



NAVALNY AND THE MOSCOW MAYORAL ELECTION

■ ANALYSIS		
Navalny's Campaign to be Moscow Mayor		2
By Robert W. Orttung, Washington		
■ ANALYSIS		
Re-Setting the Game:		
The Logic and Practice of Official Support for Alexei Navalny's Mayoral Run		6
By Julian G. Waller, Washington		
■ OPINION POLL		
Forecasts Before the Election		10
■ STATISTICS		
Election Results		11

Navalny's Campaign to be Moscow Mayor

By Robert W. Orttung, Washington

Abstract

According to the official results of the Moscow mayoral elections held on September 8, 2013, acting Mayor Sergei Sobyenin won 51.37% of the vote and his main challenger Alexey Navalny won 27.24% with a turnout of 32%. By crossing the 50% barrier, Sobyenin avoided a runoff in which he would have competed head-to-head with the second place finisher. Navalny refused to recognize the results, claiming that Sobyenin and his Kremlin allies have falsified the totals to ensure that there would be no second round. While the consequences of the elections for Russia's political system remain unclear, it is possible to evaluate the nature of Navalny's campaign. This article compares Navalny's technique to President Barack Obama's 2012 reelection effort, arguably one of the most sophisticated campaigns yet run in the history of democracy. Navalny's efforts naturally fall short given the harsh conditions in which he was working, but ultimately he has presented an alternative to the existing system in Russia.

Setting a Standard

Regardless of the results in the September 8, 2013, Moscow mayoral election, Alexei Navalny ran the most sophisticated electoral campaign that Russia has seen. While it is seemingly absurd to compare his efforts to those of Barack Obama's 2012 presidential campaign, Obama 2012 marks the state of the art in electoral campaigning so far achieved in electoral democracies and sets a standard against which other efforts can be measured. Placing Navalny's campaign in this context shows its strengths and weaknesses. As Navalny has himself declared, "Now we are objectively setting a new standard for campaigns in Russia."

Navalny and his campaign manager themselves point to many influences from American practice. Navalny told *Vedomosti* that he designed his meetings with constituents based on the meetings of the Baltimore mayor with his voters depicted in the TV show "The Wire." Navalny also mentioned meeting with former Democratic Party leader Howard Dean during his time at Yale in 2010 and other American politicians. Navalny seemed to gather from these conversations that campaigning is relentless hard work and that attracting a strong volunteer base can make up for a lack of money.

Of course, there is nothing new under the sun in the world of campaigning. Quintus Tullius Cicero laid out the most essential strategies in 64 BC in advising his brother Marcus Tullius Cicero, who was running for consul, the highest office in the Roman Republic. The rise of the Internet has not really affected the basic contours of any campaign.

Differences between the Obama and Navalny Campaigns

The differences between Obama's presidential campaign and Navalny's mayoral effort go beyond the fact that Obama was seeking a second term as president of a coun-

try with a population of more than 300 million, running with the advantages of being the incumbent and a solid political party organization behind him, and Navalny strove to unseat the chief executive of a city of 11.5 million. The contexts were totally different: Freedom House rates Russia as "not free" and Navalny campaigned under the constant threat of imprisonment.

A crucial difference is the amount of time that the two campaigns had to prepare before the actual voting began. Obama had four years to rethink the approach that he had employed in his successful 2008 campaign. He used this period to build a sophisticated new data platform called "Dashboard" that allowed him to integrate vast quantities of information held by the campaign to turn out Democratic Party voters in the most effective manner possible. Mayor Sergei Sobyenin and President Vladimir Putin announced that Moscow would hold a mayoral election out of the blue on June 4, when Sobyenin unexpectedly resigned, and scheduled the elections for September 8. This gave any potential opposition candidate just three months to organize a campaign. Additionally, those three months were over the summer, when many Muscovites leave the city to enjoy the pleasures of their country houses. September 8 is only the beginning of what could be considered a normal political season. By design, the mayoral election was neither free nor fair and could not provide any real legitimacy to Sobyenin, whose power rests on Putin's support.

The media is similarly important. The closely allied federal and city authorities control the major national and city television broadcasters that reach the Moscow electorate. State-controlled television defined the overall context of the race and Navalny had no way to influence it directly. News programs heavily favored Sobyenin. However, it is unclear how much of a factor television was in determining the results. The Obama campaign claims that its television advertising in the summer of

2012 defined Mitt Romney as an out-of-touch business tycoon and that he was never able to shake this image, contributing heavily to his defeat. In contrast, Statistician Nate Silver argues that the ads had no impact on Romney's and Obama's relative standing in the polls and therefore had little impact. In Russia, Ellen Mickiewicz's detailed research on television audiences shows that viewers do not necessarily believe what they see and there is no way to know how they will act on the information broadcast by the television networks.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the Obama and Navalny campaigns in this technology-driven era was the massive database of voters that the Obama campaign had built. Voter profiles compiled by campaign managers included information gathered by volunteers, public records, and social media about how committed a voter is to the Democratic Party and how likely he or she is to vote. Using this sophisticated data, the Obama campaign could target its door-to-door efforts and phone calling to irregular voters who are leaning Democratic, and would be more likely to turn out if the campaign contacted them and encouraged them to cast a ballot. This database allows to campaign to avoid wasting time and resources contacting die-hard Democrats who will vote even without being contacted and citizens who will never vote for the Democratic Party no matter how hard the campaign might try to persuade them.

