The Prospects for a Color Revolution in Russia

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Abstract: From 1998 to 2005, six elections took place in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia that led to the defeat of authoritarian incumbents or their anointed successors, the empowerment of opposition forces, and, thereafter, the introduction of democratic reforms. Because Putin's regime closely resembles those regimes that were successfully challenged by these dramatic changes in politics, Russia is a logical candidate for such a "color revolution," as these electoral turnovers have been termed. Moreover, the color revolutions have demonstrated an ability to spread among countries, including several that border Russia. However, the case for a color revolution in Russia is mixed. On the one hand, the many costs of personalized rule make Putin's Russia vulnerable. On the other hand, Putin has been extraordinarily effective at home and abroad in preempting the possibility of an opposition victory in Russian presidential and parliamentary elections.

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The global wave of democratization, which began in the mid-1970s and continued through the mid-1990s, had two effects. One was to significantly expand the number of democracies in the world. The other was to transform the nature of dictatorship. While military and Communist Party regimes served as the most common forms of autocratic rule during the Cold War, a relatively new type of dictatorship became the global norm after. This version of dictatorship has been variously termed "hybrid," "competitive authoritarian," or "electoral authoritarian."[1]

These regimes originate in the failure of their predecessors to grow the economy and provide political order and national security.[2] Their defining feature is that they straddle democracy and dictatorship. On the one hand, they claim and appear to be democratic, given their liberal constitutions, representative institutions, and competition among parties and among candidates for political office. On the other hand, their leaders purposefully compromise

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doi:10.1162/DAED_ a_00431

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democracy. For example, just as the regime uses both laws and informal actions to curtail civil liberties and political rights, it also conducts elections on an uneven playing field that strongly favors the regime over the opposition.

How sustainable is this marriage between democracy and dictatorship? The purpose of this essay is to address this question by assessing the likelihood that Vladimir Putin's regime in Russia will experience a "color revolution," joining the cross-national wave of elections in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia from 1998 to 2005 that led to the defeat of autocrats and the empowerment of opposition forces.[3]

I focus on the prospects for a color revolution in Russia because Putin and his allies see the color revolutions as an existential threat.[4] Their fears are justified: Russia is a postcommunist Eurasian country and a competitive authoritarian regime, and it has been primarily in this region and invariably in such regimes that color revolutions have taken place. Moreover, with the exception of the collapse of the Yanukovych regime in Ukraine in February 2014, it has only been through elections – and not, say, through the more familiar mechanisms for deposing authoritarian rulers, such as foreign invasions, elite defections from the regime, mass protests, or military coups d'état – that authoritarian leaders have lost power in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia. Equally worrisome for Putin and his associates are two other aspects of color revolutions: they appear to be contagious, and they have been followed by not just the defeat of authoritarian incumbents, but also democratic reforms and closer ties with the West.

The analysis is divided into two parts. First, I offer some generalizations about the strengths and weaknesses of competitive authoritarian regimes and the conditions that support color revolutions. Second, I use these generalizations to evaluate the likelihood that Russia will join the wave of color revolutions that began in Slovakia (1998), moved to Croatia and Serbia (2000), and then moved to Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005).

Despite the apparent tensions between being both democratic and authoritarian, hybrid regimes have shown themselves to be remarkably durable.[5] Their resilience is based on two factors. First, their leaders keep winning elections. Indeed, incumbent political leaders or their anointed successors have won an average of four out of every five elections that have been held in competitive authoritarian regimes.[6]

Electoral successes reflect, in part, the formidable resources these leaders have at their disposal. These regimes typically create fake opposition parties; harass the real opposition and make it hard for their candidates to run for office; use state coffers and their control over the media to promote regime candidates; manipulate electoral rules to ensure the electoral success of the regime; and control voter registration and the tabulation of the vote. At the same time, authoritarian rulers repeatedly win elections because voters have good reasons to support them. Their records often compare favorably with those of their predecessors, and the opposition is typically divided, politically compromised, and unpopular. Equally important is the impact of their string of electoral victories. In projecting an image of political permanence, the leaders of these regimes are able to marginalize the opposition, tempt some of their critics to collaborate with the regime, and discourage defections from the ruling circle.[7] The second cornerstone of their power is their relationships with democratic institutions. By maintaining but undermining democratic institutions, political leaders in hybrid regimes carry out "nuanced" assaults on democracy; they can have their cake and eat it, too. While democratic insti-

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tutions give these regimes a patina of legitimacy at home and abroad and reassure citizens that the deviations from democracy, while needed in a time of crisis, involve measures that are both temporary and reversible, their subtle subversion gives political leaders wide-ranging and largely unaccountable powers.[8]

In addition, holding competitive elections contributes in important ways to the survival of these regimes. Just as these elections confer an image of accountable government and periodically refresh the regime's mandate to rule, so they have the additional benefits for the regime of helping autocrats identify supporters, expose opponents, gain some useful information about the electorate, and calibrate the distribution of rents.

