Getting The Opposition Together: Protest Coordination in Authoritarian Regimes

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It widely recognized that unified oppositions represent a bigger threat to dictators than divided oppositions. However, much remains unknown about when opposition forces cooperate and when they do not. In this paper, we use microlevel data on opposition protests in Putin-era Russia to examine the factors that facilitate cooperation among local activists from different organizations and different ideological tendencies. In particular, we focus on what leads so-called systemic opposition parties—those who have been granted some institutional accommodation by the regime—to join forces with more radical, non-systemic opposition forces. We propose a novel randomization method for analyzing protest coordination using event count data and find that coordination is most likely on issues of fundamental importance to the systemic opposition's base. We also find that state cooptation reduces the extent of coordination. These findings illustrate the politically precarious position of 'loyal' opposition under autocracy; they must simultaneously show fealty to the state and maintain some measure of credibility as an opposition.

On February 11, 2011, Egypt's long-standing President Hosni Mubarak resigned. Once seen by many as the face of "durable authoritarianism" in the Middle East, Mubarak was overthrown by street protests that prompted the defection of key military allies and made Mubarak's position untenable (Brownlee et al. 2015; 71). The protests emerged from a network of activists and intellectuals in the *Kafiya* ("Enough") network and an online protest group, the *April 6 Movement. April 6*, named after a textile workers' strike, tied the urban intellectuals' struggle against Mubarak to that of labor movement, which had been growing in militancy in the face of economic decline (Beinin and El-Hamalawy 2007), as well as to the demands of myriad other protesters from the poor to judges and tax collectors (Masoud 2011; 21). As a result, the "Days of Rage" that prompted Mubarak's end represented a broad coalition of forces, bringing together formerly disparate, fractious and marginal opposition groups.

Such "negative" coalitions of street protestors are characteristic of politics in the post-Cold War era (Beissinger 2013), but the circumstances under which these coalitions come together are not well understood by political scientists and sociologists. We understand a lot about individual motivations to protest (Javeline 2003), and there is important work on the importance of social networks (Gonzalez-Bailon and Wang 2016), on the channels through which communication about protest takes place (Tufecki 2017) and on how technology can shape intra-group coordination (Pierskalla and Hollenbach 2013). Less is known, however, about the circumstances that can bring together activists from different political tendencies or groups. Scholars have studied inter-group coordination in the context of elections (Van de Walle 2006, Wahman 2011, Gandhi and Reuter 2013, Bunce and Wolchik 2011) and at key moments during political transitions (Ó Beacháin 2009, Beissinger 2013). On the other side of the coin, important work has been done on the techniques used by authoritarians to fragment their opponents, particularly during elections (Magaloni 2006, Lust Okar 2005).

Nevertheless, we still know little about protest coordination outside of elections and transitions. This is perhaps surprising since understanding the factors that encourage cooperation among different parts of society is one of the most important issues in the study of regime change. One finding that seems to stand up is the importance of economic crisis in generating coalitions of the discontented (Haggard and Kaufman 1997). Nevertheless, economic crisis, as experience in the former Soviet Union suggests, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for opposition coordination. Despite an ongoing economic crisis in Russia, liberal oppositionists supporting democracy and human rights have tended to be primarily drawn from the emerging middle class and from intelligentsia circles, while the working class, pensioners and the poor are more likely to protest around economic issues (Robertson 2013). Separately, these groups pose little threat to incumbent regimes, but when they come together, as they did without a particular economic crisis in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Rose Revolution in Georgia, formerly strong incumbents have been overthrown almost overnight.

While there are many different aspects to the issue of opposition coordination, we focus on one particularly important issue – cooperation between normally loyal "in-system" opposition groups and more radical opponents who are excluded from formal politics. Loyal oppositions, after all, play an important role structuring political conflict and helping to stabilize authoritarian rule in many countries (Lust-Okar 2005). Moreover, research suggests that cycles of contention and splits in the ruling coalition are more likely to emerge and grow when those excluded from formal politics are able to make allies with groups inside the system (Collier and Mahoney 1997, Tarrow 1998). We argue that the systemic opposition's decision to cooperate with the non-systemic opposition is influenced by two basic but potentially conflicting factors – the desire to retain core supporters and the need to maintain productive relations with the regime. Leaders of the systemic opposition must retain the support of core constituents if they are to maintain their credibility as an opposition. Consequently, when the non-system opposition advances grievances that are shared by the supporters of the systemic opposition, the systemic opposition is more likely to coordinate its protest activities with the non-system opposition. On the other hand, systemic opposition groups need to demonstrate loyalty to the regime in order to continue to receive access to patronage and spoils. Reuter and Robertson (2015) demonstrate how perks given to loyal opposition party leaders in Russia can lead to a reduction in social protest led by those parties. Following this logic, we argue here that such cooptation should not only lead to a reduction in protest, but should also make loyal oppositions less likely to coordinate their protests with other groups.

