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## New hope?

### Russian youth between protest and conformity

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In March and June 2017 protesters took to the streets of several dozen Russian cities. Russia has recently been the subject of lively discussion in political circles and the media for the most part because of its aggressive international politics and alleged meddling in the US elections.

The recent demonstrations have forced analysts and journalists to look at the country from yet another perspective. Many have noticed a generational change in the demonstrations. Led by Alexei Navalny, the most recognizable opposition leader in Russia, young Russians took to the streets to protest corruption and demand change.

However, the young people who decided to take part in the protests in

March and June and others who showed their support for the protesters constitute only a very small fraction of young Russians. Opinion research indicates that the current regime in Russia has strong support among people ages aged 25 and younger, much stronger than among the older generations.

This does not mean, however, that Navalny's fight for the young is hopeless. It once again turns out that youth is unpredictable, and that in the case of Russia, a very thin line divides the support for Putin's administration, on one hand, and the desire for deep changes and new political opening on the other.

### Attack its weak point

The direct cause of the protests was the documentary film, “He is not a Dimon to you,” which revealed the extent of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev’s affluence and corruption.<sup>1</sup> The movie was produced by the *Anti-corruption Foundation*, an organization associated with Alexei Navalny, a main opposition figure in Russia. The rallies that were held on March 12 were organized to first and foremost criticize and stigmatize the all-encompassing corruption among the political elites. Thousands of people took to the streets of more than eighty Russian cities.<sup>2</sup> More than 10,000 people protested in Moscow, around 8,000 in Saint Petersburg, and from a few hundred to two thousand in other cities of Russia.<sup>3</sup> A thousand protesters were detained by the police in Moscow alone.<sup>4</sup> The March events saw a continuation on June 12 at rallies organized during the Day of Russia national holiday. Alexei Navalny, the main organizer of the protest, was detained by police in his courtyard, but that didn’t stop the rallies from taking place. “Stop corruption in Russia!” and “Hold politicians responsible!” were the protesters’ main slogans in approximately 140 Russian cities.<sup>5</sup> Between 10,000 and 20,000 protested in Moscow, 10,000 in Saint Petersburg and 3,000-5,000 in Novosibirsk, Yekaterynburg and Chelyabinsk. In Moscow alone, the police detained more than a few hundred people.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the documentary, Dmitry Medvedev was accused of embezzling an estimated \$1.2 billion, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmCnHqwkYt0> ; <https://fbk.info/english/press-releases/post/303/>

<sup>2</sup> L. Jasina, A. Legucka, *Konsekwencje protestów antykorupcyjnych dla kampanii wyborczej w Rosji*, 5.05.2017, <http://www.pism.pl/publikacje/biuletyn/nr-43-1485>, access (10.08.2017).

<sup>3</sup> J. Strzelecki, I. Wiśniewska, M. Menkiszak, *Antyrządowe protesty w Rosji*, 27.03.2017, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2017-03-27/antyrzadowe-protesty-w-rosji>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>4</sup> A. Kolesnikov, *New Protests Question Russia’s Social Contract*, 16.06.2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/71283>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>5</sup> J. Strzelecki, I. Wiśniewska, M. Menkiszak, *Antyrządowe protesty...*

<sup>6</sup> A. Kolesnikov, *New Protests Question...*

Corruption was the buzzword of the rallies. Indeed, the protests from March and June were fueled by anger towards the corrupt elites, especially Dmitry Medvedev, the former president of Russia, who had once been seen as offering hope for liberal reforms in Russia. The protesters demanded reforms. Although they were on a smaller scale than the events from 2011 and 2012,<sup>7</sup> they attracted serious interest both in Russia and abroad. These events are important for at least three reasons.

First of all, contrary to the 2011-12 demonstrations which had many organizers, the protests in 2017 were seen as a “one-man show.” The key figure behind the protest was Alexei Navalny, the politician and anti-corruption activist who had already risen to the position of the most recognizable figure of the opposition in Russia and is now re-iterating his leadership role.