Competitive authoritarian regimes, however, are also vulnerable. Lacking constraints, authoritarian rulers can go too far in pursuing their agenda of domination: for example, when evidence mounts that elections have been stolen or when too many of their opponents die under suspicious circumstances, the regime resorts to extreme forms of repression, targeting what are widely viewed as innocent victims. As they violate widely held democratic norms and leave an impression that the regime is so insecure that it needs to take desperate measures to stay in office, these flagrant abuses of power can undercut the popularity of incumbent leaders and embolden opposition forces.

Despite their contributions to the survival of these regimes, moreover, competitive elections pose risks for authoritarian rulers.[9] As we know from the color revolutions, oppositions can still win elections. Moreover, elections are scheduled ahead of time, their political stakes are high, and oppositions can in theory at least participate. As a consequence, competitive elections ultimately provide the opposition with three assets: opportunities to influence politics, time to plan their strategies, and focal points for political action.

Less obviously from the regime's perspective, stealing elections, too, can be a dangerous endeavor. It is not just that citizens, even in these compromised democracies, value free and fair elections, or that information about the quality of elections is widely available as a result of social media and the presence of domestic and, to a lesser extent, international election monitors. It is also that autocratic leaders depend upon lower-level officials to deliver their ideal outcome: that is, a margin of victory in the election that is high enough to demonstrate popular support of the autocratic incumbent and discourage the opposition, but not so large as to call into question the validity of the electoral process. The key problem is that it is *very* hard for the regime's lieutenants to hit that "sweet spot." Local officials tied to the regime act as individuals and cannot, in any event, easily coordinate their actions. They assume that their political future rests on their delivery of the vote, and they calculate how many votes they will steal based on their reading of the popularity of the regime and the opposition. Thus, if they think the regime is quite popular, they have strong incentives to win favor with the regime by delivering large majorities in their areas. Because each regime ally is likely to proceed with the same logic, the result is a landslide election. Lopsided election results are a big problem for the regime, however, because they feed suspicions about electoral fraud (while providing ample proof of various electoral irregularities) and increase the likelihood of postelection protests. Conversely, if local officials assume that the regime is unpopular and the opposition is a credible competitor, they may be tempted to take the opposite tack: deliver fewer "extra" votes for the regime and thereby protect themselves from allegations of electoral fraud in the event that the opposition wins. These cal-

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culations produce several unappealing scenarios insofar as the regime is concerned. If the election is close but the regime's candidates win, the opposition has strong incentives to allege fraud in the short-term and mount more ambitious electoral campaigns in the future. At the same time, if the opposition actually wins, the regime is forced to choose between two unpalatable possibilities: leaving office or refusing to do so. In the first case, the regime loses power; in the second, it risks widespread protests.[10]

What laid the groundwork for the color revolutions? A comparison between the six elections that empowered the opposition and those elections that failed to do so, whether in these same countries or in other hybrid regimes in the region, reveals some surprising answers to this question.[11]

One plausible explanation for the contrast between electoral continuity and change is that some regimes are more vulnerable than others. The logic here is simple: weak regimes invite strong challenges. The problem with this explanation is that none of the familiar indicators of regime weakness do a consistent job of distinguishing between elections that led to turnover in personnel and parties versus elections that maintained the authoritarian status quo. For example, one cannot predict a color revolution on the basis of distinctively high levels of corruption, unusually poor economic performance, or a noticeable and a dramatic fall-off in the ability of the state to do its job (such as controlling borders, providing political order, and implementing policies). At the same time, two other factors often used to measure regime weakness – that is, defections from the ruling circle and a significant shift in patterns of state coercion (whether up or down, depending on the theory) – also fail to distinguish between our two sets of elections.

