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POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN RUSSIA

■ ANALYSIS	
Russian Blogs: Tool for Opposition and State By Robert Orttung, Washington	2
■ TABLES AND GRAPHS	
Opinion Poll Conducted on the Occasion of the Day of the Internet	5
The 1,000,000th Ru.Net Address	7
■ ANALYSIS	
Does Russia Still Have an Opposition? By Andrew Wilson, London	8
■ TABLES AND GRAPHS	
Russian Attitudes Towards the Opposition	10

Analysis

Russian Blogs: Tool for Opposition and State

By Robert Orttung, Washington

Abstract

Russian blogs reach the most dynamic members of the youth generation. Members of civil society have utilized them to mobilize activists who support a variety of ideologies, including liberal opposition groups and nationalists. In some cases, information that first appeared in blogs was later picked up by the traditional media and then led to political action. The state has also used blogs effectively to mobilize its own supporters. Additionally, it has used information in blogs to coordinate police responses to street protests and has taken action against individual bloggers whose views the state authorities do not support. Despite these crackdowns, Russia's blog culture is evolving spontaneously and thriving.

Blogging in Russia

Blogs are widely viewed as the most vibrant and least regulated part of the Internet. They are important in Russia because they are reaching the more sophisticated and active part of society, including the younger generation, at a time when the traditional media is heavily controlled by the state and aimed at a mass audience. Since television and most newspapers work within strict guidelines, Russians see the Internet as a refuge. Blogging has become a popular way for young Russians to learn about, and actively discuss, politics and current events largely unfettered by state restrictions. In particular, blogs allow for argument, which is generally absent in the media.

In Russia today about a quarter of the adult population, 28 million people, use the Internet, up from only 8 percent in 2002. At the same time, state-controlled television networks reach almost every household.

Blogs allow almost any individual to communicate with a potentially large audience at very low cost. Bloggers do not need printing presses, paper, or other equipment beyond a computer and an Internet connection.

Most politically-active Russian bloggers have placed their blogs at the livejournal.com site. The site had just over 500,000 users in Russia on September 21, 2007, according the site's statistics page. Livejournal.com is an American company and its servers are located outside of Russia and presumably beyond Russian control, though they are vulnerable to hackers. However, in October 2006, Livejournal caused a controversy when it handed Sup, a Russian company with ties to the oligarch Aleksandr Mamut, the right to service its Cyrillic sites.

Blogs are increasingly affecting main stream media, which reported on Livejournal discussions of topics including the case against then Defense Minister Sergei

Ivanov's son, who took the life of an elderly female pedestrian in an automobile accident, and the trial of Alexandra Ivannikova, a young woman who killed an Armenian cab driver after he allegedly tried to rape her. She was ultimately cleared of all charges, but her case led to heated discussions of illegal immigration and nationalism.

In some cases, blogs are serving as an alternative source of information to the mainstream media. During the Kondopoga ethnic riots in September 2006, bloggers provided some of the first eyewitness accounts of what happened as well as commentary on the events.

The growing use of the Russian Internet has attracted the attention of foreign advertisers, who are flocking to ru.net sites. Within a year they could bring \$90 to \$105 million in advertisements, about 35 percent of their income, according to Mindshare Interaction. Ru.net registered its one millionth website in September.

Russia has already had some scandals associated with blogs. Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Security Committee Sergei Abel'tsev (LDPR) fired his assistant Irina Tolmacheva for her blog (<http://budni-pomdepa.livejournal.com/>). In the blog she quoted her boss saying that Muscovites should round up the stray dogs in the city and turn them loose on the participants in the March of Those Who Disagree, which took place in mid-April. The blog also quoted humorist Viktor Shenderovich criticizing Abel'tsev for his views. The LDPR party staff informed Abel'tsev about the blog and ordered him to fire Tolmacheva for betraying the party cause.

Political Activists Use Blogs to Mobilize People

A wide range of political activists are using blogs to mobilize their supporters to have an impact on Russian politics. On the liberal end of the spectrum, activists like Masha Gaidar and Ilya Yashin use their sites to

advertise protests or debates. Yashin is the head of the Yabloko party's youth movement and has used his livejournal blog to mobilize thousands-strong street protests. Once the rallies take place, the participants frequently post pictures of the events, including, at times, photographs that show how the police beat some of the protesters. These pictures demonstrate the extent to which the authorities are willing to go to keep dissent within limited bounds.

At the same time, blogs have proven to be an effective resource for nationalists. Konstantin Krylov, for example, used his livejournal blog to rally 3,000 for a march in Moscow in November 2006. In the controversy over Estonia's decision in April 2007 to move a WWII memorial from the center of town, both sides used blogs to their advantage. Russian nationalist protesters published maps showing where demonstrators should meet, while some eyewitnesses gave neutral accounts of what was actually happening on the scene. Likewise, both sides in the Chechen conflict have found it useful to post videos of battle scenes and abuses on sites like YouTube.

There are concrete cases where blogs are having an impact on politics. In 2006, bloggers began to express their anger about the decision of the Russian government to build an oil pipeline near Lake Baikal. Subsequently there were publications in the media, demonstrations organized by livejournal.com users, and ultimately, Putin's intervention to move the pipeline route away from the lake.

Are blogs a qualitatively new platform for organizing people? Mobilizers have always been able to rely on leaflets, then radio and television. In contrast to those methods, blogs allow all variety of individuals to address a large audience, getting out their information quickly and cheaply. While these features are attractive, blogs still have nowhere near the direct impact of the traditional media. For one thing, it is very hard for any individual blogger to rise above the general noise of the vast multitude of blogs.

The State is also Effectively Using Blogs to Mobilize People

While blogs present useful new tools to civil society, in Russia the state also has been effective at using them. While so far civil society activists have been able to turn out small protest actions, the authorities seem to be able to use the information readily available on the blogs to coordinate efforts to ensure that these rallies do not go too far.

Not only have the authorities been able to use information on the Internet to place limits on opposition groups, pro-Kremlin blogs work to activate youth to work in the Kremlin's favor. In this sense, blogs represent both mobilization from below and above. For

example, when the pro-Kremlin youth group Nashi held its summer camp at Seliger, many of the main events there were recorded in a blog (<http://community.livejournal.com/seliger2007/>). Many other bloggers commented critically on these activities. While some accuse Nashi of being funded by state money, members of the group claim that it receives funding from a variety of corporate sponsors. In the Russian context, companies often contribute to pro-Kremlin causes in order to curry favor with the political leadership.

Whether the mobilization is driven from above or below, the motivation of blog writers can also vary. In some cases, they may be true believers in the cause and simply writing about what they believe. In others, they may be interested in contributing to a blog largely as a way to advance their career. Some people receive money to blog specific opinions.

According to the Moscow Carnegie Center's Masha Lipman, the Kremlin has a number of sites under its control financed through Kremlin-associated businesses. These sites are difficult to identify because they are not necessarily overtly loyal to the Kremlin, but only include criticisms that the Kremlin allows. The presence of such sites makes it difficult to know what to believe and not believe in the greater blogosphere.

The state is also using blogs in a more straightforward way to get out its message. In September, the Central Electoral Commission set up its own blog as a way of allowing ordinary citizens to ask questions of election officials and to report irregularities (<http://community.livejournal.com/izbircom>). The officials hope that the blog will give them greater access to Russian young people between the ages of 18 and 35.

Authorities Crack Down

While the authorities have sought to harness the power of blogs for their own causes, they have also turned to the cruder approach of simply shutting down the most outspoken opposition contributors. This process began in 2006 when the authorities prosecuted sites that reproduced the Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed. The site gazeta.ru received an official warning for republishing these pictures; a second such warning would force it to shut down.

The Russian authorities have taken action against several bloggers who have expressed critical opinions in their writings.