The second reason is the scale of the events. The protests took place in several dozen cities throughout Russia. Not only did they spread out beyond the traditional centers of protests, namely Moscow and Saint Petersburg, but the number of cities was comparable to, if not more than it was during the protests of 2011 and 2012. The third reason, which will be discussed in detail in this report, is the demography of the protest. What surprised many Russians, and the international community as well, was the engagement of young people (up to 24-25 years old) in the protest. Direct witnesses and photographic relations confirm the unusually high participation of young people (seen as a percentage of all protesters) who took part in the events. Young people came to the protests inspired by Alexei Navalny’s anti-corruption campaign and to speak out about other issues important for them.

<sup>7</sup> The protests in 2011 and 2012 were motivated by claims that the parliamentary and presidential election results were flawed. They later evolved into anti-Putin and anti-regime demonstrations. The consequences of the demonstrations were severe – many people ended up in prison, and the regime introduced a series of anti-democratic laws.

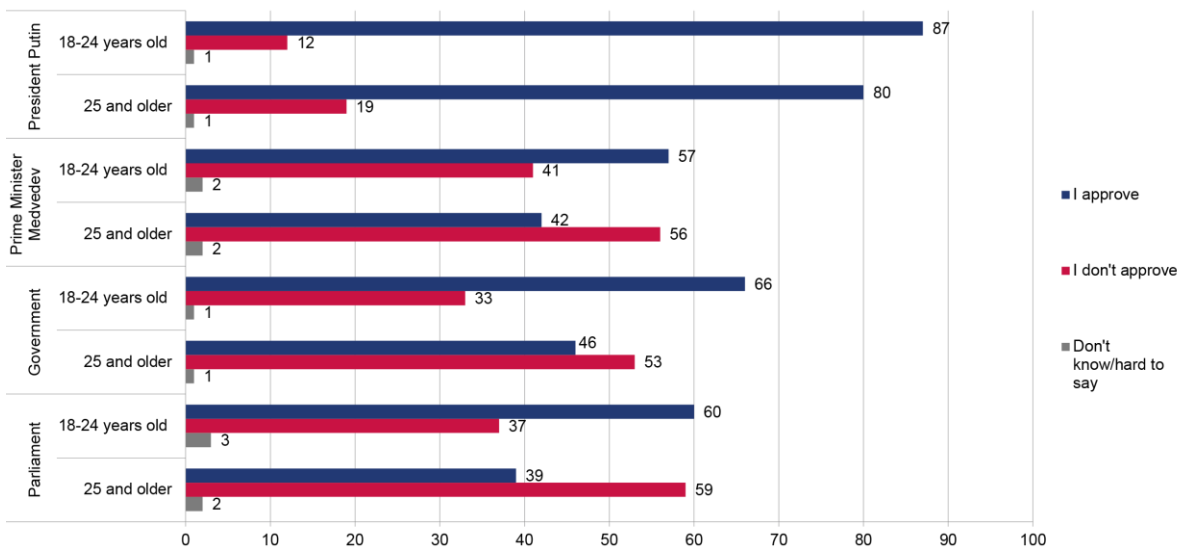
### The young Russian paradox – supporting the regime yet open to change

It may come as a surprise that youth were a vital part of the protests in March and June when one looks at the data from opinion polling that show that young people are more likely to favor the current political regime than older Russians.

Data from an opinion poll conducted by the Levada Center show that young Russians aged 18- 24 put more trust in the country’s main political figures and institutions than older Russians.

work of the government (66%), Parliament (60%) and Prime Minister Medvedev (57%). Positive perceptions of these institutions are consistently much stronger than negative attitudes towards them. These results are much different from those among Russians who are 25 and older. Here, the disapproval rates of the State Duma, Prime Minister Medvedev and the government are higher than the positive opinions of them. In the case of the State Duma, the negative difference reaches 20 percentage points.