Is the key factor, then, the character of the opposition? On the one hand, if we take a long-term perspective on the development of the opposition, we find few differences between the opposition in these six countries and the opposition in the remaining hybrid regimes in the region. In every case, the opposition is divided, compromised, and unpopular, and it repeatedly fails to function as an effective challenger to the regime as a result. On the other hand, if we take a shorter-term perspective, we discover a sharp contrast between the oppositions that won power and those that did not. In five of the six color revolutions (Kyrgyzstan is the exception), but not in the remaining electoral contests in all of the competitive authoritarian regimes in the region, the opposition won an impressive number of local elections (primarily in large cities) in the few years leading up to the pivotal national election. These victories were significant because they punctured the regime's "aura of invincibility" and thereby encouraged the electorate to take seriously the possibility of an alternative to the regime.[12] By running a dress rehearsal before the national election, moreover, the opposition was able to test candidates, issues, and campaign techniques, and acquire some governing experience. As a result, opposition forces improved their case for winning national elections, while gaining stronger incentives to cooperate with one another in pursuit of national office.

The other key development that distinguishes our electoral breakthroughs from all other elections in the competitive authoritarian regimes in the postcommunist region is a dramatic change in the way the opposition conducted its national campaign. The opposition was able to mount a powerful challenge to the regime because it forged a coalition among opposition parties; put forward single candidates, whether for parliamentary or presidential elections; worked closely with civil society groups; organized successful voter registration and turnout drives (which, in

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most cases, increased turnout in contrast with earlier elections); and created a youth movement or built on an existing one that opposed the regime. In addition, the opposition ran sophisticated campaigns that, among other things, played up the costs of the regime and the benefits of electing the opposition, made creative use of the media (even where the regime had extensive controls over it), and campaigned throughout the country (and not just the major cities). Also central to the opposition's new strategy was an ambitious program for monitoring the vote, such that regime violations of free and fair elections were duly recorded and broadly advertised.

In the more authoritarian countries that experienced a color revolution, such as Serbia, the opposition assumed that the regime would not leave power under any circumstances, and that the military and the security forces would back the regime. In anticipation of that scenario, they used electoral mobilization as the foundation for popular protests following the election. For this to work, they needed to establish some connections with the military and the security forces before the election – which they did.

How can we account for this remarkable shift in the behavior of the opposition? The answer is that the opposition was able to draw on the experiences of opposition groups in other competitive authoritarian regimes, such as the Philippines in 1986, Chile in 1988, Nicaragua in 1990, and, in the postcommunist region, Bulgaria in 1990, Romania in 1996, and, finally, Slovakia in 1998 (which began the wave of color revolutions). The model for winning power that was used in these countries had five advantages: it targeted elections as the site for change, it had a clear "to-do" list, it succeeded in its mission, it avoided violence, and it was easy to transfer across state boundaries.

But why was the change in opposition strategies so successful? One answer is obvious: these electoral strategies were vastly superior to those that the opposition had used in the past. However, there is another consideration that will be especially important, once we turn to the Russian case. Prior to these pivotal elections, repeated confrontations between the regime and the opposition had produced multiple victories for the former and multiple defeats for the latter. As a consequence of this history, the regime had few incentives to learn or change, whereas the opposition had powerful incentives both to learn and change. This dual logic meant that the regime was vulnerable to the electoral model, because past successes led it to overestimate its power, underestimate the opposition, and recycle the actions that had worked in the past. The regime, in short, was taken by surprise – a victim of its past successes.

As the wave of electoral turnovers continued, however, it moved into more difficult political terrain, as evidenced by the fact that a turnover in political leadership came to require not just winning elections, but also carrying out postelection protests. Authoritarians began to update their strategies in accordance with these new threats, and oppositions began to assume that they could prevail without the hard and tedious work associated with the electoral model. Because the element of surprise was gone and the resources of the opposition and the regime began to even out, the color revolutions came to a seeming end in 2005. However, the success of these oppositions led to a contradictory impact on the political complexion of the postcommunist space. While early risers in this wave transitioned to democracy and later risers made more modest democratic progress, the competitive authoritarian regimes that were able to avoid a color revolution became more authoritarian. While Serbia after 2000 exemplifies the first dynamic and Georgia after 2003 the second, Russia under Putin exemplifies the third.

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We can now use our generalizations about the conditions that support the electoral defeat of authoritarian rulers and the strengths and weaknesses of hybrid regimes to pose a final question. Is Russia ripe for a color revolution? At the outset, there appear to be good reasons to expect a color revolution in Russia's future.