Navalny had nothing like this kind of database and therefore could not target his resources on turning out lukewarm and inconsistent voters. Rather he had to reach out to the masses, getting his campaign newspapers into the hands of as many people as possible in the hopes of reaching as many of those he needed to turn out as possible. In fact, when Sobyenin sent out a mass mailing to 2.44 million Muscovites, apparently targeting older voters whom he expected to support him, Navalny filed a complaint with the Moscow Electoral Commission complaining about Sobyenin's allegedly illegal use of personal data for campaign purposes. Navalny claimed that such a tactic was only legal if each individual had authorized the Sobyenin campaign to use his personal data. In the U.S. such information is part of the public record and freely available to all political parties.

Modern American campaigns spend only tiny amounts of money on hard copy paper newspapers or other literature. Beyond television advertising, the focus instead is on personal contacts, whether going door-to-door or on the phone. Grassroots activists and precinct-level party volunteers may disagree with this approach, but the campaign managers simply respond "yard signs and flyers don't vote." Navalny printed two newspapers, each with a print run of 4 million copies, and distributed them throughout the city. Additionally, his staff prepared

raion level newspapers that they distributed in the areas where Navalny spoke. Many of the volunteers who created these papers work in the pro-Kremlin media for their day jobs. Additionally, Navalny had distributed at least 900 banners that people could hang from their balconies, the Moscow equivalent of American suburban yard signs.

Making the Most of What They Give You

Even though Navalny's campaign had nothing like the money or information resources of the Obama effort, he has redefined the nature of Russian campaigning. After this campaign, it will be increasingly difficult for the authorities to rely on their control of Russia's political institutions and voter manipulation.

While new for the city of Moscow and national politics in Russia, Navalny's efforts drew on local precedents. In some respects it resembled the 1990 Democratic Russia campaign for the Moscow City Soviet, with the upstarts outmaneuvering the incumbent Communists. In 2009 Boris Nemtsov ran for mayor of Sochi, already deep into preparations for hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics. He likewise had no access to television broadcasts, nor could he rent space to meet with constituents. Instead, he printed campaign material and distributed it on local bus lines and street markets. The authorities could not simply remove him from the ballot because international attention was focused on the race given Sochi's Olympic status. While that campaign sparked some interest among Russian and international observers, most analysts assumed that Nemtsov was fighting a quixotic battle. Nemtsov's populist campaign promised to freeze the level of municipal fees, cut the number of bureaucrats in the city, prevent developers from building wherever they pleased, and generally return power to the local level by eliminating the ability of the governor's aides to rule the city capriciously. Ultimately, acting Sochi Mayor Pakhomov won 77 percent of the vote, while Nemtsov captured only 13.5 percent with just 39 percent of the potential voters participating in the elections. Navalny doubled this result in Moscow.

Like Nemtsov, Navalny had to figure out how to run a campaign with no access to television and constant harassment from the authorities. Moreover, he had to do it in a city about 33 times as large as Sochi. Navalny had no choice but to find ways to address the voters directly.

Like Obama and Nemtsov in Sochi, Navalny's key task was to turn out the voters who support him. The higher the turnout among his base, the greater Navalny's chances to win. That is why Sobyenin scheduled the campaign and elections for the summer time, hoping that good weather would divert attention from the balloting.

The most visible element of Navalny's campaign was the giant cubes that he placed in strategic locations

throughout Moscow, mostly near popular metro stations. Not only did the cubes serve as giant billboards, they were meeting places for volunteers who gathered there and then entered the metro system to distribute Navalny campaign material and flyers to metro riders. Like Obama's campaign, which assembled a group of whiz kids from Silicon Valley, Navalny had a team of software engineers who designed a map showing where all the cubes were located so voters could easily find them (<http://cube.navalny.ru/>).

Navalny himself traveled around the city, holding 3–4 meetings with voters a day. These meetings usually took place outside with Navalny standing in front of a crowd. Judging by the pictures that Navalny and his team posted on his Livejournal blog (<http://navalny.livejournal.com/>), the number of people who showed up for the events grew dramatically as the campaign progressed; the initial gatherings of several dozen swelled to crowds of several thousand by the end of August. The campaign had a staff of 50 people to organize these events, which included everything from microphones for Navalny to chairs for senior citizens who came to listen. Navalny did not announce his rallies publicly in advance—rather his volunteers distributed fliers near where the meeting was planned so that only locals would show up, minimizing the number of outside journalists and provocateurs. These rallies took place in many of the big new suburbs far from the center of town. Most of the people who showed up were supportive of the campaign.