Diagram 1. Do you approve or disapprove of the actions of ...? (in %)

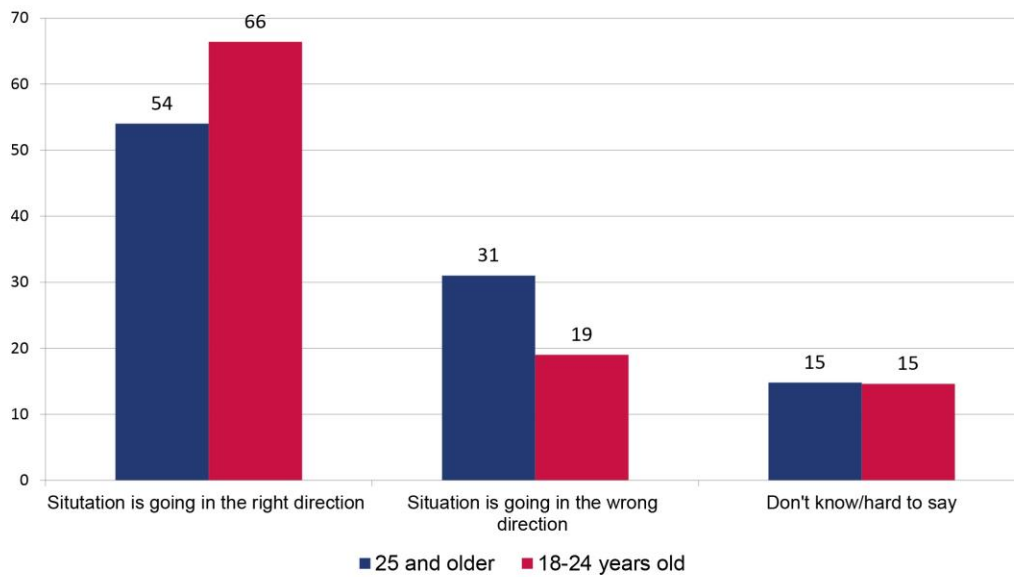


### Exceptional support for President Putin (87% among young Russians)<sup>8</sup> is supplemented by high approval of the

<sup>8</sup> Polls showing an extremely high approval of Putin are sometimes questioned. Some claim that merely asking questions about one’s support for Putin is, in an authoritarian state like Russia, questionable, because people are too afraid to say what they really think about him. At the same time, others tend to claim that the high approval of the president is not constant, and that it has even changed radically in the past. For instance, after 2008, Putin lost one-third of his supporters. For these people, such a significant change shows that even if some people are afraid to express dissatisfaction, there are enough of them to have a significant impact on polls. What is also often stressed by the defenders of such surveys is that the Kremlin has created this high support for Putin because it uses powerful tools to influence society’s perceptions – namely, propaganda in national outlets.

Young Russians not only have a better opinion of the political institutions in the country, they also see the situation of the state in rosier colors than the older generation does. Two-thirds of Russians aged 18-24 believe that the situation in Russia is going in the right direction, while almost one-fifth (19%) think the opposite. At the same time, among people 25 and older, a positive vision of the future is shared by 54%, and almost one-third (31%) worry that the situation is going into wrong direction (diagram 2).

Diagram 2. In your opinion, is the situation in your country going in the right direction or is the country moving into the wrong direction? (in %)



