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The Russian Presidential Election: What Next?

By Stephen White, Glasgow

Abstract

Vladimir Putin's election was scarcely a surprise. But the political context had changed, and this meant a rather different kind of exercise, with a national system of electronic surveillance and unprecedented numbers of observers. The implications of the election will take some time to emerge: further changes to the electoral system are currently being considered by the Duma, and there are prospects of more far-reaching constitutional changes that would turn Russia into a more 'parliamentary' system. Putin himself appears to have a more limited agenda, and one that may not be sufficient to satisfy a more disaffected society.

The result, in itself, was hardly a surprise. Nor even that it was a victory for Putin on the first round. His rating had been improving since December, and the Levada Centre, which is not usually regarded as Kremlin-friendly, had predicted 66 per cent. Nor was there much of a surprise in the distribution of the result around the country. Chechnya, once again, was the leader, with an impressive 99.8 per cent, followed by Dagestan and Ingushetia, with 93 and 92 per cent respectively. Moscow, at the other extreme, was a disappointment (46 per cent), although this time there was a better showing in the northern capital, St Petersburg, with 59 per cent (it is, of course, Putin's home town). And overall, turnout was slightly higher (see pp. 22–24 for the election results of all the regions).

But the context had changed since December, and particularly since the moment that a popular movement began to develop that set out as its main objective the cancellation of elections that had been widely regarded as fraudulent. The outcome, in fact, was close to the predictions of the main opinion poll organisations. But public opinion, on the evidence of a survey that was commissioned by the author and associates from Russian Research in January (n=1600), found that not much more than half thought the results that had been declared were an honest reflection of the votes that had been cast, and about a third took the opposite view.

This time, the Kremlin promised, it would be different. And in many respects it was. One of the main differences was the introduction of a system of web cameras in almost all of the 93,000 polling stations, recording the entire proceedings from opening time at 8 a.m. to closing time at 8 p.m. It was an expensive innovation (an estimated \$300 million), but Putin had promised it when he conducted his national 'direct line' in late December, and it appears to have been a success even though some polling stations were left outside the system (a few had no electricity supply, and there were others that lost their connection). It did, at least, catch some obvious examples of ballot stuffing (the results were immediately invalidated), as well as a number of elec-

tion officials who had been having a quiet sleep (not to mention two voters who took the opportunity to engage in some physical intimacy).

Another difference was the massive presence of election observers. Locally, there were some entirely new citizen initiatives, including 'For Honest Elections' and 'The League of Voters', as well as more familiar ones; altogether, about a million observers of this kind were mobilised, more than twice as many as had taken part in December. And there were more international monitors: not only representatives from the OSCE and the Council of Europe, but an even larger delegation from the Commonwealth of Independent States and a group of fifty 'experts' from Europe and the United States, selected by the Central Electoral Commission itself in order to provide a view that was more likely to be supportive of the Kremlin.

All the same, there was a very mixed reaction to the provisional results when they began to emerge. GOLOS (Vote), which is locally based but dependent on outside funding, argued in their initial assessment that the degree of falsification had been about 15 per cent—enough to have deprived Putin of a first-round victory. The OSCE mission was more cautious, concluding that there had been some improvements since December but that the entire exercise lacked genuine competition and an impartial arbiter. Businessman Mikhail Prokhorov, who came third and second in the two capitals, refused to acknowledge the results until he had been able to examine them more closely. Communist leader Genadii Zyuganov went further, pronouncing the results 'illegitimate' and refusing to take part in a post-election round table with the other candidates.

Foreign governments were just as cautious, and particularly in their willingness to 'congratulate' the new President-elect. There were friendly greetings from the presidents of China, Iran, Syria and Venezuela, and from Belarus and most of the other post-Soviet republics. Elsewhere in Europe, Angela Merkel was the first Western leader to send her greetings, and President Sarkozy went as far as 'congratulations'. The European Union

as a whole was less enthusiastic, and the United States came up with a response that 'congratulated the Russian people on the completion of the presidential elections' without mentioning Putin himself.

The new President will be inaugurated in May; what is less clear is what kind of presidency it will be, and in particular, what kind of relationship will be established between a newly elected leadership and a newly assertive society. There was no indication at any time that the Kremlin might be willing to cancel the Duma election and repeat it on a different basis. But initial reactions to the December result suggested that there could be far-reaching changes in the electoral system of a kind that would make it more accessible and meaningful to ordinary citizens. The 'against all' option, for a start, might be restored (it would of course allow voters to express their dissatisfaction with the Kremlin authorities without having to opt for an oppositional party). And the single-member constituencies might be restored, so that voters could choose a particular person who would thereafter be 'their deputy' instead of selecting among a centrally-determined set of party lists.

It was reforms of this kind that were the subject of the initiatives that Medvedev introduced in late December and which are currently acquiring legislative form. As formulated, there will be no return to the previous electoral system, in which half the seats were filled by constituency-based competitions between individual candidates. There will, however, be a party-list competition on a constituency basis, organised so that each of the 83 republics and regions can be assured of some form of representation. It will be easier to form and register a political party—perhaps only 500 members will be necessary, certainly far fewer than the 40,000 that is presently required. And there will a return to the direct election of governors, although there will also be a presidential 'filter' that will allow the most unwelcome candidates to be excluded before they reach the ballot paper.

Some of the most interesting developments took place in the period immediately following polling day. In a decision that became known on 5 March, Medvedev indicated that he had invited the Procurator General to review a series of judicial decisions, one of them the sentences that had been passed on former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Perhaps more significant in the longer term, it was also announced that a law would be prepared on the convening of a constitutional convention. A mechanism of this kind is necessary if chapters 1, 2 or 9 of the constitution are to be amended, but it has not yet been provided for in legislation. There have already been some suggestions from what Russians call the political class that there should not only be specific changes, such as the reintroduction of a vice-presi-

dency, but also a full-scale revision or even replacement of the document that was approved by a popular vote in 1993. At least in some versions (for instance, the one preferred by Igor Yurgens of the Institute for Contemporary Development, widely seen as a Medvedev think-tank), changes of this kind might extend as far as to convert Russia from a presidential to a parliamentary republic.

An early indication will be the composition of the new government, and especially the choice of prime minister. Putin gave something less than an unconditional guarantee to Medvedev in September when he announced that he would accept a nomination to the presidency; all the same, this has to be seen as the most likely option. Other names have been suggested, including Aleksei Kudrin, the former finance minister and a choice that would be popular in Western capitals. Putin has already promised to make far-reaching changes in ministerial ranks, and that at least half the present cabinet will be replaced. This would of course be an opportunity to bring at least a few oppositionists into the government; Zyuganov has suggested some names already, including economist and former presidential candidate Sergei Glaz'ev.

This would in effect be a 'liberalising' scenario: one that would broaden the political debate, restore a dialogue between regime and society, and allow the discussion to continue without the need for tens of thousands to assemble every few weeks on the public squares of major cities. At the same time it is not the trajectory that Putin himself appears to have chosen, or one he will be willing to contemplate. He has repeatedly insisted that the opposition might have legitimate concerns, but that its main support comes from abroad, and that those who take a different view are in effect the agents of a foreign power. Speaking to his supporters at a rally in central Moscow after the result had been declared, Putin again insisted that any attempt to subvert the Russian political process from abroad 'would not succeed'. There was nothing about dialogue, or opening up the political system to a wider range of opinion, or finding a way forward that would rebuild the kind of national consensus that appears to have evaporated over recent months.

We have some indication of the way forward that the newly re-elected President is likely to choose in the series of extended articles he published in January and February in a number of central newspapers. The underlying thesis was the same as it has always been: that Russia can and should find some kind of optimal path between a return to the Soviet past and the market fundamentalism of the 1990s. There was a particularly heavy emphasis (for instance in the article that appeared in *Izvestiya* on 16 January) on stability and the growth of a middle class. Already, Putin suggested, between 20 and 30 per cent of the society could be placed in this category;

it would account for a majority within the foreseeable future at the same time as more or less the entire adult population become university or college graduates.

There was another contribution on ‘democracy and the quality of the state’ in the business paper *Kommerstant* on 6 February. There could be no copying of Western forms of democracy; they had hindered economic reform and allowed power to slip into the hands of ‘local and central oligarchic elites’, leading to a ‘covert struggle of clans and a proliferation of semifeudal rent-seeking’. How could they avoid this ‘combination of anarchy and oligarchy’ in the future? One way, certainly, was to involve ordinary people in state management on a continuing basis, such as by an ‘interactive interface’ in government web portals. There should also be a greater role for ‘self-regulating organisations’, in effect civil society. The internet could be used to provide for the public dis-

cussion of draft legislation, or what experts called ‘cloud-sourcing’. And citizens should be able to put forward their own proposals, as in the United Kingdom, where a petition signed by more than 100,000 would normally ensure its discussion within the legislature.

If there is a gap in this agenda of change, it is precisely politics: not respectful petitions from ordinary citizens (who will have to register with the authorities if they wish to make use of the new mechanism), or electronic ‘consultations’, but genuine alternatives advanced by independent parties at competitive elections in a process that rests ultimately on the rule of law. As we head into a new and more turbulent period in Russia’s post-communist politics, it is far from clear that Putin will be able to understand the issues in such terms or that the powerful interests he represents will in any case allow him to do so.

About the Author

Stephen White is James Bryce Professor at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. His recent publications include *Understanding Russian Politics* (Cambridge, 2011) and *Russia’s Authoritarian Elections* (with others, Routledge, 2012).

Further Reading:

- Stephen White, *Understanding Russian Politics* (Cambridge, 2011)
- Angus Roxburgh, *The Strongman: Vladimir Putin and the Struggle for Russia* (Tauris, 2011)

ANALYSIS

Can Putinism Evolve?

By Robert W. Orttung, Zurich

Abstract

As Vladimir Putin begins what is effectively his fourth term as Russia’s dominant leader, having set the country’s course for the last 12 years, the central question in defining Russia’s future is whether he can define and implement a set of reforms to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive global market place and satisfy the yearnings of a more vocal and assertive civil society in Russia’s main cities. Answering this question requires taking into account the nature of the system Putin has created, his style of political leadership, the effectiveness of key institutions of accountability—particularly the media—and the strength of Russia’s energy-based economy.

Corruption as a System-Defining Feature

Corruption defines the core of Russia’s political system. Most visibly, many of the people closest to Vladimir Putin during his rise to power have become fabulously wealthy thanks to their access to state-controlled wealth. These people need Putin to remain in office in order to provide a guarantee for their property rights since Russia’s courts clearly would not be able to ensure

that today’s holdings will not be appropriated by other groups once Putin is no longer in office. As a result, Putin is effectively trapped into remaining Russia’s leader.

Beyond the question of a potential redistribution of property is one of personal security. If Putin were to leave office, he would inevitably face calls that he and his closest allies be put on trial for the extensive theft of state property. One viral video on the Russian Inter-

net, for example, depicted Putin standing in the same prosecutorial cage that once held oligarch-turned-political-prisoner Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Protest organizers commonly call the president-elect a “thief.” The fate of Ukraine’s former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and Egypt’s former President Hosni Mubarak, both imprisoned by their successors, must have been front and center in Putin’s thinking when he decided to push aside his loyal sidekick Dmitry Medvedev and personally return to the Kremlin. Putin clearly felt that Medvedev would not be a strong enough leader on his own to guarantee his predecessor’s personal safety the way Putin himself had protected Yeltsin from corruption charges at the end of 1999.

Introducing reforms will ultimately destabilize the system that Putin has built. An appropriate analogy would be to Gorbachev’s efforts to reform the Communist system, which also led to its ultimate collapse. A counterfactual analysis suggests that if Andropov had lived longer or if Gorbachev had not attacked the key Communist Party supports of the system, the Soviet Union could have survived. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union set a precedent that current leaders want to avoid.

That corruption is the defining feature of the Russian system is ironic since the main goal of Putin’s leadership has been to centralize political power in the hands of a few at the top. The pervasive corruption means that effectively the central leaders have little control over the members of the bureaucracy, who effectively work for their own particular interests rather than those of the central state. Despite this glaring problem, Russia’s top leaders have maintained enough control to ensure that they can remain in power. Along these lines, Putin certainly remembers Vladimir Yakovlev’s victory over his [Putin’s] mentor Anatoly Sobchak in the 1996 St. Petersburg mayoral election, a searing defeat that taught Putin not to allow any election in which the outcome was uncertain in advance.