Debates are a typical part of campaigns in functioning democracies, but in Russia's system Putin has traditionally refused to participate in them and Sobyenin also declined to face off with Navalny and the four additional contenders. Sobyenin's campaign manager claimed that he preferred to engage in "direct contact with Muscovites." Without Sobyenin, the five other candidates participated in two debates that were shown on Moscow television stations that have smaller viewerships than TV Tsentr, which is technically a federal, not a local, channel and therefore opted out of broadcasting the encounters. (The debates were on Moscow 24 and the second one is here—<http://www.m24.ru/videos/26321>). After two debates, Navalny decided not to participate in further encounters with the non-Sobyenin candidates. The Moskva-Doverie station that had been set to host the third debate planned to air it at 8am, when few people would be watching. In any case, these debates were not helping Navalny because they made it difficult for him to distinguish himself from the other candidates when the incumbent was not participating.

Navalny makes extensive use of the Internet and this is where he is likely to reach many of his voters. The most important Internet resources for his outreach efforts are the website of the Ekho Moskvyy radio station

(<http://echo.msk.ru/>) and Dozhd' Internet TV (<http://tvrain.ru/>). The Ekho Moskvyy site is one of the most popular news sites in Russia and Navalny's posts typically receive 50,000 hits or more, generating hundreds of comments. His material appears at the top of the page, where it is easily seen by viewers. He frequently appears on Dozhd' shows and his events are well covered there. Additionally, Navalny regularly updates his Livejournal website. On Twitter he had 393,313 followers as of September 2, 2013. The Twitter account, in particular, was a non-stop flood of cartoons, pictures, and other memes, made by the candidate's tech-savvy legions of fans, celebrating the campaign and the effort to bring change to Putin's Russia. Vkontakte, Twitter and Facebook were excellent sources for recruiting volunteers.

A key insight of the George W. Bush campaign was that people are more likely to vote for a candidate if one of their family members or friends advises them to do so. Such family and friends style persuasion is much more effective than typical campaign outreach. Obama worked closely with Facebook to identify ways for volunteers who supported Obama to reach out to their friends via social networks who might not be registered to vote or who might not support the candidate on their own. Navalny has done something similar. Since he lacked the data-gathering technology that Obama deployed, he asked his supporters to send messages to people whom they had never met among the 4 million Vkontakte users registered in Moscow, more than 50 percent of the 7.2 million voters in the city (<http://moskva.navalny.ru/>). Since Vkontakte's spam filters block users from sending more than 20 messages a day to those who are not on their friend list, Navalny called on his supporters to send out such messages every day.

Navalny's campaign is financed mainly by small donations from a large number of contributors. By the end of August, he had collected more than 100 million rubles (\$3 million). The average size of the donation was 3,500 rubles (\$10). Contributors to the campaign could donate on-line through Yandex Dengi (<https://money.yandex.ru/>), though Navalny pointed out that only 10 percent of the donors used that method to transfer money to him.

Attacking one's opponents has become a key part of all political campaigns. Navalny, known for his anti-corruption crusading focused on the expensive apartments owned by Sobyenin's two daughters. The elder daughter runs an interior decorating company that worked exclusively for government clients where her father held office. Such accusations fed the widely held view that Russia's leaders are corrupt and implicated Sobyenin in these practices (<http://echo.msk.ru/blog/navalny/1135174-echo/>). The regime likewise sought to portray Navalny as corrupt by prosecuting him for his work in advising the governor

in Kirov Oblast and apparent ownership of a company in Montenegro. Obama similarly sought to portray his opponent Mitt Romney as an unscrupulous businessman, though attacks on Romney's children were definitely out of the question.

Campaign staffing is also key. The head of Navalny's campaign is Leonid Volkov, a member of the Yekaterinburg City Duma and a specialist in information technologies. Other key players included Roman Rubanov, an auditor, and Maksim Kats, a member of the Shchukino Raion Council. Kats' Twitter account seems to be a major source of young volunteers for the campaign.

The campaign managed to attract 14,000 volunteers, however, the campaign has only managed to use 2,000 of these effectively. The failure to engage more of these people who are ready to work shows the organizational weakness of the campaign. However, the fact that Russians are willing to work on the campaign without being paid is a new development and the volunteer base will form the core of a new opposition after the election. Navalny has been able to attract many well-paid top managers from companies based in Moscow who take time off from their jobs to campaign for him. These people are willing to stand in front of the cubes and distribute literature, according to *New Times* Editor Evgenia Albats. Regardless of the outcome, the campaign built a network of politically engaged people who are prepared to work to improve conditions in their city and country.

Finally, Navalny is following Cicero's advice to bring hope to people. The campaign's main slogan was "Change Russia, Start with Moscow." Clearly Navalny has ambitions beyond Moscow. "I am a political actor, my ambition is to change life in the country," he says.

Other Candidates

Sobyanin's campaign was based on his control of the city administration, the city budget, funds to buy off influential persons or groups, access to television, and the cash in campaign war chest (84 million rubles or \$2.6 mil-

lion at the beginning of August, when Navalny had only 22 million rubles). In seeking to hold the election and allowing Navalny to compete, Sobyanin assumed from the start that he would win with "orchestrated competition" to use Nikolai Petrov's term. The national network NTV, for example, gave the mayor more than 20 minutes to explain to its audience all the new construction that he is overseeing in Moscow on August 29 (<http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/651379/>). This kind of coverage is simply not available to opposition candidates like Navalny. Sobyanin's main message was his competence in running the city and the amount of construction completed under his watch. His campaign was nowhere near as active as Navalny's in terms of generating voter activism and failed to turn out the mayor's base voters.