Source: Levada Center, June 2017

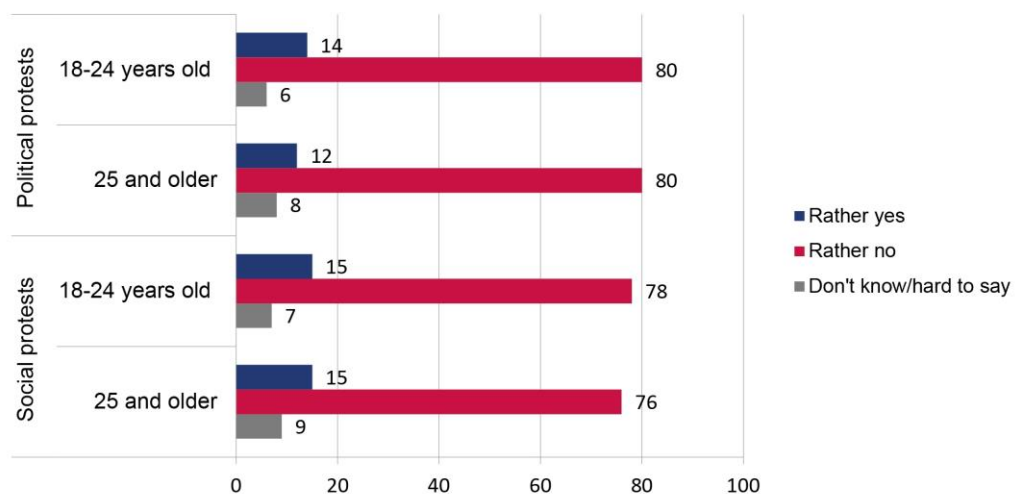
The shift from general questions about the authorities and the situation in the country to more specific questions about protests and the politics of Alexei Navalny reveals an interesting trend. Although young Russians are more supportive of the current regime than the older generations, the potential for political and social protest is at pretty much the same (rather low) level and varies from 12% (readiness to participate in political protests by the general population) to 15% (participation in socially-oriented protests) for both youth and people who are 25 and older (diagram 3).

Moreover, it seems that young people tend to be relatively more open to alternative “scenarios” for the future of the country. When asked about the desired future shape of their country, 49% responded that they

would like Russia to be like the western developed countries.<sup>9</sup>

Young Russians are more willing to believe that Navalny may be a real alternative for Russia. They are more enthusiastic about the new opposition leader than the older generations. As Levada research shows, 25% of young people and 15% of their elders take a positive approach toward

Diagram 3. In your opinion, if social or political protests were to happen in Russia, would you take part in them or not? (in %)



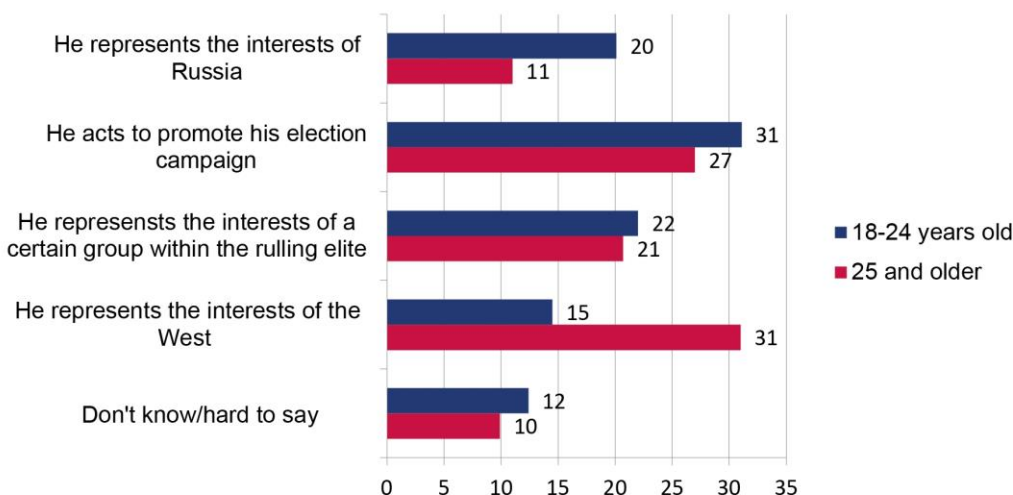
Source: Levada Center, June 2017

<sup>9</sup> *О молодежи старой и новой*, 23.05.2017, <https://www.levada.ru/2017/05/23/o-molodezhi-staroi-i-novoj/>, access: 10.08.2017.

Navalny.<sup>10</sup> Respectively, 17% and less than 10% declare their willingness to vote for Navalny in the presidential elections.<sup>11</sup> When asked about Alexei Navalny's activity as an anti-corruption activist, both young Russians (31%) and people aged 25 and older (27%) who know of him see his actions primarily as a preparation for the presidential election campaign. There is also a considerable group of people (around one-fifth among both young Russians and the older generations) that perceive Navalny's actions as yet another representation of the current ruling elite.

