

# PUTIN'S UNEASY RETURN: THE 2012 RUSSIAN ELECTION STUDIES SURVEY

*An NCEEER Working Paper by*

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## **Executive Summary**

The authors introduce the latest wave of the long-running Russian Election Studies series of mass surveys and assess how robust and durable connections were between Russia's regime and the citizenry during the tumultuous 2011-12 election cycle. The survey reveals that Putin's regime retains most of the broad and deep connections with the electorate that have helped sustain it for a dozen years. At the same time, there are ominous signs of erosion that helped force the 2011–12 crisis and that could portend bigger problems despite the coercive resources at the authorities' disposal.

## Introduction

On March 4, 2012, Russians went to their local polling stations and returned Vladimir Putin to a third term as president after a four-year hiatus when he worked as prime minister. Surveys taken in 2008, as he was ceding the presidency due to a constitutional term limit to his associate Dmitry Medvedev, found that an eventual return was the outcome many Russians wanted back then.<sup>1</sup> A plurality of 48 percent agreed at the time Putin should return to the presidency someday, and many others were open to suggestion—which would have led one to expect smooth sailing in the next electoral cycle.<sup>2</sup> In the event, the political waters in Russia were choppy in 2011–12 and the passage was difficult. After months of decline in support for the regime and a bungled announcement of Putin’s plans to return, flagrant attempts to stage-manage the December 2011 parliamentary election sparked protest of a magnitude not seen since the early 1990s. The leadership, showing signs of panic, relaxed some political controls while seeking to connect with the population in new ways. Many observers, taking their cues from the falling poll numbers and from placards at some of the street rallies demanding Putin’s resignation, predicted a frontal retreat by the regime or perhaps its imminent overthrow in a latter-day Orange Revolution. By March, however, the authorities had regained position and successfully ushered Putin back into his former office.

All of this raises a central question: What was the connection between the regime and public opinion in the fateful winter and spring of 2011–12? This question gets to larger theoretical debates on sources of stability and instability in hybrid regimes like Russia’s.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars see such systems as precariously fragile political systems; others portray them as potentially quite durable under the right conditions.<sup>4</sup> Did Russia’s regime display robust enough connections with the electorate to suggest it survived the 2011–12 crisis by virtue of its strengths

and is likely to endure? Or, alternatively, are these events better seen as signs that that the regime has lost any such connections and is little more than an empty edifice ready to crumble? We had a chance to address this range of issues through the latest wave of the Russian Elections Studies (RES) series of public opinion surveys. This one was taken of a nationally representative sample of 1,682 adults from April 1 to May 18, 2012.<sup>5</sup> We find that Putin's regime retains most of the broad and deep connections with the electorate that have helped sustain it for a dozen years, but that there are ominous signs of erosion that forced the 2011–12 crisis. Without doubting that the leadership has many coercive resources at its disposal, we submit that these trends in public opinion could portend bigger problems in future if the regime cannot find ways to revitalize or reshape its relationship with the citizenry.

### **Castling, Crisis, and Comeback**

Putin's move to the premiership and Medvedev's accession as president in 2008 ushered in a four-year period of internal political ferment that is often referred to sardonically as the Russian "tandemocracy." Most Russia watchers were convinced that Putin, operating chiefly through informal mechanisms, remained the country's most powerful politician, a verdict that looks more on the mark than ever in retrospect. But hard evidence about the game at the top was in short supply, and rumor and conjecture swirled. Among the topics endlessly speculated about was whether a split would emerge between the two political partners and whether Putin would return to the formally supreme office of president.

Some experts' painstaking investigation of leadership rhetoric, fortified by the Moscow rumor mill, found evidence of serious political differences, with Medvedev coming out as a something of a modernizer relative to a more traditionalist and xenophobic Putin.<sup>6</sup> And yet, no

overt schism materialized and the leaders stressed at every turn that they “represent one and the same political force.”<sup>7</sup> The tandem-mates also left open the question of who would run for president upon the end of Medvedev’s first term in 2012.<sup>8</sup> Refusing to tip his hand, Putin allowed in comments to the press mainly that the decision would not be made until the campaign neared and would “depend on the results” of each politician’s work in the tandem.<sup>9</sup> If public opinion was to be any judge, Putin seemed the better positioned of the twosome: The Levada-Center regularly included him and Medvedev together in its presidential election surveys, and Putin was consistently on top. But Medvedev was never too far behind, indicating that a substantial share of Russians, as we had found back in 2008, liked the appearance of a new face at the helm—even if on the same old ship.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, tracking polls did detect a gradual decline in public confidence in them and the United Russia Party, which took shape during the global financial crisis of 2008–9 and the associated downturn in the economy.<sup>11</sup> The stakes in the struggle were now higher than they had been in 2008, as one of Medvedev’s first acts as president had been to initiate a constitutional change extending the presidential term of office to six years from the previous four.

Against this unsettled backdrop, the tandem made what was arguably its biggest gaffe. With no forewarning, Medvedev announced to the United Russia Party congress on the September 24, 2011, that he would support Putin’s return to the presidency, opting to step aside and after the presidential election to assume Putin’s current duties as prime minister and leader of the party. This might not have been so bad had the pair not also told the party faithful and a national television audience that all this had been planned long ago, making what they hoped would seem like a legitimate castling move in the ongoing game of political chess (the Russian term is *rokirovka*) appear instead to be a deceitful “switcheroo” that treated the voters as dupes.

Many Putin supporters welcomed the announcement anyway. When we asked our respondents in the spring of 2012 how they evaluated it, 24 percent answered that they were satisfied and 10 percent answered that they were relieved.<sup>12</sup> But 34 percent expressed indifference, 11 percent disappointment, and 2 percent that they were offended. Putin's return to the fray failed to excite many millions of voters, and the alternative of a Medvedev-led tandem resonated strongly with a small though significant part of the electorate.

The misstep at the party congress was but the first of a cascade of unfortunate events for United Russia leading into the national election of the State Duma (lower house of parliament) on December 4. For one thing, the party's "political technologists," caught unawares by the leadership reshuffle, had to put the now downgraded Medvedev in the spotlight much more than they would have had to otherwise, as by agreement he rather than Putin, who was slated for a return to the Kremlin, was the number one candidate on their party list. They should have been making an argument about why it was desirable for Medvedev to give way to Putin, who had chosen him in the first place and who had said all along that Medvedev was doing an outstanding job. No coherent explanation on this point was ever forthcoming. With the campaign lacking a fresh and persuasive message and the standing of United Russia in popular opinion suffering, Putin put much of his effort into the All-Russian Popular Front, a new organization assigned to promote a vague pro-regime populism and to cheerlead for official candidates. Behind the scenes, leaders of the United Russia campaign scrambled to make up for lost votes by hook or by crook—by padding the electors' rolls, spreading innuendo about other parties, accusing them of disloyalty to Russia, and so forth. It exacerbated the party's predicament when a few of the more egregious dirty tricks were exposed by disgruntled members of United Russia itself.<sup>13</sup> In an unprecedented development, substantial numbers of volunteers offered to help opposition parties

monitor the elections and block election-day fraud in favor of United Russia.<sup>14</sup> Even Putin's own political Teflon appeared to be cracking. When he strode up to the microphone after a Russian fighter beat an American in a mixed martial arts event on live television, a broad chorus of derisive whistles (the Russian equivalent of American booing) rang out when he began to speak.<sup>15</sup>

The political gadfly and blogger Aleksei Navalny had started in 2009–10 a bold online campaign to brand United Russia the “Party of Swindlers and Thieves.” The uncomplimentary moniker circulated continuously on the Internet during the 2011 election race. Our survey confirms that it had broad resonance among the population, which did not sit well with the Kremlin.<sup>16</sup> Even some players generally written off as government-sponsored “virtual parties”<sup>17</sup> attacked the party of power with enthusiasm, producing a heated campaign. This turn was evident, surprisingly, on state-run television, where ads from the A Just Russia Party blasted official corruption and declared that Russia could do without swindlers and thieves. Veteran party leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in one widely watched televised debate goaded a United Russia parliamentarian into blurting out, “Better to be a party of swindlers and thieves than a party of murderers, robbers, and rapists!”<sup>18</sup> The outburst was construed by opposition politicians as an admission that the party consisted of swindlers and thieves.<sup>19</sup>

United Russia scaled down its electoral expectations as the autumn progressed. All the same, it came as a shock when on December 4 it failed to clear the symbolically important 50-percent mark *even according to official tallies*, netting 49.32 percent of the vote as reported by the Central Election Commission. The Communist Party (KPRF) finished second with 19.19 percent, followed by the left-of-center A Just Russia at 13.25 percent and Zhirinovskiy's populist-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) at 11.68 percent. The other three parties

entered (Yabloko, Patriots of Russia, and Right Cause) fell short of the five-percent barrier for being seated in the Duma; Yabloko did get enough votes to qualify for some state financing (3.43 percent).<sup>20</sup>

The results declared by the Central Election Commission were one thing, perceptions of them another. It was widely believed in Russia that the true vote for United Russia had been significantly lower than officially announced. Firsthand observers and analysts pointed out disturbing signs of fraud, and citizens in the days after the election responded en masse to calls to take to the streets to protest.<sup>21</sup> Within a week, the crowds reached the tens of thousands. At the biggest march, held in many cities on December 24, more than a hundred thousand, by some counts, showed up to express their discontent in downtown Moscow alone.<sup>22</sup> United Russia, the Popular Front, and other pro-government organizations mounted counter-rallies which in some places were also rather well attended, but the level of emotion paled before the opposition demonstrations.