After the Elections

The election results showed that Navalny had mobilized more than 630,000 of Moscow's 7.2 million potential voters to support him. That is a respectable figure and could provide the basis for further growth. However, as the excitement of the election recedes, it will be difficult to maintain momentum. Assuming that he is not simply imprisoned by the authorities, Navalny has suggested that he would work with his supporters to introduce new legislation into the United Russia-controlled Moscow City Duma. Obama has not had much luck turning his campaign team into a sustainable political movement that can influence legislation between elections. His Organizing for America sends out numerous emails, but has little apparent impact in getting Congress to shift its positions on important issues like gun control or climate change. Obama did not even use the organization to round up support for striking Syria. Ultimately, though, Navalny's campaign demonstrated the presence of an activist group among Russian voters and presented the possibility of an alternative to the current system, something that Russia's rulers have worked fervently to prevent from coming into being.

About the Author

Robert Ortung is the assistant director of the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs.

Recommended Reading

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- Ellen Mickiewicz, *Television, Power, and the Public in Russia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Re-Setting the Game: The Logic and Practice of Official Support for Alexei Navalny's Mayoral Run

By Julian G. Waller, Washington

Abstract

Alexei Navalny, the main opposition candidate running in the Moscow mayoral election, paradoxically received support from his Kremlin-backed opponent several times throughout the campaign. The goals and ambitions of acting mayor and candidate Sergei Sobyenin best explain this uncharacteristic promotion of an opposition politician by the authorities. The logic of Sobyenin's hesitant, yet persistent, support for Navalny's candidacy seeks to tap into legitimacy as the new basis for political agency and self-promotion. Only Navalny could deliver that legitimacy, without which Sobyenin would remain in his more subordinate role as Moscow city's apparatchik-in-chief. This reality became clear as the campaign progressed, and strongly changed the nature of its dynamic over the course of the summer. In the aftermath of the election, it remains unclear if this policy was a success.

Setting the Stage

The surprise announcement on June 4th of a snap election for the Moscow mayoralty provoked shock in some corners of the Russian political world. Since Putin appointed Sobyenin to the mayor's office in October 2010, he has been dogged by questions of legitimacy. Even in a country where elections are regularly disparaged as not-free or manipulated, Mayor Sobyenin had to deal with the constraints of being the unelected leader of the largest, wealthiest, and most educated urban conglomeration in the Russian Federation, a city that is the locus of all major anti-government protests since they began in December 2011. The mayor's increasing ambitions did not fit well with his status as an appointed bureaucrat, especially following the liberalization of the regional election law in 2012, which made it possible for governors and capital city mayors to stand for direct elections. Seeing a chance to both further his political career and stymie potential challengers emerging in the near future, Sobyenin decided to hold snap polls as an ideal way out of this predicament.

Repeated references to the riskiness of Sobyenin's "maneuver" enlivened Russian-language news sources throughout June.¹ Some observers applauded the timing of the election to coincide with a period of supposed weakness for the opposition.² Vladimir Putin's critics were in retreat, pressured by the Kremlin's retrenchment and aggressive anti-opposition actions that accompanied Putin's return to the presidency. Russia's dependent courts had opened or re-opened criminal cases

against many opposition leaders—including Navalny—while the rubber stamp parliament passed laws restricting foreign asset ownership and NGO activity. The anti-Putin opposition saw the 2016 State Duma elections as their next major opportunity, while a potential contest in the summer of 2013 seemed particularly unpromising. Ultimately, six candidates competed.

The Logic of Cooperation

One of the principle reasons for calling snap elections in 2013 instead of holding out until 2015, when Sobyenin's term officially ended, was the fear that opposition unity would be greater and that the economic situation in the country would grow much worse—a potential driver for future political destabilization. Furthermore, such snap elections could provide much-needed legitimacy to shore up Sobyenin's political position and even act as a springboard for further advancement.

The concept of legitimacy as a political tool is well known in all democratic countries and is a regular feature of political discussion in modern Russia. The Russian president relies on the votes of the population to secure his position as national leader, just as the lower house of the parliament relies on votes to legitimize its position. Even if the specific numbers were subject to some dispute and doubt, Putin's sizeable vote share in the 2012 presidential election indicated strong popular support for his return to office. The president appoints governors and senators (with regional input) so they lack the legitimacy that comes with popular election. Instead, their authority was derived from the personal relationships they cultivated in the higher levels of the Kremlin.