Russian society – a society where young people are more supportive for the current political regime but also open to something new in Russian politics, while the older generation seem to be more critical towards the ruling elite (but not to Putin himself) and at the same time less optimistic that anything might change in Russian politics, and especially that Navalny could be the leader of change.

Diagram 4. In your opinion, whose interests does Alexei Navalny represent when he publishes his investigations on corruption among the elites in the country? (in %; among people who know of Navalny)



Source: Levada Center, June 2017

What distinguishes Russians aged 18-24 from older people is the fact that youth more often claim that Alexei Navalny represents the interests of Russia than the West (20%, as opposed to 15%). The situation is the opposite among people 25 and older – almost one-third (31%) believe that Navalny represents the interests of the West and only 11% see him as representing the interests of Russia. This short analysis of the data can be seen as an attempt to show a bigger picture of

### Young protesters: educated, internet-savvy and looking for change

The analysis of opinion poll data shows that young Russians who are not happy with the current political regime and are ready to express their dissatisfaction through participation in protests are a minority among youth in Russia. But this minority has been trying to show, through their participation in the March and June protests, their readiness to be a vocal group in society. Young people were a significant part, if not the majority, of the total number of protesters.<sup>12</sup> The limited

<sup>10</sup> This survey only included people who know who Navalny is; *Чей это город?*, 28.03.2017, <https://www.levada.ru/2017/03/28/chej-eto-gorod/>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> According to some sources, youth constituted as much as even 70% of all protesters.

quantitative data are insufficient for a comprehensive picture of the typical young protester, but information gathered by analysts and journalists who have been researching March and June events and data from general opinion polls provide information that is useful in looking at the phenomenon of young protesters.

When one looks at the composition of young protesters, it turns out that they represent middle class families, in many cases the so-called “intelligentsia.”<sup>13</sup> According to interviews conducted by the Levada Center, young Russians who participated in March protests are highly educated (students or would-be students). In many cases, they follow the example of their parents who also show up regularly at protests and talk about politics at home.<sup>14</sup>

Another interesting factor is the potential openness to change among part of the young Russians, which also revealed in their attitudes towards the protests. It seems that young Russians, more often than older people, believe in the “honesty” and “good cause” of the protesters and the protests themselves. According to the Levada Center, 10% of people aged 18-24 who were asked about the June protests said that people were paid to participate. Among the older generations, this response was chosen by 21%. Also, young Russians are harder to discourage if protests fail. As research by Levada shows, young people very often protest for protest’s sake – they have a need to express their emotions.<sup>15</sup> Older people are more skeptical, and if protests are not successful, they more readily give up.

The young people who took to the streets in March and June – because of their social status and better education – are presumably more aware of their situation in the country than the general population. And this situation has seriously deteriorated since 2014.<sup>16</sup> Average real incomes have been decreasing for three consecutive years.<sup>17</sup> The enduring crisis with no sign of reforms offers young people little hope for change. Almost one-third (32%) would like to leave the country permanently.<sup>18</sup> The general unhappiness with the economic situation has been magnified by the stark contrast between some representatives of the authorities living in luxury and the many people struggling in recent years. When Navalny released a documentary about Medvedev’s wealth, support for the prime minister among the young people fell by 10 percentage points.<sup>19</sup>

The social media factor should not be underestimated. Youth get their news from the internet more often than older people – 70% of young Russians receive information about current events from online sources, compared to only 25% of Russians in general.<sup>20</sup> On the internet, and especially in the social media, political activists (including Navalny) have an advantage over the state. For instance, Navalny’s Youtube channel has 1.3 million subscribers, whereas the Kremlin’s official channel has only 30,000.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, television still plays an important role; 60% of young people point to it as

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*День России: россиянам не позволено спорить с Путиным*, 14.06.2017, [https://www.inopressa.ru/article/14jun2017/inotheme/protest\\_russia\\_obzor14.html](https://www.inopressa.ru/article/14jun2017/inotheme/protest_russia_obzor14.html), access: 10.08.2017. ; Леонид Радзиховский: *Митинги протеста не имели никаких политических целей* Подробнее:, 13.06.2017, <https://ok-inform.ru/politics/domestic/94549-leonid-radzhikovskij-mitingi-protesta-ne-imeli-nikakikh-politicheskikh-tselej.html>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>13</sup> *В чем особенности новой волны протестов в России*, 6.04.2017, <http://carnegie.ru/commentary/68576>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>14</sup> *В чем особенности...*