The Putin team—after the initial panic passed—regrouped and then rallied. First, it brought forth a bundle of emergency political concessions. Most notably, it lowered the barriers to registration for opposition parties (after a decade of methodically heightening those barriers), eased their entry into the electoral arena, made some room for independent voices on state television, and promised to restore gubernatorial elections (which were scrapped in 2004). Putin personally announced that video cameras would be installed in all voting stations and would stream live coverage of proceedings at the presidential election scheduled for March 4, 2012. Second, the government redoubled efforts to shore up Putin's public support in anticipation of the presidential vote. A massive media effort presented him as a battle-tested elder statesman who could ensure Russia's stable development into the next decade. Working out of the prime

minister's office, Putin issued a series of programmatic articles on key topics and declared that after March 4 he would hold the next cabinet of ministers, presumably to be headed by Medvedev, strictly accountable for carrying them out. Not giving up on hard-knuckled machine tactics, the Kremlin removed unwanted players from the pool of potential candidates through a set of formal and technical devices.<sup>23</sup> The winnowing left Putin to contend with a depleted and less than stellar field of rivals: the unpopular Sergei Mironov of the A Just Russia Party, the "perpetual candidates" Zhirinovskiy and Zyuganov, and business magnate Mikhail Prokhorov. Prokhorov, the one newcomer, had shown sympathy with the protesters in December and claimed to speak for the liberal opposition, but was widely distrusted as an "oligarch" in bed with the regime and as an international playboy to boot.

The regime's improvised combination of tactics, refined on the hoof, worked. Popular protests steadily diminished in size and intensity. In the court of public opinion, Putin made perceptible gains and none of his opponents was able to gain traction. On March 4, he was elected to a third presidential term with 63.64 percent of the officially counted vote, or about 7 percentage points fewer than he attained in 2004 and Medvedev matched in 2008; he was trailed by Zyuganov at 17.18 percent, Prokhorov at 7.98, Zhirinovskiy at 6.22, and Mironov at 3.85 percent.<sup>24</sup> While electoral forensics did show some irregularities, even the zealous monitoring NGO Golos concluded that Putin likely won the 50 percent he needed to avoid a runoff even without the suspicious votes. Post-election analyses mostly faulted manipulations of the larger process that tilted the playing field in his favor.<sup>25</sup>

## Voters in Russia's Information Space

As with previous elections, our survey data tell us that Russians on the whole were not particularly engaged in the political process. About three-fourths claimed to follow politics “all the time” (36 percent) or “sometimes” (38 percent); many fewer (51 percent) reported that they had discussed politics with friends, family, or acquaintances during the previous seven days. This detachment was not because people had completely lost faith in the electoral process. When participants in our survey were requested to place themselves on a five-point scale where a 1 meant that “no matter who people vote for, it won’t make any difference to what happens in the country” and a 5 meant that “voting makes a difference,” the most despairing response was limited to 18 percent of them. Almost everyone else credited elections with some degree of influence, the modal position (29 percent) being that the act of voting does in fact make a difference.

Those who talked with others about politics indicated that such conversations were not their primary source of political information. Instead, Russians relied overwhelmingly on the mass media, with television remaining king as it has been for every election covered by the RES. To be sure, the Internet has made important inroads. In the 2008 RES, just 29 percent reported using the Internet at all, and just 2 percent said it was their “basic source of information about political events” rather than television, radio, or newspapers. By the 2012 RES, the share of Internet users had nearly doubled to 54 percent, with 11 percent of all respondents (mainly younger and better-educated) now calling it their primary source of information on politics. Among Internet users, 48 percent said they had read some kind of political commentary online, 33 percent had found information on planned political demonstrations or activities, and 15 percent claimed to have visited the website of a party, politician, or political movement. Only 5

percent said they had discussed politics on web forums or in blogs and only 6 percent had seen news on the Internet channel *Dozhd'* (Rain), the biggest effort to challenge the dominance of officially controlled news output.<sup>26</sup>

Despite these inroads from the worldwide web, 83 percent of Russian citizens still cited television as their primary source of political information, no more than a slight slip from 89 percent in 2008.<sup>27</sup> All but 3 percent of our sample professed to watch television, with over nine tenths of these watching daily news programs almost every day (78 percent), several times a week (18 percent), or once in the week before the survey (3 percent). Four viewers in five watched the news on the state-owned First Channel and Rossiia Channel and 63 percent on the state-controlled but largely privately-owned NTV network. REN-TV offers more balanced news coverage and is available in Russia's largest population points. Twenty-eight percent of TV news watchers tuned in to it during the week before the survey—not a trivial proportion, but less than half of those who watched First Channel and Rossiia.<sup>28</sup>

It is of note that those Russians who watched the big three channels appeared to accept them as objective sources of information. Asked whether they sensed that “during the last presidential election campaign any one of the main television channels—First Channel, Rossiia, NTV—were working in favor of any one of the candidates,” just 27 percent responded yes, with 64 percent not noticing any bias and 9 percent finding it hard to say.<sup>29</sup> Of those detecting a bias, a resounding 83 percent did think the bias was toward Putin; 5 percent named Zhirinovskiy, whose public profile usually rises during election seasons and did so again in 2011–12. Most of the people reporting a pro-Putin media bias were not Putin voters, indicating that relatively few of his self-reported voters recognized the possibility that they might not be getting balanced information about him and the campaign from the media.

## **Moderately Pro-Market, Pro-Western Preferences**

Putin has in the past drawn a considerable measure of electoral support from his stance on concrete policy topics of the day.<sup>30</sup> We find 2012 to be no exception to this tendency. Once again, we see that voters have defined views of what Putin stands for. Moreover, a great many of them tend to favor these very positions. Policy issues often got lost in Western media coverage of the dramatic street events of 2011–12, and we recommend that this imbalance be rectified.

The RES has focused on major issues that capture major ideational orientations and thus have the potential to cleave the electorate. It also asks regularly about more momentary or technical issues that may or may not be important in a given election cycle. Our broadest measure has been to ask survey respondents where they fall in the ideological spectrum between the political left and political right, requesting that they place themselves on a scale between 0 at the far left and 10 at the far right. As in previous election cycles, in the 2012 poll we find wide variation in how potential voters position themselves, with the average being slightly right of center. This is portrayed graphically in Figure 1 and is summarized by the average self-placement of 6.1, representing a slight shift to the right compared to 2008, when the mean was 5.7. The most common answer by far was for Russians to place themselves at the exact political center (chosen by 25 percent), with the far right being the second-most common response (chosen by 9 percent).

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

This is consistent with broad perspectives on market reform. Russians in 2012 by and large preferred to “continue and deepen market reforms” to a return to socialism or freezing the present economic system (see Figure 2). These questions are valuable because they aim at broad orientations relevant to Russia based on its recent history and current political discourse rather

than policy details regarding exactly how the state role should be structured in a market economy. While a majority broadly supports the market, we also find that 91 percent agree or strongly agree that the state should play a bigger role in the Russian economy than it does today. In the same vein, a lot of Russians remain uncomfortable with the market's tendency to generate inequality: 55 percent tend to disagree with the statement that it is "normal when the owner of a prosperous enterprise, using the labor of his workers, becomes richer than other people," although 42 percent agree with it. Most Russians are more market-oriented than not and consider themselves to be on the political right.<sup>31</sup> But, with the odd exception, they are by no means neoliberals.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The 2012 RES also found that Russians, while suspicious of Western countries and their governments' intentions regarding their country, still think of the West mainly as an ally or, as Putin has repeatedly described it over the years, a "partner" for Russia. A number of our questions revealed high levels of suspicion. Most starkly, we found that 81 percent either agreed or tended to agree that "the USA and NATO will weaken Russia if our president does not do enough to resist their influence." That said, most Russians are still not prepared to see it principally as a foe or even a rival. When asked how Russia should relate to the West, 56 percent thought in 2012 that it should be treated as an ally rather than an enemy, rival, or friend (see Figure 3).<sup>32</sup>

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Because most Russians profess support for democracy, at the most abstract level it has proven not to be an issue that broadly cleaves the population.<sup>33</sup> Roughly as before, we observe that 77 percent of the population in 2012 agrees that "Russia should be a democratic country"

and that 53 percent agree that “competition among political parties makes our political system stronger.” The divisions in Russian society come mainly when one assesses whether the current leadership is democratic and what exactly is meant by “democratic.” If 34 percent thought that Russia could be called democratic today, a majority (52 percent) disagreed, though of the latter 39 percent thought it was likely to become a democracy in the foreseeable future. Some scholars have depicted Russians’ preference for forceful leaders as fatal to the notion of democracy. We see it rather differently. When challenged to compare democracy with the principle of a “strong leader who is restrained by neither parliament nor elections,” we find that Russians supporting the strong leader option do not necessarily oppose the principle of democracy. In our post-election survey, 56 percent averred that a strong leader was generally a “good fit” for Russia; 63 percent said democracy was a good fit; and a striking 35 percent affirmed *simultaneously* that each was a good fit. Hale has argued elsewhere based on the 2008 RES data that this is a logically consistent position, with the strong leader meant to be elected and an expression of the popular will.<sup>34</sup> And in the abstract Russians tend to be supporters of a division of powers. A bare 6 percent in our poll favored eliminating presidential term limits, 59 percent believed that power should as a rule be divided between Moscow and the regions, and a majority asserted either that the parliament should be more powerful than the president (9 percent) or that the two branches should have equal powers (43 percent).

