

Patterns of Discontent: Identifying the Participant Core in Russian Post-Election
Protest

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The remarkable spectacle of Russians protesting against the Putin regime in December 2011 raises critical questions the impact of protest on regime stability. To begin to address these questions, we examine the patterns of participation over the first wave of actions in both the anti-Kremlin protests and pro-Kremlin rallies. We are particularly interested in the interaction between two decisions: when an individual first joined a protest, and whether or not they became regular participants after that point. In other words, we are interested in exploring the timing and persistence of individual protesters within a broader context of mobilization. We argue that understanding these patterns provides a strong basis to assess the obstacles to mobilization faced by opposition in Russia's electoral authoritarian system as well as the capacity to spark mass mobilization in the future.

Models of protest-driven regime change often focus on the size of the initial mobilization as a key predictor of the fall of authoritarian leaders. In these models, the size of protest provides immediate and clear information about the challenges facing the regime and the costs of relying on repression to stay in power. In Russia, the initial post-election protest mobilization demanding honest election was not sufficient to spark regime change. Yet, the reaction to electoral fraud did launch a wave of protests that continued for seven months, spreading from the capital across Russia's regions and demanding honest governance. A third smaller wave of protests emerged in fall 2012 amidst significant regime efforts to stifle the opposition through strict laws, arbitrary prosecutions, harassment and cooptation.

The protests' failure to provoke regime change raises a serious question for the literature on colored revolutions in the post-Communist space: how do persistent protests influence the probability of regime change over time? We suggest that the answer to this question rests on three related factors: the commitment of the participants, referred to in the literature as the participation differential, the cohesiveness of the protest core, and their logic for participation. Relying on individual-level survey data collected at the pro- and anti-regime rallies in late February and early March 2012 in Russia, we develop a measure of the participation differential in order to explore the relative size of committed activists within both movements. We then examine the factors that influenced disparate patterns of participation, including biographical attributes, political grievances, motivations, campaign effects, and protest effects, including state response.

Our analysis clearly illustrates the key differences between the mobilization strategies and support in the pro- and anti-government movements. We find that the opposition had a larger core of dedicated participants than the pro-government participation. We also find evidence of a participation cascade that increased the size of the movement over time. Drawing on social movement theory, we explore the underlying model of mobilization intensity on each side of street, focusing on the differences in the roles of networks, past political activity, and movement goals on the intensity and timing of participation. While these factors provide some leverage on explaining differential participation within each movement, they also underscore the differences in the longer-term mobilization potential of these two groups and their likely responses to the changing context of Russian politics.

The Trajectory of Pro- and Anti-Putin Movements, December 2011-May 2013

Election fraud following parliamentary polls prompted unexpectedly large and persistent street protests that began in December 2011 and continued through Aleksey Navalny's 2013 mayoral campaign. While our analysis focuses on protest in Moscow, the movement spread beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg to Russia's regions and it appeared to spark a reemergence of regional protest around a wide range of political issues (Robertson 2012). A state-sponsored counter-movement organized as a series of pro-government rallies emerged contemporaneously with the protest movement. In this paper, we examine the trajectory of protest in the first two wave of contentious action, between December 2011 and June 2012. In addition, because the Russian protests were strongly influenced by the Kremlin's mobilization of counter-rallies, we also briefly examine the trajectory of participation at the rallies.

Relying on press reports of protest activity, Figure 1 depicts protest and rally participation during this period. In this figure, we report crowd estimates offered by event organizers since state media and the official police estimates tend to inflate participation in government protests and diminish anti-regime protest participation. By reporting organizer participation we argue that we get a better relative sense of protest size as both sets of figures are biased in the same direction.¹

Figure One About Here

The pattern of protest participation in Figure 1 is striking. The data clearly show two waves of protest although the pro-Kremlin actions in the second wave were truncated. The figure also shows that participation on both sides of the street exhibited similar dynamics. Interestingly, pro-government rallies lagged initial protests but then turned to anticipate protest actions over the course of these second protest cycle that coincided with Mr. Putin's inauguration.

Anti-Kremlin protest participation peaked at the second street action at Bolotnaya Square on February 4, 2012 and then declined steadily and then paused in mid-March. Arrests on charges of violating protest regulations—or refusing to leave protest venues—were common during this period but punishments were relatively minor. The police alternated between imposing short jail terms and letting protesters off with fines depending on how they interpreted charges. Protest leaders often tweeted from the police vans and even police stations to update followers on the disposition of their cases creating a comic atmosphere around police sanctions. Yet, with time the threat of potential violence and arrest increased. As the Presidential election approached, the police presence in Moscow, and in particular the presence of Special Forces, or OMON, increased dramatically.

During this period, pre-election polls showed that the vast majority of Russians believed Mr. Putin's re-election—by a wide margin—to be inevitable. As our data show, even core activists expected the Presidential elections to be relatively free of falsification, at least in Moscow. To ensure victory and

¹ In fact, opposition organizers had very sophisticated mechanisms in place to measure crowd participation. See Tselikov 2012 for a description of different measurement procedures. We used a polynomial smoothing function to create Figure 1.

project the image of support into Russia's regions, the government mustered massive spectacles that functioned as Presidential election rallies. These factors dampened the enthusiasm for a movement that chanted "Russia Without Putin" at its events.

Mr. Putin's inauguration ceremony, coupled with the traditional May celebrations of military victories, sparked a second wave of protest activities and pro-Putin rallies. Opposition leaders struggled to find a new message, beyond electoral fairness—settling on "For Honest Government." Between early May and June of 2012, protests became more confrontational as opposition leaders challenged the boundaries of police regulation. Creative attempts to find legal ways to stay on the streets included a series of "walking tours" of Moscow's cultural monuments led by writers and musicians, as well as "control walks" in which participants wore white to symbolize the movement without exhibiting any other protest behaviors. A series of foot chases between police and opposition moved from park to park in early May and ended in an open air encampment near the *Chistye Prudy* metro station. The encampment, known as Occupy Abai, endured for just about a week before authorities acted on neighborhood complaints and closed it down.

At the May 6 March of Millions protest event at Bolotnaya Square, conflict between the authorities and the opposition peaked. While previous events were largely non-violent, the May 6 protest ended in a skirmish between police and protesters. By the end of the day, the OMON arrested over six hundred protesters. Relying on copious amounts of video evidence of police brutality, opposition leaders claimed that the police provoked the violence. The Kremlin refused any formal investigation of these claims and used the event to demonize the opposition. Russian television showed President Putin visiting injured officers in the hospital—who were awarded apartments in compensation for their injuries. In total 28 opposition participants were arrested or jailed on various crimes from inciting riot to participation in mass riot. The description of offenses are very specific: upending portable toilets to create a barrier against police, ripping up and throwing asphalt at police, collaborating with foreign powers and assault. Some of these arrests and many charges came as late as April 2013 almost a year after the protest event and the ongoing trials of the Bolotnaya prisoners marked a very public use of politicized justice designed to stifle protest.

State intervention did not stop protest actions but mass participation subsided. Actions in June 2012 through the fall and winter of 2013 were limited, although a distinct third wave emerged Fall 2012. On the anniversary of the May 6 Bolotnaya rally, a commemorative protest sanctioned by Moscow officials attracted around 20,000 activists. The event was somber, lacking the excitement of the earlier protests. The sentencing of movement leaders Aleksey Navalny in August 2013 sparked a spontaneous protest in the heart of Moscow attended by more than 10,000 participants. Beyond these large opposition events, smaller, issue-based protest actions focused the environment, delivery of social services, and political transgressions continued throughout the Russian Federation.