<sup>15</sup> *Чей это город...*

<sup>16</sup> *Average wages*, <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/average-wages.htm>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>17</sup> M. Menkiszak, *Rosja odbiła się od dna*, „Rocznik Strategiczny 2016/2017”, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> *Emigratsiya tabl*, [http://www.levada.ru/cp/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Emigratsiya\\_tabl..pdf](http://www.levada.ru/cp/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Emigratsiya_tabl..pdf), access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>19</sup> In May, Medvedev’s support started to grow again «Эффект от фильма «Он вам не Димон» почти прошел», 29.05.2017, <https://www.levada.ru/2017/05/29/effekt-ot-filma-on-vam-ne-dimon-pochti-proshel/>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/user/NavalnyRu> ; <https://www.youtube.com/user/kremlin/featured>

important source of information.<sup>22</sup> While this means that many young people make use of diverse sources of information, one can assume that the young people who took part in the protests are those who are “online” and follow political discussions like those from Navalny’s channels on a more-or-less regular basis or are at least exposed to people who follow these types of debates. Moreover, the internet is a source of various types of “triggers” that can influence young people and their readiness to openly protest because they are the ones who are the most exposed to these “triggers.” This includes memes (featuring both Navalny and regime politicians), blogs, vlogs (for instance, Youtuber Nikolay Sobolev, who encouraged youth to participate in the protests<sup>23</sup>) and other shared content, like the video showing a counter-productive lecture during which students were discouraged to take part in protests and were explained what “patriotism” is.<sup>24</sup>

An interesting factor that also could have influenced young people is the fact that the young are less willing to accept the costs of Russia’s neo-imperial foreign policy (e.g., Russia’s engagement in Ukraine and Syria). More than half (55%) of young Russians do not support spending public money on Crimea development at the expense of social benefits.<sup>25</sup> This could mean that young Russians are less susceptible to traditional propaganda schemes, which tend to dwell on nostalgia for the USSR period.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> «Эффект от фильма «Он вам не Димон» почти прошел», 29.05.2017, <https://www.levada.ru/2017/05/29/effekt-ot-filma-on-vam-ne-dimon-pochti-proshel/>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>23</sup> *Generation YouTube: How Millennials Are Shaping Russian Politics*, 19.04.2017, <http://carnegie.ru/commentary/68709>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>24</sup> *Почему на акции протеста вышло столько подростков?*, 27.03.2017, <https://meduza.io/feature/2017/03/27/pochemu-na-aktsii-protesta-vyshlo-stolko-podrostkov-i-chego-oni-hotyat>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>25</sup> R. Rahimov, *Russia’s millennials challenge the Kremlin*, 4.05.2017, <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/2345-russia-s-millennials-challenge-the-kremlin>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem

### With the young for the young?

Alexei Navalny has been often labeled the number one opposition leader in Russia, and the Western media are keen to deliberate whether he may represent a serious alternative to the Russian political regime and president Putin personally anytime in the future. In Russia, Navalny continues to become more widely recognized and to raise emotions among society. Back in March 2012, only 25% of Russians had heard of Navalny, while five years later (March 2017), this figure doubled (to 55%).<sup>27</sup> This is definitely not a coincidence. What Navalny and his team have created is a well-planned and decently executed strategy of political and social activism neatly connected with self-promotion. They undertake actions such as investigating cases of corruption and publicizing them, organizing protests and offering legal aid for people detained at the protests.<sup>28</sup> All these actions likely contribute to Navalny’s bigger goal – an effective electoral campaign. He still counts on the possibility that he will be allowed to take part in the upcoming presidential elections.<sup>29</sup> That would give him access to national broadcasts, enabling him to reach a wider new audience.