### **The Dip in Performance and Character Ratings**

One of the features of Russia’s hybrid regime is that it allows some opposition forces consistently to compete in elections, but after the votes are counted denies them the opportunity to gain experience and support through managing public affairs.<sup>35</sup> This turns out to be an

advantage for the ruling authorities mainly when the public perceives them as performing adequately themselves. Earlier versions of the RES found fairly consistent approval of the performance of those who control the machinery of government, though with some major exceptions. In 2012, we still find goodly levels of approval, but also important instances of slippage in public standing—consistent with the argument that after a dozen years in power some of the bloom is off the Putin rose.

One senses a decline relative to 2008 when the question is asked most directly, though comparisons are complicated by the switch in offices between Putin and Medvedev. In 2012 50 percent of survey respondents approved of Putin’s post-2008 activity as prime minister and 38 percent approved of Medvedev’s work as president; four years earlier 59 percent on balance approved Putin’s presidential performance. It bears emphasis that in each case the rest mainly declared that they “approve some and disapprove some” rather than declare that they out-and-out “disapproved” (11–12 percent for each leader). Interestingly, 9 percent of our respondents volunteered a response that was not on our questionnaire when asked about Medvedev—that he was not independent enough to have his performance as president judged since Putin had really been calling the shots.

We uncovered some foundations of this dip in the tandem’s performance ratings when we posed more specific questions. Noticeably more people in 2012 than in 2008 thought that corruption and inequality had increased since Putin first took office as president in 2000, and fewer Russians than in 2008 felt that Putin’s reign had brought net increases in stability and Russian influence in the world (see Figure 4). Support for some key Putin policies that were tracked in both recent waves of the RES also declined, as Figure 5 conveys most clearly in the

instance of his decision in 2004 to end direct gubernatorial elections and his government's 2003 arrest and imprisonment of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, at the time Russia's richest man.

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

The 2012 RES also confirms that the slowdown in Russian economic growth after the world financial crisis has impacted popular perceptions of economic success under Putin. Even at the best of times, these perceptions have on the whole have been much less positive than is often claimed.<sup>36</sup> On every occasion that we have asked about short-term economic trends year since 2000, the majority or strong plurality view among ordinary Russians has been that the economy has not been changing significantly from year to year, either for them and their families personally or for the country (see Table 1). Although those thinking that their own and the nation's economy has been trending upward have consistently outnumbered those thinking it had worsened, the share of those seeing improvement declined significantly between 2008 and 2012. Summing up over the longer haul (see Figure 6), as of 2012 about the same number of citizens thought that standards of living had declined since Putin's ascendancy (34 percent) as thought they had improved (33 percent), with 29 percent reporting no change. A large plurality of 41 percent also thought that the state had not become more responsive to the needs of the population since 2000. Interestingly (see Table 2), the share of those seeing themselves as mainly winning from the economic reforms of the 2000s went up over the past four years by about 10 percentage points, though this was still a minority response (at 37 percent). Table 3 sums up how individuals see their material position a dozen years into the Putin era. As can be seen, the average Russian household now has enough money for basic needs but is hard pressed to buy expensive consumer goods.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

[FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

One of the more noteworthy findings of the 2012 RES is the change in how people view Vladimir Putin’s leadership on a personal level. In past RES iterations, Putin demonstrated an impressive personal connection with the electorate. Large and stable majorities agreed that he was or probably was “an intelligent and knowledgeable person,” a “strong leader,” and “an honest and trustworthy person” and that he “really cares about the interests of people like you.” He has retained high marks on intelligence and strength. But 2012 saw the first significant declines since he came to office in the share of people thinking he was honest and really cared about people (see Figure 7). The sense appears to be growing that, regardless of his continuing positive qualities in the estimation of the populace, Putin is out of touch and insincere. Aside from the comparison with Putin’s past scores, comparisons with the assessments of other presidential contenders showed Putin in quite a flattering light. In the minds of the citizenry, he comes across as distinctly more intelligent, strong, honest, and compassionate than his colleague Medvedev and as superior by much wider margins to Zyuganov, Zhirinovsky, and Prokhorov (see Figure 8).

[FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE]

[FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE]

## **The Duma Election and Political Parties**

The period 2008–12 was not one of significant growth in the Russian party system, though the RES does provide grounds for asserting that political parties remained more important than is often thought. The dimensions of the group that displays psychological “partisan” attachments to particular parties changed hardly at all (see Table 4).<sup>37</sup> “Transitional partisan” ties, as disclosed by survey respondents, were almost invariably to the “parliamentary parties” that were seated in the Duma at the time of the survey. United Russia held steady in claiming close to a third of the population as its adherents and other parties failed to gain any ground whatsoever.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

This stalemate reflects the above-mentioned difficulties that opposition parties have had in gaining reputation, since they can do little but find fault from the sidelines. Accordingly, when the RES asked respondents in 2012 which party among those officially registered would do the best job solving key national problems (improving the economy, safeguarding democracy, and promoting Russia’s international interests), United Russia continued to dominate the positive responses on each count: 48, 43, and 52 percent, respectively. The most any other party could muster on these competence scores was the 9 percent who thought the Communists would do best on the economy. Only about 20 percent in each instance volunteered that there was no difference between the parties, a signal that voters see their choices from among parties as at least somewhat meaningful.

Further indication that voters considered there to be consequential differences among the parties comes from our questions that asked voters to identify the stands of each major party on policy matters. In terms of general positioning, voters continue in 2012 to see United Russia as

primarily a right-oriented party, counterpoised to the KPRF's leftism, with the other two main parties falling more in the center as far as the public can tell (see Figure 9). On the economic front specifically, United Russia is identified with a stand for continuing and deepening market reforms, while the KPRF is seen as devoted to a return to socialism; the stands on this issue of A Just Russia and Zhirinovskiy's LDPR are less clear to voters (Figure 10). Voters also perceived important cross-party differences on foreign policy (Figure 11). United Russia is identified with treating the West as an ally while the KPRF and LDPR are seen as believing the West is mainly a rival or enemy; very few regard any party as deeming the West to be Russia's friend.

[FIGURE 9 ABOUT HERE]

[FIGURE 10 ABOUT HERE]

[FIGURE 11 ABOUT HERE]

Significantly, the positions that people believe United Russia holds tend to be those that they themselves report holding in greatest measure, as a juxtaposition of Figures 9, 10, and 11 with Figures 1, 2, and 3 above will make apparent. In rough synch with the pattern where the Russian population leans slightly right of center on the 0–10 left-right scale, averaging 6.1 in their self-placements, we find that United Russia is the one major party that Russians also place right-of-center, assigning it an average 7.3 to the KPRF's 3.2, the LDPR's 3.9, and A Just Russia's 4.5.

Did the issues matter? To listen to Russian voters themselves, issue considerations were indeed among the main reasons for casting their vote as they did in the party-list competition for the State Duma in December 2011. We asked participating voters to choose from among a list of possible reasons for voting, picking the most important factor for them. Table 5 lays out the distribution of responses. With Putin not heading the party slate in 2011, as he had done in

2007—that role was yielded to Medvedev—we find that a majority of 51 percent of United Russia voters (up from 34 percent in 2008) cited either the party’s work in the Duma or its program as the main motivator. Fifteen percent still cited the party leader’s personality, up from 9 percent in 2008. Admittedly, there may have been some confusion on this score since when our survey was in the field Putin had recently stepped down as chair of the party (a formal status separate from head of its electoral slate) and relinquished this responsibility to Medvedev. When we asked specifically whether it was important that Putin had chaired the party at the time of the Duma vote, 78 percent replied that it was; 57 percent also attached importance to Medvedev’s role as party list leader. Whereas just over a quarter of United Russia voters in 2008 explained their choice mainly in terms of Putin’s endorsement of the party, this proportion fell to 8 percent in 2012. Table 5 tells us that in the self-analysis of the voters the other parties also drew support mainly from the appeal of their programs (the top draw of the KPRF and A Just Russia) and of their leaders (especially Zhirinovskiy of the LDPR). They could not have been helped by the fact that few respondents held out much hope for any of them. Less than a third of the population thought that any party registered at the time of the Duma election other than United Russia had a chance to come to power in the coming decade.<sup>38</sup>