Given the need to protect the status quo property distribution and a fear of implementing any kind of genuine political reform, Putinism cannot evolve from the essential system that is visible today. The key features of the state will remain in place—extensive secret police monitoring of all aspects of society that present a potential threat to the status quo, a resource-based economy whose centralization of assets ensures that there is no economic basis for political pluralism, and a firm grip on the mainstream media. The key goal of this effort is to eliminate the appearance of any substantive opposition.

While it is true that civil society has been increasingly restive in the two capital cities and many provincial centers, the opposition has no way to influence actual policy-making in Russia. The sequence of large

protests in December and February followed by Putin’s decisive ability to win a new term in March demonstrates that the mass mobilization was not sufficient to change the course of the regime. With the elections over, and Putin’s demonstration of tough tactics against the March 5 protests on Moscow’s central Pushkin Square, it will be increasingly difficult to bring large crowds into the streets when potential protesters can plainly see that such demonstrations have no policy impact and are likely to lead to physical confrontation with the police. Russian citizens interested in self-preservation will likely steer clear.

No Substantial Concessions

As a leader facing a restive society, Putin naturally has to proceed carefully to prevent the loss of his own power or even a revolution that overturns the political system. One possibility would be to make substantial reforms that transform state institutions in line with social demands. As Jack Goldstone points out in his historical analysis of revolutions, the adoption of such concessionary reform programs is extremely rare. Nevertheless, there are several proposals currently being discussed in Russia. Liberal commentators frequently suggest that Putin will not be able to serve out the full six-year term that he has just won, though this speculation seems more like wishful thinking than a viable scenario. Another possibility is holding new parliamentary elections within a year or two that would allow genuine contestation among a variety of parties and create a parliament that reflects Russian society rather than parties that the authorities allow to compete and that have little connection with society. However, given the tone of Putin’s campaign, which largely dismissed the opposition as a product of foreign intervention, and his refusal to debate even his hand-picked opponents on television, there is little reason to believe that serious reform is likely. In fact, Putin has had plenty of opportunities for reform in the past, including during his second term as president and when Medvedev was in the Kremlin. At these times, his power was largely unchallenged and he could have attempted to implement change if he had wanted to. However, no serious political or economic reforms were announced then and there is little reason to believe that reforms adopted “from above” will happen now. Whether the absence of reform reflects a lack of interest on Putin’s part or a tacit recognition of an inability to implement changes that would be unpopular with the bureaucracy and the population, there has been no movement toward reform.

A second possibility is to make concessions that avoid a revolution by meeting some of the protesters’ most pressing and popular concerns, making it possible for

society to “let off steam,” while leaving the political and economic system largely intact. The changes to the political system announced by Medvedev at the end of December seem to fall into this category. The authorities will tinker with the electoral law, as they have done repeatedly in the past, but the main elements of control will remain in place.

The most serious potential reform that Medvedev proposed was direct elections for Russia’s governors. Putin replaced the gubernatorial elections in 2004 with presidential appointments and both he and Medvedev consistently opposed returning to a system of regional executive elections ever since. When Putin abolished the elections, there was little public protest, in part because many people viewed the gubernatorial elections as neither free nor fair and typically brought to power corrupt leaders. However, polls subsequently showed majority popular support for a return to elections so that citizens would at least have some say in how they were governed. As the details of Medvedev’s proposal became clear, however, it was also obvious that the new elections would most likely be limited to candidates that had Kremlin approval. Such a concession allowed the administration to give the appearance of reform without actually giving up control over the political system.

What Putin has sought to avoid is concessions that ultimately reduce the president’s power; any concessions that make him seem weak would ultimately stimulate greater demands for change. However, in some cases Putin has offered fake concessions that have angered the population. In a sense, the Medvedev presidency can be viewed in these terms. By not serving as president for a third term, Putin seemed to signal that he would step out of power and allow his chosen successor to take over. Medvedev articulated a wide variety of reforms, but did not actually implement them. The September 24, 2011, announcement that Putin would return to the Kremlin demonstrated that the plans that Medvedev had discussed would remain on paper. This failure, combined with the obvious fraud in the December elections, led to the explosion of protests in December 2011.

The presidential elections signaled that Putin was not going to make any concessions in his formal return to the country’s top office. The point of the elections was not to demonstrate Putin’s democratic legitimacy, but to show that he could still manipulate the system and demonstrate that his power was unquestionable. Despite the demands of the December protesters, he did not remove the head of the Central Electoral Commission Vladimir Churov. Likewise, the Commission rejected the signatures collected by Grigorii Yavlinsky and did not allow him onto the ballot, presumably because it was conceivable that the opposition would rally around him.

Despite the protests, the presidential elections were little different in their conduct than the parliamentary elections. Even the removal of Vladislav Surkov, the architect of Putin’s political system, could not be seen as a concession since he was quickly replaced by Vyacheslav Volodin, who favors maintaining tight control over the political system.

Firm Control Over the Media

A clear signal that the regime is interested in reform would be a political decision to release the current tight control over Russia’s national television networks. In fact, one of the concessions Medvedev announced at the end of December was the establishment of a public television network that would be an independent broadcaster. If there were such an outlet, it could facilitate a national discussion of strategies for political and economic reform. While such debates take place on the Internet, having them on television would allow them much greater impact on society and the ideas expressed would influence people who do not obtain their information from the Internet.

Instead, during the election, Putin used his monopoly control over the mainstream media to reach his core electorate: rural voters, the urban poor, and residents of the national republics, where his support was far above average. While the media provided some coverage of the December protests and for the first time in many years, a few opposition leaders were allowed to appear in a limited number of national broadcasts, such changes reflected a tactical retreat rather than systemic change. In essence, television continued to promote the idea that Putin was the essential leader for Russia and that any of the alternatives would lead to disaster.

If anything, pressure on the alternative media intensified during the campaign. Ksenia Sobchak, the increasingly opposition-minded celebrity whose father brought Putin into politics, could not continue her talk show on Russian MTV when she sought to include the crusading anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny on one of her programs. The provocative name of the show was “State Department (*Gosdep*)” evoking Putin’s complaint that Russia’s protesters turned out against him after Secretary of State Hilary Clinton had summoned them. Similarly, the Kremlin-friendly owner of radio station Ekho Moskvyy reorganized its board of directors. While the change had little impact on the station’s broadcasting, it sent a signal about who was ultimately in control. Similarly, the authorities placed new pressure on Alexander Lebedev, the banker who provides financial support to the independent newspaper *Novaya gazeta*.

After Putin was apparently publicly booed by a wrestling audience in November, he has reason to fear the

reaction he receives from the well-off urban populations that are increasingly turning against him. The Internet now is filled with derisive attacks on Putin, many of which are transmitted by Navalny's widely-read blog. Recent posts included a variety of anti-Putin posters and entries in a song contest encouraging users to upload homemade anti-Putin videos. While the quality of the singing varied widely, the opposition message was similar throughout.

Will Oil Income Be Enough?

If corruption is the defining feature of Putin's system, oil and natural gas sales provide the financial resources that make it all possible. Commodity sales deliver the rents that Putin can distribute among his elite supporters. They also stimulate the economic growth that makes it possible for the population to experience an improving standard of living. During the 2008 international financial crisis, reserves from earlier energy sales made it possible for increased state spending to cushion the temporary drop in Russian output.

High energy prices after 1973 made it possible for the Soviet Union to continue without economic reform according to the analysis of Yegor Gaidar. Today's high oil prices are providing windfall profits to Russia that also ensure a steady income for the state. But this revenue is vulnerable to the volatility of international energy markets. While energy prices are high now, they may drop precipitously in the future if European and US economic recovery falters. If energy prices drop, it will be harder for Putin to finance the numerous social programs he promised to support during his campaign.

But, even if energy prices remain high, it is not clear that the money they produce will be sufficient to pac-

ify the population. The protesters in Moscow and other cities are typically well educated and well compensated. Their demands are political rather than economic. They seek dignity and a chance to participate in the policy-making process; further economic gains are not at the top of their agenda.

Conclusion

Overall, the Putin regime's unwillingness to transform widely discussed reform plans into substantive policies means that the system is unlikely to change much in the foreseeable future. Change will only come if society continues to exert pressure on Russia's leaders. Most likely the time for street demonstrations is passing and now the opposition will need to present an alternative to Putin, both in terms of a leader who can replace him and a set of ideas that can offer a different model of development for Russia. This alternative model will need to focus on building real democratic institutions that hold the leaders accountable, reducing the amount of corruption by allowing the media to conduct independent investigations, and laying the basis for improving the competitiveness of Russia's non-energy sectors.

Obviously, the current opposition cannot present a realistic alternative to Putin. While the disparate elements agree in their desire to remove Putin, they have little common ground in their ideas of what should replace him. Therefore the best-case scenario would be for an opening in the state media, especially television, that would allow a society-wide discussion of what path Russia should take moving forward. Putin's continuing grip on the media, however, suggest that the possibilities for such a discussion taking place are extremely limited.

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Association GOLOS—Domestic Monitoring of Elections of the President of Russian Federation, 4 March 2012: Preliminary Report

Moscow, 5 March 2012

Introduction

The Association GOLOS has conducted a large-scale observation of the elections of the President of the Russia Federation.

GOLOS Association monitored violations during the voting and counting processes through the use of its Map of Electoral Violations hotline, the new SMS-CEC project (which collects PEC protocol data via SMS,) and communication with correspondents about compliance with electoral procedures.

Correspondents of the newspaper Civic Voice worked in 45 Russian cities. The total number of correspondent groups (with the majority of correspondents having worked in pairs) was 1,218. Correspondents visited approximately 6,400 polling stations.

Key Findings

The election of the President of the Russian Federation (RF) was carried out in an atmosphere of increased social activism. The State Duma elections on 4 December 2011 were followed by a wave of mass protests, wherein citizens expressed their distrust in the results of the election, demanded their repeal, demanded the liberalization of party and electoral legislation, and frequently expressed their negative opinions of the heads of state. At first, the government reacted haphazardly, but radical proposals were ultimately made. These proposals included changes to party registration rules (reducing the required number of signatures from 45,000 to 500) a return to the elections of heads of the Russian Federation subjects, and reforms to the State Duma election system. They also tried to assuage the public with the introduction of web cameras at polling stations on Election Day.

Nonetheless, the electoral campaign preceding Election Day featured all of the usual shortcomings associated with Russian elections: the extensive use of administrative resources in support of the incumbent, as well as massive—and in some cases, illegal—campaigning for the incumbent on behalf of the Russian media. The level of competition in these elections was somewhat higher than in previous elections, though not enough so to qualify it as an adequate reflection of the range of public interests.

As Election Day approached, campaigning for Putin became increasingly aggressive in nature. In some cases, this aggression played out in the form of pressure on independent media outlets and NGOs.

Preparations for Election Day included the coercion of citizens into obtaining absentee voter certificates (AVCs). Another widespread phenomenon was that of requiring employees to vote at their places of employment.

On Election Day, quite a few violations were noted: the number of reported violations is comparable to the number reported on voting day for the Duma elections. It should be noted, that the numbers were reduced for explicit acts of fraud during voting and the number of observers removed from polling stations. However, there were numerous cases of mass voting through the use of AVCs.

In general, the RF presidential elections can be characterized as normal in the context of the past decade of Russian elections, with an insufficient level of competition, government interference with the electoral process, and some degree of coercion to vote. These elections cannot be classified as free and fair under the definitions provided in the Russian constitution and international electoral standards.

1. General Characteristics

Several features have distinguished the electoral campaign for the 2012 election of the President of the Russian Federation from that of the parliamentary elections.

First, whereas United Russia previously served as the object at the center of the mass-media campaign, the focus has been shifted to the government under the leadership of Vladimir Putin. The main candidate deliberately distanced himself from the party, albeit remaining its leader. He presented himself as leader of the nation, and based his campaign on the All-Russian People's Front, which was established last summer.

Second, the campaign was marked by the “struggle for fair elections and liberalization of the political system,” which was the government's reaction to the civil protests that followed the parliamentary elections. Toward this end,

it was announced that several radical reforms would be introduced for regional party development and elections. Furthermore, the government has undertaken costly efforts to equip almost all polling stations with security cameras. Thus, promises of fair elections and political reform supplemented the traditional campaign methods of extolling the achievements of the current administration and proposing decisions on financial government assistance for various groups of people.