Placing the post-election protests in a broader political context, demonstrates that the characterization of the protests and spontaneous and bounded by the electoral cycle is not entirely accurate. Rather, our individual level research suggests that the protests had both spontaneous and planned elements. It also shows that the differences in patterns of participation in the rallies and

protests mapped to a distinct set of attitudes and political characteristics. These distinctions have important implications for assessing the longer terms impact of protests on Russian politics and the potential for future motivation. While the popular media often points the failures of the “For Honest Elections” movement, the fact is that it prompted some institutional reform and also made electoral fraud more difficult. As a result, the Kremlin has had to engineer new tactics and strategies, some of which are more visible and more coercive, to control competition. Moreover, our research suggests that the movement did have significant influences on the political behaviors of protest participants over the course of the first wave of street action.

The State Response: Pro-Kremlin Rallies

One of the Kremlin’s most visible response to protest was the mobilization of support in the form of mass rallies. In contrast to the anti-government protests, the pro-Kremlin rallies continued to grow as the Presidential elections approached and then dropped off sharply. As we describe elsewhere, the Kremlin’s strategy shifted throughout the cycle of protest, moving from concessions to confrontation and from defense (against protest) to offense (winning votes for Putin) (Smyth, Sobolev and Soboleva 2013). By early January, the Kremlin stepped in to organize political events, using state resources to mobilize the loyalists. Transport, housing and incentives provided vast crowds of regional state workers, youth organizations, party faithful. At the same time, social media and YouTube videos document the state resources and coercion, or third party mobilization, at these events. The Kremlin lured participations with carrots and sticks, promising days off but also threatening dismissal if state workers did not participate. It also bussed regional youth to the capital, housing them around the city to ensure that they were ready for mobilization.

While these resources were clearly important for rally actions, preliminary analysis suggests that pro-Putin rally participation was not just an example of third party mobilization. The rally brought together like-minded participants who supported the regime but were unlikely to have participated in street actions without incentives. In terms of mobilization theory, the Kremlin had a leg up in mounting street actions because it had already done the work to frame the event: identify of common interests (threat of revolutionary action) and offer a the solution to the problem (large spectacles). It also had enormous resource to invest incentives to overcome the collective action problem.

By May 2012, the Kremlin extended traditional Victory Day celebrations to a four-day holiday in honor of the inauguration. The protesters and pro-Kremlin forces battled to bring the holiday rituals in support of their cause. Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party had resisted formally supporting the protest movement, invited the “For Honest Government” movement to join the traditional May march. Anti-Kremlin activists handed white carnations, echoing the white ribbon symbol of the movement, to war veterans many of whom accepted them. On May 9, pro-Kremlin youth activists handed out orange and brown ribbons on Tverskaya Street and Mr. Medvedev and Putin marched, actively linking the President’s victory to the commemoration Russian military victories.

The dueling performance of protests and counter-rallies marked a battle to describe the reality of regime support. Figure 1 suggests that these efforts represented a strategic interaction between regime and opposition. Yet, while the patterns developed in Figure 1 illustrate the trajectory of protest at the aggregate level, they mask the individual-level patterns that shaped changes in protest participation—when protesters joined the actions and their level of commitment over individual events and across protest cycles. We argue that embedded within these individual-level patterns is a deeper understanding of why the protests failed to grow over time. Considered together, the patterns of protest participation provide key insights into the factors that sustained the regime through this first, significant crisis and the ways in which protest might reemerge in the future.

Different Waves: Different Protest Constituencies

Our research strategy allows us to examine participation in rallies and protests between December 2011 and March 2012 and to suggest linkages between waves of action. To demonstrate the validity of the data and extend the scope of our study beyond this wave, we briefly summarize the patterns of participation evident in the Levada Center's data collected over a longer time period.² Levada conducted survey research at a series of rallies extending through January 2013. Although these are not panel data and do not provide us with an opportunity to assess individual participation over time, the comparison of aggregate statistics provide important clues about the evolution of protest participation and also provide support for our own conclusions.

The Levada Data suggest some change in protest attendance over time but also some significant continuities. Men outnumbered women participants over all of the protests although women's participation increased in the 2013 actions. While young people seemed to dominate in early protests, the crowd grew slightly older with time. This decline mapped to a decrease in both student participation and anti-fascist groups signaling changes in the political composition of the crowds over time. While self-identified liberals and democrats were the largest groups throughout the protests, the number of nationalists and communists rose over the course of the first and second waves of protest. One notable change in the composition of the crowds was the sharp decline in participation by public sector specialists at 2013 events. This change provides some evidence of the effectiveness of Kremlin efforts to diminish participation of state workers by threatening them with job loss.

Yet, even with this change crowd composition the general picture of the crowd remained fairly stable in terms of socio-economic participation. Protesters tended to be better off than most Russian citizens and even most Muscovites. In addition, they were more highly educated and generally, more likely to be informed of political action through the Internet. There is also significant evidence that personal networks played a role in protest mobilization over the course of the first wave and beyond.

² Our summary is based on Volkov's (2012) report that relies on Levada Center polls conducted at protest meetings to characterize changes in protest participation through the first three waves: December-March, May-July, and September-December.

There is plenty of evidence in the Levada data to suggest a core set of protesters “stalwarts” who took part in meetings over time. By 2013 at the “March against Scoundrels,” a full 95 percent of protest participants had taken part in at least one prior protest activity (Levada February 2013). Approximately 60 percent of that crowd participated in each of the three large rallies of the first wave. At the same time, participants in later events saw themselves as less likely to continue to take part in mass actions, a drop of almost 20 percentage points between the Winter 2012 meetings and the January 2013 March. Importantly for this paper, the Levada polls also hint at partisan shift in participation over time. With each protest, the percentage of protest stalwarts, principally Yabloko voters, declined in favor of Communists and Nationalists. While this finding suggests some sort of change in participation, it does not provide much information about the mechanisms of mobilization at work among different types of participants

Explaining the Intensity and Timing of Protest Participation

As our narrative of aggregated protest behavior suggests, the Russian post-election protests emerged within a very particular context that was shifting in subtle but important ways in 2011-2012. While the Putin era had been marked by episodes of coercion and almost persistent political manipulation, the lead-up to the presidential-parliamentary election cycle was marked by an increasingly authoritarian tendency. This tendency emerged in the context of elections as Mr. Putin announced his return to power, openly sought to manufacture opposition, and scrambled to rehabilitate the party of power, United Russia. Falling approval ratings for Mr. Putin, Mr. Medvedev, and UR, suggested that the global economic crisis, falling energy prices, and the lack of systemic reform diminished the regime’s capacity to win vote support—or even quiescence—based on economic appeals and promises of future prosperity (Chaisty and Whitefield 2013, Robinson 2013, Treisman 2012). Moreover, while citizens consistently identified corruption as a critical concern, the regime seemed incapable of addressing those issues.

As December 2011 parliamentary elections approached, there was a growing discontent with the regime that was reflected in parliamentary elections marked by fraud and post-election protest. These events provide an important context in which to understand the Russian protest cycle and the factors that shape participation patterns. Falsification gave way to protest, followed by the Kremlin making small concessions in the form of systemic reforms. Yet, as protests evolved, Mr. Putin’s reelection seemed inevitable, and the expectations of his significant victory diminished expectations about the magnitude of fraud in the presidential election. It seemed increasingly unlikely that the protest movement would achieve any of its key goals: free and fair elections, systemic reform, and the removal of Putin. These events shape the context in which the first wave of protest unfolded.