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

### **Putin’s Return in Voters’ Eyes**

The same Putin whose standing in terms of personal image and performance evaluations had slipped relative to 2008 was still able in the 2012 presidential campaign to handily dispatch the rivals who were permitted onto the ballot. One factor working in his favor was that his positions on major issues, as voters themselves perceived them, were firmly in line with what

citizens were inclined to report their own views to be. Putin was widely seen as a right-of-center politician (see Figure 12) and as one who preferred continuing and deepening market reforms to either the economic status quo or socialism (Figure 13). And, notwithstanding the harsh anti-Western rhetoric that flowered during the campaign, Putin was still seen by the typical voter—as in every other RES wave when the question was put to respondents—as striving to treat the West as an ally (see Figure 14). Even as he played on public sentiment that the West could not be trusted to its own devices, he did not dispel the idea that Russia could and should work with the West. Here it is important to recall Figure 11 presented above: This is a profitable political position for Putin because parties other than United Russia, and their leaders, are seen, plausibly enough, as voicing uniformly anti-Western views, which command minority support in Russia. In much the same fashion, he stood out with more popular stands on economic issues and the left-right scale than did the parties that nominated his presidential challengers (see for comparisons Figures 9 and 10).<sup>39</sup> Figures 12, 13, and 14 also demonstrate that voters saw essentially no difference between Putin and his protégé Medvedev in the policy sphere—perceiving them as part of a single, unified political force, as the members of the tandem themselves put it in their rhetoric.

[FIGURE 12 ABOUT HERE]

[FIGURE 13 ABOUT HERE]

[FIGURE 14 ABOUT HERE]

In addition, Putin was seen as far and away the most competent to handle major issues of the day among those on the ballot. Despite the sag in his likeability and overall performance ratings, over half identified him as the candidate as best able to improve the economy, safeguard human rights and democracy, and promote Russia's national interests abroad, which was clearly

his strongest suit (see Table 6). A low number, 10 to 15 percent, volunteered that there was no difference among the candidates. These results were not very different from those for similar questions posed in earlier elections in which Putin stood for president. In 2012, we also posed a new question that produced some illuminating results along these same lines: Is this a person whose time has passed, a person needed right now in the present moment, or a person whose time is yet to come? As Table 7 reports, a lopsided 75 percent judged Putin to be a man of the present, as someone needed right now. Only 7 percent thought Prokhorov was needed now, but, in a glimpse of voters' time perspectives and possibly of Prokhorov's future prospects, 60 percent saw him as someone whose time is yet to come. The contrast with Medvedev—born in 1965, the same year as Prokhorov—could not have been starker. Thirty-nine percent of RES respondents thought Medvedev's time had already passed and 41 percent that he was mainly a person of the present moment; only 12 percent thought his time was yet to come. This seems to confirm the judgment of those who interpret the September switcheroo as essentially, for millions of voters, having emasculated Medvedev as an independent politician.

[TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE]

Fifty-one percent of voters in our sample, when handed a card with a list of decision factors and asked to explain why they had chosen Putin, said they did so primarily because they liked his past performance in office (see Table 8). Eleven percent named his program as the most important consideration to them, 15 percent his personality, and 11 percent his potential to bring concrete benefits to their particular region. Not having experience in state executive office, Putin's challengers were unable to get many to say they voted for them on the basis of their prior work, drawing instead mainly on program, personality, and the protest vote. Hardly anyone said

that the fact Putin was nominated by United Russia was the main reason they cast a ballot for him, although to a separate question (see Table 9) 49 percent of Putin voters replied this was “important” to them. And pretty well all United Russia partisans did report voting for Putin. Almost across the board, the majority of each party’s partisans voted for the candidate their declared sentiments would lead us to predict (see Table 10). The exception was Prokhorov, who collected the support of those few voters whom we identified as partisans for minor parties. Putin raked in the majority of independents’ votes.

[TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE 10 ABOUT HERE]

The presidential campaign itself appeared to be somewhat more active than in the past. The vast majority of survey informants (82 percent, up a shade from 2008) said they saw campaign advertisements on television, and 72 percent claimed to have seen one for Putin (up from 60 percent who said in 2008 that they had seen one for Medvedev). A quarter of the population also said that they knew which presidential candidate their boss at the workplace supported: true to form, 88 percent of these named Putin as the beneficiary.<sup>40</sup> Far more (63 percent) said their regional governor supported a candidate, with near unanimity (98 percent) on the advice being to vote for Putin. These figures correspond roughly to those from 2008. The publicity blitz and the flurry of campaign visits proved to be beside the point for the median voter. Two RES respondents in three (66 percent) told us they had made up their minds how to vote earlier than one month before the election. That is, they had reached closure even before the official period of media campaigning began on February 4.<sup>41</sup>

Given the political turmoil that accompanied them, it is natural to wonder whether the successive elections of 2011–12 were legitimate exercises in the minds of the people of Russia. The RES data (see Figure 15) paint a mixed picture. When asked to rate the Duma and presidential elections separately on a five-point fairness scale, more Russians gave them a positive rating (scores 1 and 2) than a negative rating (scores 4 and 5). But opinion was differentiated for both elections, as sizable minorities perceived the contests as unfair or adopted a neutral position (score 3). We are also struck by the divergence between the parliamentary and the presidential elections. About one-third of our respondents thought the presidential election was completely fair and about half thought it was on balance fair. By contrast, about one-fifth judged the Duma election completely fair and about one-third judged it to be more or less fair. Grassroots opinion was thus aligned rather well with the different protest aftermaths to the two elections. The announced results of the Duma election sparked major and memorable demonstrations. Not nearly as many turned out on the streets to contest the presidential outcome.

[FIGURE 15 ABOUT HERE]

Asked on the heels of the presidential race what they think would have happened had the race been entirely clean, without technical or other violations of procedure, 67 percent ventured that the result would have been essentially the same or that Putin would have won even *more* votes. Another 20 percent replied that Putin would have likely had to face a runoff, but still would have won. A paltry 5 percent asserted that the outcome of a completely fair election would have ultimately been another candidate winning. For the parliamentary election, 57 percent thought that a completely fair contest would still have produced a United Russia majority delegation in the Duma but a not insignificant 29 percent thought the party would have lost its

majority. About the same share of the population accordingly tended to agree with protesters that new and honest repeat elections should be held.

## **Conclusion**

The most important preliminary findings of RES 2012 are twofold: Putin's hybrid regime retains a broad array of connections to ordinary citizens that can be expected to help stabilize its hold on power; and these links have been eroding recently in ways that contributed to the 2011–12 political crisis. Worrisome trendlines for the leadership include declining approval ratings, growing perceptions that corruption and inequality have increased, and the refusal of a majority of the population to recognize net economic progress despite official GDP statistics that still point to it. Even Putin's personal appeal is wearing thin, with significantly fewer people than in 2008 thinking that he is honest or that he really cares about them. The dominant United Russia Party has fared even worse, with many now thinking of it as a “party of swindlers and thieves.”

These trends have not yet gone far enough to alter the deeper reality of a leadership that has managed to stay reasonably in tune with the attitudes of the population and that has successfully cast itself as the only serious state management team in town. Putin—and even United Russia—remain widely identified with the most popular positions on issues that cleave the electorate (such as economic reform). While people see problems in spades and would like more to be done, they nevertheless view the current authorities as far better equipped to handle these problems than anyone else out there. Accordingly, a majority of the population continued as of 2012 to approve of the work Putin has done in office, and no other party has come close in popular support to United Russia, even in its damaged state. A large majority believes, therefore, that even completely free and fair elections would still have produced a Putin victory, and the

same is true for United Russia despite the December 2011 protesters' hopes that repeat elections would have different results. And perhaps most telling of all, less than a third of the population thought that any other party registered at the time would have any chance at all of taking power in the decade ahead.

The regime's bond with the electorate, therefore, has been shaken and both Putin and the ruling party have lost some supporters. The rulers managed to stanch most of the bleeding in the winter of 2011–12 with a blend of targeted concessions, selective crackdowns, and new initiatives. But the trendline is not favorable for Russia's leadership. Recent legislation against "propagandizing homosexuality" to minors and offending religious believers can be understood as attempts to reverse the losses and prevent future hemorrhages in popular support. It is far from clear if this will succeed in the end. While hybrid regime leaders have tools they can use to stay in power that their democratic counterparts lack, they still remain dependent on public opinion. The case of Russia indicates both that it is quite possible for such rulers to build up highly robust mass backing, going well beyond economic performance considerations, and also that this balancing act can be difficult to sustain over the long haul.

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<sup>1</sup> Russia's 1993 constitution stipulates that no one may serve more than two consecutive terms as president, but it places no limit on total terms served. Hence a leader is eligible to return to the office after a hiatus, which is what Putin did in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> See Henry E. Hale and Timothy J. Colton, "Russians and the Putin-Medvedev 'Tandemocracy': A Survey-Based Portrait of the 2007-08 Election Season," v.57, no.2, *Problems of Post-Communism*, v.57, no.2, March/April 2010, pp.3-20.