Perhaps the most important is that Putin has used his sixteen years in power to build a system of personalized rule. Why is that costly? First, like his Communist predecessors, who also fused and centralized political power and economic resources, Putin has made it very easy for citizens to hold him personally responsible for both bad as well as welcome political or economic developments. This generalization, in turn, highlights the contradictory impact of crises on personalized rule. On the one hand, crises played a key role in the rise of competitive authoritarianism: they prime the support of any leader who seems to overcome crises and they legitimate that leader's assaults on democracy. In this sense, rulers like Putin have a vested interest in periodically "refreshing" the crisis button. However, because rule is personalized, citizens can also decide to hold the leader accountable for the crises that occur on his watch.

Another cost of personalized rule is that it goes hand in hand with a weak ruling party – a factor that figures prominently in some accounts of why authoritarian rulers fall.[13] After the collapse of the communist system, Russia was slow to develop a ruling party, in part because Yeltsin was less interested in institutionalizing his rule than in promoting his personal power. When a ruling party finally did form, it lacked an ideological foundation and, as a result, the capacity to do what strong parties do: structure public debates, public opinion, and voting behavior; recruit and socialize members; and institutionalize the power of the leader such that the party and, thus, the regime can outlive the downfall or death of the leader. Instead, United Russia, the dominant party, has largely functioned as a parking lot for ambitious individuals pursuing power and money. As a result, if Putin were to weaken or leave power for whatever reason, United Russia would quickly disintegrate and, like the collapse of the ruling parties of both Tudjman's Croatia and Shevardnadze's Georgia, would make the regime an easy target for a color revolution.[14] Moreover, Putin's success thus far in eliminating competitors does not alter this prediction. In most of the color revolutions, the leader that came to power was not, in fact, either a well-established leader of the opposition or a prominent defector from the regime. A seeming lack of alternatives to the leader, in short, does not foreclose a color revolution.

As is typical of personalized rule, moreover, Russia is, even by the low standards of hybrid regimes, unusually corrupt. Corruption is a problem for Putin, partly because public opinion surveys have demonstrated that a growing percentage of Russians are very concerned about corruption.[15] Corruption is also a problem because, without secure property rights and rule of law, economic performance suffers and the state's ability to implement policies is impaired.[16]

The latter issue leads to a more general point: the weakness of the Russian state. It is true that, under Putin's tutelage, the Russian state has centralized, has become somewhat more effective in collecting revenues, and is less subject to challenges to its authority by oligarchs, regional governors, and secessionist regions than it was during the Yeltsin years. At the same time, however, Putin's power is nonetheless compromised by the weakness of the Russian state. A case in point is Chechnya. While Putin eventually succeeded in ending the war in Chechnya and installing Ramzan Kadyrov, a leader there who pledges fealty to Moscow, it is unclear whether he or Putin has the upper hand.

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Indeed, their relationship is reminiscent of Soviet bloc politics during the Cold War when Eastern European regimes, dependent on Moscow for money, energy, and regime survival, converted their weakness into strength by blackmailing Moscow into providing significant subsidies. In the absence of such support, Eastern European leaders were able to warn that unrest would ensue and likely spread throughout the region, thereby destroying the entire bloc, including the Soviet Union.[17]

The spatial integrity of the Russian state is not the only area where Putin's record as a state-builder can be called into question. As Brian Taylor has argued, in comparative terms the Russian state is an "under performer," as indicated by, for example, widespread corruption, high murder rates, and citizens' anger about the ineffectiveness and the lack of accountability of the police and other state officials. Russia does not have a well-ordered, rule-bound, and, therefore, effective state; instead, "state employees act like bandits."[18]

Thus, personalized rule in Russia has been surprisingly costly for Putin: the regime depends on him for its functioning and very survival; he controls the state in theory, but not in practice; and personalized rule means that he has reneged on his promise to build political order. The dictatorship of law, a big theme in his rise to power, has proven elusive.

Putin is also vulnerable because he has failed in recent years to meet another standard by which he has argued he should be judged: delivering strong economic performance. As was mentioned earlier, only some of the color revolutions took place when the economy was on a downswing, suggesting that economic performance was not at the center of at least some of these electoral turnovers. That said, Russia presents a distinctive economic profile in the region given the striking contrast between an extended period of robust economic performance (during Putin's first two terms in office) and an economic slowdown, beginning in 2008, and then an actual contraction of the Russian economy since 2014 (during Putin's third term in office).