Third, there was a notable decrease in campaigning on the part of local officials: campaign activities were carried out with greater caution, and with more fear of publicity and public scandals. There was no pronounced impact on the campaign of law enforcement agencies.

Nonetheless, the presidential campaign bore the traditional features of a Russian election, such as the use of office and official position by one of the candidates, who led the federal government throughout the campaign and who benefited enormously from campaigning disguised as news. Thus, statements about striving for fair elections were exclusive to Election Day and the counting process. Still, judging from reports submitted to the Map of Electoral Violations [<http://www.kartanarusheniy.org/>], there was evidence at the local levels of preparations to distort the will of voters, which intensified as Election Day approached.

It should also be noted that approximately one fifth of voters were able to take part in local elections on 4 March. Developments common to Russian elections were displayed throughout the course of the municipal campaigns, such as the illegal failure to register participants in the election and the use of administrative resources.

The hierarchy of electoral commissions, which was formed with the active participation of the executive branch of the government, remained intact. Odious leaders retained their posts as heads of electoral commissions.

There were continued efforts to pressure and intimidate representatives of independent NGOs and the media.

Throughout the campaign, the majority of all candidates' regional headquarters exhibited minimal activity. Active campaigning was only visible in regions preparing for important local elections in addition to the presidential elections. Much more pronounced were the activities of NGOs in organizing protests for fair elections and political reform. The campaign was characterized by the use of many forms of "Black PR," which targeted both non-system opposition members and registered presidential candidates.

The main campaign was conducted through the central television channels. This is where administrative resources were used to the maximum extent to indirectly campaign for Putin under the guise of covering his professional activities. Despite the fact that the administrative law clearly demarcates the limitations on the use of one's official position for campaigning purposes, all of the official resources and privileges of being the prime minister have been fully utilized: a trip across the country, meetings with labor collectives, speeches on campaign matters and promises, media reports and coverage.

2. Legal Conditions

The Russian presidential elections are regulated by the Russian Constitution and the federal laws, "On the Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right of Citizens of the Russian Federation to Participate in a Referendum," and "On the Elections of the President of the Russian Federation."

The president is elected for a six-year term. Before the constitutional amendment was made, the president was elected for a four-year term. The President of the Russian Federation shall be no younger than 35 years of age and shall have resided permanently in the Russian Federation for no less than the past 10 years. One cannot be elected as president for more than two consecutive terms, though the total number of terms is not limited. One who—in addition to Russian citizenship—maintains foreign citizenship or legal permanent residency in a foreign country is ineligible to be elected RF President.

A candidate's nomination is produced either at a party congress or at a meeting of an action group of voters (in the case of self-nominated candidates). A candidate who is self-nominated or nominated by a party without representation in the Duma, is given approximately one month to collect at least two million signatures in support of his or her candidacy. Requirements imposed on the collection of signatures are quite rigid. The acceptance of signatures effectively depends on the political will of the organizers of the election.

The candidate is obliged to create an electoral fund from which all campaign costs must be paid. Candidates' electoral funds may not exceed 400 million rubles. If a second round is required, 100 million rubles will be added to the total.

If a candidate gains at least half of the votes cast, he or she will be elected during the first round of elections. If a second round is required, two candidates will compete for the greatest number of votes. In this case, the candidate that gains more votes than his rival will be elected.

Under the law, elections are to be organized and conducted by an independent electoral commission. In practice, the electoral commissions are controlled by the administration. The commission system has a hierarchical structure: one Central Election Commission (CEC); 83 Election Commissions of subjects of the Federation (SECs); 2,746 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs), and more than 95,000 Precinct Electoral Commissions (PECs).

3. Nomination and Registration of Candidates

Political parties have nominated five candidates for the 4 March 2012 elections. Putin, backed by United Russia, was formally nominated on 27 November 2011. His nomination was unofficially announced at the first party convention on 24 September 2011. Zyuganov, backed by the Communist Party, was nominated on 17 December 2011. Mironov, backed by Fair Russia, was nominated on 10 December 2011. Zhirinovskiy, backed by the Liberal Democratic Party, was nominated on 13 December 2011. Yavlinsky, backed by Yabloko, was nominated on 18 December 2011.

Of ten self-nominated candidates, five were registered for the collection of signatures. In addition to these, another candidate, Grigory Yavlinsky, collected signatures on behalf of his nomination by a party without Duma Representation.

Five candidates were successfully registered: Putin, Zyuganov, Zhirinovskiy, Mironov, and Prokhorov. On the basis of signature verification issues, the RF CEC rejected Yabloko candidate Yavlinsky's registration, and self-nominated candidate Dmitry Mezentsev.

4. Campaigning

Most of the candidates' regional headquarters were minimally active, relying primarily on both free and paid airtime. Very few headquarters distributed party publications. Large advertisements were placed mostly only in large cities. Active campaigning was only visible in regions preparing for important local elections in addition to the presidential elections. Against the backdrop of the mostly inert activities of candidates' regional headquarters were the much more pronounced activities of public organizations, which organized protests for political reform and fair elections, and also prepared for the monitoring of the upcoming elections.

On 11 January, the CEC explained that Putin has the right not to take a furlough during the electoral campaign. It was explained that according to the law, candidates who work in the civil service, municipal service, or mass media are not permitted to remain in their places of work during the campaign. According to the CEC, the prime minister's position does not fall into any of these categories.

Alexander Karlin campaigned for Putin on the television program "A Meeting with the Governor," which aired on the station Katun 24 at 10:00 on 28 January 2012. Alexey Orlov, head of the Republic of Kalmykia, delivered a congratulatory address to voters on republican television on 31 December 2011. During the speech, he called on the citizens of the republic to vote for presidential candidate Putin in March 2012. After the New Year holidays, all official newspapers published the address.

Campaigning for Putin was primarily carried out through mass media coverage of the activities of the prime minister, primarily through three nationwide television stations. According to the unofficial data provided by the Levada-Center, Putin's name was mentioned two to three times more frequently than any of the other candidates. According to GOLOS experts, however, his name was mentioned five times more often than Prokhorov's, who follows Putin in this index.

Furthermore, Putin published six policy articles in major newspapers. These articles were not paid for through his election fund, and some of them were published before 6 February—the official start date for media-based campaign activities.

During the campaign period, Russian television featured several films that displayed signs of pre-election campaigning. Furthermore, several materials were devoted to discrediting opposition human rights organizations.

It should also be noted that Putin refused to participate in televised debates with the other presidential candidates.

There is a great deal of evidence of coercion and providing financial incentives for individuals who participated in mass actions in support of Putin.

There were also reports from the regions of pressure on political activists and organizers of the civic movement, "For Fair Elections."

5. Public Observation

The failure of the state in its duties to organize and conduct free and fair elections provoked a dramatic increase in the number of citizens interested in serving as public election observers.

Self-nominated candidate Prokhorov, whose headquarters enjoys close cooperation with the Yabloko party, led the active recruitment and training of observers.

Several NGOs also informally led the recruitment and training of observers. Such groups in Moscow and St. Petersburg included: the League of Voters (with the help of well-known media personalities) the unregistered party Democratic Choice, Citizen Observer (led by D. Oreshkin), Rosvybory (led by A. Navalny), and School of Observers.

Candidate Putin's headquarters actively attracted observers to polling stations as well. Using the resources of higher education institutions, they involved students—especially, young lawyers—in these activities. Dubbed the “Observer Corps,” this movement promises observers at all polling stations.

The GOLOS Association monitored violations during the voting and counting processes through the use of its Map of Electoral Violations hotline, the new SMS-CEC project (which collects PEC protocol data via SMS,) and communication with correspondents about compliance with electoral procedures.

Correspondents of the newspaper Civic Voice worked in 45 Russian cities. The total number of correspondent groups (with the majority of correspondents having worked in pairs) was 1,218. Correspondents visited approximately 6,400 polling stations.

Correspondents received evidence suggesting that many of the commissions did not fully comply with the procedures provided by law. For example, 7% of correspondents met with difficulties in gaining entry into the polling stations, and 16% reported inconvenient observation conditions. Especially massive departures from the law were observed at the counting stage in approximately one third of the commissions.

6. Pressure on GOLOS Association and the Media

GOLOS representatives in the regions faced considerable pressure. The organization was evicted from its central office in Moscow through the early termination of its lease.

In January, the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies and Mass Communications (Roskomnadzor) began monitoring the newspaper Civil Voice (Grazhdanskiy Golos). The inspection failed to lead to any findings of serious violations. However, the directive required inspectors to identify at least some sort of observation. A violation report was drafted stating that the mandatory copy of the newspaper sent to the Russian Book Chamber was not on the day of output from the printing press. The lawyers at GOLOS do not believe that this is a violation, and they will now appeal the protocol in court.

In January, the Ministry of Justice audited GOLOS Association. The audit resulted in the issuance of a warning that lawyers at GOLOS are currently analyzing with a view to further action.

Several of GOLOS' regional divisions have been subjected to unscheduled audits of their financial records. Specifically, the financial records of GOLOS' partner organization in Pskov, its Volga division in Samara, and its Moscow offices have all been checked. Prosecutors summoned Vladimir Karataev, coordinator of GOLOS' Adygeya branch. In many of the regions, GOLOS representatives were invited to “talk” with regional FSB departments aimed at combating extremism.

On 18 January Alexander Kalashnikov, head of the Federal Security Service (FSB) in the Republic of Komi, designated GOLOS and the human rights commission Memorial as two of a number of extremist organizations that are active in Komi. He stated in an official report that the activities of these organizations “are directed from abroad, often financed by foreign NGO funding, and are directed to transform the political system of the Russian Federation,” and he emphasized that their main goal is “to disrupt the conduct of the presidential elections.”

On 23 February, the coordinator of GOLOS' Ulyanovsk branch received a phone call from a man who introduced himself as an FSB official named Viktor, and who conveyed greetings from Alexey Georgievich (another former FSB “curator.”) The conversation, held in his personal car, touched on a variety of aspects including the coordination of public activities, including GOLOS. The man's request to be sent records was denied.

As in the fall of 2011, independent media outlets were actively pressured. Pressure was exerted against leading independent Russian media outlets *Novaya Gazeta*, Ekho Moskvyy (Echo of Moscow) and television station Dozhd (Rain).

On 16 February, Dozhd's editorial office received a request from the Zamoskvorechye interregional prosecutor's office “on behalf of the prosecutor's office of Moscow” demanding an explanation of who financed broadcasts of rallies

in Bolotnoi Square and on Sakharov Prospekt. Natalia Sindeeva, the channel's owner, reported this. Earlier in December 2011, the Roskomnadzor studied the channel's broadcasts from 5–6 December to ensure compliance with the law.

On 14 February Gazprom-Media demanded the early resignation of the Ekho Moskvy board of directors, and a change in the composition of independent directors. This impacted Editor-in-Chief of radio station Ekho Moskvy, Alexei Venediktov, his first assistant Vladimir Varfolomeev, as well as independent directors Evgeni Yasin and Alexander Makovsky. The creative team resolutely advocated against their departures; however, the dispute between the editors and owners—which had lasted since the end of December—ended in favor of the media holding company.

In January, Prime Minister Putin, publicly criticized Ekho Moskvy, stating at a meeting with chief media editors that the radio station “pours diarrhea from morning until evening.” Later, according to Venediktov, President Medvedev criticized the editorial policy of Ekho Moskvy.

It also became known that on 24 February, the company RU-center—which specializes in the registration of internet domain names, made changes to its procedural rules, whereby without a court ruling the company can close any site on the third level domain if there is suspicion that an offense may have been committed. This was precisely the case for Ekho Moskvy's website, echo.msk.ru.) It is also noted that the registrar has the right to independently evaluate user activities for legal violations, including in cases where such violations have not been clearly defined by legal regulations. Representatives of the Internet community perceived this as an attempt to introduce censorship. Moreover, in the new regulations Ru-center made no provisions about mass media websites. However, mass media websites are different from others in that the law “On Mass Media” regulates them. Article 16 of the law states that the activities of the mass media may be terminated or suspended only by the decision of either a founder or a court through a civil lawsuit initiated by the registering authority.

7. Preparations for Election Day

A plan to equip polling stations with video cameras was launched and widely publicized. An enormous sum of money was allocated for the project—13 billion rubles (approx. 330 million Euro)—which exceeds the budget for the entire presidential election campaign. As a result, web cameras were placed in 96% of polling stations. Web cameras recorded footage of everything that happened at these polling stations. The main disadvantage of this initiative—aside from the low degree of efficiency—is that permission to view the footage will be granted only to “participants in the electoral process,” as per a decision of the RF Ministry of Communications.