In this paper, we are not interested in why people protest. Rather, we focus on the intersection of the timing and intensity of participation—the participation differential (Passy and Giugni 2001; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991). To understand individual-level patterns of protest participation within the context of authoritarian elections, we turn to three distinct literatures: the literature on participation in social movements, the literature on the colored revolutions and post-election protest, and the literature on differential participation and information cascades. These literatures

map to two distinct approaches to understanding protest—the intensity of participation measured by the constancy and frequency of protest, and also the temporal aspect that captures the timing of participation. The nexus of these literatures also point to five sets of factors that shape the timing and intensity of protest participation: biographical availability, political grievances, political interest and behavior, campaign effects, and beliefs and motivations.

The work on individual participation in protest focuses almost exclusively on the protest calculus: the costs and benefits of individual participation. Gamson (1968) argued that protest participation was a function of two factors: the individual's motivation and his or her belief that the protest would be successful. In successive formulations, scholars argued that the protest calculus—the analysis of the costs of protest (time, the potential for injury or arrest) and the benefits (policy or regime change)—would drive protest. Consistent with formal models of collective action, Muller and Opp (1986) argued that individuals would be unlikely to see themselves pivotal in a protest action, generating an important obstacle to mobilization.

Scholars point to variety of mechanisms that can counteract these calculations. McAdam (1986) identified lifecycle or biographical availability variables that describe the “absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation, such as full-time employment, marriage and family responsibilities (p. 70).” Of all of these variables, age and gender appeared to carry the greatest constraint on protest participation. However, material well being, employment and education have also been shown to influence participants' choices. In the Russian context, this expectation has not always held, although there is significant differential participation in protest activity by students and pensioners.

Similarly, the literature on differential recruitment stresses the critical role that personal networks and friendship can play in shaping participation in risky movements (Barkan et. al. 1995; Klandermans, 1993; McAdam et al., 1988; Passy and Guigni 2001; Wiltfang and McAdam, 1991). These networks decrease the costs of participation by providing shared information, transport, and even beliefs about the efficacy of protest. In addition, as with ideology and congruence with movement goals, networks also provide critical solidary incentives that accrue from group members and friendship ties (McAdam 1986). Studies of Russian protest also cite the importance of social media on protest participation (Greene 2013, Litvinenko 2011), a finding we confirm in our analysis presented later.

Much of the literature on protest focuses on the intensity and nature of political grievances held by potential protesters. In authoritarian regimes, where there are few channels for individuals to redress grievances through formal politics, protest emerges as a form of redress. Yet, grievances are omnipresent and protest is rare, so it is important to think about the types of grievances that might drive protest. We focus on two measures mentioned in the literature, regime alienation and a vision for the future. Moreover, we would that individuals who are more interested in politics, and who seek out alternative sources of information, would be more likely to articulate clear policy positions, policy goals, and grievances against the regime.

Javeline (2009) argues that a clear target of blame for alienation and grievances goes a long way toward providing a clear impulse for protest. Building on this logic, Tucker (2007) addresses the particular value of electoral fraud as a moment in which citizens with long held grievances against the state can take to the streets to redress their concerns by demanding a recount or replay of the electoral contest. Other studies focus on the role of leadership in altering the cost-benefit calculus (Hulsey and Smyth 2013).

We also recognize the unique conditions of post-election protest in electoral authoritarian regimes. These regimes routinely manipulate electoral competition through biased formal rules, the use of regulations to narrow competition, the infusion of administrative resources, and outright falsification. Yet, the clandestine nature of these actions makes it difficult for citizens to assess their effect on election outcomes. The campaign itself may be critical for shaping beliefs about the fairness of competition, the likelihood of government defeat, or even the target of blame for mass discontent. Tucker's insight, that electoral fraud can serve as a focal point for frustrated citizens is a significant innovation. He argues that "For once, the entire country is experiencing the same act of abuse simultaneously; in the language of the collective action literature, major electoral fraud provides an obvious focal point for action (541)." By this logic, the fraud unites citizens with very disparate grievances in a common antipathy toward a corrupt regime and transforms the individual decision into a collective one.

Yet, fraud is a very complex event and what seems obvious in hindsight or from afar may not be clear to citizens who are the victims of fraud. We argue that the conduct of the campaign and pre-election activity can provide critical insight into the nature and level of fraud. For instance, a charismatic opposition leader may raise expectations about probability of an opposition victory. Defensive state actions such those that occurred in Russia can signal the regime's sense that support is softening. Independent public opinion polls offer some information as well. Mobilization around opposition candidates and parties can also establish linkages that promote solidary incentives to turn out. More generally, deciding to vote and then sorting out one's vote choice provides a potential protester with an important opportunity to resolve her affect toward the regime and her uncertainty about the state's strategies. Put another way, the campaign itself is an important focal point that can sort out potential protesters and motivate them to act.

Scholars identify the importance of campaign effects in Ukraine's Orange Revolution. Mark Beissinger's (2012) study of participation finds some evidence to support Tucker's (2007) interpretation, but argues that the more powerful cause of protest was an "emotional response to injustice" or, in terms of the mobilization literature, suddenly imposed grievances. He imputes the rise of these grievances to robust campaigning by the supporters of the opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko. Similarly, Bunce and Wolchik (2011) cite the Orange oppositions' capacity to effectively deploy an electoral model of revolution whose tactics included increasing voter turnout, uniting the opposition, organizing international election monitoring, appeal to youth organizations, and canvassing voters. All of these factors emerged in the electoral campaign and shaped the beliefs that drove protest participation.

These literatures provide important insights into the variables that drive protest intensity, but their effects are static. In the individual participation literature, the emergence of protest is not a catalyst for mobilization or changes in the intensity of participation. The empirical observation of protest cascades resulting in what Timur Kuran (1991) called the revolutionary bandwagon, led scholars to examine the timing of protest participation (Verhulst and Walgrave 2008; Verhulst and Van Laer 2009, Walgrave and Verhulst 2009). These studies focus on protest itself as a catalyst for participation: the event of protest as well as event characteristics such as the size, frame, symbolic meaning, and type of participants. They also stress that the state's response to protest can also alter an individual's calculations. As such, it may be that a few days or events of protest may provide the information essential to attract more support or even to discourage new participation.

The most-cited factor in the revolutionary bandwagon literature is the size of the protest. As protest grows, the likelihood that any single protester will bear the cost of violence or arrest decreases, making it more likely that others join (Kuran 1991; Lohmann 1994). In Kuran's (1991) version of this approach, the participation of each protester decreases the costs of participation for non-protestors, encouraging them to join the fray. Yet, as Lohmann (1994) points out, ordinary citizens are likely to discount the actions of political extremists or radicals and place disproportionate weight on the actions of political moderates. Extremist demands and grievances are likely to be different from those of the general population, and therefore provide little information about the viability of the regime. The substantial participation of moderates in the first rounds of protest provides positive information about the potential of the protest as well as negative information about the durability of the regime, as citizens recognize themselves in the moderates' grievances. Thus, as protest grows we expect new participants to be less revolutionary or hold softer positions than the initial core that took to the streets. The magnitude of attitudinal differences among early and late participants will provide important insights into the durability of protest.