We test these arguments using original, daily events data on protest in the regions of Russia between 2007 and 2012. Specifically, we study how and when the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), Russia's primary in-system opposition party, coordinates its protests with leftist groups that are excluded from formal politics. We code coordination as instances when the KPRF and non-system groups hold protests on the same day, in the same place, with the same demands. In order to analyze patterns and correlates of coordination we employ an innovative "randomization inference" technique. The motivation behind this technique begins with a recognition that groups may (rarely) protest in the same place and time with the same demands *by pure chance*. Our randomization inference approach first entails estimating a "null" level of coordination, which is the level of simultaneous (same-day, same

place, same demand) protest we would *expect* to see in a region if the two groups were choosing to protest at random. We then define "extra-random coordination" as the difference between the amount of coordination we observe and what we would expect to see by chance.¹ This allows us to test systematically whether we are observing significantly more extra random coordination in any given region. This randomization inference approach has the added benefit of allowing us to account for a number of other factors that may codetermine the incidence of joint protest – namely the length of the legislative convocation, the overall level of protest among the KPRF and the overall level of protest among the non-system opposition.

We find that the KPRF is significantly less likely to coordinate its protest with nonsystem groups when KPRF leaders are granted important leadership positions in the regional legislature. In return for access to legislative spoils, KPRF leaders not only demobilize their followers, but also make doubly sure that they do not coordinate their protest activities with the non-system opposition. In addition, we find that the KPRF and non-system groups are more likely to coordinate protests on issues related to material demands—such as inflation, social assistance, wages, and employment—issues that are of primary importance to the KPRF's core electorate.

The findings illuminate the politics of protest coordination in contemporary authoritarian regimes. When systemic oppositions rely on constituencies that are motivated primarily by material concerns, economic downturns are likely to represent moments of real danger for incumbents. Such crises can unite disparate parts of the opposition. The paper also helps to illustrate the delicate situation faced by systemic oppositions in contemporary authoritarian regimes. The KPRF, like other systemic oppositions, is often dismissed as a mere poodle of the

¹ We identify chance coordination through a simulation, which we discuss below.

regime. Our findings suggest instead, that systemic oppositions face the difficult task of being both a poodle of the regime and a guard dog for their own core constituencies.

Opposition Coordination in Authoritarian Regimes

Political scientists have grappled with the question of opposition coordination in authoritarian regimes in two different ways – by examining the incentives for opposition parties to coordinate in elections and by analyzing the logic of protest participation under autocracy. Drawing on the literature on pre-electoral coalitions in democracies, some have argued that specific features of the electoral systems and institutions such as district magnitude and the number of parties participating in elections are likely to be important in influencing decisions amongst party leaders on whether to coordinate their efforts (Golder 2006, Gandhi and Reuter 2013). More specific to the case of electoral coordination under authoritarianism, scholars have argued that behavior is also shaped by the likelihood that a regime transition is about to take place (Wahmann 2012, Van De Walle 2006). As a transition becomes more likely, opposition parties are more likely to coordinate because it is more likely that their efforts to unseat the regime will be successful.

However, these explanations offer only limited insight into protest coordination. Electoral institutions such as district magnitude are unlikely to have a direct impact on protest coordination. The probability of transition, on the other hand, is likely to affect the probability of protest coordination. As Kuran (1991) demonstrated, when transition is highly likely, citizens in general – and would-be political leaders – have very strong incentives to "coordinate" by joining in with ongoing protests (Kuran 1991). However, as Kuran also argues, these incentives are only likely to appear late and unpredictably, so they are of limited use in helping us understand the systematic factors that shape protest coordination. Finally, explanations based on commitment

problems rest on arguments about elite squabbles over the division of spoils and office. They have less relevance for explaining the coordination of street protest.

