

Protest mobilization and cooptation of parliamentary opposition parties in Russia's regions

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Data Documentation

The data set assembles information on the number of leadership posts held by deputies of Russia's regional parliament at the beginning of the For Fair Elections (FFE) protests in December 2011, the number of protests organized by these parties as part of the FFE protest cycle, and a measure for the number of party activists at these gatherings, as approximated by the number of party supporters recognizable in visual sources.

Data gathering and discussion of limitations

Leadership posts. Two principal ways to determine the office holder were developed. The preferred way was to use first-hand information from the regional legislatures. Most websites of regional parliaments provide access to databases with passed legislation. These databases were searched for decrees ("postanovlenia"), with which the assembly appoints deputies to leadership positions by simple majority vote. A time period from the election of the particular parliament (usually, leadership positions are appointed in the first or second session) until mid-2012 was covered. If that approach was impossible due to dysfunctional or lacking databases, a time-restricted online search of regional newspaper articles and other dated documents was conducted. Searching specifically for documents that dated from the exact period under study ensured that any change of position was noticed.

As Reuter and Robertson (2015)¹ observe, though, change in leadership positions during a parliamentary term occurs only very rarely. Replacements of an oppositional deputy by a deputy of the ruling party or vice versa during or immediately after the period under study would have to be coded separately because such changes could indicate a punishment or reward. Among the few replacements observed in the period under study, no such delicate changes occurred. In those 24 regions that elected their parliaments simultaneously to the national elections on 4 December 2011, positions were filled through December. In the two ways described and drawing upon a data set from April 2013 for backup² where possible, data on leadership positions in 80 out of 83 regional parliaments could be gathered.

¹ Reuter, Ora John, and Graeme B. Robertson. 2015. "Legislatures, Cooptation, and Social Protest in Contemporary Authoritarian Regimes." *The Journal of Politics* 77 (1): 235–48.

² The dataset was provided by Rostislav Turovsky from the Higher School of Economics, Moscow. It contains information on the holders of speakerships, vice-speakerships and committee chairs of regional legislatures in April 2013. With the help of documentation available online, it was checked in every single case whether the same persons that occupied the leadership positions in April 2013 did already hold them in the beginning of December 2011, i.e. before the outbreak of protest. If that was the case, it was assumed that the respective persons held their position continuously throughout the period under study. In all other cases, including those in which a regional election took place between December 2011 and April 2013, documents available online were searched for information on the office holder in the beginning and the end of the period under study as described above.

Number of organized protest events by each parliamentary opposition party per region. The data is taken directly from a dataset compiled by Gabowitsch and Sveshnikova (used in Gabowitsch 2016).³ The authors included all collective public events that were linked to the protest against the outcome of the parliamentary elections. The database includes marches, rallies, car processions, spontaneous gatherings and “nano-meetings”. The latter were excluded. The authors drew from several types of sources in order to circumvent media bias: they included information from regional press reports, but also from blogs and party websites. Their dataset contains information on 547 protest events in the studied period. It lists date, place, type and, in 44% of cases, also the organizer of the event.

The number of missings in the category of the organizer, which is central to the present data set, is thus relatively high. Hence, the data may underestimate the absolute number of protest events organized by political parties – simply because that information was not presented in the consulted sources and could thus not be included in the dataset. However, there is no reason to believe that the missings vary systematically across regions. In other words: It is unlikely that factors that would explain party protest also influences whether this particular piece of information was reported in the source. Therefore, although the absolute number of protest events organized by political parties may be underestimated, the regional variation is likely to be fairly accurate.

Aggregated approximated number of recognizable party activists per region. The variable was coded by the author relying on the same PEPS dataset. Gabowitsch and Sveshnikova archived all original reports on the protest events. Consultation of these sources combined with additional online research provided usable visual coverage of 91% of the listed events. The material of each event was coded, and the obtained numbers were aggregated to obtain an approximate figure of party activists present at protest events per region in the given period.