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<sup>3</sup> By hybrid regimes we mean those that combine democratic and autocratic elements to some significant degree.

<sup>4</sup> For different perspectives, see Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Larry Diamond, “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy*, v.13, April 2002; Graeme B. Robertson, *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Andreas Schedler, ed., *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Specifically, it uses a multistage area probability sampling technique. The questionnaire was designed by the present authors and carried out by the Moscow-based Demoscope organization. It was funded by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER) under authority of a Title VIII grant from the U.S. government and supplemental funding by the latter to increase the number of respondents. The views expressed here are solely those of the authors and are not the responsibility of the U.S. government, the NCEEER, or any other person or entity.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Richard Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> *Polit.Ru*, April 27, 2010, 02:06; *RFE/RL News*, June 20, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., *Polit.Ru*, November 12, 2008, 18:07.

<sup>9</sup> *The Moscow Times*, June 10, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., see *The Moscow Times*, August 4, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> *Vedomosti.ru*, November 29, 2012.

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<sup>12</sup> Question wording: “On September 24 of last year, Dmitry Medvedev declared that according to an agreement he had reached earlier with Vladimir Putin, he would not run for reelection as president in 2012, but would instead support the return of Putin to the presidency. Which of the words that I will mention best expresses how you felt when you heard about this decision?”

Options were those discussed above. 12 percent responded unprompted that they did not know about this declaration, and 7 percent found it either hard to say or refused to answer.

<sup>13</sup> Il’ia Barabanov, “Piarova pobeda,” *The New Times*, November 28, 2011, pp.4-7; *Kommersant*, December 2, 2011, p.1.

<sup>14</sup> One co-author’s interviews in the Yabloko Party, fall 2011.

<sup>15</sup> *Kommersant Vlast’*, November 28, 2011, p.22.

<sup>16</sup> We asked, in our spring 2012 survey: “Some politicians have used the expression “Party of Swindlers and Thieves” as a way of criticizing one of Russia’s political parties. Do you know about which party these words were said?” Without giving them a list of party names to choose from, 51 percent found it hard to say and 4 percent refused to answer, but almost everyone else (37 percent) identified United Russia.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson 2005.

<sup>18</sup> *Kommersant*, November 28, 2011, p.2.

<sup>19</sup> As did A Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov in a televised debate on First Channel, November 29, 2011, 18:25, observed by Henry Hale.

<sup>20</sup> Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation official website, [www.vybory.izbirkom.ru](http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru), as accessed on July 20, 2013. Patriots of Russia netted 0.97 percent and Right Cause 0.6 percent. No other parties were registered as parties, thus being disqualified from running.

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<sup>21</sup> Sergei Shpil'kin, "Statistika issledovala vybory," *Gazeta.ru*, December 10, 2011, 14:57.

<sup>22</sup> *Polit.Ru*, December 25, 2011, 17:59.

<sup>23</sup> *RFE/RL*, January 27, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation official website, [www.vybory.izbirkom.ru](http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru), as accessed on July 20, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> *RFE/RL*, March 5, 2012; Sergei Shpil'kin, "Iavka opiat' srabotala v pol'zu odnogo iz kandidatov," *Gazeta.Ru*, March 6, 2012, 14:59.

<sup>26</sup> For more detailed analysis of patterns of Internet use and politics found in the RES, see Timothy Colton, draft paper in progress.

<sup>27</sup> As for other kinds of media, 3 percent identified radio and 1 percent newspapers, about the same as in 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Satellite or cable news shows were watched by 18 percent of TV news watchers, and programming by city/regional channels (usually state-owned or state-controlled) by 51 percent.

<sup>29</sup> In this, they generally disagreed with the OSCE's monitoring, but were in line with findings described in: Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, "Zamechaniia TsIK k nekotorym vyvodom, sodержashchims'ia v Zaiavlenii o predvaritel'nykh rezul'tatakh I vyvodakh, sdelannom sovместno 5 marta 2012 goda po itogam vyborov Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii missiiami inostrannykh (mezhdunarodnykh) nabludatelei BDIPCh i PA OBSE, a takzhe PACE," official CEC website, <http://cikrf.ru/news/relevant/2012/03/22/zamechanie.html>, accessed March 24, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> See especially Timothy J. Colton and Henry E. Hale, "The Putin Vote: Presidential Electorates in a Hybrid Regime," *Slavic Review*, v.68, no.3, Fall 2009, pp.473-503.

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<sup>31</sup> Also consistent with this interpretation is the finding reported below in Figure D that a majority support the 2005 partial replacement of state-provided benefits with cash payments.

<sup>32</sup> A separate survey about a year later replaces the term “ally” with “partner” and finds virtually the same distribution of responses, which has been quite stable ever since the RES started asking this question.

<sup>33</sup> On trends in support for democracy from 2008 to 2012, see Henry E. Hale, “Trends in Russian Views on Democracy 2008-12: Has There Been a Russian Democratic Awakening?” *Russian Analytical Digest*, no.117, September 19, 2012, pp.9-14.

<sup>34</sup> Henry E. Hale, “The Myth of Mass Russian Support for Autocracy: Public Opinion Foundations of a Hybrid Regime,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, v.63, no.8, October 2011, pp.1357-1375.

<sup>35</sup> Vladimir Gel'man, “Political Opposition in Russia: A Dying Species?” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, v.21, no.3, July-September 2005, pp.226-246.

<sup>36</sup> For perhaps the strongest statement of the economic argument, see Daniel S. Treisman, *The Return* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011).

<sup>37</sup> This is following Colton’s definition of a transitional partisan as someone who names a party unprompted when asked whether s/he either has a party s/he calls “my party” or has a party s/he considers “more than the others reflects your interests, views, and concerns.” See Timothy J. Colton, *Transitional Citizens: Voters and What Influences Them in the New Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>38</sup> Forty-eight percent said they had no chance, and 24 percent found it hard to say. Of those saying a party had a chance, 36 percent named the KPRF as most likely, 22 percent A Just

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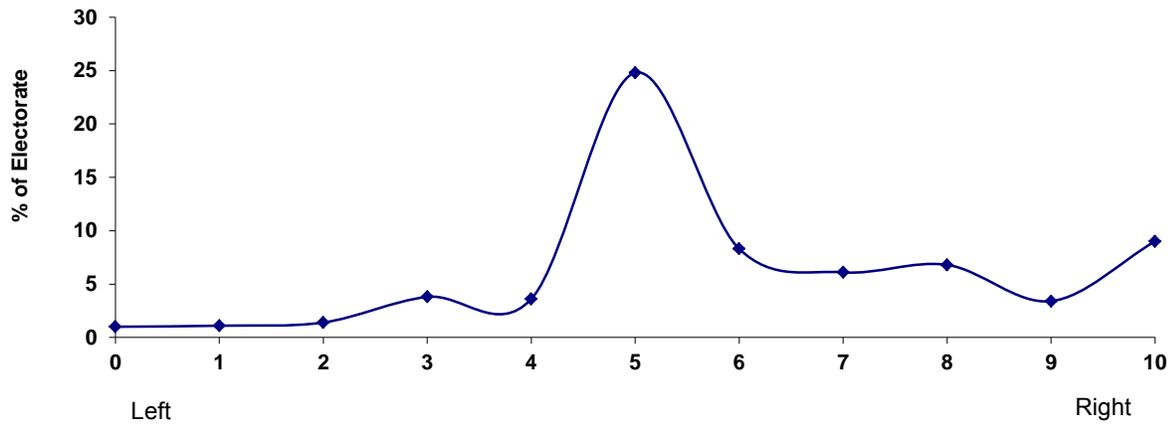
Russia, and 11 percent the LDPR, and 5 percent for Right Cause, with the others not reaching 2 percent.

<sup>39</sup> Prokhorov was the other candidate whom voters identified with a right-of-center position on the left-right scale, with an average placement of 5.7 to Putin's 7.5, though Prokhorov's placement was far more dispersed, with a full 37 percent unable to place him anywhere at all.

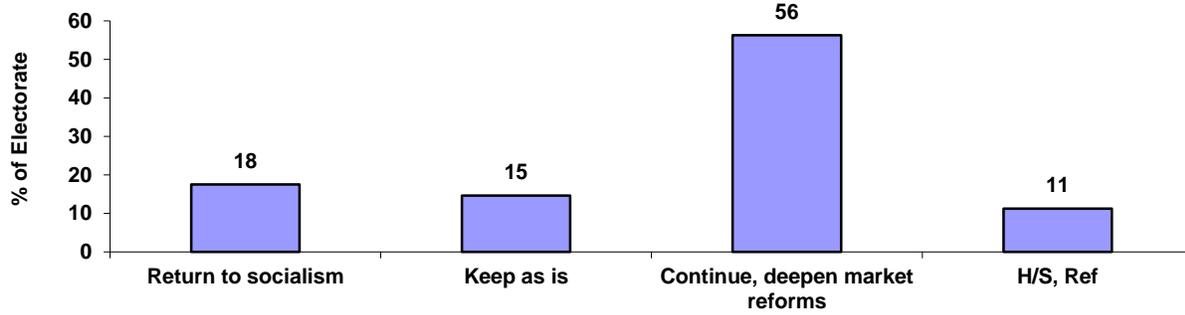
<sup>40</sup> 38 percent responded that they do not work, and another 25 percent said that they did not know their boss' preferences.