In spite of the statements made by the highest representatives of the communications authority, on the Map of Electoral Violations, the GOLOS Association indicated the violations of the principle of voluntary participation and freedom of voting. This is most prominently expressed in the compulsory receipt of AVCs.

Some reports also indicate that the coercion to receive AVCs is related to coercion to vote at one's workplace, to inform management about the number of AVCs, and in some cases even to submit AVCs to company leadership.

More broadly than in previous elections, efforts were made to control the vote. Toward this end, a number of businesses declared 4 March a workday, and then established polling stations within company premises. It should be mentioned that in these cases, electoral commissions are formed from staff members of a given company, there are no web cameras in these polling stations, and it is very difficult for observers to access them.

There have been reports of management requiring that their subordinates confirm having voted for a particular candidate by photographing their completed ballots.

Reports have also been submitted about the traditional method of compiling voter lists outside of the premises with the help of social workers.

8. Voting and Counting

Positive assessments were made with regard to the equipment of a significant number of polling stations. Many utilized new stationary ballot boxes made of transparent material and containing narrow openings in order to hinder ballot-stuffing efforts.

GOLOS Association notes the low efficiency of equipping of polling stations with Internet surveillance cameras. In many polling stations, cameras were located far away from ballot boxes, places of ballot issuance, and places used for the counting of votes. In many cases, voters were obscured by ballot boxes when depositing their ballots. Internet broadcasts of the camera footage were conducted intermittently, but there was practically no footage of a number of polling stations.

Nonetheless, the presence of cameras and the possibility of online broadcasts have enabled citizens conducting Internet surveillance to identify a number of irregularities, including acts of ballot stuffing.

The Association also notes the unsatisfactory situation of voting with AVCs. There were a great many reports of refusals to issue AVCs to voters on the basis of their absence from their designated PECs. In our opinion, this was the result of the mass coercion of voters to vote using AVCs, and the organized “carousel voting” of groups of citizens. At the same time, we acknowledge the failure of the electoral commission system to efficiently solve issues related to the lack of AVCs.

9. Analysis of Reports Received on GOLOS Association’s Hotline and Map of Electoral Violations on Election Day

The GOLOS Association has implemented the Map of Electoral Violations (MEV) [<http://www.kartanarusheniy.org/>], a website that served as a platform for Russian citizens to report evidence of violations throughout the electoral campaign. The MEV has received more than 8,600 reports, and the hotline operators accepted more than 6,000 calls. Moderators of the MEV published 3,788 reports of possible violations, many of which were supported by documentation. As of the morning of 5 March, moderators anticipate over 1,000 reports, some of which will be published on the MEV.

On Election Day and during the summarization of the results of the MEV, more than 2,000 reports were excluded, having been deemed defective by moderators. GOLOS’ corps of short-term correspondents systemically analyzed the implementation of legislatively established procedures in the PECs.

“Carousel voting” by groups of voters was the violation most commonly cited in reports.

The following violations were also frequently cited within the reports:

During the voting period:

- Non-admittance of media representatives into the polling stations;
- Violations in the design of polling stations;
- Stuffing of ballots;
- The removal of observers, election commission members, and media representatives.

During the counting period:

- Violations of the legislatively established procedures for counting votes;
- Tampering with ballots during the sorting process.

The largest numbers of reports were sent from Moscow, Moscow oblast, Samara oblast, and St. Petersburg.

There were numerous reports on violations of the rights of observers: prohibitions against the taking of photo and video footage, impossible observation conditions created by the relegation of observers into inconvenient locations and the prohibition of free movement around the premises, failures of the commissions to consult documents, and failures of the commissions to accept and consider allegations of violations.

Correspondents of the GOLOS run newspaper “Grazhdanskiy golos” (Civic Voice) noted in their special questionnaires the implementation statutory procedures for voting and counting. The results accumulated in regional databases, which are then combined into a national database.

The SMS-CEC project [<http://sms.golos.org/>] compiled data elicited from 1,533 protocols. Correlation inspections were carried out for all of these.

In evaluating the preliminary data on the outcome of the vote, attention was first drawn to the significant contrast between the official preliminary results of voting and the results announced by the exit polls. Preliminary data available on the morning of 5 March suggested that Putin had received approximately 64% of the vote, whereas exit polls conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation FOM gave Putin 59.3%, and exit polls conducted by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center VCIOM gave him 58.3%. Such differences exceed the usual margin of error for exit polls.

Attention is also drawn to the differences in regional voting results. While these differences are less pronounced than those of the 2011 State Duma elections, they are still quite large: results in favor of Putin range from 47.7% in Moscow to 99.8% in the Chechen Republic. Among the territories and oblasts where Putin enjoyed the greatest success was the Kamertovo oblast, where he gained 77.2% of the vote.

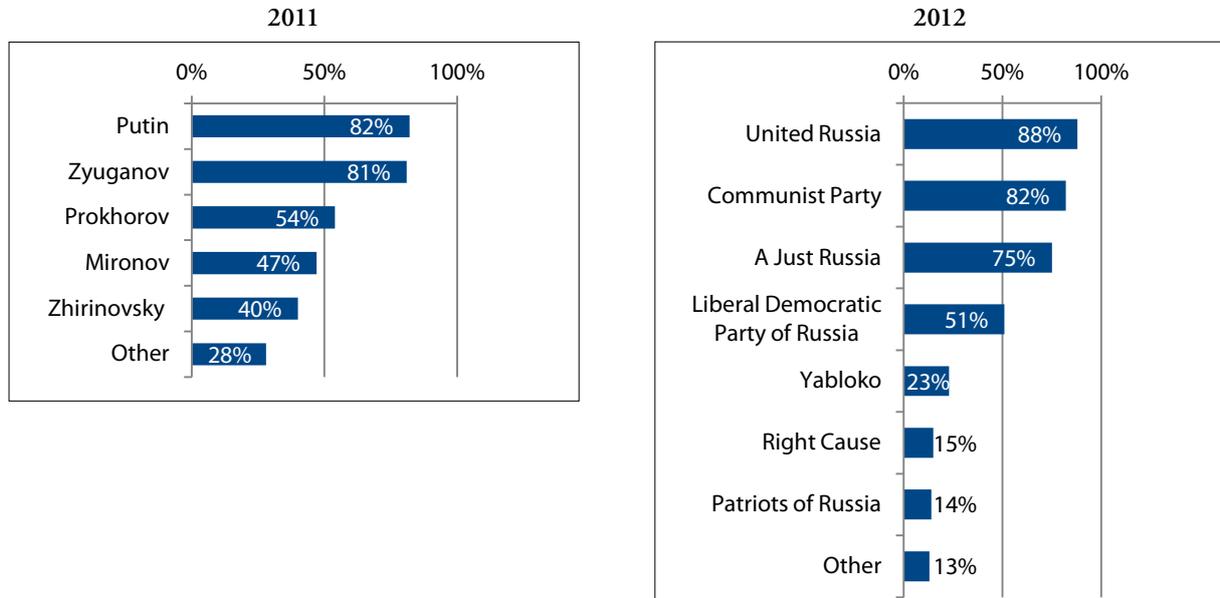
Based on this data, GOLOS Association asserts that the final stage of the RF presidential election campaign (including voting and counting) as with the previous stages, were marred by a large number of violations of electoral law. Although the scale of these violations was—according to our estimates—smaller than that of the 2011 State Duma elections, these violations nonetheless significantly affected the results of the vote.

10. Analysis of the Observation by the Correspondents of GOLOS

Characteristics	Presidential Elections, 4 March 2012		Election to the State Duma, 4 December 2011	
	Number of reports	% featuring these characteristics	Number of reports	% featuring these characteristics
Failure to present ballot boxes for voting	1217	6%	1659	5%
Absence of opportunities to view the list of voters	1162	7%	1583	7%
Ballots were distributed without signatures	1108	13%	1549	13%
Campaign materials were placed within 50 m. from the polling station	6854	4%	3779	8%
Absent summary poster of all candidates	6872	3%	3802	5%
Voter lists were not bound	6805	6%	3744	4%
Violations of procedures for the issuance of ballots	6665	4%	3667	8%
Information about ballot stuffing, bribery, "carousel voting"	6608	3%		
Transportation of voter groups	6576	6%	3524	6%
Group voting by use of AVCs	6640	5%	3584	5%
Pressure on voters during voting process	6725	1%		
Use of "lists" for voting outside of the polling station	5690	23%	3034	25%
Failure to gain familiarity with the voter list for mobile voting	6217	5%	3779	7%
Failure to be present for mobile voting	5970	8%	3317	6%
Mobile ballot boxes kept out of view of observers	6740	14%	3722	12%
Failure to announce counting data for each voter register	573	40%	1471	46%
Failure to verify the accuracy of counts with reference to voter lists	341	10%	1424	7%
Failure to announce the number of applications prior to opening mobile ballot boxes	546	14%	1441	23%
Failure to follow procedures for the sorting of ballots	473	18%	1283	26%

Characteristics	Presidential Elections, 4 March 2012		Election to the State Duma, 4 December 2011	
	Number of reports	% featuring these characteristics	Number of reports	% featuring these characteristics
Failure to observe counting procedures for sorted bundles	474	22%	1279	25%
Impossibility of seeing marks on ballots	473	18%	1276	20%
Untimely entry of data into enlarged form of protocol	574	33%	approx. 1300	32–36%
Failure to adhere to counting phases	572	17%	1457	24%
Protocol drafted outside of the voting premises	574	7%		
Failure of PEC to hold final meeting	561	30%	1417	39%
Failure of observers to place signatures on packets	515	8%	1335	6%
Failure to observe protocol signature procedures	564	7%	1414	9%
No list of complaints included in the protocol	489	18%	1143	29%
Copies of protocol not promptly issued	575	5%	1435	9%
Commission did not make copies of protocol	572	12%	1445	27%
Administrative officials present during the count	554	14%	1438	13%
Higher commission representatives present during the count	554	8%	1430	9%
Difficulties in gaining entry into polling station	7017	7%	1669	10%
Inconvenient conditions for observers	7001	16%	3791	16%
Restrictions on the location and free movement of observers	6972	7%	3745	10%
Illegal restrictions on photo and video recordings	6909	7%	3652	9%
Removal of observers, commission members	6891	3%	3725	5%
Enlarged form of the protocol inconveniently located	30	7%	62	21%
Not all people with rights to be present were granted entry into TEC building	29	7%	62	11%
TEC restricted free movement of observers	28	14%	62	19%

The coverage of polling stations by representatives of various candidates (excluding members with decisive voting rights) was divided as follows:



According to reports by correspondents of the newspaper Civic Voice, the average number of observers in the morning was 5.2 for each PEC. In the evening, the average was 8.9 per PEC. During the 4 December 2011 Duma elections, these numbers were 1.6 and 2.1, respectively.

The present text is a result of the cooperation between the Russian NGO “The Association of Non-Profit Organizations ‘In Defense of Voters’ Rights’ GOLOS” and the European Exchange in Berlin for the purpose of observing the Russian Duma elections 2011, supported by the German Association for East European Studies (DGO) and the Heinrich Böll Foundation.



Election Falsification and Its Limits: A Regional Comparison on the Eve of the Presidential Elections

By Alexander Kynev, Moscow

Summary

The results of the presidential elections essentially depends not on the true poll ratings of the candidates, but on how many extra votes are given to the main candidate and how many are taken away from the others. By using the election results from 4th December, Russia can be divided into three regions with varying potential for manipulation and protest. The result of the presidential election on 4th March partly depends on the turnout in the group of the “protest regions” with 52.2 million voters, where, according to the official results of the December 2011 parliamentary elections, United Russia received less than 42% of the vote: these regions are mainly in Northern Russia, Siberia, the Urals and the Far East. Additionally, the relationship between the durability of administrative resources and electoral control in the “mid-table regions” (the regions of Moscow, Rostov, Voronezh and Stavropol) with over 30 million voters will also play an important role.

“Inflating” the Voter Lists

The turnout for the Duma elections on 4th December 2011 was 60.21%. This represents 65.8 million voters among 109.2 million people who were registered to vote on 4th December 2011 (almost 337,000 of these live outside the country). In July 2011, a decision taken by the Central Election Commission stated that as of 1st July 2011, only 108.1 million people were registered to vote within the territory of the Russian Federation.