This pattern brings to mind two theories about regime change. The first is the "rising expectations" theory of revolution, wherein strong economic performance for a number of years, followed by a sharp and sudden decline, leads to a gap between what people have come to expect from the economy and what they get.[19] The result, according to this theory, is political upheaval. The other theory is of more recent vintage. As political scientist Kevin Morrison has argued, when autocratic governments rely on nontax revenues, such as energy exports, and thereby opt out of the democratic deal, wherein the regime trades accountable government for the right to tax the citizenry, a sharp decline in those nontax revenues leads to popular uprisings and often regime change.[20]

Finally, there is some evidence, albeit limited, that the color revolutions are having some impact on Russian politics. For example, Golos ("vote" in English) is a Russian NGO founded in 2000 that, like similar organizations in Croatia, Serbia, and Ukraine on the eve of their color revolutions, supports free and fair elections and monitors the vote, albeit not as thoroughly as we saw elsewhere during the color revolutions. Another example is the protests that broke out, primarily in Moscow, in response to the fraudulent parliamentary elections in 2011. Third, in his ultimately unsuccessful but surprisingly effective campaign for mayor of Moscow in 2014, the opposition leader, Aleksei Navalny, ran against corruption and relied on exactly the kinds of strategies that define the electoral model.[21] Finally and most recently, while the September 2016 parliamentary and regional elections led to an overwhelming victory for Putin's party, they also featured some important wins for the opposition in both

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St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as a significant decline in electoral turnout (as we also saw in the years leading up to the color revolutions).

If there are reasons to argue that the Putin regime is vulnerable, there are also reasons to see the Putin regime as a sustainable project. The strengths of this regime include several well-known assets. One is money: Russia is a much richer country than the countries that experienced color revolutions, and none of their leaders had the luxury, in contrast to Putin, of being able to use the "hydrocarbon sector as their personal bank."[22] Another is the sheer size of the Russian Federation and, in most of the country, its very low population density. If these characteristics get in the way of state capacity, they especially get in the way of a full implementation of the electoral model. Finally, there is Putin's popularity. While his approval rating on the eve of the crisis in Ukraine in late 2013 was 64 percent, in August 2014, largely in response to the annexation of Crimea, it was 84 percent.[23] However, there is a more complicated story regarding Putin's popular support. Rallies around the flag tend to be short-lived phenomena. Moreover, it is hard to gauge real popularity in the absence of alternatives to the leader. This is especially true given the fact that Russians express strong concerns about a variety of issues, such as corruption and the quality of their political institutions, that could easily migrate to their evaluation of Putin as a leader. [24]

Less obvious, but equally important, is the very resilience of the regime. By resilience, I refer, first, to the fact that Putin has been in power for sixteen years and, second, to the fact that he has won three elections handily and avoided, unlike Yeltsin in 1996, a runoff election for the presidency. Resilience is a factor that divides and discourages existing and would-be challengers.

If resilience speaks to Putin's ability to win elections and to maintain power, it also says a lot about two issues that are inextricably linked to one another in the Russian case: that is, Putin's refusal to take his power for granted and the pattern of growing authoritarianism over the course of Putin's rule. Put simply, the former has driven the latter. Thus, for reasons of safeguarding his power, Putin's regime has over time stepped up its harassment of the opposition and civil society groups, founded new civil society groups that are closely tied to the regime, and carried out a successful campaign of ending the autonomy of the oligarchs, the regional governors, and the media. In a similar vein, Putin has been quick to change electoral rules in ways that serve his interests: for example, by extending the length of the presidential term and thereby allowing for the possibility that he could remain president until 2024. Finally, Putin has manipulated the public discourse in ways that divide and marginalize opponents while bringing new groups into his coalition. For instance, in his first two terms, as Russian scholar Gulnaz Sharafutdinova has persuasively argued, Putin successfully eliminated the Yeltsin era's rhetorical emphasis on democratization and self-determination and substituted the value of centralization, dictatorship of law, and state-building.[25]

More recently, he has fashioned a new script that uses Russian exceptionalism, Russian nationalism, the projection of Russian power in the international system, cultural conservatism, and criticisms of the United States as a destabilizing force in the international system as the touchstones for mobilizing political support. These rhetorical themes, and the policies that have gone along with them, have expanded his coalition to include extreme nationalists and have divided the Russian opposition by forcing them to choose between being patriots or traitors. This new framing of how Russia should understand itself is a familiar