<sup>41</sup> On technical aspects of the presidential election process, see OSCE, "Russian Federation Presidential Election 4 March 2012," OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Report, Warsaw, May 11, 2012.

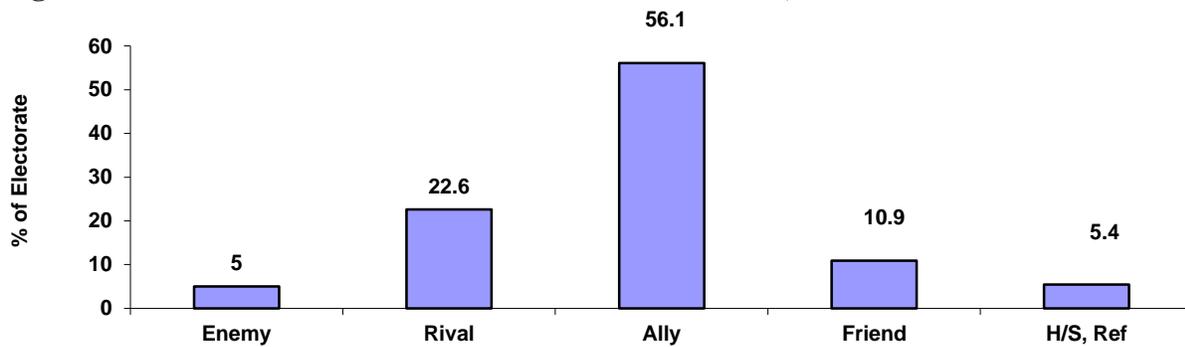
**Figure 1. Political Left-Right Self-Placement 2012 (Percent)**



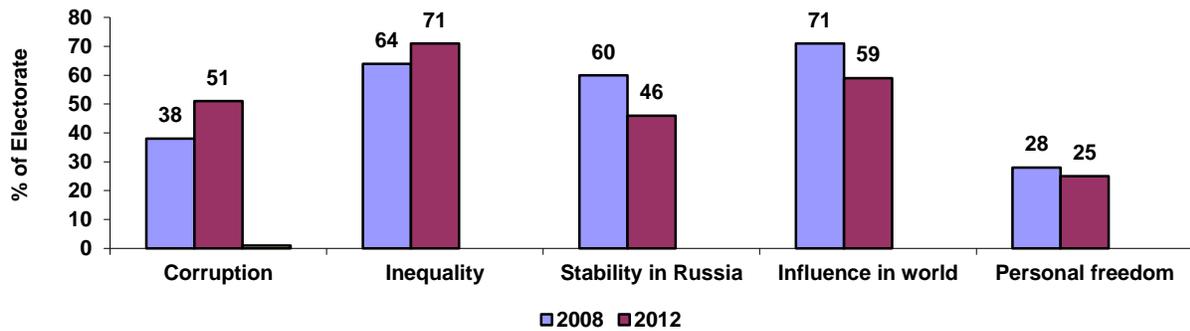
**Figure 2. Views on Economic Reform, 2012 (Percent)**



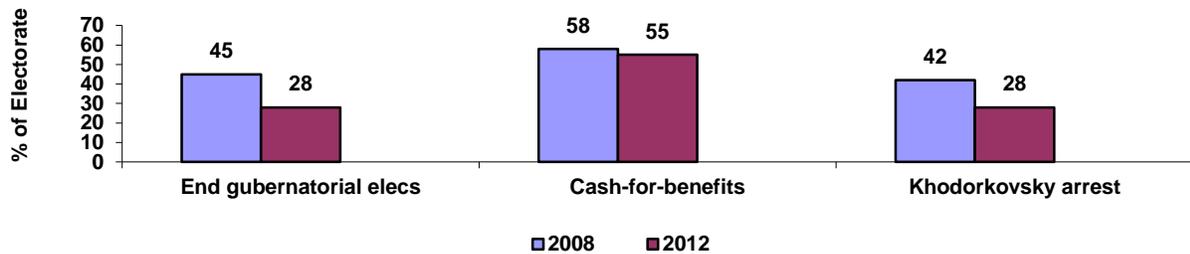
**Figure 3. Views on How Russia Should Relate to the West, 2012 (Percent)**



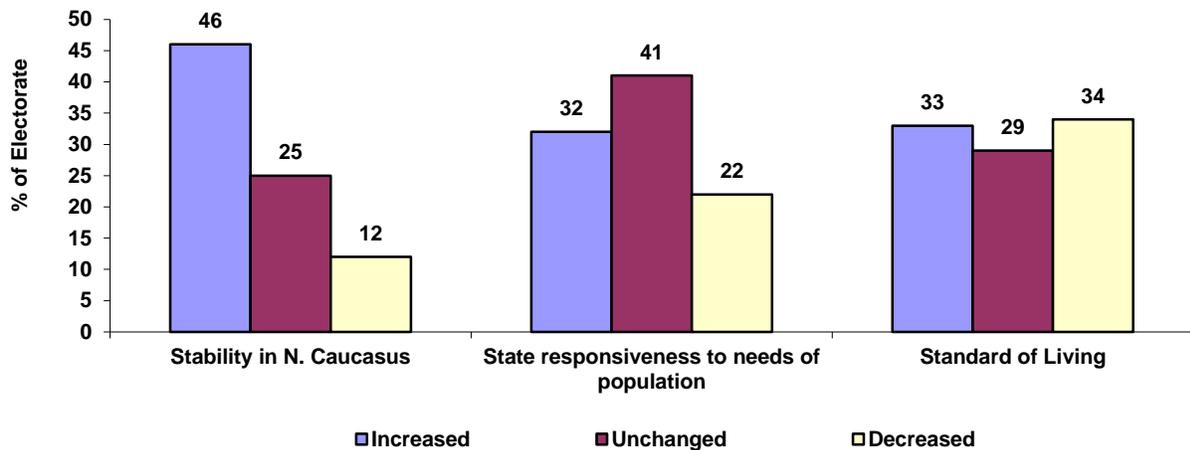
**Figure 4. Perceptions of an Increase since 2000 in Selected Spheres (Percent)**



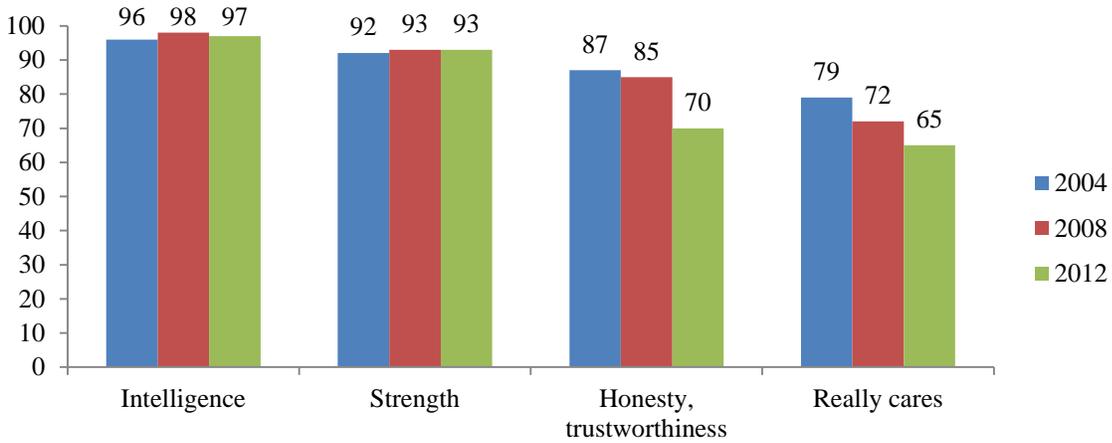
**Figure 5. Support for Key Putin Policies (Percent)**



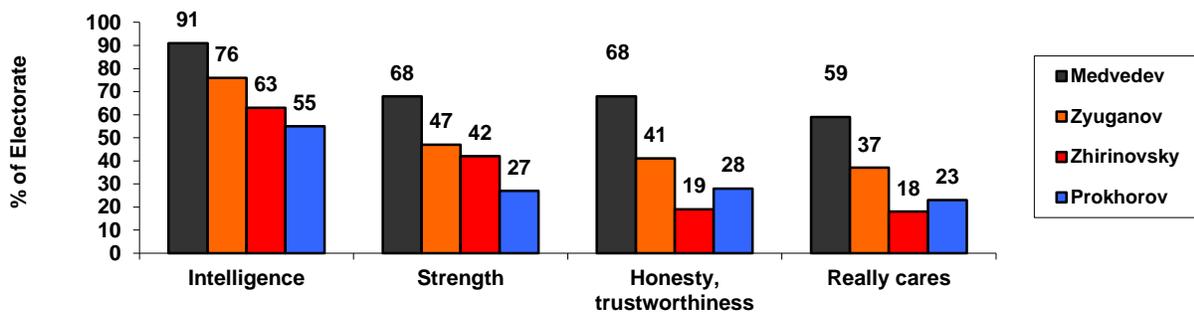
**Figure 6. Distribution of 2012 Answers to: “What do you think, in the last 12 years since the year 2000, when Putin first became President, have the following things increased, decreased, or remained unchanged?”**