The other main approach to coordination in political science has been to look at how individuals take cues from each other about whether and when to protest. Most of the early literature in this area focused on individual level propensities, attitudes or calculations that lead people to act together. Kuran (1991) and Lohmann (1994) outline different ways in which one person's actions influence others' decision to protest or not. Echoing research on funerals and other coordinating events (Tamason 1980), Tucker (2007) argues that citizens are likely to come together in protest when elections act to coordinate widespread discontent with corruption. Relatedly, Beissinger (2013) has argued that cultural cleavages and symbolic capital can be very important in bringing together diverse groups of people in the kind of short-lived negative coalitions that seem typical of contemporary urban revolutions.

More recent work, however, reflects the dramatic changes wrought by the emergence of social media and other information technologies. The spread of cell phones (Pierskalla and Hollenbach 2013), Facebook (Reuter and Szakoni 2015) and Twitter (Tucker et al. 2013) has allowed activists to communicate directly with one another in ways that were unimaginable at the time of Kuran's revolutions "out of nowhere". As Tufecki (2017) argues, this ability to communicate makes coordination possible on a scale that was unachievable before. Nevertheless, as Tufecki also points out, most existing analyses tell us a lot about the potential for so-called "leaderless" mobilizations, but, necessarily, tend to occlude the role of organizations in building structures that are able to sustain protest across time and space. While individual level analyses might lead us to think that failure can make protest a "one-shot deal"

(Meirowitz and Tucker 2013), bringing organizations into the picture shows how movements can survive failure and come back stronger and more cohesive (Bunce and Wolchik 2011).

Hence, organizations and the patterns of cooperation that they engage in are crucial in shaping patterns of protest not just at any given time, but also in influencing long-term patterns of development. What determines whether groups are likely to cooperate in protest rather than go it alone? More specifically, under what conditions is an in-system opposition group likely to coordinate with more radical, non-system groups? In the next section, we argue that the extent and timing of cooperation is likely to depend on a combination of incentives offered by the state and pressures from below.

Why and When Would Protesters Coordinate?

The incentives for opposition activists to coordinate protest rather than protesting alone seem quite powerful on the face of it. If we assume that protesters would like to maximize the chances of achieving satisfaction of their demands, then having more individuals participate would clearly help. A broader coalition can help demonstrate worthiness, unity and numbers. Moreover, bringing the organizational resources and political networks of two groups together will generally give them more reach and influence than if they act apart, particularly if there is complementarity between their organizational networks (Almieda 2010).

However, there are also disincentives to coordination. Coordination necessarily involves a process of cooperation and negotiation. The specific nature of the demands being made and the way in which these demands are presented, as well as the repertoire of tactics used to express demands, might all become subject to discussion, negotiation and perhaps compromise. Activists might fear a loss of ideological purity or coherence. In situations of high distrust, they might also fear that cooperation will make them vulnerable to manipulation by the state. Finally, in authoritarian regimes, coordination may draw the wrath of the state, which may levy sanctions against both in-system and non-system groups in order to keep them from uniting (Gandhi and Reuter 2013). Consequently, decisions on whether or not to cooperate are likely to vary across time and space. In this section, we outline some of the major factors that we think are likely to influence patterns of cooperation.

We focus specifically on the incentives faced by in-system or loyal opposition groups in making decisions about whether to cooperate with more radical groups or non-system protesters. In many authoritarian settings, regime leaders divide political opposition into a systemic component that is allowed to participate in official politics and a non-systemic component that is excluded from elections, spoil distribution, and policy making. In some settings, the "systemic" opposition is called the "loyal" or "official" opposition. Excluded groups meanwhile are sometimes referred to as the "radical opposition" or the "unrecognized opposition." Such arrangements are very common in the Arab world, where Islamic parties are often excluded from official politics, while more secular opposition parties are allowed to compete in elections and even win seats (Lust-Okar 2005). But the practice is common outside the Middle East as well. In Indonesia, the Suharto's New Order regime banned the Communists, some Islamic groups, and many student organizations, but allowed a number of official opposition parties to win seats in the legislature-most prominently the United Development Party (PPP). In South Africa under apartheid, opposition parties representing Colored and Indian South Africans took seats in the Tricameral Parliament and opposition parties existed in the White chamber, while the African National Congress and hundreds of other anti-apartheid groups remained outside the system.