In addition, these participation cascades interact with and shape individual motivations. The core of Kuran's (1991) model is a gap between public and private preferences for an authoritarian regime. As Lisa Wedeen (1998) argues, citizens of authoritarian states are compelled through fear of prosecution to act "as if" they support the regime. This performance of regime support has two important implications. First, as Kuran (1991) stresses, it creates discomfort for citizens whose preference gap is very large. For these citizens, reconciling public and private preferences provides significant payoffs and promotes extended participation.

Second, control of the media and electoral campaigns and outcomes in authoritarian regimes can obscure the true nature of public opinion. A citizen may not know that he or she shares a widely-held desire for regime change and the willingness to join protest actions. It is only after other citizens reveal their preferences by taking to the streets that other individuals see these events and revise their beliefs. As the size of protest grows and the potential costs decline, the citizens are more likely to act on the private preference for regime change. This moment can provoke what McAdam (1992) called cognitive liberation, in which citizens recognize that the regime is vulnerable to

challenge. Protesters who take public action to reconcile their public and private preferences are also more likely to emerge as part of a durable core of dissenters over time.

Similarly, core protesters, those who show up early and often can develop an activist identity that binds them to the movement (Melucci 1989). This identity is distinct from that of intermittent protesters in a number of regards. First, it encompasses protest experiences that diminish the barriers for subsequent participation. Second, an activist identity rests on important bonds among activist protesters in terms of organizational ties and networks. In the absence of civil society organization, these bonds are likely to exist in the form of personal and even virtual networks or micro-mobilization networks. Finally, activist identity is often rooted in strong emotions such as indignation or anger that serve as a catalyst for individual action. All of these aspects of identity are influenced by participation but they may also be diminished over time if the protesters' experiences are not fulfilling.

A final type of information that can be gleaned from ongoing protest is the state's response to initial protest actions, from crackdown to concessions. State response provides significant information both about the costs of protest and the likely efficacy of protest actions, subsequently shaping patterns of protest participation (Della Porta 1998; DeNardo 1986; Lohmann 1994). Concessions provide unambiguous signals that protest will prompt political change, encouraging those who see futility in protest to reevaluate and perhaps creating a collective moment of cognitive liberation. Crackdown provides very different signals that increase the perceived cost of protest. However, crackdown can also produce focal points and heighten grievances that can provoke profound emotions and mobilize citizens. In Russia, the state's early move toward concession in the form of formal rules changes gave way to an increased use of coercion, politicized justice, and administrative punishment such as firing to dissuade protest participation. The Levada evidence suggests the effectiveness of these strategies.

In addition to considering the effect that state response might have on protest trajectory (DeNardo 1985; Lohmann 1994), we also consider the role the state can play in mobilizing support for protest rallies. The most obvious of these strategies is third-party mobilization—in this case state mobilization—of regime supporters to counter and stifle protest participation. The effort serves as a state-driven counter movement to the initial anti-government protest, creating a stylized battle among three actors: the movement, the counter-movement, and the government (Chong 1991). This interaction may have serious effects on the protest calculus as a movement progresses. This potential influence is suggested by the macro-level patterns of protest depicted in Figure 1.

Mobilization is only one strategy employed by the state to manage protest competition but it is the key strategy of interest in this paper. The question of how the state employed third party mobilization is critical because it demonstrates the state's capacity to act and effectively respond to challenges embodied in protest. The Kremlin's narrative of protest suggests that evidence of third party mobilization should increase as the protest cycle continued, Presidential elections inched closer, and the Kremlin altered its strategy to focus more on using pro-regime actions such as campaign rallies to shore up electoral support for the President.

This paper marks the starting point of our inquiry into the protest trajectory in Russia's authoritarian regime. We rely on survey data to characterize the Russian protest participants in terms of their participation patterns—the interaction between their point of mobilization and also the constancy of their participation. In the next section of this paper, we characterize and describe the composition of the pro- and anti-government protesters. Subsequently, we explore whether or not an “activist identity” existed or emerged within these groups. Finally, examine the implications of these patterns for the likelihood of future protest actions.

Disaggregating Protest Participation: Identifying Stalwarts and Tourists

The structure of the first wave of Russian protest was distinct from other colored revolutions in post-Communist states. Rather than establishing encampments on the streets of large cities across the Federation, the Russian movement involved a series of distinct street actions held weeks apart over a period of three months. This form of protest action provided time for participants to accumulate significant information about protest dynamics and also allowed for information to percolate through society. The punctuated protest cycle highlights the importance of action attributes identified in the literature—the size of the movement core, its internal coherence, the differences between core and transitory participants within the pro- and anti-regime forces—for shaping subsequent participation. It also highlights the important role that changing political context and state response can have on protest behavior.

Our study rests on a survey of protesters conducted over two weeks, late February and early March, in both the pro- and anti-government actions.³ Since it was impossible to know the underlying population of protesters, we designed our sample strategy to allow us to conduct group comparisons by age, income, and gender—ensuring representation from each group. Using an group of trained undergraduate students, we compiled a sample of 363 respondents in the pro-regime rallies and 484 respondents in the anti-regime protests.⁴

Our measures of participation are built on a question that listed the major protest events between December 2011 and March 10, 2012 and asked respondents to identify which of the events that they had attended. This question listed five pro-government rallies and five protest meetings.⁵ We also included an option of other, to include the smaller events that were held during the period. There

³ In terms of Figure 1, we implemented our survey near the peak of the pro-government action and just before the nadir of the first wave of anti-government protests. In other words, our data collection coincided with Presidential elections. If we think about how this timing might bias our results we might expect that we over-sample stalwarts who attended the events as participation declined, at the expense of the casual participants who attended the largest protests at the height of excitement and energy of the movement. Still, we are pleased to find that we have sufficient variation and sample size across these groups to explore the attributes of types of participants.

⁴ A detailed discussion of our sample strategy and a complete translation of the survey instrument is available at: <http://www.hse.ru/data/2012/08/27/1242904584/APPENDIX%20ON%20DATA%20COLLECTION.pdf>

⁵ Anti-government actions included, Triumph Square/Chistye Prudy; Bolotnaya Square, Sakharov March, Yakimanke-Bolotnaya Square, and the “Big White Ring” event. Pro-government rallies included, Triumph Square, Manezhaya Square, Sparrow Hills, Poklonnaya Hills, Luzhniki Stadium. By definition all of our respondents attended the meetings at which we implemented our research, so that the total number of events included in our measures is six.

are a number of ways to look at the differences among individual protesters across a series of protest events or over protest waves. In our case, we are interested in two related protest patterns. First, we examine whether or not there is a core of committed participants on each side of the rally. We defined this group of protest stalwarts rigorously, including all participants who had attended more than three of the five large protests in our time frame. Second, we look at the composition of the anti-regime protest core in terms of when individuals join the protest to shed light on the dynamics of mobilization. Finally, we combine these two measures to create a measure of the protest core—those who showed up early and often—and those who less committed to protest.

Protest Commitment: Stalwart and Casual Participants

The starting point of our empirical question centers on level of commitment that individuals had to the protest movement and the relative size of the committed (stalwart) and uncommitted (casual) participants. Table 1 reports the size of the stalwart and casual groups for both the pro-government rallies and the anti-government protests.