The return of direct elections for governors gave provincial bosses access to political legitimacy as a tool. While most regional leaders saw the elections as merely a

1 <http://ria.ru/analytics/20130604/941309930.html>; <http://www.komersant.ru/doc/2204755/print>; http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2013/06/130605_putin_sobyenin_resignation.shtml; http://www.stratagema.org/publications/politics/item_3024.html

2 <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/txt.asp?id=310702>

new test assessing how well they could work their political machines and deliver votes for the Kremlin during federal elections, Sobyenin realized the potential gains that a competitive election could provide him personally. With forecasted ratings in the 60–70 percent range and an opposition reeling from Putin's renewed repressions, there was little fear of a loss. Instead, Sobyenin felt that he could engage in a “free and fair” contest that would give him a claim to political legitimacy and boost his rank within the federal hierarchy.

Given the context of the relatively liberal and increasingly active Moscow citizenry, a win in free elections would demonstrate an ability to compete effectively with the protest movement and achieve victory on terms that no one before had been able to achieve. If successful, such an effort would defuse the protest spirit by vanquishing it in the course of real and fair elections while proving Sobyenin's mettle to the circle of Putin confidantes in the Kremlin, putting him in a position to jockey for increased authority. Potential uncertainty in the 2018 presidential elections continues to loom over the Kremlin clans, and the possible collapse of the Medvedev government encourages elite-level maneuverings to gain the best position. Arguably, holding free elections in which there was little chance of losing could potentially strengthen Sobyenin's position within these intra-elite struggles by adding the factor of his position as a truly legitimate political actor.

From the start, Sobyenin stressed his desire to hold the freest and fairest elections in the history of the city.³ He pushed to ensure that observers would see the elections as competitive. In June he published a “Memorandum on Honest Elections” that sounded surprisingly similar to the long-held electoral demands of the opposition, focusing on improving competition and reforming the vote-count process through more automated counting.⁴ Speaking in regard to helping opposition candidates overcome registration hurdles (discussed in greater detail below), one pundit said that much of the acting mayor's campaign was “not PR for Sobyenin as a candidate, but PR for the legitimacy of the elections.”⁵ Sobyenin saw no point in running an election that did not increase his legitimacy, while a voting exercise that led to citizen apathy or opposition protests would necessarily hurt his reputation.

The goal of seeking legitimacy created a logic by which the perception of competitive, free, and fair elections became a necessity for the authorities. Based on the political situation in early June, it seemed reasonable to

expect that the ballot in September would be fairly safe. Oligarch Mikhail Prokhorov's need to dispose of his assets before the elections and the on-going criminal proceedings against Navalny suggested that the two credible opponents would be excluded from this competition. Unable to unload his property, Prokhorov dropped out quickly, but Sobyenin's logic proved to have a drive of its own. The remainder of the field was dominated by second or third-tier party candidates from the Communist, Liberal Democratic, and Just Russia parties, while Sergei Mitrokhin represented Yabloko.

Only the inconvenient and brash liberal-nationalist opposition blogger Navalny held any credibility among the field of non-barraged candidates. Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Vyatcheslav Volodin specifically stated that using Navalny's presence to increase competitiveness was a policy with support from the federal center, and emphasized that a run by Navalny would be beneficial for the new political system.⁶ Calmed by assurances from pro-Kremlin political managers who claimed that Navalny would only get 2–3 percent of the vote, Navalny's candidacy became a key ingredient for the success of Sobyenin's quest for political legitimacy.⁷ Without Navalny, there was no one who could conceivably be seen as a legitimate challenger in the eyes of the protest movement. The second-rate unknowns put forth by the other parties only furthered this perception of a non-competitive, grey, and foreordained result—the opposite of a legitimacy-granting election.

Over the course of a single month, the logic of legitimacy forced a move from simply requiring a freer and more competitive electoral process to one specifically requiring Navalny's participation for the adjective “competitive” to have an imprimatur of reality. That however, was not all. In fact, in order for Navalny to be part of the campaign, he needed to be given the freedom to campaign. A decade's worth of practice in harassment, obfuscation, and repression against those who did not play by the rules of the tightly-controlled political game had to be thrown out, and a blatantly anti-systemic politician had to be given the space and the freedom to run an aggressive campaign. The remaining two months before the election illustrated this tension and the new political dynamic it required. Sobyenin's initially relatively small risk of holding snap elections turned into an unprecedented political opening, at least in Moscow, as the authorities were committed to allowing their self-declared foe to compete.

3 <http://www.aif.ru/politics/news/414522>

4 <http://www.newsru.com/russia/27jun2013/karusel.html>

5 <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2225932>

6 http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2013/07/09_a_5419993.shtml

7 <http://en.novayagazeta.ru/politics/58969.html>

Forms of Cooperation

From the *de facto* start of the electoral campaign in early June to the balloting on September 8th, Navalny found an uncommon ally in City Hall. Although this help was hardly total or full-throated, it nevertheless appeared every time Navalny found himself with a potential barrier to participation. Sobyenin ordered local deputies to sign off on his initial registration as a candidate. Breaking with typical Russian practice, the city electoral commission registered Navalny to compete without raising any technical problems. The authorities sustained their commitment to Navalny's participation when they dramatically released him from jail, pending appeal, the day after he received a five-year term in the *Kirovles* criminal case, thereby allowing him to continue his campaign. Finally, City Hall's surprising acceptance of pro-Navalny rallies and voter-meetings rounded out the notable support the liberal opposition received from Sobyenin's administration over the course of the election.