- The Ivanovo-based Kursiv site, which lampooned Putin's efforts to increase birthrates by dubbing him the "phallic symbol of Russia," was immediately shut down and the editor fined 20,000 rubles (US\$770). In the past, this site has exposed corruption in Ivanovo, and this investigative work may have been the real reason for the crackdown.

- Savva Terentyev, a Syktyvkar resident, was summoned for an interview with a local procurator after he denounced the local police in explicit language, calling for them to be burned in a public square. Terentyev was angered because the police had removed computers from the office of *Iskra*, a local opposition newspaper, and found pirated software on them. On August 9, the procurator filed charges against him under article 282 of the Criminal Code, inciting hatred or enmity and humiliating a person's dignity, with a maximum sentence of two years. Observers have described this incident as an example of local authorities flexing their muscles rather than a systematic crackdown on the media.
- Taras Zelenyuk, of Novosibirsk, was fined 130,000 rubles (\$4,500) on July 16 under article 282 for arguing that Ukrainians are superior to Russians on Ukrainian forums in an Internet forum.
- Dmitry Tashlykov, a Vladimir journalist, was arrested for describing the activities of Governor Nikolay Vinogradov in critical terms in 2006. The governor's spokesman objected to his use of explicit language.

In several instances the authorities are going after Internet news sites in cases that could set a precedent for the use of blogs. The authorities are using a loophole in the law that allows them to treat Internet news sites as full blown media outlets, with all the responsibilities they have. While this practice may currently be informal, the State Duma is seeking to make it a law. The lower house is drafting a bill that equates Internet material with mass media publications. "Once the bill is ... signed into law, Runet will fall into the realm of provisions of the Criminal and Administrative Codes and any critical remark against the authorities may be interpreted as an insult or libel," according to an ITAR-TASS analysis published April 13, 2007. So far the authorities have targeted two sites. In December 2006, a court in the Siberian region of Khakassia shut down the Internet news site *Novy Fokus* because it had not registered as a media outlet. The site was known for critical reporting on local issues. It reopened in late March after agreeing to register, accepted stricter supervision, and paid a fine of 20,000 rubles. Bloggers followed the case because they feared it would affect them. The site *Zyryanskaya Zhizn* (Komi Republic) was fined after failing to register and prosecutors have applied to have it shut down. (It was still on line as of September 24, 2007 – <http://www.zyryane.ru/>)

In April, at the request of State Duma member Viktor Alksnis, the Moscow procurator filed charges against a livejournal user, pro-Kremlin Fund for Effective Politics employee Timofei Shevyakov, for alleged slander and insulting someone in a public forum. Shevyakov had

added a rude comment to Alksnis' blog. The defendant faces a possible year of correctional labor and bloggers are worried that the case will set a precedent.

As Russia heads toward the December 2007 State Duma elections and the March 2008 presidential elections, the authorities are making institutional changes that will give them greater control over the Internet. Only one day after regional elections held on March 11 suggested that Moscow's grip was not as tight as it could be, President Putin moved to establish a new agency, merging the Federal Service for Media Law Compliance and Cultural Heritage (Rosokhrankultura) and the Federal Information Technologies Agency (Rossvyaznadzor) into the new Federal Service for Mass Media, Telecommunications and the Protection of Cultural Heritage, that will both license media outlets and monitor their output. The new agency will have control over television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet.

While official explanations of the merger cite efforts to streamline and rationalize the process of licensing television and radio broadcasting, the real purpose of the new agency would appear to be something different. Raf Sahkirov, a former *Izvestia* editor dismissed for critical coverage of the 2004 Beslan school siege, said "This is an attempt to put everything under control, not only electronic media, but also personal data about people such as bloggers."

Freedom of Information

Russia is making only halting progress toward giving its citizens free access to information. On April 18, 2007, the State Duma passed in the first of three readings a law "On Supplying Access to Information about the Activity of State and Local Government Agencies." State Duma member Vladimir Ryzhkov criticized the draft, saying that it will change nothing and that a different version is needed. He said that the law allows the bureaucrats to determine how they give out the information. Moreover, the current draft does not actually require the bureaucrats to release information and puts journalists at the same level as ordinary citizens. There has been no further action on the law since its introduction.

Blogs are moving ahead much more quickly in terms of creating more transparency in apparently state-sponsored actions. For example, liberal bloggers republish Nashi leaflets on line to demonstrate what these groups are doing on the streets.

Hyper-Local Media May Prove Effective

While blogging remains popular, the Russian Internet is evolving in line with global trends. For example, there are now hyper-local neighborhood news sites with information supplied by professional journalists and the

users themselves. One example is Moi Raion, which provides information about numerous neighborhoods in Moscow and St. Petersburg (<http://www.mr-spb.ru/>). The Scandinavian media company Schibsted currently owns a 70 percent stake in the project and the Media Defense Loan Fund also holds a stake. The corporate involvement suggests that the project may be financially self-sustaining.

This site differs from opinionated blogs because it is fact-based, providing neighborhood news and public service information that is not available elsewhere.

About the author:

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Useful Links for Blogs in Russia

Overview of Russian Blogs

<http://blogs.yandex.ru/>

Political Blogs

- Political Discussions – [Community.livejournal.com/ru_politics](http://community.livejournal.com/ru_politics)
- Official Central Electoral Committee Blog – <http://community.livejournal.com/izbircom>
- Regional Elections (g_golosov.livejournal.com)
- Vladimir Pribylovskii (anticomproamat.livejournal.com)

Blogs of Russian Politicians

- Nikita Belyh (belyh.livejournal.com)
- Ilya Yashin (yashin.livejournal.com)
- Maria Gaidar (m_gaidar.livejournal.com)
- Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (blogs.mail.ru/mail/zhirinovskiyv/)

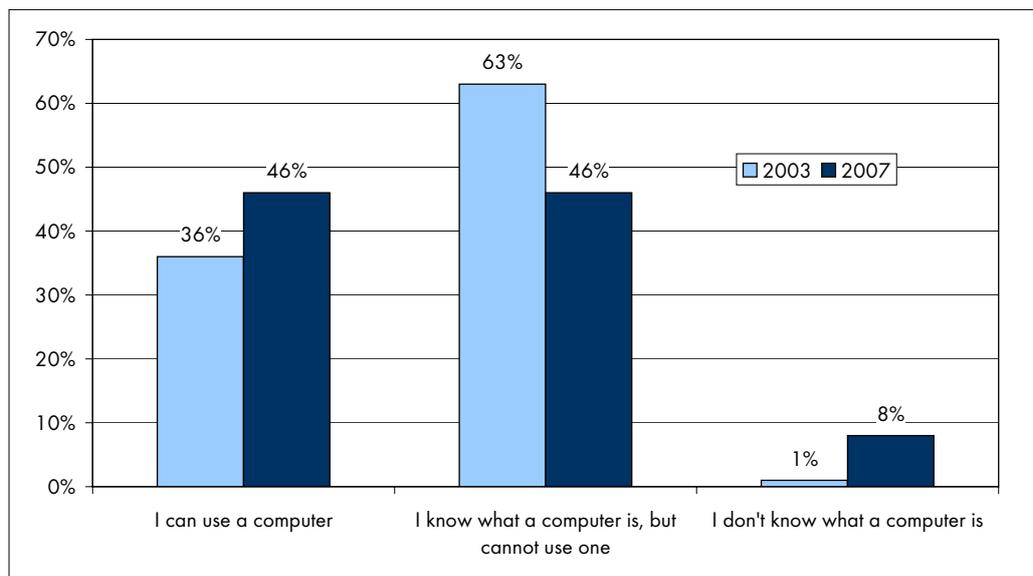
While much of this news is not necessarily political, it can have political overtones, for example, by reporting that there are an unusually large number of infant deaths in a local hospital, where corruption is rampant.