Table 1 About Here

In this table stalwarts are those who attended three or more of the six major events that comprised the first wave of protest. This stringent benchmark that gives us a rigorous measure of commitment to the protest movement. The first finding that is clear in this table is that regardless of how it is measured, the size of the core is much larger in the anti-government side than in the pro-government side. The protest movement core includes just over 40 percent of the respondents in our sample. While this seems quite high, it is important to note by January 2013 the Levada data from the “March Against Scoundrels” is approximately 60 percent of the sample. In contrast, the rallies had a core that was just 20 percent of our sample. This difference provides the first clues about the characters of these different groups. Below we discuss the nature of the differences between the protest core and the causal participants in some detail.

In this paper, we are less concerned about the differences between the subgroups at the pro-government rally than at the protests and provide only preliminary findings. In general terms, our data suggest that while rally participants largely supported Mr. Putin and his regime, they were unlikely to have protested without some encouragement. Biographical variables were better predictors of commitment on the pro-government side than on the anti-government side. Rally stalwarts reported being better off than the casual participants and also reported that their material wellbeing increased significant since 2000 when Mr. Putin took office. They also were more likely to work in supervisory capacities at state-owned jobs. In terms of political motivations, the core was less likely to cite support for Mr. Putin as a very important goal for participation, citing support for the regime and also against any sort of Orange Revolution. However, they were most likely to parrot the government line that protests reflected government intervention in Russia’s domestic politics. Pro-government stalwarts were also much more likely to be embedded in larger political networks and more likely to be organized by a political party.

The distinctions between the stalwarts and casuals in the anti-government rallies were quite different from their pro-government counterparts. When considering these data, keep in mind that we are not identifying factors that make participation in protest more likely, instead we are explaining the distinction between committed and uncommitted activists. As such, some variables that we know predict participation such as education levels do not emerge as significant in explaining the protest differential. Table 2 reports the biographical variables that marked a significant distinction between the two groups of protest participants.⁶

Table 2 About Here

Table 2 shows patterns of protest participation that are consistent with the broader literature. Residents who lived in the capital city were more likely to be stalwarts as were the employed or student participants. Pensioners attended the protests but were less likely to be committed participants—not a surprising outcome in the frigid temperatures of January and February 2012. Consistent with patterns of overall participation in the protest movement, women were also slightly less likely to be committed participants. The sector of employment variable is surprising. In our data, employment in the state sector was a better predictor of consistency than employment in the private sector in the first wave of protest. This finding needs to be treated with some caution as the level of significance is marginal but it is important because together with the Levada data on the drop off in protest participation by state workers, it underscores a distinct vulnerability in a regime where the state is willing to punish workers by firing and blacklisting them. As the same time, our significance measure does not assess the importance of private sector stalwarts in terms of the size of the group. As the table shows, this group was more than twice as large as the public sector stalwarts suggesting the limits to the Kremlin's coercive strategy.

The other surprising finding in Table 2 is that some variables that we know to be significant predictors of protest participation such as education, material conditions and class, level of employment, and age emerged as significant predictors of consistent protest participation. This finding suggests that models of mobilization should have some overlap with models of participation intensity but also differ in significant ways.

In Table 3, we turn to examine the role of networks in defining the protest core. In this table we use two measures. The first is a measure of Internet network activity, titled “politicized Internet network.” We constructed this variable from two questions: one that asked the frequency of Internet use and a second that asked how the respondent preferred to discuss politics. The table reports values for respondents who reported that they were “always” on the Internet and preferred to discuss politics online. The second measure asks respondents to estimate the number of members in their immediate circle who had previously participated in political protest.

Table 3 About Here

⁶ Throughout this analysis we test statistical significant of the variation among groups using a Fisher's test designed to accurately assess differences in small-N samples.

Predictably, we find that both types of political networks are significant predictors of protest stalwarts. Stalwarts were more likely to be embedded in politicized Internet networks although almost half of the causal participants were also involved in political discussion on the Internet. In terms of political networks within their circle (family, friends, colleagues), protesters involved in large political networks were also more likely to be stalwart participants. Clearly these two groups overlap, but not all of those embedded in personal networks are also on the Internet and visa-versa. However, these findings provide the first evidence that the mobilization protest core had roots in forms of social capital and social bonds constructed before the outbreak of protest. Consistent with the Levada data, we find that the plurality of stalwarts cast their vote for the Yabloko party in December 2011, signaling their previous engagement with the organization.

While we do not report it in this table, stalwarts were also more likely to engage in frequent political discussions than casual supporters. In addition, our evidence provides some support for the political engagement and campaign mobilization thesis. The protest core was more likely to turn out to vote. Stalwarts were also twice as likely to have served as election observers in parliamentary elections in December 2011. These findings speak to a campaign effect that is critical in mobilizing protest participation and building movement loyalty.

Table 4 focuses on the biggest differences that we observe between casual and stalwart protesters. These differences focus on protest goals and motivations and stem from fairly nuanced differences in the intensity of attitudes rather than the presence or absence of different attitudes. However, all of the attitudes reported below have statistically significant differences between the stalwart and causal groups.

Table 4 About Here

The first three rows of data describe differences in protesters' support for the top three goals articulated by the "For Honest Elections" movement. It is critical to note that the movement was not entirely about defeating Mr. Putin or about revolution. As the evidence shows the stalwart activists stressed the importance of all three movement goals, including the reformist demands—the end of electoral manipulation and the implementation more transparent and even-handed electoral rules and the reintroduction of competitive elections.

In fact, less than half of the casual protesters strongly supported any of the movement goals, although they were the closest to the stalwart core on the issue of ending falsification than they were on systemic reform. The causal participants exhibited the lowest level of support for the goal of "Russia without Putin" and a small minority of casual supporters (just over ten percent) disagreed entirely that the demand of the removal of or electoral defeat of Mr. Putin. This sentiment mapped to the causals' expression of limited trust in Mr. Putin (as opposed to outright distrust). In other words, about a quarter of the causal protesters either only partially trusted Putin or did not have strong affect toward the President.

This pattern of attitudes is echoed in the focus of blame for the problems in the society, and in particular, blame for electoral fraud. Supplemental data shows that casuals were slightly less

convinced of the magnitude of electoral fraud and also were less likely to believe that the Kremlin was responsible for that fraud. In Javeline's (2009) terms, causal supporters were more ambivalent about the target of blame for the political woes in Russia although the difference is in degree not in kind. Importantly, this evidence gives credence to our earlier point that it is often difficult for citizens, even those that hold strong grievances against the regime, to understand the nature and extent of electoral manipulation.

The bottom of the table reports individual motivations for joining the protest. Our list of motivations engages very different elements of the protest decision from emotion, to communication, duty and personal interest. The consistent finding across the table is that respondents from the protest core were more likely to cite a range of motivations for their participation and evaluate them more highly than causal participants. This includes the performance or communicative aspect of the participation captured in the goals, "to show my involvement with events" and "to convey my concern to society." In contrast, causal participants were less concerned with communicating their concern to the broader society than the stalwart participants.

Perhaps the most interesting difference between the two groups is revealed by attitudes about the morality of participation. The stalwarts stress the idea of moral duty more than their casual counterparts. While not a direct test of Kuran's (1991) formulation protest as a reconciliation of public and private preferences, the moral duty motivation for participation speaks to the deep nature of emotion involved in protest participation decisions. Among our respondents, only a belief that protest was essential to defend one's personal interests—the most highly rated motivation for action—surpassed moral duty as a motivation for participation. Within the stalwart group, wellbeing and morality were linked.