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ploy of dictators who want to stay in power but face economic difficulties. As one analyst recently argued in a comparison between contemporary Russian politics and Milosevic's rule in Serbia during the 1990s: "If Milosevic were alive today, he would sue Putin for plagiarism."[26]

Putin, therefore, is the very model of a rational authoritarian ruler who knows that using rhetoric, policies, and invisible interventions to preempt threats is a far better strategy than relying simply on coercion or responding to threats after they materialize. Putin has not just "protest-proofed" and "defection-proofed" his regime, he has also "diffusion-proofed" his hold on power. It is not accidental, for example, that the trend toward growing authoritarianism in Russia began not just in response to Putin's decisive reelection in 2004, but also in reaction to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in the same year; or that, in the wake of the Ukrainian color revolution, the Putin regime began to take steps toward making it harder for international election monitors to participate in Russian elections, the Russian media to be independent of the state, and NGOs in Russia to operate and to receive support from the West.

However, the most recent example of the influence of the color revolutions on Putin's behavior and his use of preemptive actions to ward off domestic and international popular protests began in late 2013 and continued with the implosion of the Russia-friendly Yanukovych regime in February 2014, the quick Russian annexation of Crimea a month later, and, thereafter, Russian destabilization of eastern Ukraine. One could argue that these events can be explained by the threats to Russian national security posed by a Ukraine that was moving toward Europe and away from Russia. However, this intervention also reflected Putin's fears that the unrest in Ukraine and the collapse of its Putin-friendly regime, with both of these developments coded by Putin and his advisors as yet another Western-directed color revolution, would destabilize Russia. As a result, while he had lost his man in Kiev, and thereby lost his ability to steer developments in Ukraine, Putin could at the least intervene in Ukraine in ways that would derail Ukraine's democratic experiment, reduce the appeals for Russians of the Ukraine scenario, and limit the ability of the West to respond forcefully to his covert violations of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty (for example, by manipulating international norms regarding minority rights and the responsibility to protect). Finally, aggression in Ukraine could mobilize Putin's popular support at home by playing up a "fascist" threat in Ukraine and reminding Russians that, with Putin at the helm and Crimea a new "subject" of the Russian Federation, the Russian state was finally in a position to expand – rather than, as in the recent past, contract – in both its physical size and its international influence.

The annexation of Crimea, in short, was very popular at home, while covert interventions in eastern Ukraine made sure that Russians would not be interested in following the precedent of Euromaidan. At the same time, Putin's repertoire of intervention served other domestic purposes, such as legitimating more energetic attacks on the media, civil society, and opposition groups.[27] Putin's fears of a color revolution, therefore, led him to carry out a complicated version of diversionary war: that is, wars launched by authoritarian rulers (in Putin's case, largely through covert means) to shore up their political support at home.[28]

There are two conclusions that we can draw from this assessment of the prospects for a color revolution in Russia. First, both Putin and the regime he has fashioned are vulnerable. This is largely due to several contradictions that lie at the heart of Putin's political project. One is the holding of regular and competitive elections, which

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works for but also against Putin and his regime. The other is that personalized rule both expands and limits Putin's power. While he promised rule of law, political order, and economic growth, he has been unable, especially in the past few years with respect to the economy, to deliver on these goals. In appearing to be hegemonic, moreover, he makes himself the target for opposition groups and disgruntled publics. Putin, in short, faces a difficult trade-off. The actions that enhance his personal power are precisely the actions that prevent the consolidation of his regime.

The second conclusion is that the vulnerability of authoritarian rulers and their regimes is one thing, and a color revolution quite another. At this point, Russia lacks the necessary and sufficient conditions for a color revolution; for instance, significant opposition success in winning local elections and subsequent adoption by the opposition of the electoral model in its quest to win national elections. The failures of the Russian opposition in these respects reflects both the difficulty of winning power, given the authoritarian environment within which they operate, and the stringent demands of the electoral model. However, the most important constraint on opposition forces is Putin's continuing commitment to proofing his regime from color revolutions and other challenges to his rule.

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ENDNOTES

[1] See, for example, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

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[3] For a more detailed analysis of the color revolutions, see Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

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[10] Ashlea Rundlett and Milan Svolik, "Deliver the Vote! Macromotives and Microbehavior in Electoral Fraud," unpublished manuscript, 2015.

[11] The analysis that follows draws heavily on Bunce and Wolchik, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders*.

[12] The term "aura of invincibility" is taken from Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9, 174.

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