The first hurdle to Navalny's candidacy for the mayoralty was the so-called *municipal filter*, a mechanism of the new and "liberalized" electoral code adopted in the wake of the 2011 protests. That code returned directly elected governors to Russian politics for the first time since 2004, and set the scene for the Moscow campaign in the first place. In an effort to limit who could compete in the elections, the authorities imposed the municipal filter to prevent candidates with no representation or friends in the provincial legislatures and local councils from being allowed to run. Given the low level of political competition over the last decade, this requirement made it hard for non-United Russia or Kremlin-backed candidates to get on the ballot, and nearly impossible for those who represented actual opposition parties.

The problem of finding the 110 necessary municipal deputy signatures (each one from a different district) to be included on the ballot became a problem for all candidates save Sobyenin—even Communist Ivan Mel'nikov needed help from pro-government deputies.⁸ For Navalny's campaign this reality was particularly acute, and it was soon evident that it would be simply impossible to find enough friendly deputies to fill the list. The Council of Municipal Deputies treated Navalny with scorn and invited him to appear only alongside two spoiler candidates to make his pitch for their support. Navalny Campaign Manager Leonid Volkov recounted that even the signatures that had been gathered were beginning to fall away as rumors of personal calls from Mayor Sobyenin's chief of staff Anastasia Rakova with the exhortation "not one vote for Navalny!" became pervasive.⁹

The savior of the hour turned out to be Sobyenin himself. As Volkov said, when it became clear that the Navalny campaign would not pass the municipal threshold, in the last days before the registration deadline, the mayor's office offered a full set of 110 signatures.¹⁰ After Navalny refused to accept the offer for the complete set of signatures, fearing a PR disaster by allowing it to be said that the opposition campaign gained *all* of its signatures from United Russia deputies, a compromise deal allowed Navalny's campaign to take exactly the number that it needed.¹¹ Ultimately, Navalny received 49 signatures from pro-government deputies in addition to the 85 already gathered, thus allowing him to pass the barrier.¹²

Even with Sobyenin's help with the municipal deputies, signs in other areas pointed in a much more typical direction. Days before the Moscow City Electoral Commission (MCEC) accepted Navalny's documents, the federal-level commission refused his party official registration.¹³ And, as Navalny left the MCEC and greeted a large crowd of supporters, he was arrested again. The authorities later claimed that they had not arrested Navalny, but had merely detained him for a "talk" to explain the minor violations of public order that had occurred.¹⁴ This inauspicious start did not lead to further setbacks in the registration process; instead the paperwork moved forward without a hitch—a remarkable degree of non-interference on the part of the authorities. The police storming of a private pro-Navalny office (the so-called "Brothers of Navalny") accompanied by Just Russia candidate Nikolai Levichev created a media sensation, but never turned into a seriously threatening act.¹⁵ Idle talk by election officials about possibly removing Navalny from the ballot in late August due to campaign irregularities also went nowhere.¹⁶

When the *Kirovles* case reached its dramatic conclusion in late July with a 5-year prison sentence and immediate incarceration for Navalny, several thousand people turned out to protest in front of the Kremlin, leading to a surprise release pending a delayed appeal process. Although the candidate himself insisted that it was the dangerously large and unsanctioned demonstration in Moscow¹⁷ that ensured his release, that hypothesis seems unlikely. Instead, Navalny probably was saved

8 <http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/14256691/filtr-tonkoj-ochistki>

9 <http://lenta.ru/articles/2013/07/23/volkov/>

10 <http://www.rg.ru/2013/06/25/sobyenin-site.html>

11 <http://lenta.ru/articles/2013/07/23/volkov/>; <http://lenta.ru/articles/2013/07/09/navalny/>

12 <http://lenta.ru/news/2013/07/09/signatures/>

13 <http://lenta.ru/news/2013/07/05/alliance/>

14 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/article/2013/07/10/882295-navalnyiy-sdal-podpisi-popal-v-avtozak-i-pogulyal-po-moskve-kak-eto-byilo.html>

15 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/article/2013/08/14/899596-kto-sdal-bratev-navalnogo-soratnikam-levicheva.html>

16 <http://www.echo.msk.ru/news/1141120-echo.html>

17 <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2238604>

by a guardian angel operating at the highest levels in the Kremlin.¹⁸ Most shockingly, he was granted his freedom and the appeal process was delayed until *after* the September 8th elections.

Finally, the Moscow authorities helped Navalny by not unleashing the police to disrupt his numerous voter-meetings and rallies. For the entire campaign period, the candidate greeted voters several times a day in large gatherings outside of metro stations and set up nearly 200 “cubes” inscribed with his campaign platform throughout the city. A half-hearted attempt to halt a larger-than-expected rally on August 24th came to nothing, and the bungled “talk” with Navalny by the police that followed merely affirmed the unusually light touch with which they handled the candidate.¹⁹ A major “rally-concert” on September 6th, the eve of the election, was allowed to proceed, and a post-election protest rally was conducted without problem on the 9th.²⁰ A further rally to protest the election was even duly called for the 14th, a continuation of the new, liberal rally policy that became a hallmark of Sobyenin’s policy.²¹

Hundreds of Navalny volunteers fanned across Moscow to hand out election materials, including to passengers riding in the metro. The police intervened in only a small number of cases. Attempts to sabotage campaigning—not accepting a rally petition for August and a potential criminal probe for defacing city monuments with Navalny campaign material that surfaced on September 3rd—were minor exceptions and did not lead to any serious consequences. Repeated “talks” with the candidate by police were handled clumsily and never slowed the campaign.