These data provide insight into the nature of grievances that motivated protest and the distinctions across groups. Protest embodied grievances over falsification as argued by Tucker (2007) but also identified concerns about the political system, the President, and individual wellbeing and rights. These attitudes are consistent with a strong sense of alienation within the protest core. Our data confirms that while almost all protesters perceived higher levels of corruption under Putin, stalwarts were more likely to report that corruption had gotten much worse. They were also more likely to report their strong sense that the country was moving in the wrong direction. Together with the data reported in Table 4, it is clear that the stronger the grievances held by protest participants—summarized as a sense of alienation from the regime—and the more clearly those grievances are tied to targets of blame, the more likely it is that an individual will be a member of the protest core.

In addition, our data shows the importance of campaign effects of the level of protest commitment. The protest core was twice as likely to have served as an election observer and also more likely to have voted in parliamentary elections. This finding supports the Bunce and Wolchik model of post-election protest mobilization. In the face of Aleksey Navalny's "Anyone but United Russia," campaign it also suggests that the process of determining vote choice and a strategy for using the ballot as a protest tactic can contribute to protest mobilization and bind participants to the

movement. An important indicator of political learning over this time period is that a significant percentage of participants who reported abstaining in parliamentary elections subsequently went to the polls to vote in Presidential elections four months later and reported voting against Mr. Putin.

Our evidence points to an interesting set of implications about the durability of protest and the likelihood that street actions could reoccur. The distinction between the protest core and the casual cadres is not black and white. Rather, the difference is captured in nuanced assessments of the regime and its actions. It is also captured in the activists' sense of duty and their understanding of the importance of different goals and motivations for protest. The very fact that the protest core is distinguished from other protesters by its attitudes and perceptions rather than biographical factors suggests that slight changes in the political environment—economic hardship or even a political scandal—could lead to more protest participation. Similarly, as casual protesters' participation experience and contact with politicized Internet networks and face-to-face networks grow, they are also more likely to join the ranks with time and experience.

However, the flip side of the coin is that the distinctions between the core and casual protesters also have the potential to discourage participation in the short term. To foreshadow the potential effect of the protest actions on mobilization, the protest core was more forceful in its demands for change than its casual brethren. Stalwarts were more vociferous in their demand for Mr. Putin's departure and also more intense about their demand for reform. This "radicalism" may well have discouraged sustained participation among some protesters and discouraged potential participants in the first wave of protest (Lohmann 1994).

We also see some potential evidence that could undermine the protest core. Stalwart respondents identified communication and performance as an important function for protest in the broader society. For them, drawing new participants is an element of protest success and a significant goal that may forestall frustration with the failure to affect reform or preclude the reelection of Mr. Putin. At the same time, the dwindling of protest participation as the Presidential election approached suggests that frustration undermined movement momentum. There is qualitative evidence for both interpretations of this action. Mikhail Idov's (2012) essay on the young activists from *Bol'shoi Gorod* and *Afisha* demonstrates the activist's disillusionment with the cooptation of the movement by old opposition figures and the frustration with the carnival-like atmosphere of street actions. In contrast, the work of the Petersburg group of anthropologists studying the movement suggests that the solidarity that activists found with their fellow citizens from other classes and spheres of employment largely created very positive feelings about protest participation that endured past the initial wave of action (Collective 2012).

We also argue that the moral imperative felt by protest stalwarts signaled the reconciliation of their private dislike of the regime with their public actions. Many stalwarts did get utility from participation in protest beyond the immediate political goals of the action. This shared experience created stronger bonds among the stalwarts. This potential was clear in our focus groups where participants stressed their positive emotions about being involved in the movement and forging ties with other like-minded individuals. We observe the same sentiment in our interviews with activists

at the Navalny campaign who were first mobilized by the protest movement and participate not because of their support for Navalny (although some do) but because of their support for reform.

This understanding of protest as a form of social solidarity may well have led to the Kremlin's increasing reliance on coercion as the movement progressed. While there is significant debate in the scholarly literature about the relationship between coercion and violence and political dissent, the threat of violence in Russia provides a formidable challenge to participation protest actions. Our data also suggested two important elements of state capacity to limit protest beyond this cycle. First, only a third of stalwarts reported that they were willing to participate in unsanctioned street actions while fifteen percent of casual participants were willing to violate the law to participate in protest actions. Similarly, causal participants were more likely to feel threatened by the police presence at the meetings compared to their stalwart counterparts.

Participation Cascade: Temporal Patterns of Protest Participation

The second focus of the theoretic literature on the protest differential is the timing of individual participation protest actions. The theory divides participants into early and late mobilizers, suggesting that early mobilizers are motivated by pre-protest factors and are distinct from those that join the protest in progress. For late mobilizers, the protests themselves serve as a mobilizing force, attracting new participants to the ranks. Based in the economic literature on information cascades, these theories argue that the size and nature of protest particularly in authoritarian societies in where information is limited, provide important signals about the costs and benefits of individual participation. In particular, they signal the likelihood of violence, the potential outcome of protest, and the substance of political change that will be produced.

To examine the nature of information cascades on Russian protest behavior, we further disaggregate the sample to examine when different groups of protesters joined the movement. This very simple measure allows us to assess the effect of the protest events on individual mobilization. Using the same question as the previous measure of stalwarts and casuals, Table 5 reports when respondents joined the pro- and anti-regime street actions.

Table 5 About Here

As with the evidence presented on the movements' core participants, these data also show a significant difference in the pattern of participation in pro- and anti-regime actions. The first odd aspect of the data in Table 5 is that pro-government rally participants refused to answer the question about their patterns of participation. We suspect that this reflects their unwillingness to reveal that they were first time participants and in some way coerced or incentivized to attend the rallies to celebrate Mr. Putin's victory.⁷ With this in mind, our information on the attendance at pro-governments rallies reveals that participation was dispersed over time, with new participants joining in fairly equal measures over the course of events. If our interpretation of the "refused to answers"

⁷ Our interviewers reported some intervention from rally "captains" who either chased them away or warned respondents to be guarded in their answers.

is correct, we find that by far, the greatest number of first-time attenders participated in the rally at which we implemented our study. We might characterize this pattern as a late participation cascade but that interpretation of these data is inaccurate. Rather, rally participation reflects the Kremlin's well-publicized strategy of bringing rally participants to encampments in the city for extended periods of time around the time of the election to participate in multiple events.

This finding reinforces our understanding of the pro-government rallies. These events were less a cohesive social movement than a series of spectacles that attracted different crowds over time. Moreover, it is important to note that the nature and organization of events over time shifted between being directly organized by the Kremlin to attract support for UR and Mr. Putin's candidacy (as in the first, fourth and fifth events) and those that were formally organized by social organizations in order to combat the potential of Orange Revolution in the second and third events. As a result, the largest group included in this set is what we label the protest tourists—participants who showed up once toward the end of the protest cycle.

With this bias in the data in mind, Table 5 identifies a participation pattern that is orthogonal to the one we observe in the pro-government rallies. The largest component of the protest core present at the Pushkin Square action was established very early in the protest process, reflecting the strong commitment of early participants. There was also a slightly smaller group of participants who participated in early rounds but dropped out of the actions and then returned to protest the President's inauguration. There is also clear evidence of the effect of an information cascade between the first and second events and then the number of new participants declines dramatically in our sample.