In this context, systemic oppositions find themselves with a difficult role to play as they try to balance pressures from their constituents against pressures from above from the state. In

the rest of this section we outline the ways in which this combination of pressures is likely to shape the extent and nature of protest coordination.

Pressures from below – grievances

Systemic opposition parties face a delicate problem. The value to the regime of a "loyal opposition" depends not just on their loyalty, but also on their credibility as an opposition. The systemic opposition needs rank and file members as voters and supporters. More importantly, they also need to retain enough of an oppositional reputation to attract disgruntled regime opponents into their party. As a result, in-system opposition leaders have to be seen as responsive to the grievances of their members and potential sympathizers.

In-system opposition parties are likely to be especially concerned about their credibility as regime opponents when the non-systemic opposition is engaged in protest over issues that are of concern to the systemic opposition's supporters. In such cases, the systemic opposition risks losing supporters to the radical opposition if it does not take a stand to press its supporters' demands. Rather than take a back seat to the non-systemic opposition, and potentially lose supporters, the systemic opposition will bear the costs of coordination in these cases. By contrast, when the non-systemic opposition is protesting about issues that are not relevant to the core policy and political demands of the systemic opposition's supporters (or potential supporters), then the systemic opposition will see few benefits and many costs in coordinating with the non-systemic opposition.

The question, then, is which type of issues are likely to be of concern to the systemic opposition's supporters. While the answer to this question is likely to vary across settings and will usually depend on the specific ideologies of the parties involved, several general propositions can be offered here. Issues related to the material distribution of resources, such as

inflation, wage payments, pensions, social insurance or economic crises are likely to affect wide swaths of the electorate, including supporters of the systemic opposition. By contrast, issues that relate to civil rights, rule of law, and the legitimacy of the national leadership are less likely to animate systemic opposition supporters. Systemic opposition activists are less subject to arbitrary repression and operate within the political system, hence they have less reason to undermine the fundaments of that system. Thus, demands that do not represent a challenge to the system as a whole or to the national leadership are likely to be accommodated by the systemic opposition more easily than demands that directly threaten either the way the political system operates or the incumbent leadership (Chen 2012). Therefore, protests related to material issues ought to see more frequent coordination, while coordination is likely to be much rarer on issues such as civil rights issues and the rule of law.

Incentive from the state -- cooptation

The other side of the systemic opposition's dilemma relates to the state. Regime leaders buy the cooperation of systemic oppositions by giving them access to perks, privileges, and limited influence on policy. The extent to which an in-system opposition group coordinates its protest with others is likely to be conditioned by the incentives offered by the incumbent authoritarians to refrain from cooperation with other parts of the opposition. From the incumbents' perspective, coordination among opposition groups is a threat, particularly when that cooperation spans groups that are allowed to organize politically and groups that are not. Consequently, the state has incentives to inhibit cooperation between in-system and non-system groups.

In turn, we should expect the nature of the institutional incentives on offer to affect the degree to which in-system opposition groups coordinate with non-system groups. From the

perspective of the systemic opposition, coordination with the opposition risks the loss of those perks and privileges that access to the state provides. Thus, coordination comes with significant costs, and we should not expect to see much coordination between the in-system and non-system oppositions where the value of those perks and privileges is high.

Systems that provide strong incentives for in-system groups to moderate their activity provide powerful tools for incumbents to control in-system groups through the threat of removing or granting access to institutional politics and the perks it provides. Reuter and Robertson (2015) show how the specific institutional structure of legislatures facilitates the rationing of spoils to influential opposition elites, who, in return for access to these spoils, refrain from mobilizing their followers on the streets. They find that protest by the systemic opposition in Russia is reduced when the systemic opposition is offered important legislative leadership positions. Given the special dangers posed to the regime by opposition coordination, we expect that this type of institutional cooptation will not only reduce protest by the systemic opposition, but will also have the added effect of reducing the incidence of coordination with the non-system opposition.