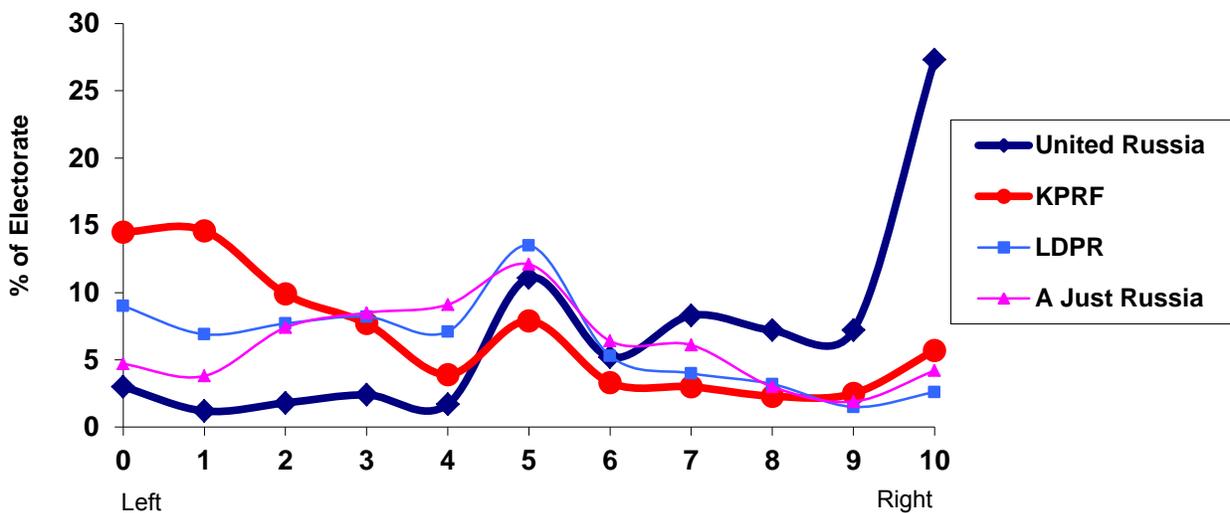
**Figure 7. Percentage of the Electorate Attributing Positive Leadership Traits to Putin (Possesses or Probably Possesses), 2004, 2008, and 2012**



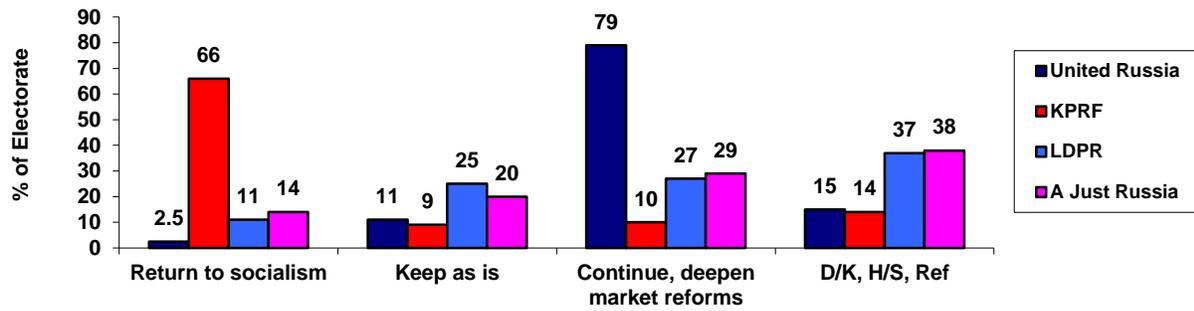
**Figure 8. Percentage of the Electorate Attributing Different Leadership Traits to Different Russian Politicians (Possesses or Probably Possesses), 2012**



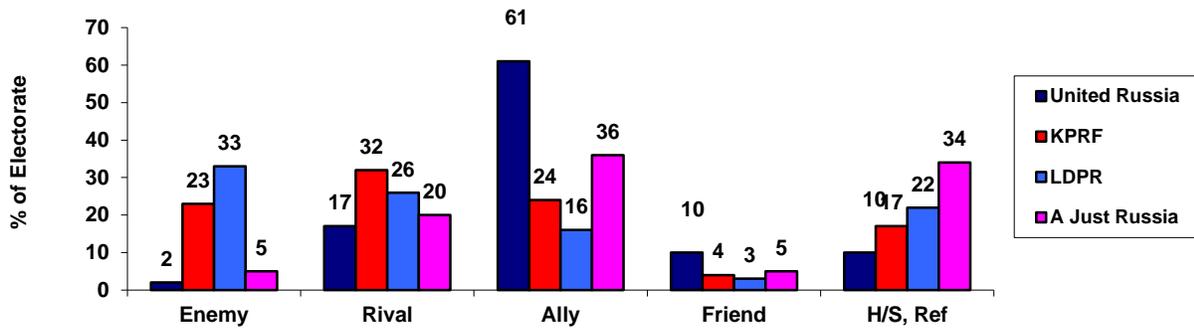
**Figure 9. Distribution of Assessments of Major Party Stands on a Left-Right Scale**



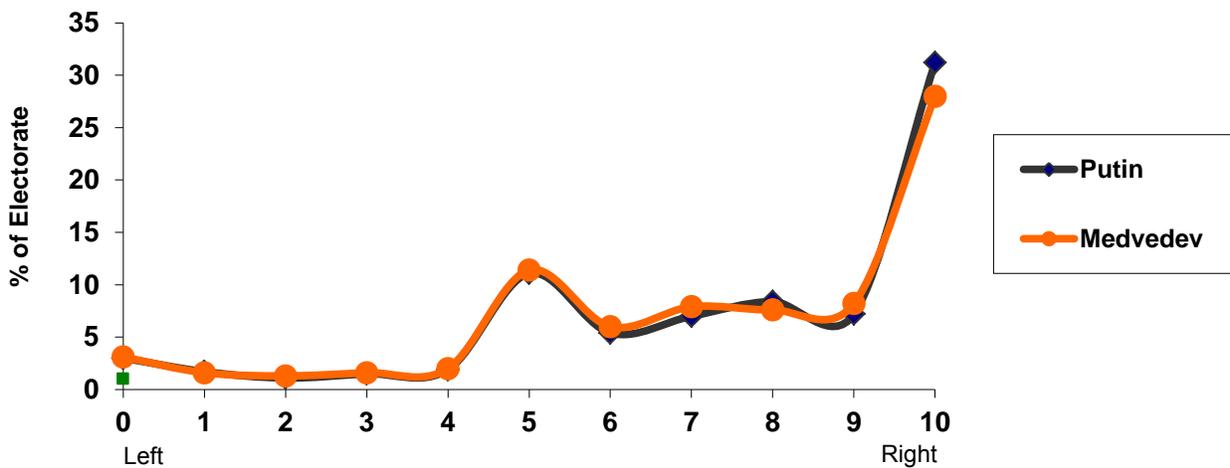
**Figure 10. Distribution of Perceptions of Major Party Stands on Economic Reform, 2012**



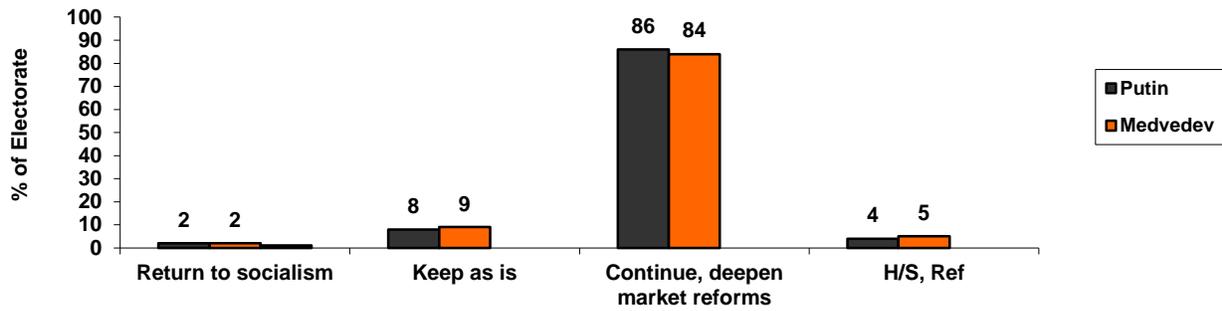
**Figure 11. Distribution of Perceptions of Major Party Stands on How Russia Should Relate to the West, 2012**



