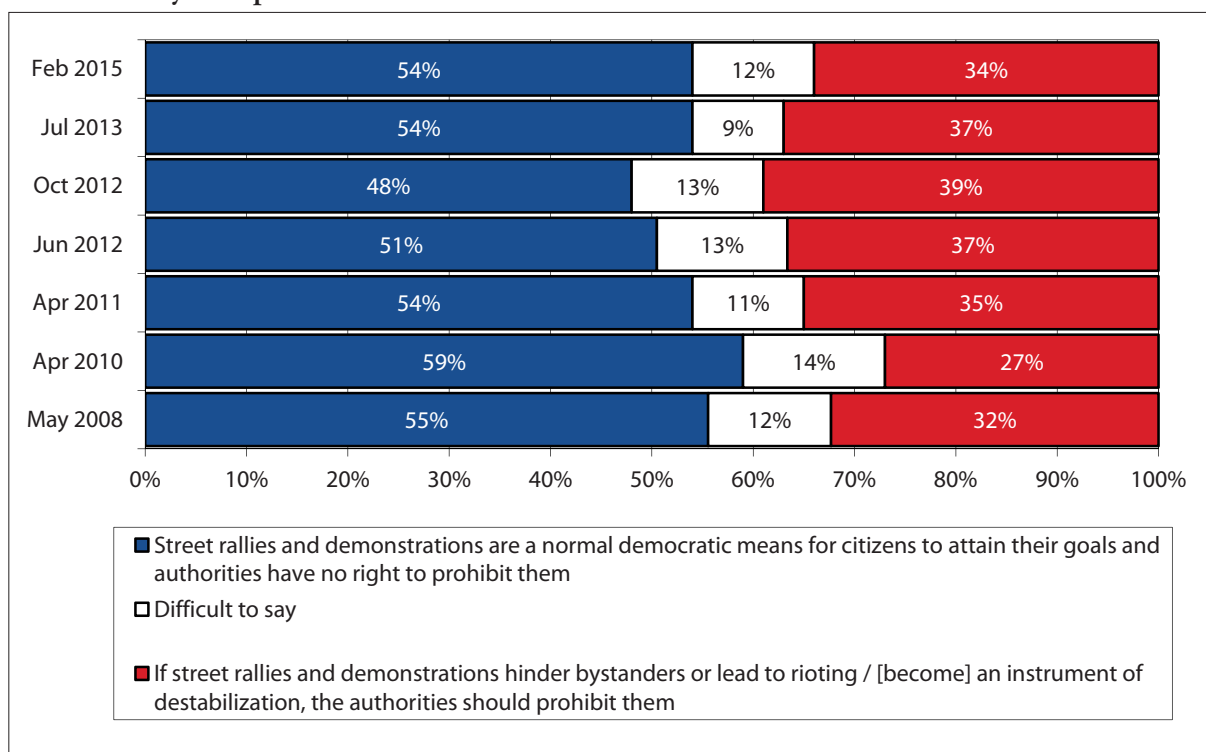
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center May 2004 – February 2015; N (for polls of 20–23 February 2015) = 1600. Published on 27 February 2015 on: <<http://www.levada.ru/print/27-02-2015/neobkhodimost-politicheskoi-oppozitsii-i-podderzhka-oppozitsionnykh-trebovaniy>>

**Figure 3: Do You Sympathize With the Leaders of the “Non-Systemic Opposition”, Such As Mikhail Kasyanov, Boris Nemtsov, Vladimir Ryzhkov, Alexei Navalny, and Others?**



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center December 2011 – February 2015; N (for polls of 20–23 February 2015) = 1600. Published on 27 February 2015 on: <<http://www.levada.ru/print/27-02-2015/neobkhodimost-politicheskoi-oppozitsii-i-podderzhka-oppozitsionnykh-trebovaniy>>

**Figure 4: Some people believe that street rallies and demonstrations are a normal democratic means to express citizens’ positions and the authorities have no right to prohibit them. Others think that street rallies and demonstrations are an instrument to destabilize order in the country and should be prohibited. Which of these points of view is closer to your opinion?**



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center May 2008 – February 2015; N (for polls of 20–23 February 2015) = 1600. Published on 27 February 2015 on: <<http://www.levada.ru/print/27-02-2015/neobkhodimost-politicheskoi-oppozitsii-i-podderzhka-oppozitsionnykh-trebovaniy>>

**ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST**

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Founded in 1982, the Research Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa) at the University of Bremen is dedicated to the interdisciplinary analysis of socialist and post-socialist developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The major focus is on the role of dissent, opposition and civil society in their historic, political, sociological and cultural dimensions.

With a unique archive on dissident culture under socialism and with an extensive collection of publications on Central and Eastern Europe, the Research Centre regularly hosts visiting scholars from all over the world.

One of the core missions of the institute is the dissemination of academic knowledge to the interested public. This includes regular e-mail newsletters covering current developments in Central and Eastern Europe.

**The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich**

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich is a Swiss academic center of competence that specializes in research, teaching, and information services in the fields of international and Swiss security studies. The CSS also acts as a consultant to various political bodies and the general public. The CSS is engaged in research projects with a number of Swiss and international partners. The Center's research focus is on new risks, European and transatlantic security, strategy and doctrine, area studies, state failure and state building, and Swiss foreign and security policy.

In its teaching capacity, the CSS contributes to the ETH Zurich-based Bachelor of Arts (BA) in public policy degree course for prospective professional military officers in the Swiss army and the ETH and University of Zurich-based MA program in Comparative and International Studies (MACIS); offers and develops specialized courses and study programs to all ETH Zurich and University of Zurich students; and has the lead in the Executive Masters degree program in Security Policy and Crisis Management (MAS ETH SPCM), which is offered by ETH Zurich. The program is tailored to the needs of experienced senior executives and managers from the private and public sectors, the policy community, and the armed forces.

The CSS runs the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), and in cooperation with partner institutes manages the Crisis and Risk Network (CRN), the Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), the Swiss Foreign and Security Policy Network (SSN), and the Russian and Eurasian Security (RES) Network.

**The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, The Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University**

The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies is home to a Master's program in European and Eurasian Studies, faculty members from political science, history, economics, sociology, anthropology, language and literature, and other fields, visiting scholars from around the world, research associates, graduate student fellows, and a rich assortment of brown bag lunches, seminars, public lectures, and conferences.

**The Institute of History at the University of Zurich**

The University of Zurich, founded in 1833, is one of the leading research universities in Europe and offers the widest range of study courses in Switzerland. With some 24,000 students and 1,900 graduates every year, Zurich is also Switzerland's largest university. Within the Faculty of Arts, the Institute of History consists of currently 17 professors and employs around a 100 researchers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. Research and teaching relate to the period from late antiquity to contemporary history. The Institute offers its 2,600 students a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in general history and various specialized subjects, including a comprehensive Master's Program in Eastern European History. Since 2009, the Institute also offers a structured PhD-program. For further information, visit at <<http://www.hist.uzh.ch/>>

**Resource Security Institute**

The Resource Security Institute (RSI) is a non-profit organization devoted to improving understanding about global energy security, particularly as it relates to Eurasia. We do this through collaborating on the publication of electronic newsletters, articles, books and public presentations.

All opinions expressed in the Russian Analytical Digest are exclusively those of the authors.

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