About the Author

Julian G. Waller is a Ph.D student in Political Science at The George Washington University. His research interests include political parties, elections, and the formal institutions of hybrid regimes in the post-Soviet space.

Prospects for Cooperation

The authorities’ cooperation with Navalny took a variety of forms over the course of the summer election campaign and with increasing liberality as the logic of Sobyenin’s goals became clear. Legitimacy required competition, competition required Navalny’s participation, and Navalny’s participation required liberalization and cooperation. This conscious help on the part of the authorities to ensure the opposition was believably represented at the ballot box cannot be overemphasized. From registration and simple non-interference to actually providing repeated public space for opposition discourses, this election campaign has featured patterns of electoral contestation that have not been seen in Russian politics for many years. The personal goals of Sobyenin were met, but in doing so the regime had to allow unprecedented competition and truly dynamic politics.

The fact that Sobyenin barely exceeded the 50 percent mark raises a number of questions about the immediate political future for Russia. Sobyenin narrowly avoided a runoff and so formally met the requirements to claim victory, though Navalny has refused to recognize this claim and instead asserts that Sobyenin cheated to win the necessary votes. Since Sobyenin’s result is not close to the numbers of the more traditional and authoritarian falsifiers that populate the country’s politics—has Sobyenin actually achieved his apotheosis to a higher status within the Kremlin elite? And to what degree can we see this summer’s events as the opening of a democratic Pandora’s Box after which there is no return, or will business as usual in Russian politics resume with a vengeance?

18 http://slon.ru/russia/5_versiy_pochemu_navalny_na_svo_bode-968360.xhtml; <http://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/69405/>; http://tvrain.ru/articles/pjat_versij_aresta_i_osvobozhdenija_alekseja_navalnogo-348871/;

19 http://news.liga.net/news/world/892466-v_rossii_zaderzhali_navalnogo_uveli_v_avtozak_pryamo_so_stseny.htm#

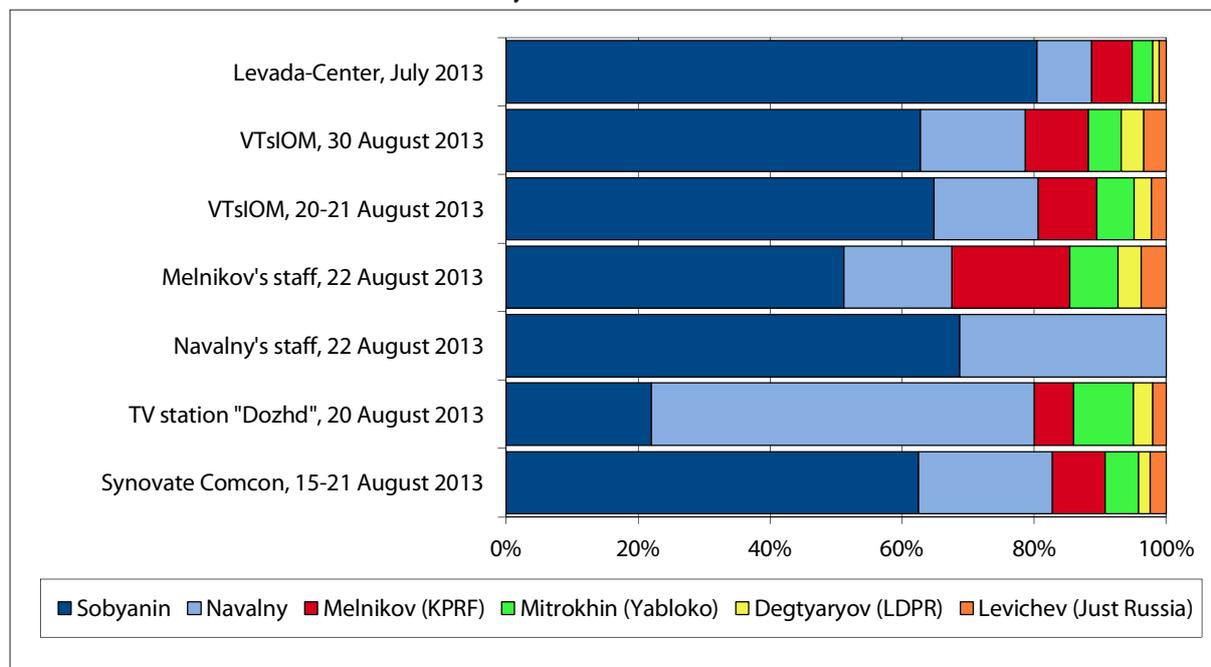
20 http://ria.ru/Moscow_elections_Navalny/20130903/960498697.html; <http://lenta.ru/news/2013/09/09/navalny/>