What also contributes to Navalny’s recognition is his involvement at the regional level. He travels across the country giving speeches and talking with citizens, thereby drawing the attention of people who would otherwise have never

<sup>27</sup> *Акции протеста 26 марта и Навальный*, 6.04.2017, <https://www.levada.ru/2017/04/06/aktsii-protesta-26-marta-i-navalnyj/>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>28</sup> A. Arutunyan, *Russia protests: this time it is different*, 29.03.2017, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_four\\_ways\\_navalny\\_protests\\_go\\_beyond\\_bolotnaya\\_7259](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_four_ways_navalny_protests_go_beyond_bolotnaya_7259), access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>29</sup> Navalny has been found guilty regarding alleged fraud based on dubious investigations involving a timber company called Kirovles. In May 2017, a Russian court upheld a five-year suspended sentence for Navalny, which means that according to Russian legislation, he won’t be able to be a presidential candidate in the forthcoming elections. Navalny’s team hopes, however, that the Russian Central Electoral Commission will allow him to participate in the election because the Kremlin may calculate that blocking Navalny’s participation would be more risky than his participation in the elections.; *The man who would (...)*

heard of him. Moreover, he has started to open regional election offices. Currently (August 2017), there are 70 offices all over the country and 134,000 people are engaged in his campaign.<sup>30</sup>

Navalny's name has been particularly associated with one group of people – young Russians. It seems that although general opinion data show that a majority of young people favor the current political regime, he is counting on his skills to effectively reach young people with his anti-corruption and anti-establishment agenda. And one can say that to some extent his strategy is working. He is not only surrounded by young volunteers who have been helping him to launch and carry out his activities in Russia's regions and in the social media, but is apparently a "rising star" among young people who are looking for something new in Russian politics.

There are several factors that contribute to Navalny's high popularity among young Russians (as opposed to other age groups). A key factor is Navalny's high visibility on the internet. Excluded from normal political debate in the public TV channels, Navalny has been forced to find his own platforms of communication to find an audience. He has gone online and has done it pretty effectively. Once an anti-corruption blogger, he has now developed his internet activities to become a full-scale information provider. His famous documentary about the alleged illegal wealth of Dmitry Medvedev was posted online and has been watched by almost 25 million people. In March 2017, Navalny's team launched a new project named "Navalny live." This Youtube channel provides its subscribers and other interested viewers with an array of talk shows on topics related to political and economic issues. Alexei Navalny is only one of the contributors, while other shows are hosted by his political compatriots.

Navalny also knows how to reach young people who are online because he has natural skills (or effectively emulates them)

in targeting young people by finding a "common language" with them. He knows how to communicate his vision of politics and Russia. He doesn't beat about the bush when speaking about the corruption, lies and hypocrisy of the Russian elites and uses colorful, youth-oriented language. He presents himself as dynamic, modern and someone new in contrast to establishment politicians. He basically senses what is missing in Russian politics. But attracting youth is not only about language, it is also about the topics Navalny engages in, and it seems that the topic of the authorities' corruption resonates with young people. Instead of criticizing the political elites in general, Navalny targets concrete people (like Medvedev) with very precise and well-documented allegations. This allows young Russians to see real (tangible) problems and not only a general picture of the "bad elites."

The economic program that Navalny's team is pursuing during the pre-election period is tailored for people with a liberal approach towards the economy. Apart from the promise to fight the omnipresent corruption, the program promotes a limited role of state in the economy and lower social benefits. This liberal program may appeal to younger rather than older people's expectations. According to the Levada Center, only 27% of young people declared that they could not live without state assistance, while among the older generations, the declared necessity for state support was as high as 70%.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Navalny has not built his image as a reflection of a western liberal democrat in Russia. When it comes to social rights, Navalny seems to be searching for his own way (or pretending to do so), and this just may work in the case of young Russians, since many of them don't identify with western democratic values entirely, but rather are looking for something in between western liberalism and Russian conservatism.

<sup>30</sup> <https://2018.navalny.com/>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>31</sup> *Pokolenie terpimych i niezawisimych*, 20.06.2017, <https://www.levada.ru/2017/06/20/pokolenie-terpimych-i-nezawisimyh/>, access: 10.08.2017.