Of our respondents who joined the movement at the fourth and fifth events very few were converted into protest stalwarts. At the point in our analysis, it is important to be clear about potential biases that result from our research design. We asked the question about past participation at the last action in the first wave of the protest cycle, after many participants had opted out. The implementation of survey after the decline in protest participation means that we have captured a high level of activists who were mobilized in the early events and continued to attend street actions. Our findings also suggest that the individuals who swelled the ranks of participants in the very large protests in late December and early January were causal participants. Despite this bias, the data show that a substantial proportion of our population came out early in the process and then attended only sporadically enabling us to compare different types of protesters with some confidence.⁸ We have no theoretic reason to expect that the casuals or even the "tourists" who fell away from the movement earlier in the cycle would be substantially different than those individuals that remained in our sample.

A significant percentage of the sample only attended the last meeting, showing the persistent capacity of the protest to attract new supporters, even in the face of the President's victory. The

⁸ We also do not know if the first time attenders in our sample might have emerged as stalwarts with time although the Levada data suggests that many did not emerged as committed activists.

final category, the late casuals are interesting for the purposes of understanding the linkages across the waves of protest and also commitment levels within the movement. Of course, we cannot assess whether or not these individuals would emerge as stalwarts or casuals but we do have some important clues. The vast majority of our late-casual respondents had attended at least one other rally prior to the point of our research. This pattern of participation shows that by this point in the first wave the true tourists—participants who swelled the ranks in the third and fourth events—had left the movement. The continuous renewal of participants foreshadowed renewed participation in events in May, including the Writer’s Walk and the May 6 “March of Millions.” Both of these events were much larger than predicted.

Together these data provide two important insights. First, it is clear that much of the participation at these events that were characterized as spontaneous by the media was actually driven by events prior to first protest. The comparison of the early and often group of protesters with all others point to some of the significant effects that drive early mobilization. The first was campaign effects. Participation in voting and in electoral observation played an important role in the mobilization of the protest core. The second factor influencing mobilization was personal networks, in the form of face-to-face networks and to a slightly lesser degree, politicized Internet networks. Formal organizational membership, rare in our study, also predicted stalwart participation. We also see important differences in grievances. The early and often group were not different from other participants in the intensity of their demands for reform but they were more decisively anti-Putin, stressing the importance of the goal “Russia without Putin.” They also had higher levels of distrust in the President and were more likely to hold stronger positions over the entire range of motivations than their more casual or late-joining counterparts.

One final comparison between those who attended the first protest and those who joined in the second round provides even more clarity on the nature of the cascade. As Kuran (1991) notes, explaining why these first zealots risk personal safety by taking to the streets is a very difficult question to answer. A comparison of our respondents who took to the streets in the first protest events—the initial mobilizers—with all of the others, provides important clues about this core group. Our data show that the initial mobilizers were younger than those who joined after them. We also find that these early mobilizers were less likely to be embedded in mobilized Internet networks but more embedded in face-to-face networks. In other words, while Internet mobilization is important for promoting protest participation and defining the protest core, it is less important in the initial stages of mobilization when activists are more likely to participate based on their personal networks and past political activity, including their participation in the campaign period.

Of the three main goals of the movement, these initial mobilizers were distinct from the second group in terms of the support for the demand to end electoral fraud but not on the demand for systemic reform or leadership change. This finding is important because it suggests that Tucker’s (2007) intuition was correct but targeted at the wrong population of critical actors. In the Russian case, falsification emerged as a focal point for a disparate set of committed activists who took to the streets to redress the problem in the Presidential elections. The capacity of falsification to serve as a

catalyst for action among groups in the broader population was more limited both because they failed to recognize the magnitude of fraud but also because they blamed fraud on other political actors such as governors, bureaucrats, and the Central Election Commission.

The initial mobilizers also stressed a subset of personal motivations to explain their participation. They demonstrated high levels of concern with the performative/communicative impact of protest, stressing their desire to communicate concern to the broader population by attending the initial protests. For initial mobilizers, protest was a path to political change and they saw a possibility to mobilize others through their actions. They were also more likely to link personal and social interests by expressing their compunction to fulfill their moral duty through protest participation. Finally, in a finding counter to the conventional wisdom about protest participation in Russia, it was these initial mobilizers who were most concerned with being a part of history and witnessing historic actions—a claim that was commonly made about the subsequent casual participants.

Perhaps the most interesting difference across these two groups was that they pointed to very different origins for the movement. The initial mobilizers attributed the impulse for organization emerged from opposition organizations. In contrast, the second-event participants, who were embedded in politicized Internet networks, claimed that ordinary citizens organized the events independent of opposition organizations. This sense of self-organization reflected the important role that the Internet played in their decisions. In our focus groups, these activists stressed the horizontal nature of the movement and their resentment of leaders who tried to coopt it or represent what they saw as a popular movement without vertical organization.

In terms of developing our understanding of protest and regime change, the strong role that initial mobilizers played in the Russian actions suggest the importance of looking beyond cascade effects to understand the motivations that drive a small core of committed protesters to challenge the regime. While the general sense of Russian post-election protest was that it was spontaneous, our data shows that this was not entirely true. As Volkov (2012) and Idov (2012) show with very different evidence, there was considerable investment in protest organization prior to the first event. In terms of future study, these findings underscore the importance of staying alert to the small protest actions that have become quite common in Russia. Our data suggest that participants in these actions whether they are focused on environmental issues, service provision, land use, historic preservation, police brutality, or the abuse of privilege are part of a growing political society that might challenge the regime in coming electoral cycles.

At the same time, the experience of post-election protest points to the potential divisions that have emerged in the protest movement and might undermine its capacity to institutionalize or articulate a clear vision for the future. To grow, the protest core must find some way to sell its message that stability will endure beyond President Putin—a job that gets easier as he ages. Moreover, the movement must find a way to maintain the loyalty of the core in the face of disagreements over tactics, organizations, leadership and message. To date, internal organization remains an Achilles heel of the reform movement and the failures of the Coordination Council provide some evidence that organizational problems persist.

Will Protest Endure?

The patterns of protest observed in our data provide mixed signals about the prospects for future mass politics. On the one hand, there is a committed core of protesters who remain willing to participate in unsanctioned events to demand redress of falsified elections. The Levada data confirms that this core continued to be active beyond the first wave of the “For Free Elections” actions and comprised a significant percentage of participants as protests continued. Moreover, this protest core is similar to President Putin’s broadly constructed vote coalition. We find that while biographical factors shape movement participation, key factors such as age, education, employment and other gender do not influence levels of commitment to the movement once participants become active. As such, contagion effects among activists and non-activists are likely to penetrate across social divisions.

In addition, this stalwart group reconciled any disparity between their public and private preferences about the regime and Mr. Putin, and saw themselves at the forefront of important political action. In Kuran’s (1991) terms, these participants found utility in participation and fulfilling their moral duty. Moreover, their mixed motivations for participation in protest provide a logic for continued activity over time in order express their concern and communicate their beliefs to fellow citizens. As such, the early and often group of protesters within our sample endorse the intrinsic value of protest as social action. They seem poised to continue to engage in political action against the regime and are unlikely to be dissuaded of the efficacy of their action because they did not oust Mr. Putin in the initial waves of protest.