21 http://ria.ru/Moscow_elections_2013/20130910/962252555.html

OPINION POLL

Forecasts Before the Election

Table 1: Forecasts for the Moscow Mayoral Elections 2013



Compiled by Polit.Ru, <http://www.polit.ru/article/2013/09/03/rating/>

Table 1: Forecasts for the Moscow Mayoral Elections 2013

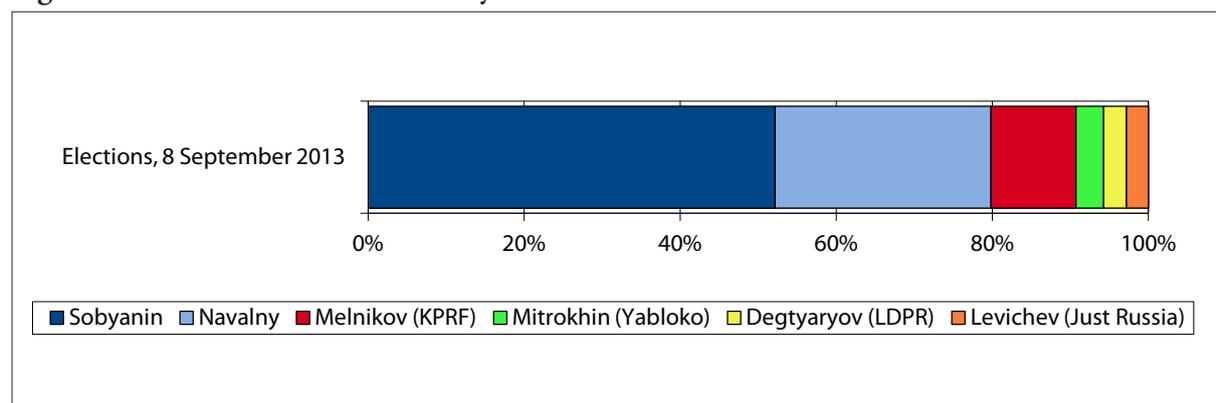
	Sobyanyin	Navalny	Melnikov (KPRF)	Mitrokhin (Yabloko)	Degtyaryov (LDPR)	Levichev (Just Russia)	margin of error
Synovate Comcon, 15–21 August 2013	62,5%	20,3%	8,0%	5,0%	1,8%	2,4%	±2,5
TV station «Dozhd», 20 August 2013	22,0%	58,0%	6,0%	9,0%	3,0%	2,0%	—
Navalny's staff, 22 August 2013	53,9%	24,5%	—	—	—	—	??
Melnikov's staff, 22 August 2013	51,2%	16,4%	17,8%	7,3%	3,5%	3,8%	±2,5
VTsIOM, 20–21 August 2013	64,1%	15,6%	8,8%	5,6%	2,6%	2,2%	±3,9
VTsIOM, 30 August 2013	62,2%	15,7%	9,4%	5,0%	3,3%	3,4%	±3,9
Levada Center, July 2013	78,0%	8,0%	6,0%	3,0%	1,0%	1,0%	±4,8
Levada Center, August 2013	58,0%	18,0%	12,0%	6,0%	2,0%	4,0%	±4,8
FOM, August 2013	56,0%	8,0%	3,0%	0,5%	1,0%	1,0%	±3,68

Compiled by Polit.Ru, <http://www.polit.ru/article/2013/09/03/rating/>

STATISTICS

Election Results

Figure 1: Results of the Moscow Mayoral Elections



Source: http://www.moscow_city.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/moscow_city?action=show&root=1&tvd=27720001368293&vrn=27720001368289®ion=77&global=&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=27720001368293&type=222. 11 September 2013

Table 1: Results of the Moscow Mayoral Elections

Persons eligible to vote	7,250,879	
Invalid ballots	35,610	
Valid ballots	2,286,972	
Voter turnout		32.03%
Degtyaryov (LDPR)	66,532	2.86%
Levichev (Just Russia)	64,778	2.79%
Melnikov (KPRF)	248,294	10.69%
Mitrokhin (Yabloko)	81,493	3.51%
Navalny (RPR-PARNAS)	632,697	27.24%
Sobyenin (United Russia, incumbent)	1,193,178	51.37%

Source: http://www.moscow_city.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/moscow_city?action=show&root=1&tvd=27720001368293&vrn=27720001368289®ion=77&global=&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=27720001368293&type=222. 11 September 2013

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

Editors: Stephen Aris, Matthias Neumann, Robert Ortung, Jeronim Perović, Heiko Pleines, Hans-Henning Schröder, Aglaya Snetkov

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Research Centre for East European Studies • Publications Department • Klagenfurter Str. 3 • 28359 Bremen • Germany

Phone: +49 421-218-69600 • Telefax: +49 421-218-69607 • e-mail: fsopr@uni-bremen.de • Internet: www.css.ethz.ch/rad