Where did these 800,000 people come from in just five months? The reality is that the number of additional voters is even higher if one considers the votes cast using an absentee voter certificate (AVC): In the precincts, a total of 1.797 million AVCs were issued, whilst just 1.258 million people used such a certificate to cast their vote. There are therefore over half a million people who were struck from the voter list in their precinct because they received an AVC and were not subsequently registered in any other voter lists.

This means that, in total, the voter lists were inflated by around 1.376 million people who can possibly have cast a vote more than once. If one also takes those people into account who voted early because of an AVC or who voted via the mobile ballot boxes¹, then the number reads 7.15 million (11%) votes which are usually referred to as “questionable.” This does not even include ballot stuffing, the sale and purchase of votes or the manipulation of protocols.

The Shpilkin Method

In Russia, various methods are applied to determine the extent of election falsification. For example, comparisons are drawn between neighbouring precincts with a

similar electorate. Mathematical models are also used to determine anomalous distributions of the vote. No less popular are polls after the elections. Besides these methods, it is possible to use the official figures provided by the Central Election Commission to determine how many votes are cast via the “questionable” ways of voting, that is those that are most affected by manipulation.

One of the methods for determining the extent of manipulation, and the one which has received the most attention in recent years, is based on a mathematical model. There are a number of different models, with the most well-known being that named after Sergei Shpilkin, an expert on election statistics. The basis of this method is formed by graphs which show the distribution of votes by precinct. A normal distribution should provide curves for all parties which have an approximately similar arc. This can be seen at most “normal” elections. In Russia, however, an abnormality is found: the graph of one of the parties (United Russia) shows an “anomaly”. If the curves for all parties are compared with United Russia’s, then, with the help of a coefficient, an estimate for the number of “anomalous” votes cast in a particular precinct for this party can be calculated.

According to Shpilkin’s calculations, the real election turnout at the Duma elections on 4th December stood at around 46.1%; 50.4 million voters cast their vote. In reality, United Russia received, according to these calculations, 33.9% of the vote and not 49.32%; the CPRF 25%, A Just Russia 17.3%, the LDPR 15.2% and Yabloko 4.5%.²

The sociologists from the Levada-Center arrive at similar figures from their poll held one week after elec-

1 On 4th December 2011, 4.3 million voters cast their vote using a mobile ballot box.

2 The Central Election Commission counted 19.2% for the CPRF, 13.2% for A Just Russia, 11.7 % for Zhirinovskiy’s LDPR and 3.43% for Yabloko.

tion day which asked Muscovites the following question: “Did you vote at the Duma elections and, if yes, for whom?”

According to this poll, United Russia received 15 percent less in the capital city than it was awarded in the official result. According to the Shpilkin Method, the Moscow result for the party in power would have been 17.5 percentage points lower.

Therefore, the estimates of the extent of nationwide vote manipulation range between 7.13 million (the proportion of “questionable” votes provided by the official figures) and 15.3 million using the Shpilkin Method.

Regional Variation in Levels of Manipulation

The tradition of election falsification is different in each region. In some areas, such as the North Caucasus Republics, any result is simply recorded in the final protocols based on what is required at the time. Other regions prefer ballot stuffing, election “tourism” or the manipulative transcription of protocol data.

A number of regions “traditionally” use mobile ballot boxes to ensure an anomalous distribution of the vote.

In recent years, voting with an AVC has become more and more popular: This has led to serious scandals in St. Petersburg, Sverdlovsk Oblast and the Chelyabinsk, Voronezh and Ryazan oblasts.

Acts of electoral falsification during the voting process itself are also difficult to expose. It is not possible for an election observer to look over the shoulder of every member of an election commission in order to look and check whether every voter has signed for him/herself. It is also impossible to compare the additional voter lists in the precincts in order to determine whether more than one vote has been cast by one and the same person.

With the efficient organisation of election monitoring, acts of manipulation during the vote-counting process can, however, be effectively prevented. In this case, the level of manipulation which has taken place during the voting process itself is inversely proportional to the number of votes from “living souls.” To put it more simply, when more genuine voters cast their vote at a polling station, fewer extra ballot papers can be stuffed into the ballot boxes for those people who did not go to the polls.

For this reason, it is no wonder that, during elections in recent years, deliberately inspired campaigns aimed at artificially preventing protest voters from going to the polls and therefore at improving the result of the “candidates in power” could be observed. It is not uncommon for these campaigns to target those areas where the proportion of protest voters is particularly high and the election controls are tight; these tend to be the large cities. The methods which are used to reduce the election

turnout include scandals, slander campaigns and the nomination of candidates with high negative poll ratings.

From December to March: Varying Potential for Protest in the Regions

Using the elections of 4th December as a basis, the Russian regions can be divided into three groups. Thus, the regions with traditional “electoral anomalies” (both in the turnout and in the percentages for the “desired” candidate) continue to include the national republics in the North Caucasus and the Volga region. For years, the Tyva Republic and Chukotka Autonomous Okrug have also belonged to this group, as have Kuzbass (Kemerovo Oblast) and the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug; and since the early 2000s also Tyumen Oblast. Often, the “anomaly” of the vote in these regions is based on the “election machinery” built up by the region’s governor, which is first made possible by the regional leader’s high popularity ratings.

During the elections on 4th December, United Russia received more than 60% of the vote in 20 regions and in three regions this result was almost achieved, between 56 and 60%. Alongside the traditionally “anomalous” regions mentioned, two central Russian oblasts have emerged (Tambov and Tula, although in the latter case this result is clearly to the “credit” of the new governor Vladimir Gruzdev), one region from the Northwest (the Komi Republic, where extremely scandalous events took place) and also the Saratov, Astrakhan, and Penza oblasts and the Krasnodar Krai. In total, there are 25.1 million registered voters in these 23 regions. It can be safely assumed that these regions will also provide the “correct” result on 4th March.

In 32 other regions, less than 40% voted for United Russia (even with election falsification). This group can also be said to include seven further regions with 40-42% for United Russia, primarily regions in Northern Russia, in Siberia, in the Urals and in the Far East. 52.2 million registered voters live in these “protest regions.” However, these regions show a relatively low election turnout when compared with the nationwide average. The regional and local administrations do not seem to have the resources needed to radically change the special electoral situation there.

Twenty-one regions can be considered “mid-table”. These include Moscow and Rostov Oblast, which has removed itself a little from the “anomalous zone”, as well as Voronezh Oblast and Stavropol Krai. These regions cover around 30.8 million registered voters. It is in these regions that the development of the elections raises the largest questions. It is quite possible that it will be the election situation in precisely these regions which determines whether or not the presidential elections will be

decided in one or two voting rounds. If the elections in Moscow again take place in “December style”, then this could raise the danger of political destabilisation in the country. For this reason, serious election falsification is not to be expected in these regions.

Therefore, the final result of the presidential elections is largely dependent on the results in the “protest regions”. The results also depend on the relationship between the durability of the administrative resources and the struggle for electoral control of the regions in “mid-table”.

It tends to be more difficult to exercise control over the presidential elections than the parliamentary elections. Firstly, during the latter there are more victors, actors, people who have a personal interest in maximising the result and so work towards it. That said, the Shpilkin Method showed in 2007 and 2008 that the manipulation during the presidential elections was higher than during the parliamentary elections. Sec-

only, in December 2011, not only the Duma but also 27 regional parliaments were elected, so that candidates for the regional legislative assemblies were also interested in securing control. In March 2012, additional elections will only take place alongside the presidential elections in a few regions, and these will only be at local level. It is therefore no surprise that in many polling stations the only individuals providing control will not be official election observers of particular candidates, but volunteers bearing the status of media correspondent.

Due to the tidal wave of people registering to become election observers, and due to the general increase in protest activity, this tendency could be broken. We will only find out how effective the “angry citizens” stationed in the polling stations will be when we get the results after 4th March.

Translation: Stephen Bench-Capon

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Figure 1: Post-election poll conducted by the Levada-Center from 8th to 16th December 2011. Proportion of the votes cast (in %).

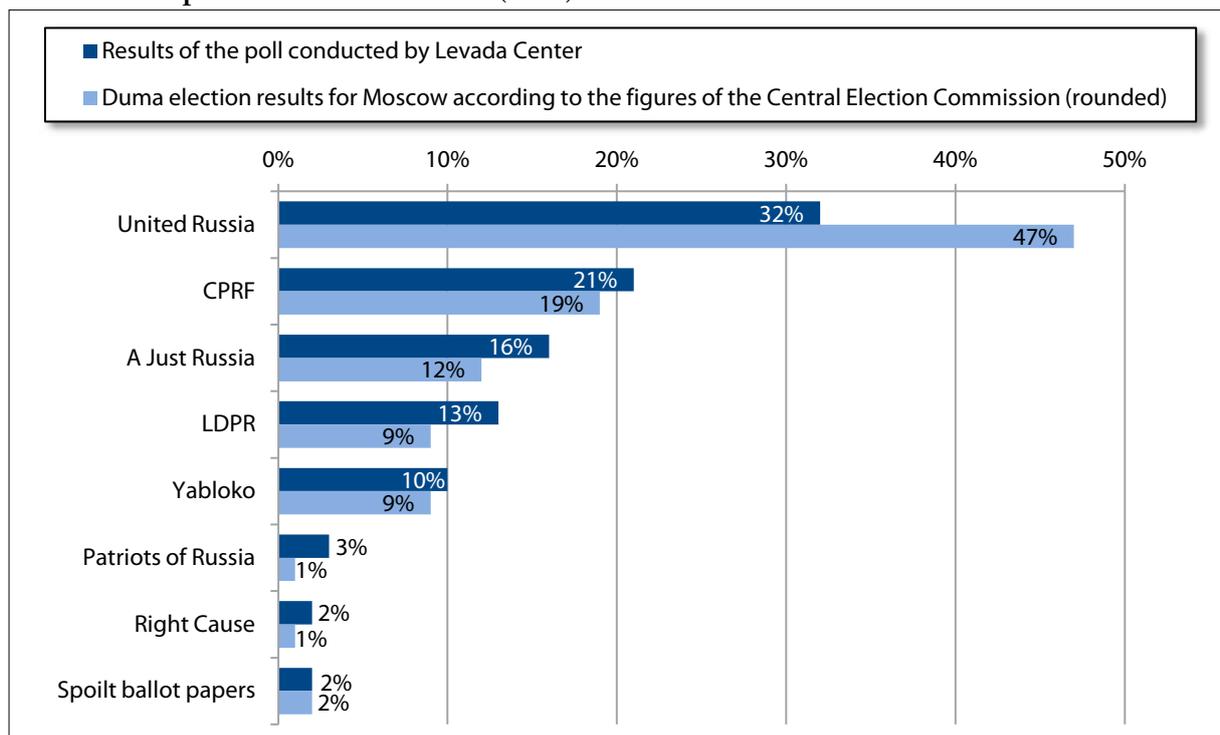
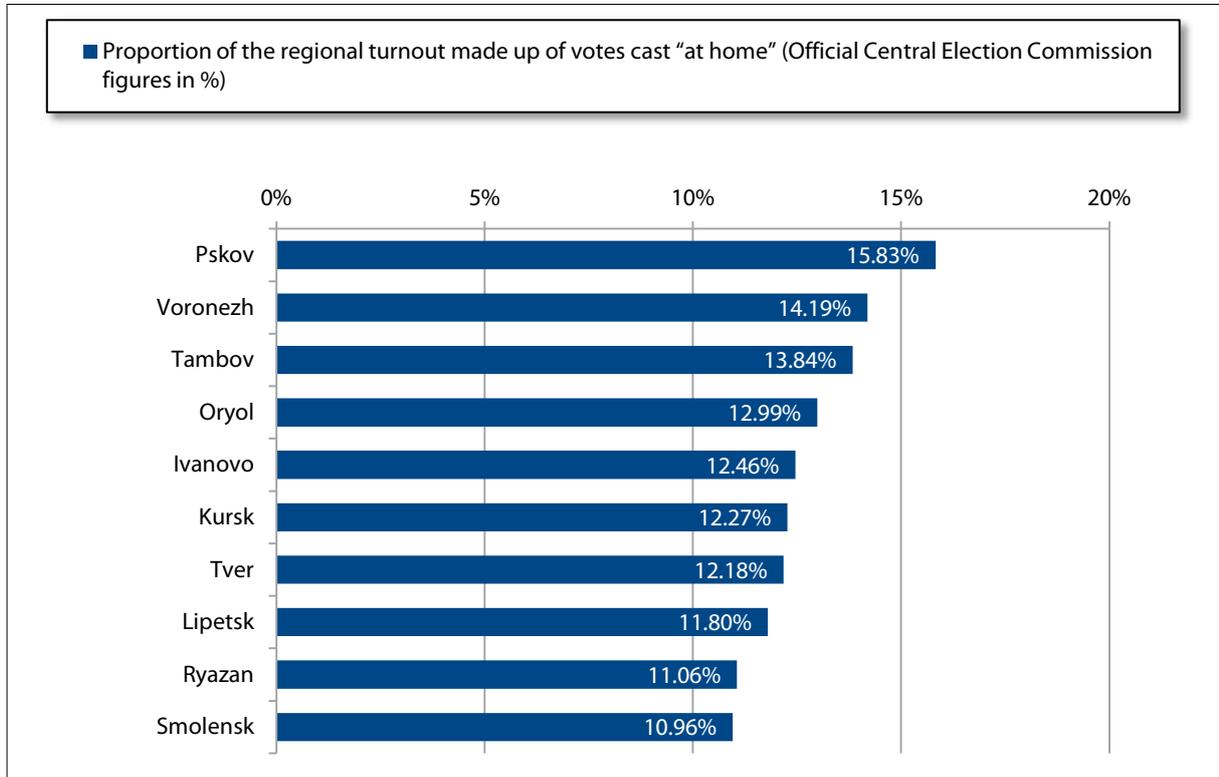