We also find that the anti-government protest core is defined by its clearly articulated political goals, and grievances that alienated them from the regime. Their attitudes about election fraud, corruption, the direction of the country and lack of trust in Mr. Putin are strong and very clear. Together, these demands comprise a bundle of attitudes that we label regime alienation. Faced with strong evidence of fraud in 2011, these citizens had no problem attributing the blame for fraud to the Kremlin and were at the front of the election observation movement that provided important information for casual protesters.

On the other hand, there was a second, larger group of protest participants who were less sure about the efficacy of protest or the nature of the regime and, therefore, were less committed to the reform movement. These individuals swelled the ranks of the large street actions but disappeared from our sample by the end of the protest cycle. Our data provides some insight into the factors that drive their abstention. First, they were not convinced that the problem lay with Mr. Putin and therefore did not see removing him as the key to political change. In terms of motivations, these casual participants were focused more on their own self interest rather than on their service to society or the need to convince broader society of the efficacy of protest.

This portrait of casual participants is important to understand future protest. Casual participants were distinct from stalwart participants in degree but not in absolute terms. As such, changes in the political context from the persistent use of political technologies to falsify elections to a decline in

economic circumstances could well harden their grievances into alienation and move them into the stalwart category. Moreover, there is some evidence that the increased use of coercion against protesters or engagement in “culture wars,” may also influence assessments of key indicators such as the direction of country.

The protest also seems to have increased the scope of political networks. Qualitative studies of protest, including our own focus groups, suggest that the collaboration among disparate groups online and in person served to build bridging social capital that has been quite durable. The protests also demonstrated the power of politicized Internet networks. Both of these factors were important in defining the protest core and many casual participants were exposed to and embedded in these networks.

As we look toward the next electoral cycle, it seems clear that a protest core will challenge the regime. The critical question for the protest movement is whether or not structural changes will provide exactly the type of information cascade that will transform non-protesters to casuals, and casuals to stalwarts. This paper provides a roadmap to evidence of this cascade is occurring: in public opinion polls that identify grievances, the health of political networks, and the levels of participation in interim elections and in electoral observation.

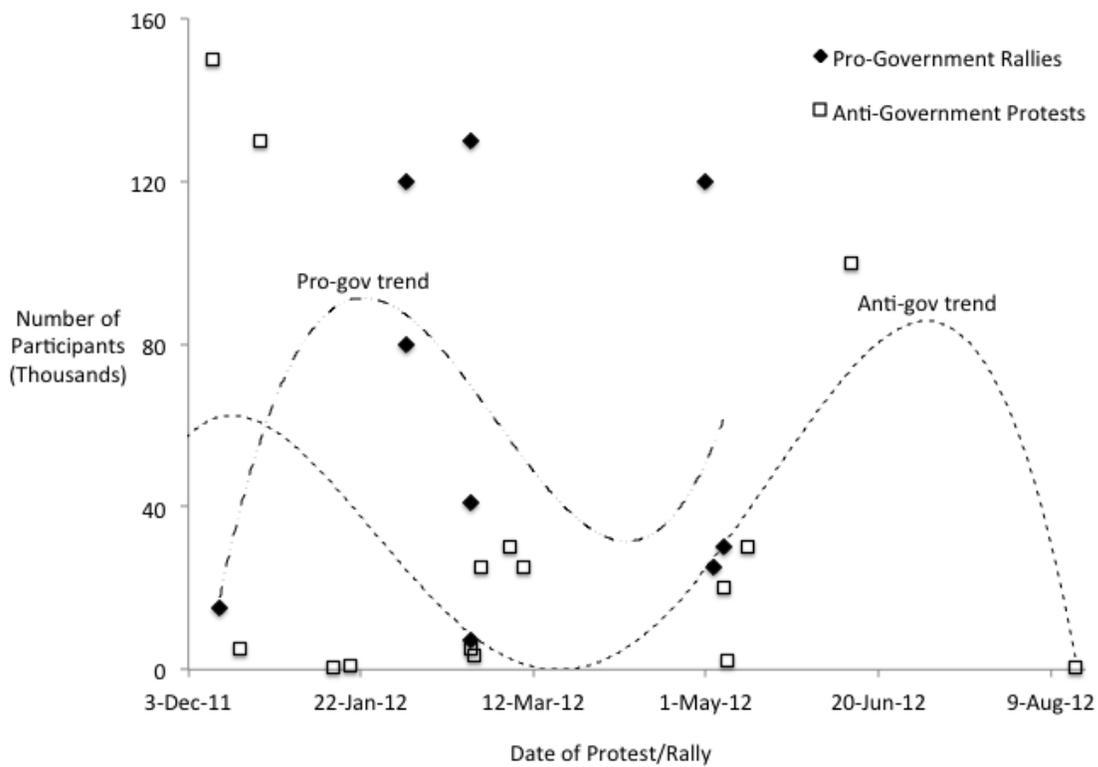


Table 1. Distribution of Attendees at Rallies and Protests

	Stalwarts	Casuals
Pro-Putin Rallies	20.7% (75)	79.3% (288)
Anti-Putin Protests	41.9% (203)	58.1% (281)

Table 2. Biographical Characteristics of Anti-Government Protest Stalwarts and Casuals

Variable	Category	Stalwarts	Casuals
Place of Residence	Moscow	88.0	74.0
	Moscow Oblast	10.9	23.0
	Outside Moscow	1.1	3.0
Sector of Work	Private Sector	66.4	67.7
	Government	25.3	28.8
	Social	8.2	3.4
Employment	Employed/Student	74.0	65.6
	Unemployed	26.0	34.4
Gender	Male	65.1	57.5
	Female	34.9	42.5

Table 3. Network Participation of Anti-Government Protest Stalwarts and Casuals

Variable	Category	Stalwarts	Casuals
Politicized Internet Networks	Yes	57.1	45.7
Personal Protest Networks	> 5	60.2	64.7
	1 – 5	31.1	22.0

Table 4. Goals of Anti-Government Protest Stalwarts and Casuals

Goal	Response	Stalwarts	Casuals
Protest Goals			
To End Falsification	Fully Disagree	56.3	40.2
	Fully Agree	0	9.9
Pass New Laws Governing Parties and Elections	Fully Agree	65.5	49.5
	Fully Disagree	.5	7.8
Russia Without Putin	Fully Agree	68.5	46.2
	Fully Disagree	4.6	13.5
Motivations for Protest			
Defend my Interest	Fully Agree	64.0	47.0
	Fully Disagree	2.5	3.2
Pressure on Politicians for Reform	Fully Agree	62.1	47.0
	Fully Disagree	.5	4.6
Convey Concern to Society	Fully Agree	55.1	36.3
	Fully Disagree	2.0	2.5
Show My Involvement with Events	Fully Agree	57.6	57.6
	Fully Disagree	3.0	3.9
It Is My Moral Duty	Fully Agree	63.1	35.7
	Fully Disagree	1.0	6.8
Be a Direct Observer of Important Events	Fully Agree	36.4	24.9
	Fully Disagree	7.9	5.0

Table 5: Timing of First Participation at Protests and Rallies

	Anti-Government Protests	Pro-Government Rallies
First Meeting	26.2% (127)	7.4% (27)
Second Meeting	40.1% (194)	8.5% (31)
Third Meeting	11.0% (53)	4.4% (16)
Fourth Meeting	2.7% (13)	14.0% (51)
Fifth Meeting	3.3% (16)	20.7% (75)
Sixth Meeting	13.4% (65)	18.1% (66)
Other Meeting	1.2% (4)	6.9% (25)
No Response	2.0% (10)	19.8% (72)

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