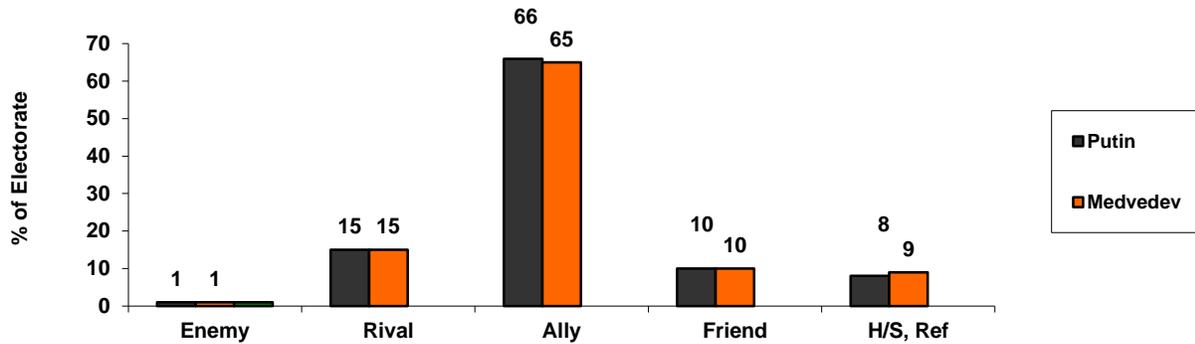
**Figure 12. Distribution of Population's Assessments of Putin's and Medvedev's Stands on Left-Right Scale, 2012 (0 = far left, 10 = far right)**



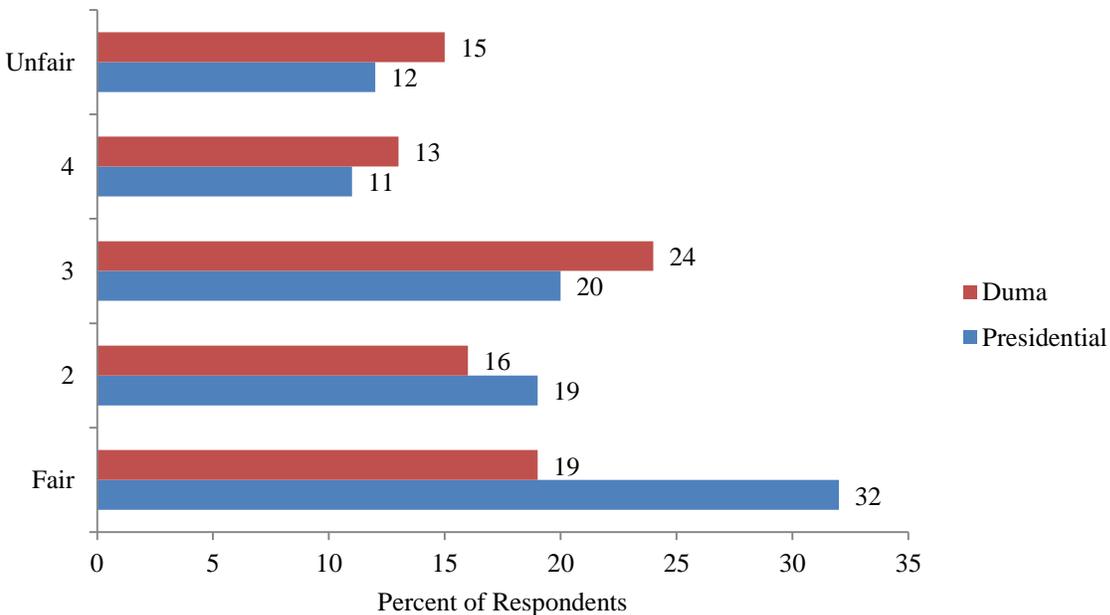
**Figure 13. Distribution of Perceptions of Putin's and Medvedev's Stands on Economic Reform, 2012**



**Figure 14. Distribution of Perceptions of Putin's and Medvedev's Stands on How Russia Should Relate to the West, 2012**



**Figure 15. Perceived Level of Fairness of 2011 Duma and 2012 Presidential Elections (1-5 scale)**



**Table 1. Citizen Perceptions of Economic Trends over Past Year, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 (Percent)**

<i>Perceived trend</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2012</i>
<b>Own Family's Material Situation</b>				
Much worse	12	7	5	5
A little worse	16	13	11	13
No change	50	59	52	57
A little better	21	18	26	22
Much better	1	1	5	2
Don't know	1	1	1	1
<b>Russian Economy as a Whole</b>				
Much worse	6	4	2	2
A little worse	12	5	9	11
No change	44	51	46	59
A little better	31	33	32	19
Much better	1	1	2	1
Don't know	6	7	9	9

**Table 2. Assessments of How Citizens Fared as a Result of the Economic Reforms Carried Out in the 1990s and since 2000, 2008 and 2012 (Percent)**

	<b>Reforms of 1990s</b>		<b>Reforms since 2000</b>	
	<i>In 2008</i>	<i>In 2012</i>	<i>In 2008</i>	<i>In 2012</i>
<b>Won or mostly won</b>	11	6	26	37
<b>Lost some, won some (volunteered)</b>	25	23	37	40
<b>Lost or mostly lost</b>	46	53	23	12
<b>Don't know</b>	18	18	14	11

**Table 3. Distribution of Responses When Asked: Which of the Following Statements Best Describes Your Family's Financial Situation? (percent)**

You don't have enough money even for food	2
You have enough money only for the most necessary things	27
You have enough money for daily expenses, but even the purchase of clothes is difficult for you	19
You generally have enough money, but for buying expensive goods like, for example, a refrigerator, television, or washing machine, you must save money for a very long time or take on debt, get credit	37
The purchase of expensive goods is not especially difficult for you, but a car is still unaffordable	11
The purchase of a car is not especially difficult for you, but purchasing housing is still unaffordable	3
At the present time you don't have to deny yourselves anything	1
H/S	1
Refusal	0.4

**Table 4. Transitional Partisanship in Russia 2008 and 2012 by Party (Percent)**

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2012</b>
United Russia	30	32
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	8	9
LDPR	4	3
A Just Russia	2	3
All others	2	3
<b>Total transitional partisans</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Nonpartisans</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>50</b>

**Table 5. Top Reason Given for Voting for Respective Parties from a List of Possible Reasons, 2012 (Percent)**

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Among Voters for the Following Parties</i>					
	<b>United Russia 08</b>	<b>United Russia 12</b>	<b>KPRF</b>	<b>LDPR</b>	<b>A Just Russia</b>	<b>Other</b>
Work in Duma	20	34	6	6	6	15
Like program	14	17	42	21	31	22
Leader personality	9	15	4	22	14	16
Party loyalty	5	2	4	2	4	6
Obey authorities	10	9	2	1	4	1
Pork barrel	10	13	14	9	14	7
Putin supports it	26	8	3	1	2	0
Protest vote	1	1	23	38	23	32

**Table 6. Percentage of the Electorate Identifying Different Candidates as Most Competent to Deal with Different Tasks 2012**

	<i>Putin</i>	<i>Zyuganov</i>	<i>Zhirinovskiy</i>	<i>Prokhorov</i>	<i>No Difference (unprompted)</i>	<i>Hard to Say / Refusal</i>
Improve the economy	61	6	2	8	11	11
Safeguard human rights	54	7	4	4	15	11
Promote international interests	70	5	4	3	10	7

**Table 7. Distribution (percent) of Answers to: “Is this a person whose time has passed, a person needed right now in the present moment, or a person whose time is yet to come?”**

	<i>Putin</i>	<i>Medvedev</i>	<i>Prokhorov</i>
His time has passed	16	39	3
Needed right now	75	41	7
Time is yet to come	2	12	60
Do not know candidate	0	0	11
H/S, refuse	6	8	18

**Table 8. Top Reason Given for Voting for Respective Presidential Candidates from a List of Possible Reasons, 2012 (Percent)**

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Among Voters for the Following Candidates</i>				
	<b>Putin</b>	<b>Zyuganov</b>	<b>Zhirinovskiy</b>	<b>Prokhorov</b>	<b>Mironov</b>
Work in last post	51	4	11	4	11
Like program	11	36	29	27	46
Like personality	15	5	25	24	6
Party nomination	0.4	1	2	0	1
Obey authorities	8	3	2	1	0
Pork barrel	11	20	13	14	6
Protest vote	1	28	17	30	30

**Table 9. Importance of United Russia Nomination for Putin Voters 2012, Medvedev Voters 2008 (Percent)**

	<i>Medvedev 2008</i>	<i>Putin 2012</i>
Completely unimportant	10	19
Unimportant	23	30
Important	47	34
Very important	16	16
Hard to say	4	1

**Table 10. Distribution of Votes for 2012 Presidential Candidates by Partisanship (Percent of Partisans, among Those Who Voted)**

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Partisanship</i>					
	<b>United Russia</b>	<b>KPRF</b>	<b>LDPR</b>	<b>Just Russia</b>	<b>Minor party</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Putin</b>	95	18	16	30	24	63
<b>Zyuganov</b>	1	73	0	12	13	9
<b>Zhirinovskiy</b>	0.4	1	78	4	3	5
<b>Prokhorov</b>	2	1	3	5	43	9
<b>Mironov</b>	1	0	2	43	8	2