Research Design: Opposition Protest Coordination in Russia

Most existing studies of protest coordination are qualitative in nature (Van Dyke 2010 and McCammon). This is largely because identifying and understanding coordination requires extremely detailed information on the activities of and interaction between different groups. Coordination, after all, can take many forms, ranging from the exchange of information about intentions to in-depth cooperation in planning and developing protests and campaigns. Getting to grips with coordination on this level typically requires deep qualitative analysis. In this paper, however, we propose a different approach that combines close qualitative knowledge with new

quantitative techniques to allows us to systematically test hypotheses about the quantity and timing of coordination between one in-system party and non-system actors.

To test the arguments presented above we look at sub-national protest patterns in Russia. We analyze coordination of protest between the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), Russia's primary in-system opposition party, and a loose grouping of non-system organizations that are broadly leftist in orientation. This approach allows us to hold constant some of the many factors that are likely to affect patterns of coordination and get a close look at the theorized relationships. Specifically, by looking at the relationship between one in-system party and a group of non-system organizations whose characteristics are well-known we can both understand and hold largely constant the effect of ideological distance in our analysis, interethnic trust (neither group are organized on ethnic lines, nor is there evidence of a hidden ethnic component) and key features of institutional design. As far as we are aware, there are no crossnational datasets on protest that would provide anything like the kind of contextual information that we are able to assemble in this one case.

Moreover, Russia is good setting for this research for several practical reasons. Its large number of sub-national units allow us to conduct large-N research on the link between political characteristics and protest dynamics. Moreover, protest by the opposition is common in Russia, and there is a clear distinction between in-system and non-system groups.

Coding Political Protest in Russia

Identifying Protest Events

To test our hypotheses, we develop data that capture two different protest dynamics – events organized by the in-system opposition and events organized by those activists and groups who are not part of the formal political process. Identifying a source for the data on the in-system

opposition is relatively simple. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), Russia's principal in-system opposition party, has long has had an ambiguous relationship with the Putin regime. On the one hand, the party wages a sometimes bitter rhetorical contest with the ruling authorities and represents the principal electoral challenge to the ruling party. On the other hand, the KPRF also cooperates with the regime in certain spheres. Most notably, it participates in formal legislative decision-making bodies at both the national and subnational level, thereby helping to legitimate them. As the December 2011 protests showed, the KPRF also moderates its opposition when necessary and refrains from cooperating with other opposition groups. In this way, the KPRF is central to the operation of electoral authoritarianism in Russia.

The KRPF publishes on its website systematic news reports that cover its protest activities. We analyzed these news reports and compiled a dataset that records information on the KPRF's protest activities in Russia's 83 regions from July 2007 through July 2012. The database contains data on 3898 protest events along nine different dimensions – date, type of event (strikes, hunger strikes, marches, demonstrations etc.), location (both region and specific town or county), type of participants (workers, pensioners, women, students etc.), number of participants, nature of the demands made (619 categories), location of protest (e.g. governor's office, regional parliament), and duration.

For data on protest by non-system groups we compiled monthly event counts from the opposition website ikd.ru. The Institute of Collective Action (IKD) is a group of sociologists who have for several years compiled weekly reports of protest actions in Russia. The focus of these reports is on events by non-system opposition parties, civil organizations, and unofficial grassroots organizations (Reuter and Robertson 2015) The website covers actions reported by IKD correspondents and newspapers throughout the Russian Federation. Detailed information on

each event is presented in the "news wire" (*lenta novostei*) section of the website. These text reports were compiled into quantitative event data using the same procedure as for the KPRF data resulting in information on 5726 events between 2007 and 2012. While no single data source can possibly be seen as a definitive record of all non-system opposition activities, the focus of the IKD provides us with a particularly good test of our theory of coordination. This is because there is considerable ideological overlap between the KPRF and the groups represented in the IKD. IKD describes itself as a group of "activists from a variety of social organizations – leftist groups, labor unions, environmental and youth organizations – people who share and reflect the interests of the majority of the population of the country who live from their labor. [...] Our weapon is critical thinking, information and collective action". Consequently, while there are clearly always some ideological differences, coordination between KPRF and IKD groups is plausible and, as we see below, in practice not that rare.