Finally, Navalny, as has been already mentioned, surrounds himself with young people – people in their 20s and 30s constitute a majority of his team. The process of broadening the scope of Navalny's activities through more involvement and presence in the regions of Russia has been possible thanks to the substantial involvement of young Russians. Navalny's team has so far opened around 70 regional offices, and more than one-third of them are led by people who are not older than 30.<sup>32</sup> The youngest person among the coordinators is only 19 years old. These people are responsible for developing the regional structures of Navalny's movement and recruiting new activists. This means that as Navalny manages to build up a team of young activists and volunteers, his ability to reach out to other young Russians significantly increases. One can assume that one of the most effective ways to reach the younger generation is to use the potential of people their age who already believe in Navalny's leadership and vision of Russia and know what arguments and language to use to increase the number of supporters and potential voters for Navalny.

### **The future remains unclear**

The current protests in Russia are certainly worth a closer look, but one should be cautious as regards assessing their significance for possible political changes in Russia. Although young people were more visible at the demonstrations than ever before, this should not overshadow the fact that those who engaged in the protests constituted a small minority of Russian youth. People aged 25 and younger are fervent supporters of the ruling regime and are more likely to believe in a bright future for their country under the current political elites than the older generations. It is interesting to note that in the case of young people, their high support for the regime overlaps with their readiness to embrace change and their hopes for a new opening in Russian politics, a readiness which is less common

among the older generations. One might feel that while the older generations are less happy about the current political elites (President Putin excluded), they are also less willing to risk change, as it could turn out even worse than the current situation. On the other hand, young people appear to be much more optimistic about the future and have faith that changes will go in a positive direction.

Alexei Navalny is someone who knows how to take advantage of the fact that some young people are looking for a new quality in Russian politics. By addressing specific topics, such as corruption among the authorities, and by using effective communication channels (youtube and other social media) to communicate these topics, Navalny has earned recognition among young people. His image as an effective leader – someone new in Russian politics – has allowed him to gather a team of activists and volunteers who are now operating in 70 cities of Russia. This team, with its many young people, is aiming to achieve greater recognition and support for Navalny. One can guess that young people from the regions will be the most likely target of these actions.

Amidst the deliberations on the recent protests, two questions remain particularly interesting, and neither of them have clear answers. The first one is the reaction of the Russian authorities to the rising popularity of Alexei Navalny. And this is not only a question of the potential to ruthlessly detain Navalny and block his candidacy in the presidential election, but also a more sophisticated reaction via internet platforms, especially through Youtube and social media. How is the current ruling regime going to use its resources – including its army of “internet trolls” – to reach young people and to discredit Navalny and his co-workers? Some actions have already been taken, for instance, the Russian parliament has made further attempts to put limits on internet activity on the internet (i.e., making it harder to access blocked websites).<sup>33</sup> Also, a few weeks

<sup>32</sup> <https://2018.navalny.com/>, access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>33</sup> R. Rahimov, *Russia's millennials challenge...*

after the march protest, a short video comparing Navalny to Adolf Hitler was published on Youtube.<sup>34</sup> TV Rain (Телеканал Дождь) claims the video was produced by Agency One, by order of Kremlin.<sup>35</sup>

It seems that despite these actions, for now, Navalny is one step ahead of the authorities.

Another question is the future of the political opposition in Russia. How are they going to respond to the growing interest in politics among young Russians? It is Navalny and his team who at least in part created this situation, although they hope to use it for their own purposes. And for now, they are doing a pretty effective job, as Navalny's recognition and popularity among young people in Russia is on the rise. So, one might ask to what extent are young people a target for other opposition figures and whether we can expect a battle over young people in the near future – a battle between Navalny and the authorities and a battle between Navalny and the other opposition leaders.

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**Young Leaders for Europe**



A joint project  
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and Heinz Nixdorf Stiftung

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rosjVJieKw>  
access: 10.08.2017.

<sup>35</sup> *Rolik o Gitlere Nawalnom*, 22.04.2017,  
<https://tvrain.ru/news/rolik-433044/>, access: 10.08.2017.