Hyperlocal media are having a growing impact in several US communities because they give voice to grassroots concerns. In serving this function, they might provide a way to effect change, over the long term, in places where free media is not widely available.

Tables and Graphs

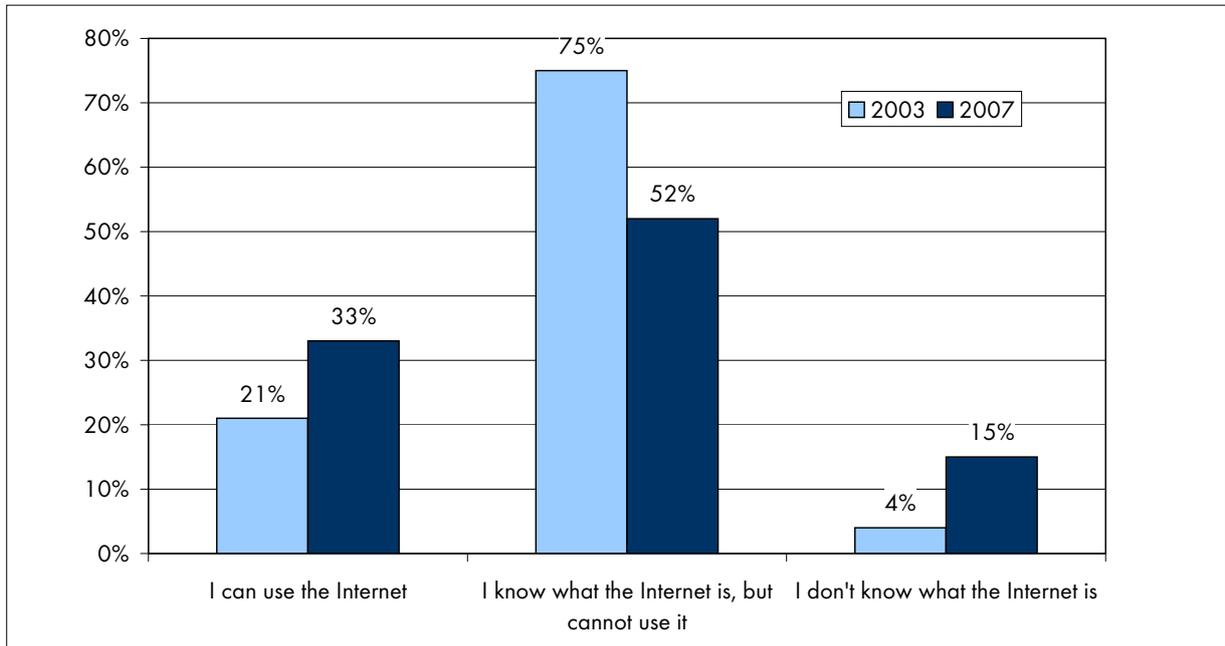
Opinion Poll Conducted on the Occasion of the Day of the Internet

Do You Know What a Computer is and Can You Use One?



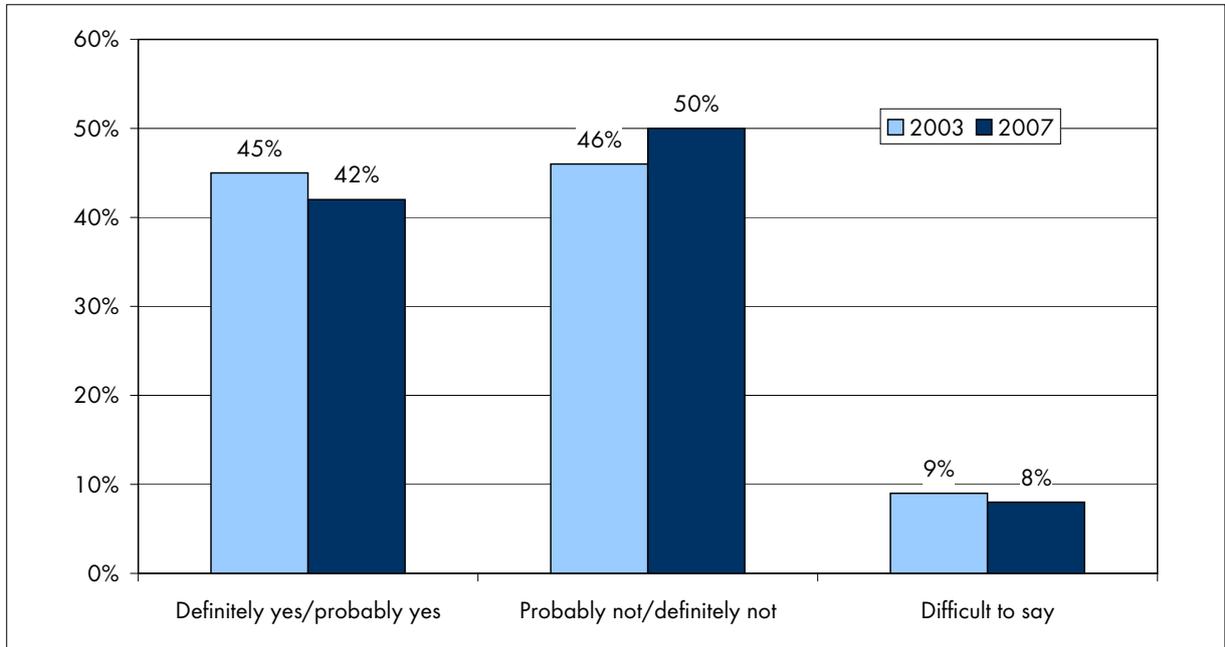
Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Levada Institute 21–25 September 2007, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2007092804.html>

Do You Know What the Internet is and Can You Use It?



Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Levada Institute 21–25 September 2007, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2007092804.html>

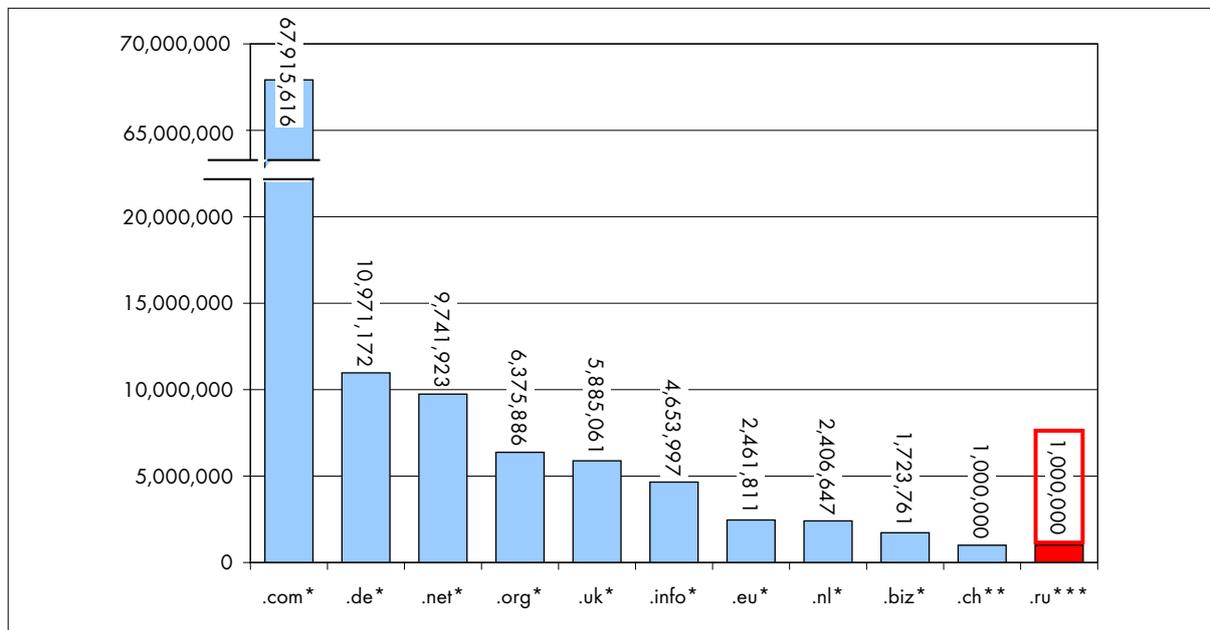
Are You Willing to Use a Computer/the Internet in Order to Obtain Information, Goods and Services, and to Raise the Level of Your Education?



Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Levada Institute 21–25 September 2007, <http://www.levada.ru/press/2007092804.html>

The 1,000,000th Ru.Net Address

Numbers of Internet Addresses Assigned to Various Top-Level Domains (2007)



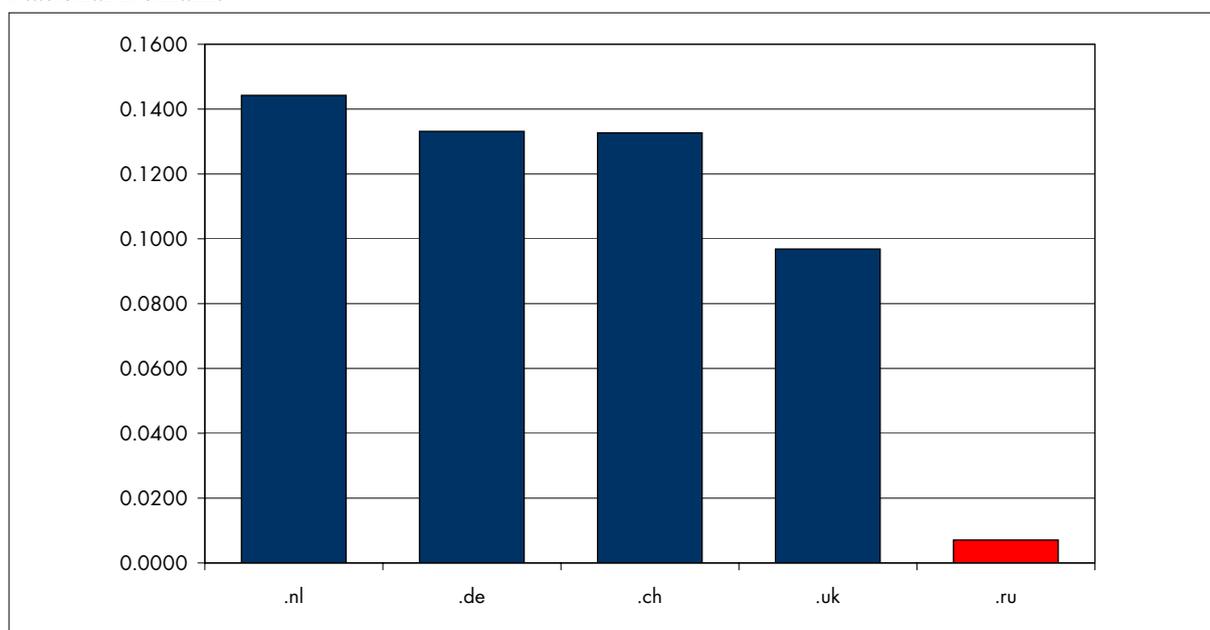
Sources: * = <http://www.domain-recht.de/> (figures for June 2007),

** = <http://www.switch.ch/de/about/news-archive.html?id=146> (figure for August 2007),

*** = *Russlandanalysen 142*, p. 18 (figure for September 2007),

<http://www.russlandanalysen.de/content/media/Russlandanalysen142.pdf>

Ratio of Internet Addresses Issued to the Population of the Respective Countries for Selected Top-Level National Domains



.nl = The Netherlands, .de = Germany, .ch = Switzerland, .uk = United Kingdom, .ru = Russia.

Sources: see above; population estimates were taken from the CIA World Factbook (July 2007 estimate),

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

Analysis

Does Russia Still Have an Opposition?

By Andrew Wilson, London

Abstract

Russia's traditional liberal opposition of Yabloko and the Union of Right-wing Forces will play little role in the 2007 State Duma elections. Also marginalized are wild cards Garry Kasparov, Mikhail Kasyanov, Dmitry Rogozin, and Eduard Limonov. Generally Kremlin opponents have not adjusted to the current rules of the game by uniting their efforts, transcending past identities, and reducing associations with discredited figures like Anatoly Chubais. Beyond its main party United Russia, the Kremlin has set up its own "opposition" in Just Russia, but it is not clear if this effort to establish a "two-party" system will be any more effective than the attempt in 1995. The main task for the Kremlin is to preserve its resources and popularity at a time when the opposition is not even powerful enough to challenge the authorities' agenda.

Failing Liberal Opposition

The campaign for this December's Duma elections may have begun, but the liberal opposition is not making an impact, and arguably isn't even trying. Its divided total vote count seems likely to underscore even the 11.8 percent that the three opposition candidates won officially in "authoritarian" Belarus in 2006. Only unity and a near miss of the 7 percent barrier would lend any moral authority to post-election protests. But both Yabloko and the Union of Right-wing Forces (URF) seem more interested in mere survival or possible presidential runs in 2008. The old arguments that they have different electoral niches and that their sum might be less than the parts do not excuse their failure to build a common front. The remnants of Russian liberalism will be defeated by the rules of the game to which they have failed to respond, rather than by the type of blatant electoral fraud that has sparked "electoral revolutions" in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, wild cards like Other Russia (Garry Kasparov's United Civic Front and Mikhail Kasyanov's National Democratic Party), or for that matter Dmitry Rogozin's Great Russia and Eduard Limonov's National Bolsheviks, will make even less of an impact on the streets, if their parties cannot even take part in the vote.

These are the considerations before one even mentions the kind of "counter-revolutionary technology" that has been developed since 2004. The anti-NGO (non-governmental organization) campaign, the ability to muddy the waters around exit polls, the role of the pro-Kremlin nationalist youth movement Nashi and the likely appearance of "counter-demonstrators," and the increasing Kremlin role in manipulating "alternative" campaign technologies, like the Internet and flash mob assembly via texting, will all severely limit the potential for the liberal opposition to make any extra-electoral impact.

Lessons from Ukraine

The Russian opposition should have learnt at least three lessons from Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004. The first of these is unity. The second is the need to reinvent your image, and not just by rebranding, although orange was a good choice at the time, warm and positive, a help in rallying neutrals. In the Ukrainian case the key task for the opposition was to transcend the politics of cultural nationalism, and go beyond the agenda set by Rukh in the 1990s. This it did well. One reason for choosing orange was to sideline the traditional national colors of yellow and blue; but Yushchenko also ran a substantive, values-based campaign and refused to perform to the nationalist caricature that his opponents wanted. The Russian "democrats" also need to leave the 1990s behind, but in their case the need is to overcome their association with shock therapy, "market Bolshevism" and "liberal oligarchs" like Anatoly Chubais. So-called "modular" colored revolutions don't simply transfer mechanistically, unless the would-be opposition is a suitable vehicle. The old-style Russian opposition has been putting the cart before the horse, hoping that the mere idea, or exemplar, of previous color revolutions would revivify them and their fortunes, rather than the other way around.

The third Ukrainian lesson was also flunked, namely not to take money from disreputable or discredited sponsors (though in the Ukrainian case this last lesson was learnt only retrospectively). The idea that Mikhail Kasyanov was a "Russian Yushchenko" or even a "Russian Tymoshenko" was ludicrous. Every rumor of a link with the exiled Boris Berezovsky has been a gift to the Kremlin media. Both Yushchenko and Tymoshenko were regime defectors who brought considerable resources with them, but this is the wrong lesson for Russia in 2007. The opposition has spent

too much time hoping for the arrival of a sugar daddy from the regime's still solid ranks, and has failed to understand just how effective the anti-oligarch "special operation" was in 2003, when the Kremlin used its attacks against Mikhail Khodorkovsky to bolster its image. Whether fairly or not, it is the Kremlin that exploited the visceral hatred many Russians feel for the super-rich, and it is still the Kremlin that can play the anti-oligarch card.