Naturally, the resulting figure is not to be taken as the real number of participating party activists – for two reasons. First, there are obvious limitations in the quality of the visual material. For instance, the angle of the camera may not capture the entire crowd. Second, everybody who shows party insignia can be plausibly thought of as a party activist but certainly not all activists who are affiliated with a party display its symbols. Therefore, we can assume that the indicator significantly underestimates the real number of protesting party activists. For both reasons, the indicator is not a representation of the absolute number of party activists – rather, it should be understood as a *relative marker*. Assuming that the factors influencing the inaccuracies of the visual material (camera angle, timing of the shot, etc.) vary randomly, the relative differences between the aggregated numbers per region should give an idea of party protest variation.⁴

³ Gabowitsch, Mischa. 2016. *Protest in Putin’s Russia*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press.

⁴ It is possible that the way in which party activists present themselves and their party affiliation at protest events varies with the type of party: Communists may have other protest rituals than followers of the LDPR. This factor, however, does not produce variance at the regional level and can therefore be disregarded – at least when parties are studied separately.

Codebook

This codebook reports the coding, a description and the source of all data in the used data set that was compiled by the author. The data set includes data on 76 out of 83 constituent subjects of the Russian Federation. If not specified otherwise, the variables contain data from the year 2011.

Coding	Description	Source
<i>ISO_id</i>	standardized regional ID according to GOST 7.67-2003	ICSID
<i>reg_id</i>	regional ID, internal coding	author
<i>region_en</i>	region name, translated	author
<i>posts_CPRF; posts_LDPR; posts_SR; posts_party</i>	Number of leadership posts in regional parliaments	author, based on publically available documents
<i>org_CPRF; org_LDPR; org_JR; org_party</i>	Number of protest events organised per region	dataset compiled by Gabowitsch and Sveshnikova (see Gabowitsch 2016)
<i>act_CPRF; act_LDPR; act_JR; act_party</i>	Aggregated number of recognizable party activists present at protest events per region	author, based on dataset compiled by Gabowitsch and Sveshnikova (see Gabowitsch 2016)
<i>share_CPRF; share_LDPR; share_JR; share_party</i>	Regional share of votes for each oppositional party in 2011 national parliamentary elections (in percentage points)	Central Electoral Commission
<i>seatshare_CPRF; seatshare_LDPR; seatshare_JR</i>	Share of seats in the regional parliament	Kynev 2009 ⁵ ; Kynev 2014 ⁶
<i>mun_els</i>	Number of upcoming municipal elections between March and June 2012	Central Electoral Commission
<i>press</i>	Freedom of the press (4-point scale) in 2010	Glaznost' Defence Foundation
<i>POPml</i>	Population (in millions)	ICSID
<i>urban</i>	Urbanization (% urban population)	ICSID
<i>logPOP</i>	Log Population	own calculation based on ICSID
<i>GRP_pc</i>	GRP per capita (in 100.000 rubles)	ICSID
<i>log_GRP_pc</i>	Log GRP per capita	own calculation based on ICSID
<i>ethnic</i>	Ethnic composition (% Russian population)	ICSID
<i>events</i>	Number of protest events per region	dataset compiled by Gabowitsch and Sveshnikova (see Gabowitsch 2016)

⁵ Kynev, Aleksandr. 2009. Vyборы Парламентов Rossijskich Regionov 2003-2009: Pervyj Cykl Vnedrenija Proporcional'noj Izbiratel'noj Sistemy [Elections to the Parliaments of the Russian Regions 2003-2009: The First Cycle of the Introduction of Proportional Electoral System]. Moskva: Tsentr "Panorama."

⁶ Kynev, Aleksandr. 2014. Vyборы Regional'nyh Parlamentov v Rossii 2009-2013: Ot Partizatsii k Personalizacii [Elections to the Parliaments of the Russian Regions 2009-2013: From Partyization to Personalization]. Moskva: Tsentr "Panorama."