We collected daily data by region on whether the IKD groups or KPRF were protesting and, if so, what demands they were making. Collecting data on the demands made at political events is complicated by the fact that in any form of collective action, different participants will typically have different reasons for participating. Moreover, even if we ignore issues of individual motivation, there are often multiple related demands that are made. These demands are then subject to category judgment calls by coders. Thus any system for coding demands is necessarily reductive. To minimize such problems, we collected data on the specific claims made (to the extent that it is reported) at events. Up to two demands were recorded per event. This gave us more than 10 000 demands. We then grouped demands by specific topics. To group demands the following categories were used – material, security, criminal justice/civil rights, political parties and appointments, elections, historical commemorations, foreign affairs,

environmental/development and other. Protests that were taking place on the same day in the same region with the same demand are treated as coordinated. Our resulting dataset contains 158,499 region-day observations stretching from July 2007 through July 2012.

Independent Variables: Measuring Grievances and Cooptation

Grievances

As noted above, grievances were recorded by noting up to two different demands made at each protest event. Coders were instructed to produce a short description of the main demands from longer text reports about the event. Each demand was then allocated to a category. Categories were derived empirically with regard to the incidence of different kinds of claims and the action it would take to resolve the demand. The following categories were used – material, security, civil rights, political, elections, historical commemorations, foreign affairs, environmental and other.

Material demands include claims for unpaid wages, unpaid benefits and the legal claims of jilted investors, demands for changes in social policies, notably in housing and related issues, or for changes in economic policy, notably with regard to prices and inflation. *Security* includes demands for protection by the state from bandits, kidnappers or other private threats to security. *Nationalist* includes both ethnic Russian nationalism and other claims based around nationality or ethnicity. *Civil Rights* covers a range of demands from general claims about the right to organize politically or to exercise free assembly to specific demands related to individual prisoners or people, gay rights, women's rights and similar claims. *Political* includes claims made in support of (or against) specific political parties and individual office holders. The *Election* category focuses on complaints about irregularities regarding registration for, or conduct of, elections at all levels. *Historical* events are gatherings commemorating national

holidays (May Day, Soviet Army Day) or other traditional festivals. *Foreign Affairs* includes claims related to Russia's relations with other states. It also includes protests about Russian military operations in Caucasus. Finally, the *Environment* category includes claims that focus either on environmental protection or on issues of construction, demolition, renovation of properties.

Above we argued that the KPRF was likely to coordinate with the non-system opposition on demands that mattered to its core constituency but that did not call into question the fundamental principles of how the system operates. The KPRF draws its support from older, economically disadvantaged groups, who prioritize economic issues such as inflation, pensions, and state benefits. Indeed, as Table 1 illustrates material demands are certainly of major significance to the KPRF. Hence, we would expect:

H1: The KPRF will coordinate more on material demands relative to other kinds of issues.

By contrast, civil rights issues are both less central to the KPRF core constituency and more challenging to the system. So we expect:

H2: The KPRF will coordinate with non-system groups less on civil rights issues.

Table 1 presents a first cut at looking at the distribution of demands at each event across the different categories. The data support the general ideas behind our hypotheses that the KPRF and IKD datasets represent in-system and non-system versions of ideologically proximate groups. For the KPRF material demands, whether for wages, enforcement of obligations or other policies, represent some 32.1 percent of events, while for the IKD the proportion is 39.7 percent. By contrast, nationalist or ethnic demands make up a very small proportion of total events. In an opposition that that has "red" (leftist) and "brown" (fascist) elements, both the IKD and KPRF seem to be, as we would have expected, very much on the red end.

	KPRF	KPRF	Non- System	Non- System
Type of Demand	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Material	1228	32.1	2199	39.7
Security	159	4.2	163	2.9
Nationalist	5	0.1	12	0.2
Civil Rights	196	5.1	931	16.8
Political	742	19.4	187	3.4
Election	475	12.4	178	3.2
Historical	611	16.0	115	2.1
Foreign Affairs	173	4.5	59	1.1
Environment	163	4.3	1606	29.0
Other	73	1.9	82	1.5
Total	3825	100	5532	100.0

Table 1: Distribution of Protest Events by Demand Type

On the other hand, there are also interesting differences between the two sets of demands, very much in line with the kinds of differences one would expect to see between in-system and non-system groups. The KPRF, as an organized political party, is more heavily involved in issues related to parties and office holders and to issues related to the conduct of elections. By contrast, the IKD data involves relatively few of these kinds of issues, but contains a lot of protests against decisions by courts and other executive bodies that have implications either for civil rights or for environmental/development issues.