The Kremlin's Strategy

The liberals are therefore perfectly capable of messing things up on their own, but the Kremlin characteristically prefers to over-insure. The over-exposure of Mikhail Barshchevsky's *Grazhdanskaia sila* (Civic Force) on official TV seems to indicate that it is serving as a clone. The Kremlin does not want either liberal party to have even the limited moral authority of improving on their 2003 score (4.3 percent for Yabloko, and 4 percent for the URF).

The liberals of course are not the only opposition. What about the loyal opposition? Or more exactly, how does the Kremlin go about picking a loyal opposition? Has the Kremlin not upset the balance of forces it achieved in 2003 by constantly talking of a two-party system (plus minor satellites), rather than four? (The four parties that won representation in the Duma in 2003 are United Russia, the Communists, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, and Rodina.) The new system might actually have less efficient "fit" than the old. The idea that real factional conflict in the Kremlin might align with virtual competition between the main two parties (United Russia and Just Russia) has not really come to pass. The idea that the Duma elections might be used for a "primary" contest between presidential contenders seems to be fading too, though this will become clearer when party lists become final. Elite conflict goes on behind the scenes, very much across party lines or in no reference to party lines, and we are left once again with Churchill's "dogs fighting under the carpet."

The only real problem with the old Duma quartet was with Rodina. Although clearly a political technology "project" put together by the Kremlin, at least in its mature stages, Rodina was admittedly a complex phenomenon that posed several management problems for a Kremlin that was unsure whether to coopt or control its particular political niche, and which has always been nervous of a genuine grassroots nationalist movement it could not command. But its replacement, Just Russia, has its problems too. A new left-nationalist party could keep its distance from its official backers in 2003, and its leaders pose as vigorous neophytes. Just Russia is just too visible, and too visibly pro-Kremlin. Moreover, in so far as Russia now has a

type of "theatre politics," the audience's attention has to be engaged. But the sparky personality of now-excluded leaders like Rogozin was arguably the main reason why so many voted for Rodina in 2003. And the proposed "script" is a hard sell: the myths that Just Russia is an outsider party that is being victimized by United Russia, and that Just Russia is against United Russia but is pro-Putin, are difficult to finesse and difficult to grasp. The new "Kremlin 2" project may therefore flop like the Rybkin Bloc, the other half of a previous two-shot strategy in 1995 along with Our Home is Russia – if not quite so spectacularly badly (Rybkin won 1.1 percent). The difference can be made up with "administrative resources," but the project will have no dynamism going forward.

Also, where are Just Russia's votes supposed to come from? United Russia is recording 50 percent or more in recent polls, up almost 15 percent on 2003, when it won 37.6 percent. Prestige-wise, it obviously has to do better than last time, and may want to win an absolute majority by more direct means than in 2003. Just Russia's potential electorate overlaps, but only incompletely, with Rodina's old electorate (9 percent in 2003), some of which may go to Patriots of Russia or to the People's Union. So far, Kremlin-connected "political technologists" are running fewer "flies" this time, so some of their wasted vote or "*moloko*" is up for grabs (in 2003, when a variety of left-nationalist parties were directed against the Communist Party (CPRF), they won a total of 11 percent; and the 7 percent barrier, raised from 5 percent in 2003, is a greater disincentive to vote for smaller parties). But one or more of the CPRF and LDPR may have to suffer – and currently both are outscoring Just Russia in the polls (see www.levada.ru/reitingi2007.html or graph on p .10).

The LDPR may have gained Andrei Lugovoi, the alleged murderer of Aleksandr Litvinenko, at number two on its party list and a substantial *succès de scandale*, but it has lost leading financiers like Suleiman Kerimov of Nafta Moskva and Konstantin Vetrov (to United Russia), as well as long-time number two Alexei Mitrofanov (to Just Russia). Of course, Zhirinovsky, who doubled his vote to 11.4 percent last time, is nothing if not a great survivor, and ultimately the Kremlin may prefer to stick with the predictability of his fairly low-cost services. Meanwhile, the fake conflict between United Russia and Just Russia (though it is getting plenty of real rough edges) may rebound to the benefit of the CPRF. The Communists' "core" electorate may in fact be in the high teens, without Rodina and the "flies" that brought it down to 12.6 percent in 2003. Interestingly, the Communists have barely changed personnel or policy for this campaign, hoping that Kremlin managers may again plump for the devil they know.

But Just Russia, the LDPR and CPRF can't all get 10 percent or more. Ultimately, the smaller parties, most of whom are once again actual or potential "clones" or "spoilers," may tip the balance, but it is hard to assess their role until the Kremlin has decided just who it wants to push up or push down. What, for example, of Patriots of Russia or the Party of Social Justice? They could equally well take votes off any or all of Just Russia, the CPRF or the LDPR. In its current situation of such power, the Kremlin may be guilty of failing to redesign the function of projects which had a much clearer purpose in 2003, which was then to take votes off the CPRF and clear a space for Rodina, as well as providing a virtual chorus for the "anti-oligarch" campaign led by United Russia. Some of these projects may have to be reanimated later in the campaign, with a late spending and advertising splurge. It may be more difficult to redesign them at this late stage.

The 2007 Campaign

A common theme is precisely what the 2007 campaign lacks for now. Once it is launched, it may help move more pieces into place. In key respects, of course, the 2007 campaign is very different from 2003, and totally unlike that of 1999. The Kremlin possesses powerful reserves of popularity and resources. The problem is how to conserve them and manage their transfer, either in "operation successor" or to Putin's new power base, without provoking open elite conflict. The Kremlin's

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political technologists, however, are not used to status quo elections. Nor are they used to elections without dramaturgia or drama. There is arguably an inbuilt tendency in "managed democracy" towards constant reinvention, to launching a new drama for every election cycle, in an attempt to keep the electorate well-managed. One reason for the appointment of Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov and the rumors of a new anti-corruption purge (*chistka*) might be to boost Just Russia. There may be a rule that you can't play the same trick twice, but "oligarchs" and Russia's unpopular "offshore aristocracy" is probably a big enough theme in which to maneuver. However, this year's dramaturgia is more likely to be the different ways of demonstrating that "Russia is back." And not just via the Winter Olympics or claiming the North Pole. Conflicts with neighbours and asserting "sovereign democracy" by "deinternationalising" Russia via conflict with NGOs and the OSCE may have foreign policy ramifications, but play well with Putin's core electorate.

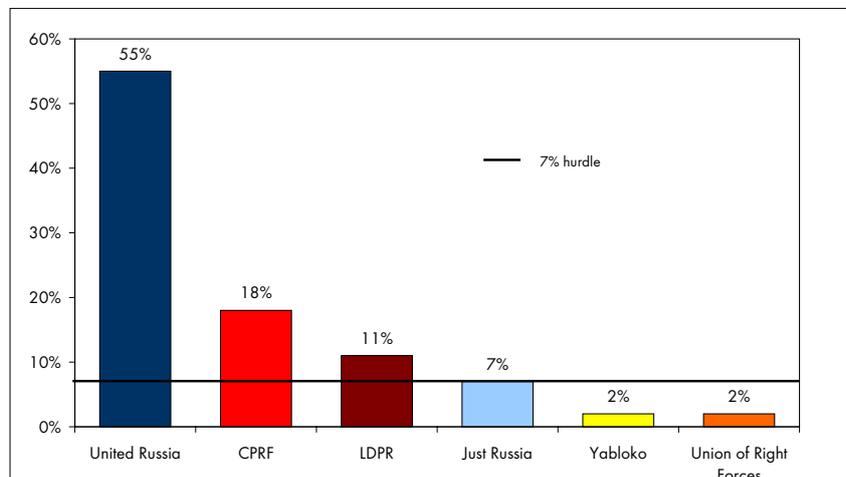
And this is probably the clearest expression of the opposition's limited power – its inability to challenge the agenda the Kremlin sets, or even to challenge the subordination of the 2007 elections to those in 2008.