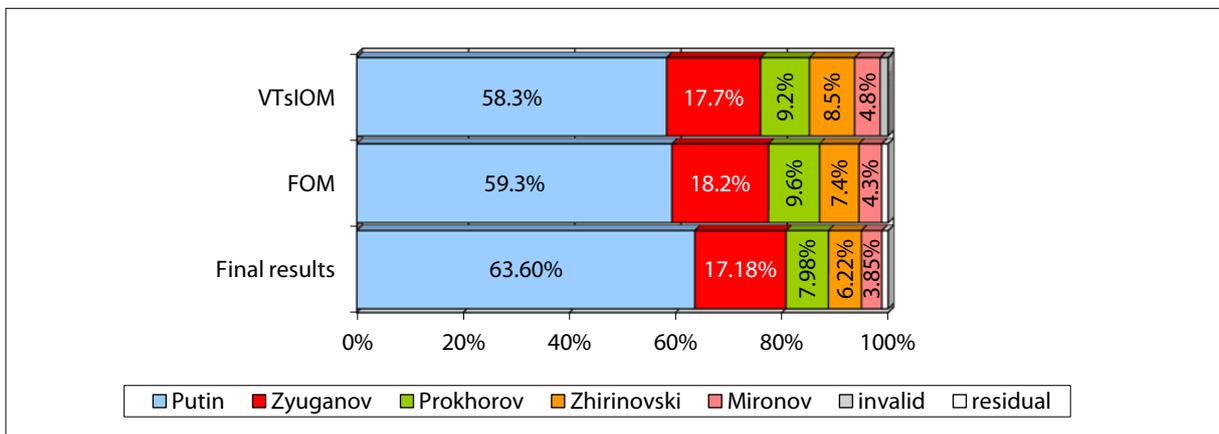
Figure 2: Regions with the highest levels of voting using mobile ballot boxes during the Duma elections on 4th December 2011.



DOCUMENTATION

Final Results of the Presidential Elections

Figure 1: Presidential Elections of 4th March 2012: Final Result Compared to Exit Polls



Sources: <http://www.cikrf.ru/news/cec/2012/03/07/prot.rtf>, <http://fom.ru/politika/10346>, <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=112577>.

**Table 1: Results of the Presidential Elections of 4th March 2012:
Results of the Russian Regions, Sorted According to the Votes for Putin**

		Zhirinovski	Zyuganov	Mironov	Prokhorov	Putin	Turnout
	<i>Russian Federation</i>	6.22%	17.18%	3.85%	7.98%	63.60%	65.25%
1	Republic of Chechnya	0.02%	0.03%	0.03%	0.02%	99.76%	99.61%
2	Republic of Dagestan	0.11%	5.94%	0.29%	0.45%	92.84%	91.10%
3	Republic of Ingushetia	1.17%	4.45%	1.06%	1.16%	91.91%	86.47%
4	Karachay-Cherkess Republic	0.98%	5.81%	0.74%	0.90%	91.36%	91.28%
5	Tuva Republic	1.74%	4.32%	1.37%	1.98%	90.00%	92.62%
6	Republic of Mordovia	2.34%	7.23%	1.11%	1.61%	87.06%	89.58%
7	Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug	5.21%	5.59%	1.49%	2.33%	84.58%	93.35%
8	Republic of Tatarstan	2.23%	9.66%	1.76%	2.93%	82.70%	83.00%
9	Kabardino-Balkar Republic	3.08%	13.81%	3.05%	2.32%	77.64%	73.05%
10	Kemerovo Oblast	6.82%	8.14%	2.28%	4.60%	77.19%	79.10%
11	Republic of Bashkortostan	3.64%	14.18%	2.49%	3.64%	75.28%	76.32%
12	Territories outside of the Russian Federation	2.72%	7.19%	1.96%	13.56%	73.24%	96.14%
13	Tyumen Oblast	7.07%	11.41%	2.45%	5.15%	73.10%	79.15%
14	Chukotka Autonomous Okrug	7.18%	9.04%	2.16%	7.53%	72.64%	81.56%
15	Tambov Oblast	4.54%	17.38%	2.25%	3.16%	71.76%	70.08%
16	City of Baikonur (Kazakhstan)	5.52%	12.14%	2.99%	6.81%	70.79%	70.17%
17	Saratov Oblast	5.06%	15.63%	3.27%	4.46%	70.64%	66.44%
18	Republic of Kalmykia	2.54%	17.51%	2.68%	6.04%	70.30%	62.01%
19	Republic of North Ossetia-Alania	3.16%	21.05%	3.11%	1.66%	70.06%	80.71%
20	Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	4.37%	14.39%	4.41%	6.49%	69.46%	74.50%
21	Astrakhan Oblast	5.07%	15.64%	4.30%	5.06%	68.76%	56.21%
22	Tula Oblast	5.79%	16.95%	3.41%	5.06%	67.77%	69.45%
23	Republic of Altai	5.60%	16.92%	3.34%	6.15%	66.87%	67.25%
24	Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra	8.11%	13.80%	3.29%	7.14%	66.41%	64.06%
25	Republic of Buryatia	5.34%	18.04%	3.36%	5.87%	66.20%	66.15%
26	Republic of Udmurtia	6.27%	14.82%	3.42%	8.59%	65.75%	64.39%
27	Zabaikalski Krai	9.95%	14.37%	3.01%	5.91%	65.69%	59.93%
28	Republic of Komi	7.67%	13.34%	4.32%	8.32%	65.02%	70.04%
29	Chelyabinsk Oblast	5.66%	14.72%	5.10%	8.03%	65.02%	62.71%
30	Sverdlovsk Oblast	5.20%	12.14%	5.47%	11.46%	64.50%	58.79%
31	Stavropol Krai	6.99%	18.03%	3.14%	6.33%	64.47%	60.27%
32	Pensa Oblast	6.39%	19.70%	3.16%	5.21%	64.27%	68.12%
33	Republic of Adygeia	5.06%	20.55%	3.01%	5.96%	64.07%	64.33%

continued overleaf

**Table 1: Results of the Presidential Elections of 4th March 2012:
Results of the Russian Regions, Sorted According to the Votes for Putin (Continued)**

		Zhirinovski	Zyuganov	Mironov	Prokhorov	Putin	Turnout
34	Bryansk Oblast	6.14%	20.91%	3.35%	4.59%	64.02%	66.97%
35	Nizhni Novgorod Oblast	5.96%	19.05%	3.40%	6.75%	63.90%	66.89%
36	Krasnodar Krai	6.54%	18.46%	3.31%	6.75%	63.72%	70.78%
37	Volgograd Oblast	6.86%	18.85%	4.33%	5.56%	63.41%	63.81%
38	Kurgan Oblast	8.57%	17.40%	3.99%	5.75%	63.39%	64.16%
39	Perm Krai	4.60%	15.78%	4.40%	10.86%	62.94%	55.09%
40	Amur Oblast	9.94%	16.87%	3.40%	5.77%	62.84%	60.35%
41	Rostov Oblast	6.27%	20.06%	3.63%	6.36%	62.66%	63.73%
42	Chuvash Republic	5.65%	20.58%	4.44%	5.52%	62.32%	73.64%
43	Leningrad Oblast	6.77%	14.18%	5.86%	9.98%	61.90%	63.24%
44	Ivanovo Oblast	7.25%	18.30%	4.44%	7.13%	61.85%	59.93%
45	Jewish Autonomous Oblast	8.35%	18.63%	3.48%	6.42%	61.59%	58.52%
46	Voronezh Oblast	6.22%	22.42%	3.68%	5.35%	61.34%	67.99%
47	Lipetsk Oblast	7.13%	21.13%	3.95%	5.55%	60.99%	65.63%
48	Kursk Oblast	8.20%	20.24%	3.81%	6.26%	60.45%	64.02%
49	Krasnojarsk Krai	8.61%	18.03%	3.54%	8.42%	60.16%	59.47%
50	Murmansk Oblast	8.09%	16.00%	5.05%	9.65%	60.05%	60.43%
51	Republic of Mari El	6.53%	22.09%	3.98%	6.37%	59.98%	70.85%
52	Kamchatka Krai	10.54%	15.97%	3.47%	8.95%	59.84%	61.07%
53	Ryasan Oblast	7.58%	21.42%	4.12%	6.10%	59.74%	64.15%
54	Pskov Oblast	6.71%	20.64%	4.57%	7.30%	59.69%	61.19%
55	Vologda Oblast	8.13%	15.35%	6.62%	9.38%	59.44%	61.63%
56	Belgorod Oblast	6.62%	23.45%	3.96%	5.53%	59.30%	74.34%
57	Kaluga Oblast	7.42%	20.01%	4.23%	8.07%	59.02%	63.51%
58	City of St. Petersburg	4.65%	13.06%	6.61%	15.52%	58.77%	62.05%
59	Samara Oblast	7.56%	20.55%	3.94%	8.05%	58.56%	60.78%
60	Republic of Khakassia	8.48%	20.56%	3.59%	7.84%	58.40%	64.69%
61	Ulyanovsk Oblast	6.96%	24.03%	4.17%	5.62%	58.18%	63.52%
62	Tver Oblast	7.40%	19.71%	4.92%	8.88%	58.02%	58.70%
63	Arkhangelsk Oblast	8.90%	15.94%	5.78%	10.45%	57.97%	58.16%
64	Kirov Oblast	7.90%	18.54%	5.22%	9.27%	57.93%	61.31%
65	Novgorod Oblast	7.41%	17.70%	7.12%	8.72%	57.91%	58.64%
66	Altai Krai	8.33%	22.26%	3.90%	7.13%	57.35%	59.93%
67	Primorski Krai	8.63%	20.36%	4.36%	7.95%	57.31%	64.14%
68	Tomsk Oblast	7.67%	18.85%	3.70%	11.57%	57.07%	58.23%
69	Nenets Autonomous Okrug	9.04%	17.27%	5.30%	10.04%	57.05%	62.49%
70	Orenburg Oblast	7.33%	24.92%	4.05%	5.80%	56.89%	61.19%
71	Moscow Oblast	6.66%	19.36%	4.23%	11.18%	56.85%	61.34%