And finally, one more form of opposition has been definitively rooted out – the 4.7 percent who voted "against all" in 2003. This option no longer appears on Russian ballots.

Tables and Graphs

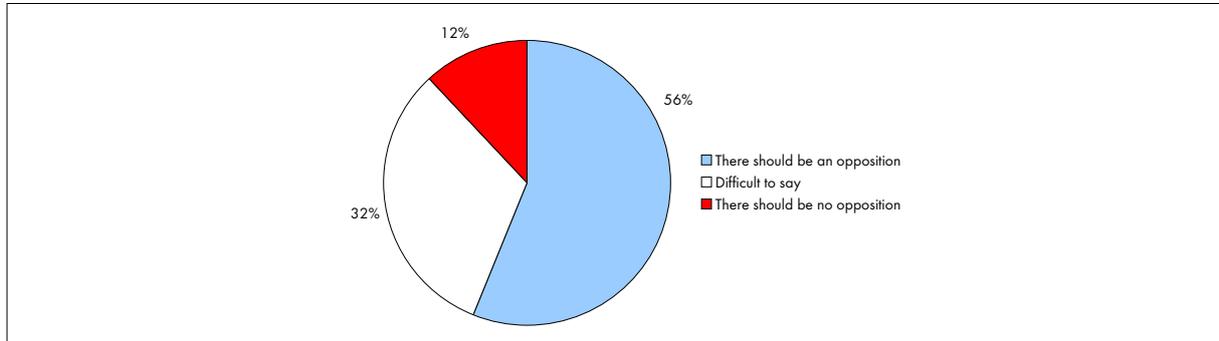
Russian Attitudes Towards the Opposition

Party Ratings, September 2007

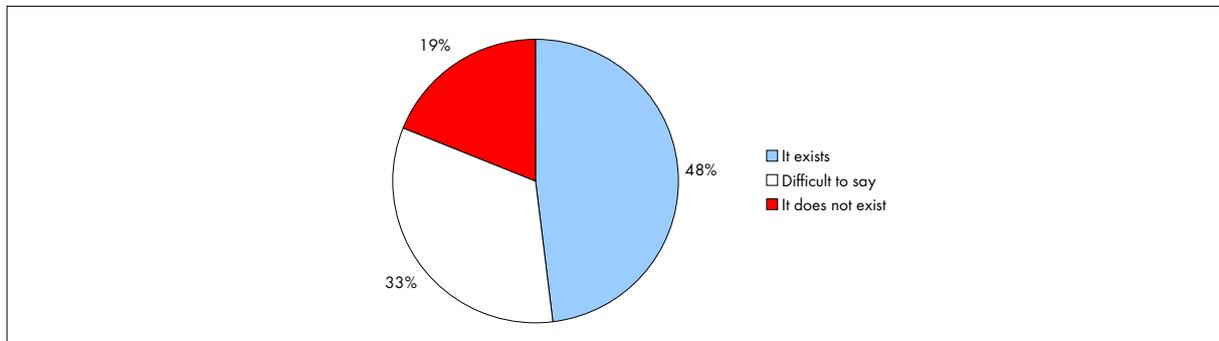


Source: <http://www.levada.ru/reitingj2007.html>

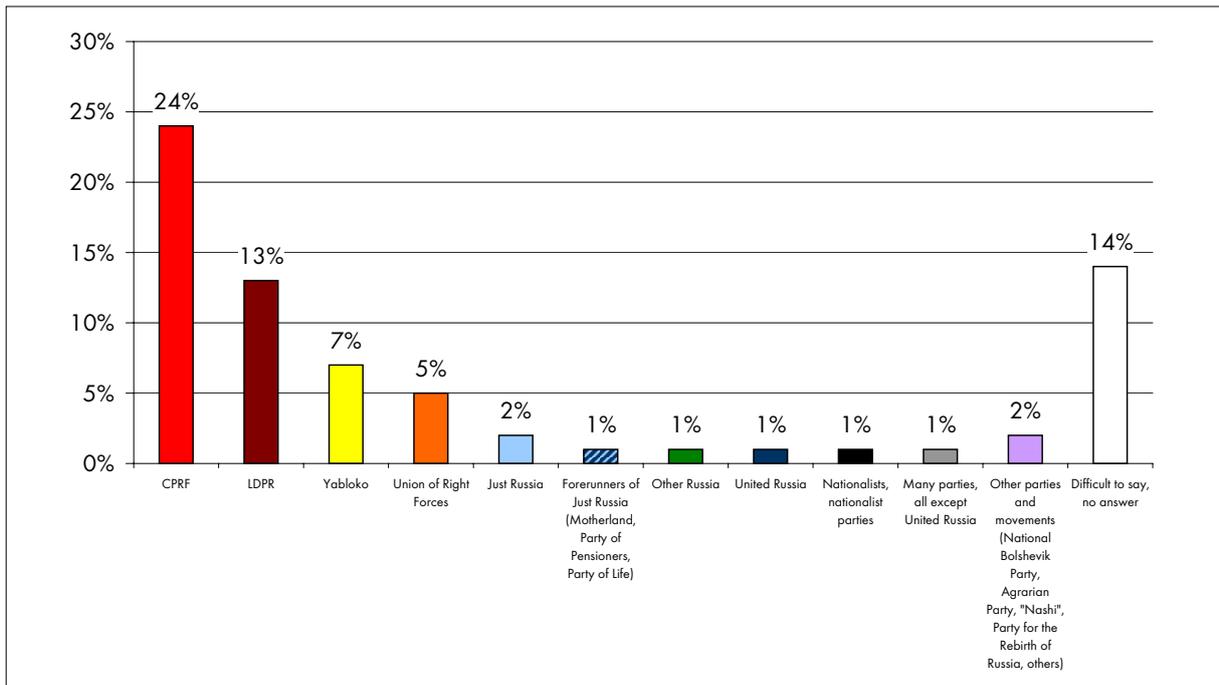
Some People Think that an Opposition Should Exist in Our Country, Others are of the Opinion that There Should be No Opposition. What is Your Opinion?



Does a Political Opposition Exist or Not?

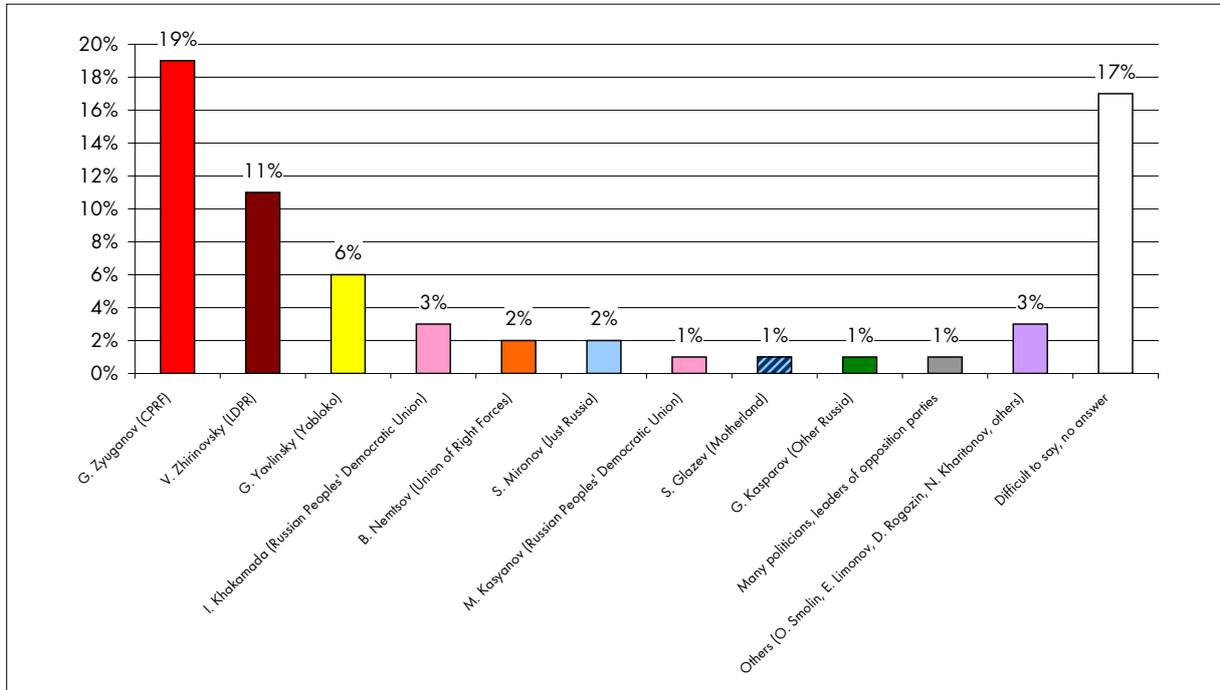


Which Parties, Political Movements and Organizations are, in Your Opinion, Opposed to the Present Government? (Open Question, Only Those Who Answered that There is an Opposition in Russia were Asked this Question)



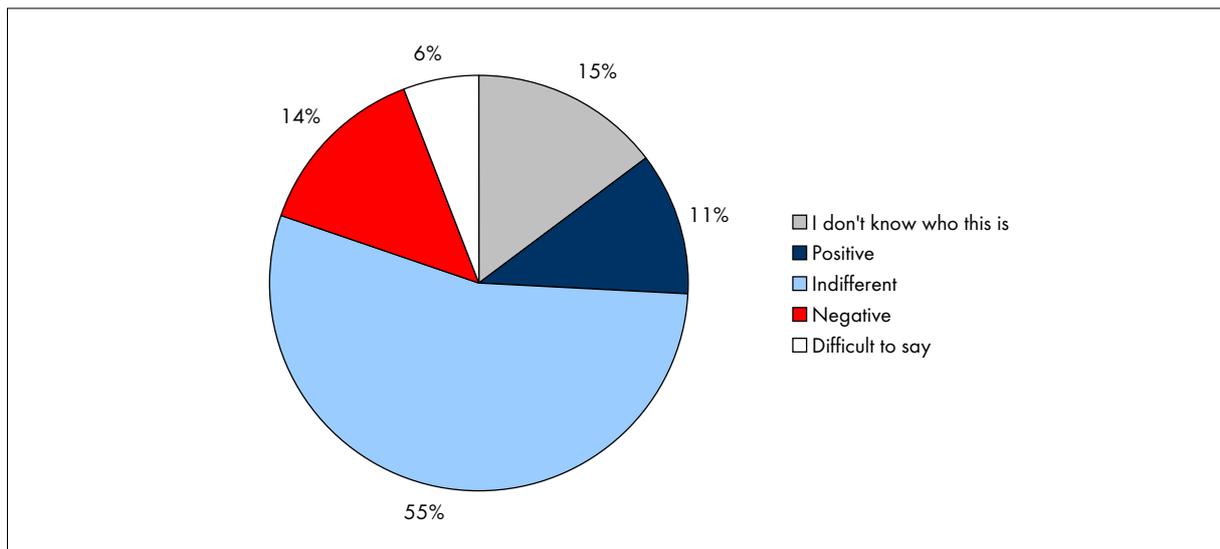
Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund on 23–24 June 2007, <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d072621>

Which Politicians are, in Your Opinion, Opposed to the Present Government? (Open Question, Only Those Who Answered that There is an Opposition in Russia were Asked this Question)



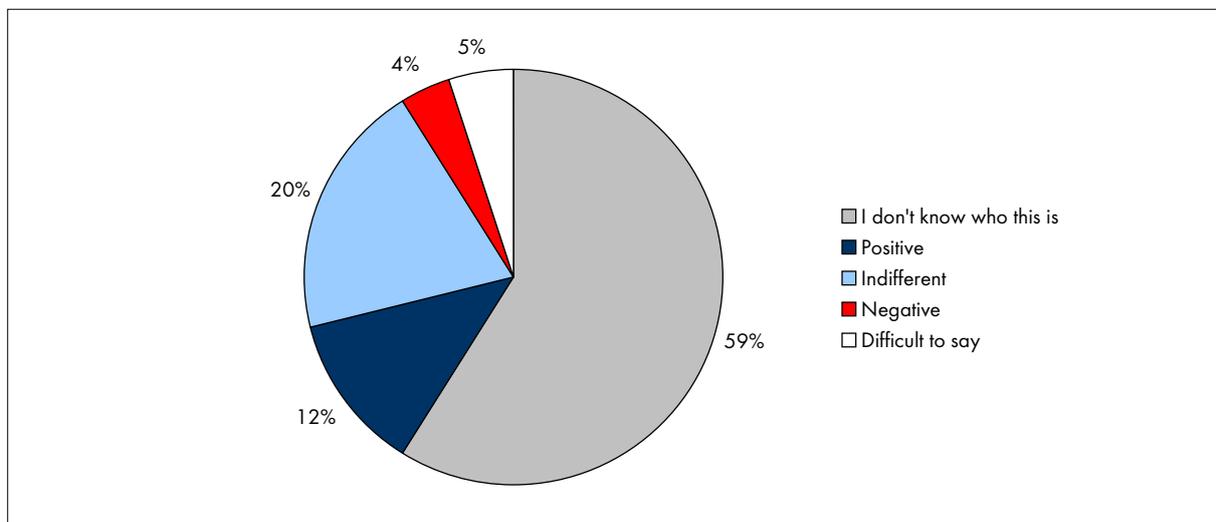
Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund on 23–24 June 2007, <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d072621>

What is your Attitude Towards Grigory Yavlinsky – Negative, Positive or Indifferent?



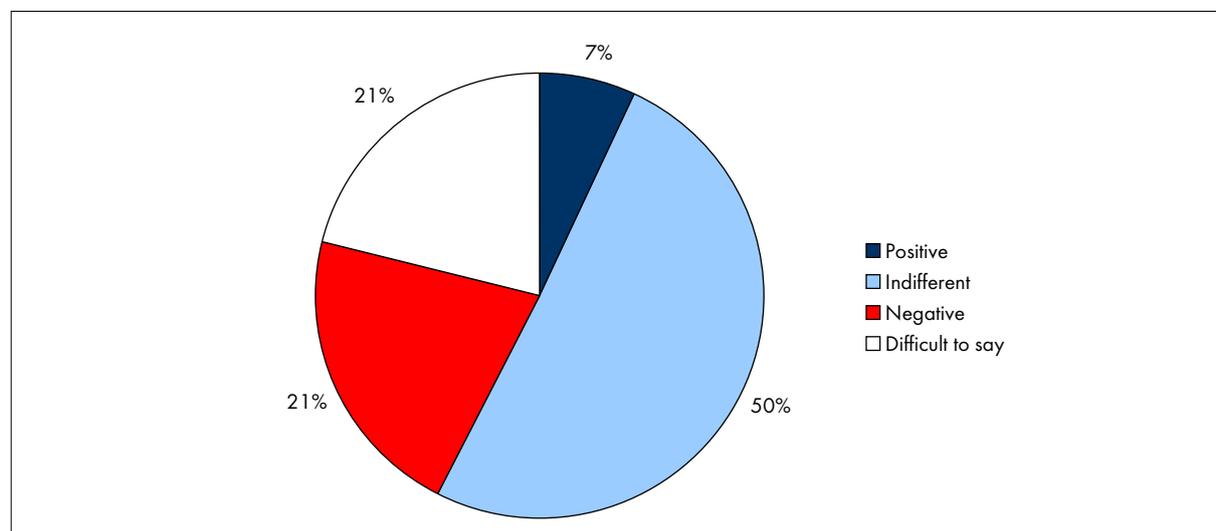
Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund on 30 June–1 July 2007, http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0727/domi0727_3/d072723

What is your Attitude Towards Mikhail Barshchevsky – Negative, Positive or Indifferent?