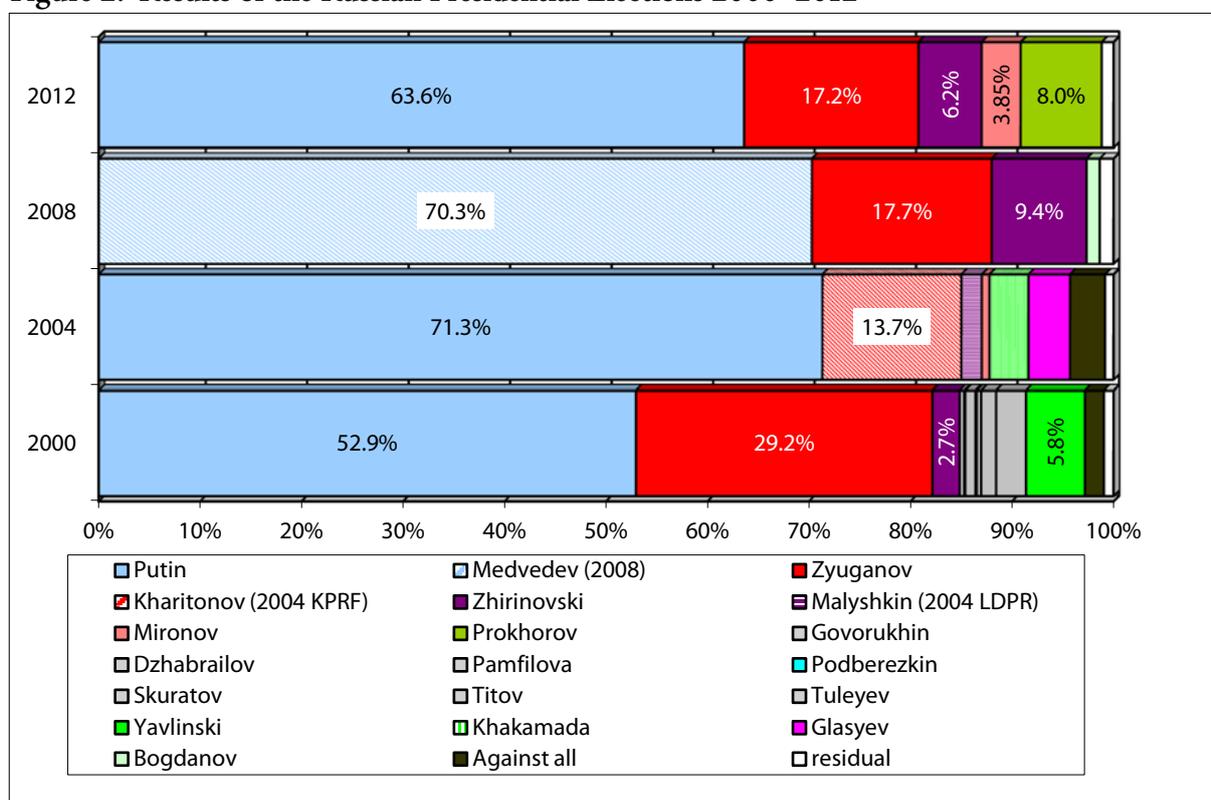
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**Table 1: Results of the Presidential Elections of 4th March 2012:
Results of the Russian Regions, Sorted According to the Votes for Putin (Continued)**

		Zhirinovski	Zyuganov	Mironov	Prokhorov	Putin	Turnout
72	Smolensk Oblast	7.94%	23.07%	4.34%	6.75%	56.69%	59.04%
73	Novosibirsk Oblast	7.70%	22.53%	3.03%	9.18%	56.34%	63.23%
74	Sakhalin Oblast	8.77%	20.03%	3.88%	9.78%	56.30%	57.25%
75	Magadan Oblast	9.18%	20.01%	3.74%	9.71%	56.25%	58.96%
76	Khabarovsk Krai	10.47%	17.65%	4.88%	9.50%	56.15%	61.92%
77	Omsk Oblast	7.68%	24.01%	4.03%	7.44%	55.55%	61.65%
78	Irkutsk Oblast	8.24%	22.57%	3.84%	8.76%	55.45%	56.01%
79	Republic of Karelia	8.59%	16.47%	6.10%	12.22%	55.38%	55.38%
80	Yaroslavl Oblast	7.72%	19.89%	6.14%	10.58%	54.53%	63.48%
81	Vladimir Oblast	8.40%	20.75%	6.57%	9.45%	53.49%	53.07%
82	Oryol Oblast	7.45%	29.09%	3.35%	6.14%	52.84%	68.04%
83	Kostroma Oblast	8.09%	26.02%	4.62%	7.61%	52.78%	61.43%
84	Kaliningrad Oblast	7.79%	21.33%	3.53%	13.56%	52.55%	59.29%
85	City of Moscow	6.30%	19.18%	5.05%	20.45%	46.95%	57.95%

Source: http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100031793509&vrn=100100031793505®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=100100031793509&type=227

Figure 2: Results of the Russian Presidential Elections 2000–2012

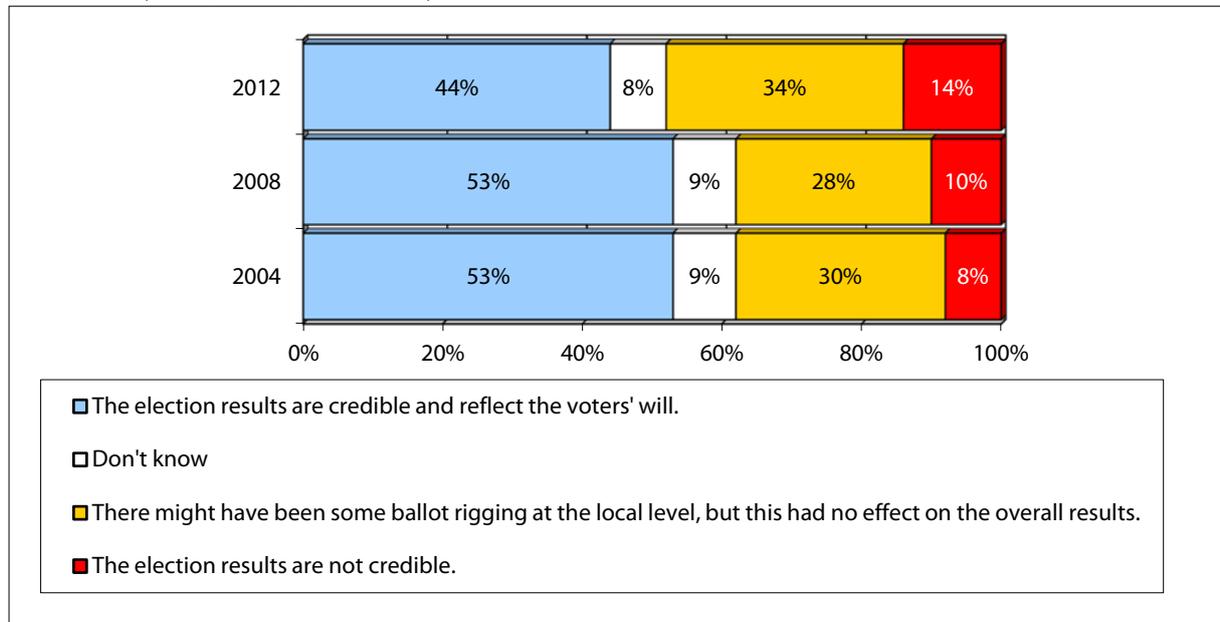


Sources: <http://www.cikrf.ru/news/cec/2012/03/07/prot.rtf>, <http://www.fci.ru/prez2000/default.htm>, http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100022249920&vrn=100100022176412®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=100100022249920&type=226, <http://pr2004.cikrf.ru/etc/svod.xls>.

OPINION POLL

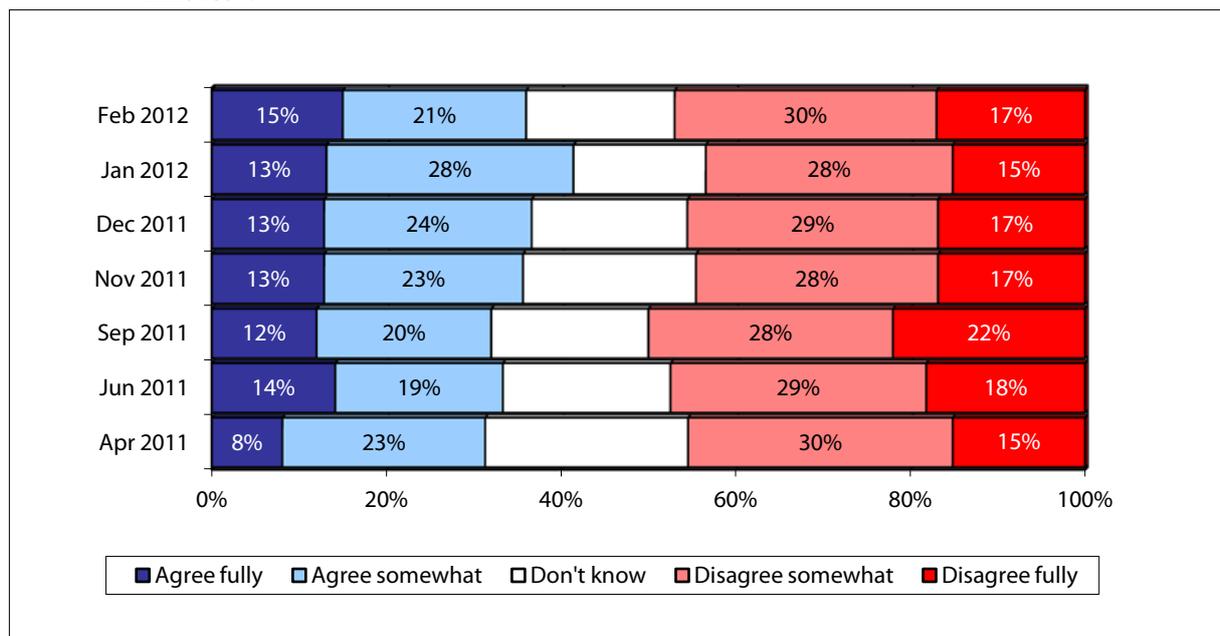
Trust in Election Results, Putin, and the Future

Figure 1: To What Extent Are the Results of the Russian Presidential Elections Credible? (2004, 2008, and 2012)



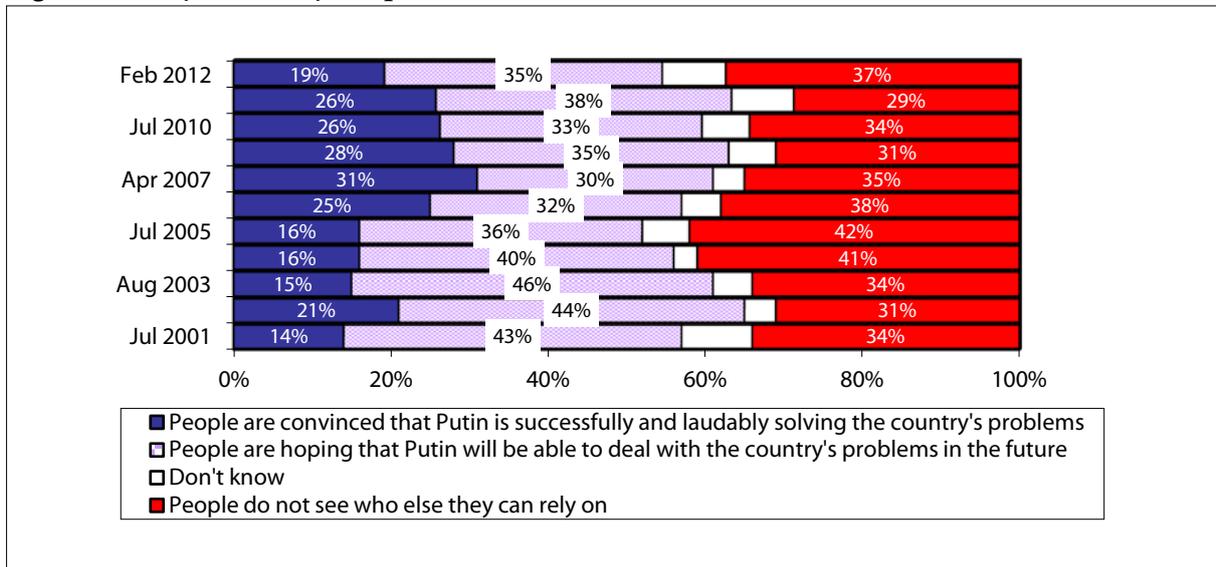
Source: representative opinion polls by VTsIOM, 2004, 2008, and 10th–12th March 2012, <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=112599>

Figure 2: Do You Agree With the Statement That “United Russia” is the “Party of Crooks and Thieves”?