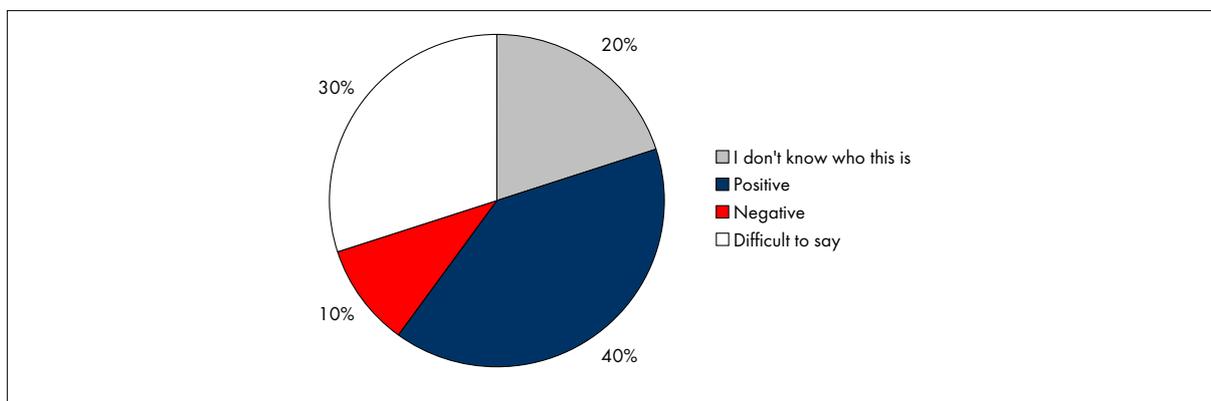
Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund on 7–8 July 2007,
<http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d072823>

What is your Attitude Towards Mikhail Kasyanov – Negative, Positive or Indifferent?



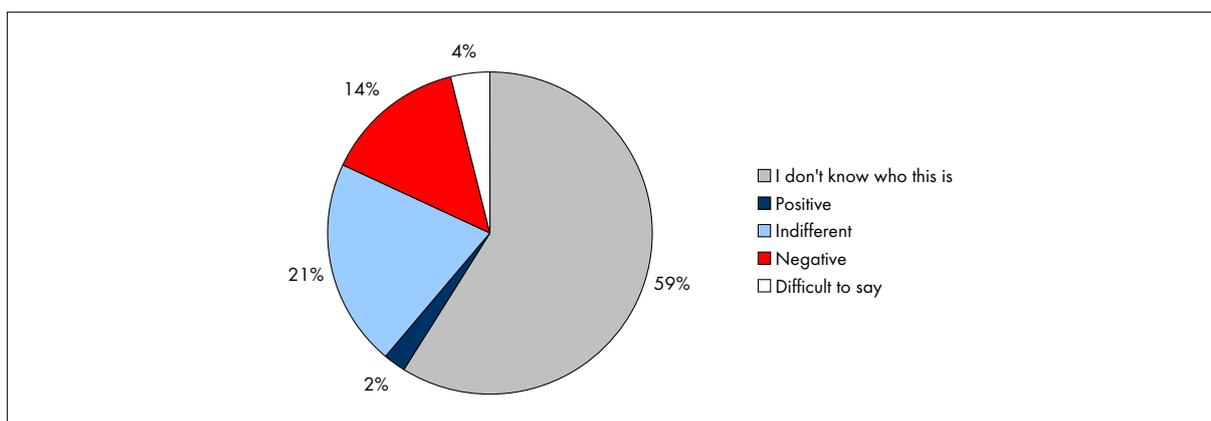
Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund on 9–10 June 2007,
http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0724/domt0724_3/d072422

What is your Attitude Towards Garry Kasparov – Negative or Positive?



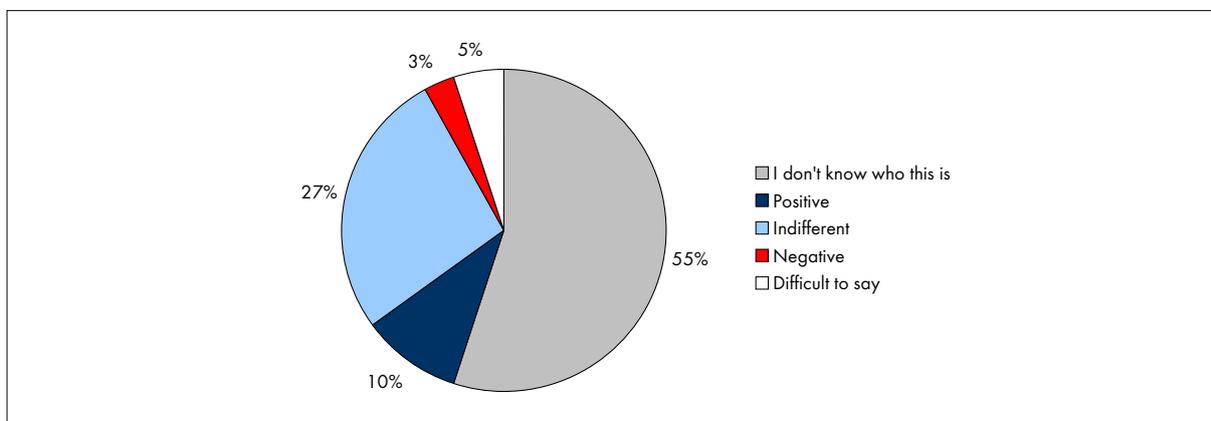
Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund on 23–24 June 2007,
http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0726/domi0726_3/d072622

What is your Attitude Towards Eduard Limonov – Negative, Positive or Indifferent?



Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund on 14–15 July 2007,
http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0729/domi0729_3/d072903

What is your Attitude Towards Vladimir Ryzhkov – Negative, Positive or Indifferent?



Source: Opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund on 28–29 July 2007,
http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0731/domi0731_3/d073122

About the Russian Analytical Digest

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-osteuropa.de) and the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich). It is supported by the Otto Wolff Foundation and the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language *Russlandanalysen* (www.russlandanalysen.de), 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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Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen

Founded in 1982 and led by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Eichwede, the Research Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa) at the University of Bremen is dedicated to socialist and post-socialist cultural and societal developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Research Centre possesses a unique collection of alternative culture and independent writings from the former socialist countries in its archive. In addition to extensive individual research on dissidence and society in socialist societies, since January 2007 a group of international research institutes is participating in a collaborative project on the theme "The other Eastern Europe – the 1960s to the 1980s, dissidence in politics and society, alternatives in culture. Contributions to comparative contemporary history", which is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

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The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) is a Swiss academic center of competence that specializes in research, teaching, and information services in the fields of international and Swiss security studies. The CSS also acts as a consultant to various political bodies and the general public.

The CSS is engaged in research projects with a number of Swiss and international partners. The Center's research focus is on new risks, European and transatlantic security, strategy and doctrine, state failure and state building, and Swiss foreign and security policy.

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

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

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

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