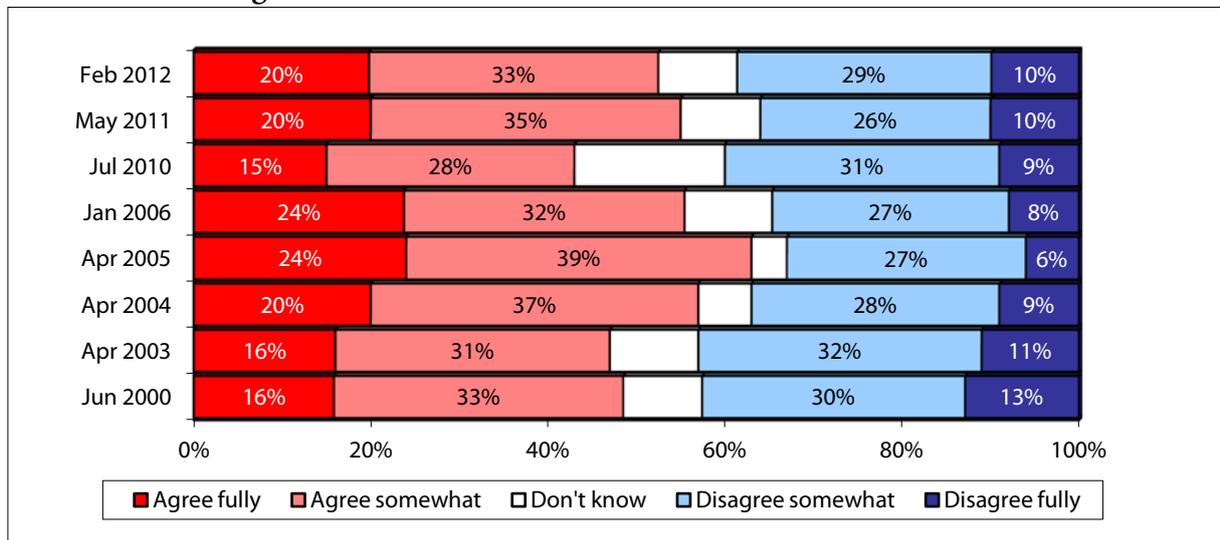
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from April 2001 to 24th–27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/rossiyane-o-edinoi-rossii-i-narodnom-fronte-politzaklyuchennykh-i-imidzhe-v-putina>

Figure 3: Why Do Many People Trust Vladimir Putin?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from July 2001 to 24th-27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/rossiyane-o-edinoi-rossii-i-narodnom-fronte-politzaklyuchennykh-i-imidzhe-v-putina>

Figure 4: Do You Agree With the Statement That the Russian Population Is Tired of Waiting for Change for the Better From Vladimir Putin?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from June 2000 to 24th-27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/rossiyane-o-edinoi-rossii-i-narodnom-fronte-politzaklyuchennykh-i-imidzhe-v-putina>

Table 1: In Which Areas Has Vladimir Putin Had Success During His Years in Power?*

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	Trend
Improving the standard of living, growth of salaries and pensions	37%	29%	28%	30%	36%	43%	40%	29%	
Strengthening of Russia's international position	19%	22%	25%	32%	26%	26%	26%	25%	
Economic development of the country	21%	14%	15%	31%	35%	31%	24%	23%	
Increase in optimism and hope for a rapid improvement of the state of things in the country	27%	21%	24%	25%	27%	26%	26%	19%	
Introducing order in the country, maintaining of a quiet political situation	18%	19%	19%	23%	24%	23%	22%	19%	
Improving Russia's relations with the West	21%	26%	25%	28%	20%	22%	29%	17%	
Solving the Chechen problem	10%	10%	10%	21%	20%	18%	12%	16%	
Increasing combat efficiency and reforming the armed forces	11%	13%	9%	14%	14%	12%	11%	15%	
Creating an acceptable economic and political environment for private business	11%	8%	7%	13%	10%	12%	13%	12%	
Cooperation with the other countries of the CIS	15%	16%	16%	15%	14%	14%	19%	12%	
Curbing the oligarchs, limiting their influence	18%	15%	13%	11%	8%	9%	9%	10%	
Eliminating the danger of terrorism in the country	3%	6%	6%	10%	10%	10%	6%	9%	
Combating corruption and bribe-taking	14%	12%	8%	14%	8%	9%	9%	7%	
Defending democracy and citizens' political liberties	6%	5%	8%	8%	4%	4%	4%	5%	
Fighting crime	8%	10%	7%	9%	8%	8%	7%	5%	
Improving relations between people of different ethnicity in Russia	3%	5%	7%	5%	5%	4%	6%	5%	
Reinforcing ethics and morals in the country	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	
I don't see any achievements	24%	26%	28%	20%	10%	15%	17%	30%	

* Sorted by the results of the latest polls

Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from 2004 to 24th–27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/ros-siyane-o-edinoi-rossii-i-narodnom-fronte-politzaklyuchennykh-i-imidzhe-v-putina>

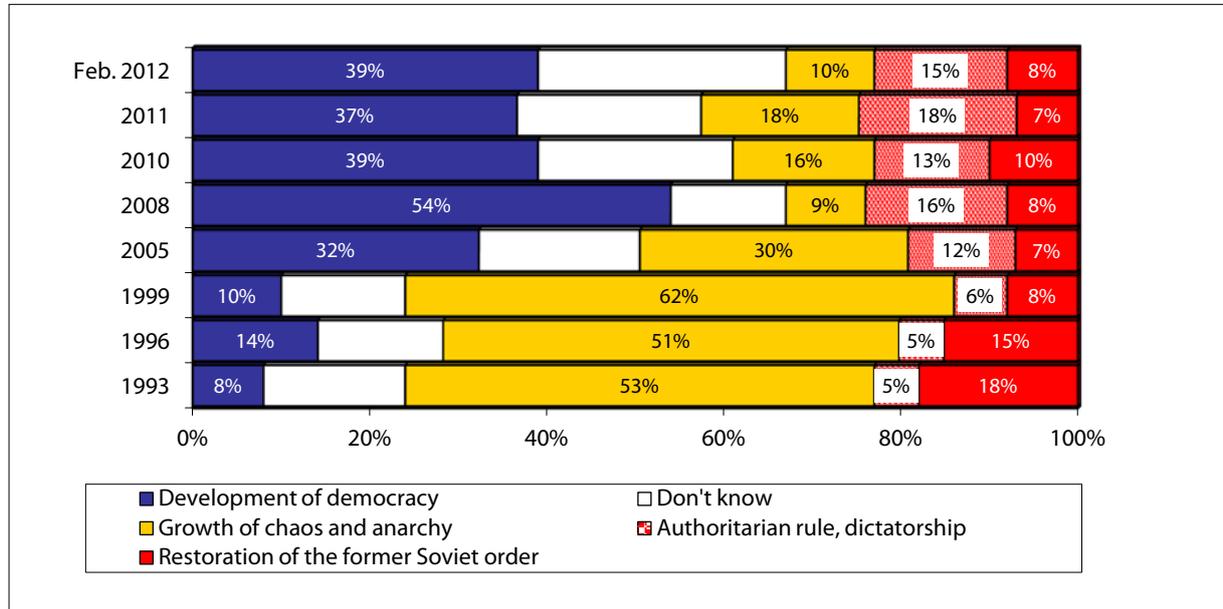
Table 2: ... And In Which Areas Have Putin's Actions Been Least Successful?*

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	Trend
Combating corruption and bribe-taking	19%	14%	16%	20%	18%	23%	24%	38%	
Improving the standard of living, growth of salaries and pensions	21%	21%	20%	19%	17%	13%	13%	21%	
Curbing the oligarchs, limiting their influence	19%	14%	16%	20%	18%	23%	24%	20%	
Reinforcing ethics and morals in the country	7%	5%	5%	10%	6%	6%	4%	15%	
Economic development of the country	18%	19%	16%	11%	8%	12%	12%	14%	
Fighting crime	28%	27%	28%	33%	32%	35%	37%	13%	
Solving the Chechen problem	25%	20%	18%	23%	17%	19%	18%	10%	
Introducing order in the country, maintaining of a quiet political situation	10%	7%	8%	6%	4%	6%	6%	7%	
Creating an acceptable economic and political environment for private business	4%	4%	4%	6%	3%	5%	5%	7%	
Improving relations between people of different ethnicity in Russia	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%	7%	
Eliminating the danger of terrorism in the country	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	6%	
Increasing combat efficiency and reforming the armed forces	34%	27%	18%	13%	7%	9%	10%	5%	
Increase in optimism and hope for a rapid improvement of the state of things in the country	6%	6%	7%	6%	4%	5%	4%	5%	
Cooperation with the other countries of the CIS	24%	15%	9%	7%	4%	4%	9%	5%	
Strengthening of Russia's international position	3%	1%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	
Improving Russia's relations with the West	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	
Defending democracy and citizens' political liberties	6%	5%	6%	4%	3%	5%	4%	3%	
I don't see any failures	13%	13%	16%	22%	14%	16%	16%	6%	

* Sorted by the results of the latest polls

Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from 2004 to 24th-27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/ros-siyane-o-edinoi-rossii-i-narodnom-fronte-politzaklyuchennykh-i-imidzhe-v-putina>

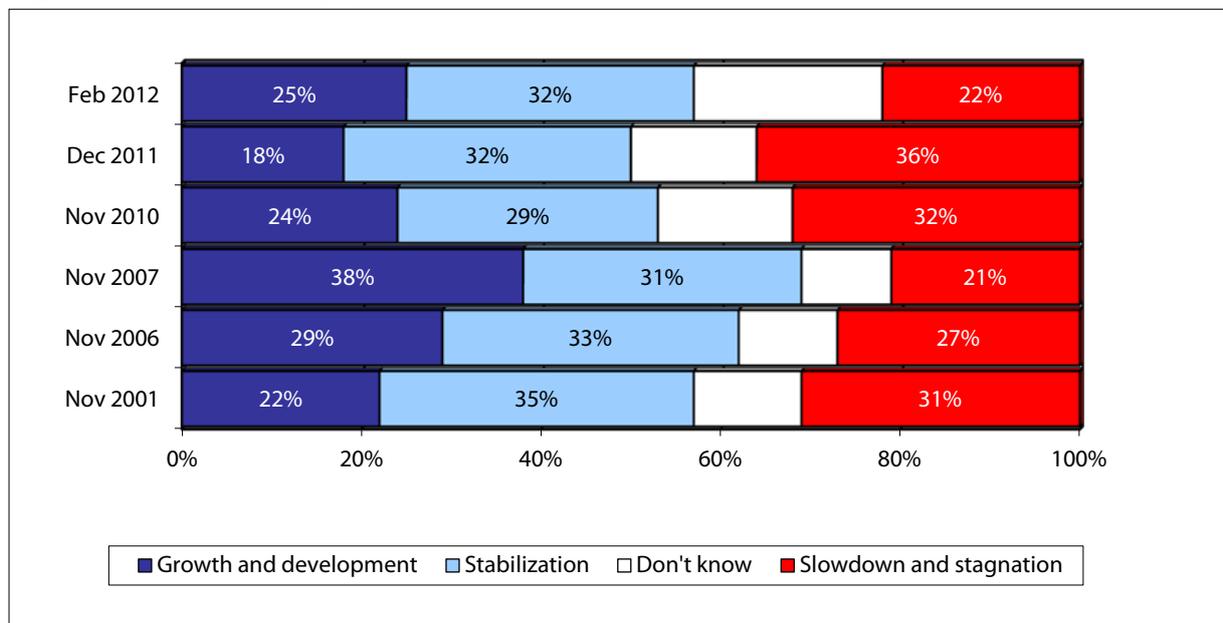
Figure 5: Which Direction Will Russian Political Life Take After the Presidential Elections in March of this Year?*



* Before 2012, the question was worded "In which direction is Russian political life developing?"

Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from 1993 to 24th-27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/izmenitsya-li-rossiya-posle-vyborov>

Figure 6: What Will Happen in Russia After the Presidential Elections in March of This Year?*



* Before 2012, the question was worded "What is happening in Russia at the moment?"

Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center from 1993 to 24th-27th February 2012, <http://www.levada.ru/print/12-03-2012/izmenitsya-li-rossiya-posle-vyborov>

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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The Russian Analytical Digest is a bi-weekly internet publication jointly produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen (www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de), the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), the Resource Security Institute, the Institute of History at the University of Zurich (<http://www.hist.uzh.ch/>) and the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at The George Washington University. It is supported by the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language *Russland-Analysen* (www.laenderanalysen.de/russland), the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia (www.res.ethz.ch), and the Russian Regional Report. The Russian Analytical Digest covers political, economic, and social developments in Russia and its regions, and looks at Russia's role in international relations.

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Resource Security Institute

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