Cooptation

We measure the benefits of participation in institutions by looking at the institutional opportunities for rent-seeking that are distributed to *leaders* of the in-system opposition. Reuter

and Robertson (2015) call this personal cooptation and show that this type of cooptation reduces overall levels of protest by systemic parties in Russia. To measure personal cooptation, we look at the allocation of important legislative leadership positions to KPRF leaders. Original data on the partisan distribution of leadership positions in Russian regional legislatures was collected by the authors for the period between 2007 and 2012. We classify speakerships, vice-speakerships, and committee chairmanships as leadership positions.

In Russian legislatures committee chairmen and vice speakers are of higher status than regular deputies, playing the key role in guiding legislation and allocating patronage opportunities (Remington 2001, Remington 2008). Moreover, such leadership positions come with a host of other perks such as increased staff, salary, and office space. Given the reduced role of Russian legislatures in policy-making over the period of analysis, our view is that these leadership positions provide their occupants primarily with private benefits.

The KPRF received a leadership position after 61 of the 161 regional elections (38%) for which data is available between 2003 and 2012. In 40 of the 55 convocations where they received a leadership position, the KPRF received only one leadership position. These leadership positions almost invariably are awarded to the top leadership of the KPRF in the region, and are usually awarded to the party's faction leader in the legislative organ. In the period under study, the KPRF never held a speakership. All speakerships were held by members of United Russia. Our main independent variable is *KPRFLeadership*, which is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the KPRF holds any leadership position in a given month. We expect:

H3: KPRF is less likely to coordinate with non-system protests in regions where it has a leadership position in the regional legislature.

Alternative Explanations

Ours is not the only possible explanation for protest coordination. One such explanation is strong social ties and a history of cooperation among groups within a specific context. While national leadership group leadership may have its own priorities, local cooperation is likely to depend heavily on the previous history of cooperation in a particular place and on the existence of social ties between groups locally (Obach 2010). The nature and quality of these social ties is often quite idiosyncratic, but is likely to be conditioned quite consistently by a number of features. Groups that are ideologically close are, *ceteris paribus*, more likely to cooperate (Roth 2010). Moreover, social ties are also likely to be influenced by previous historical patterns of protest – places with a culture of social protest in the past have both had more opportunities for coordination to take place and are more accepting of protest as a viable and acceptable political strategy. Therefore, places with a history of protest are more likely to see cooperation among opposition groups that places without such a history (Diani, Lindsay and Purdue 2010).

In order to examine such arguments, we estimate models that evaluate the impact of previous coordination on current coordination. These models are presented in the supplementary materials. We find that, while theoretically convincing, there is little statistically reliable evidence in favor of this explanation.

We also control for the seat share of the KPRF in the regional legislature. While we outlined clear expectations about the effect of legislative leadership positions on KPRF protest above, expectations about the effect of party seat shares on levels of in-system protest are more ambiguous. On one hand, coopted parties should conduct their business more within the

institutions than on the streets, leading to a reduction in both protest and protest coordination on the part of these groups. However, winning seats in the legislature, assuming elections are not completely falsified, will also be determined, to some degree, by the latent electoral strength of the opposition. Regions with a strong in-system opposition might have a higher or lower baseline level of coordination irrespective of cooptation. This means that we cannot draw strong empirical conclusions about the effect of party cooptation on coordination. Whatever the empirical prediction, including this control is necessary to help us separate the effect of personal cooptation from the strength of the in-system opposition. After all, the decision to grant a leadership position to the KPRF is, to some degree, determined by the strength of the communist opposition in the region (Reuter and Robertson 2015).

Second, in line with both grievance and business cycle models of protest, we control for *Lagged Unemployment*. Third, we control for factors that could affect the ability of system and non-system oppositions to engage in collective action, such as the openness of the media, *Press Freedom*, and levels of *Urbanization*. The former also serves as a proxy for repression – opposition parties may be less inclined to coordinate if they will be repressed for doing so (Gandhi and Reuter 2013) – and urbanization proxies geographical factors that shape the costs of collective action. Fourth, we control for the share of a region's economic output that is due to natural resource extraction and mining, *Natural Resources*. Regional governments with access to rent revenues have more fungible resources that they can use to buy support, which may make it easier for regional governments to use patronage to induce fragmentation among opposition parties. Fifth, we control for the ethnic makeup of the region, *% Russian Population*. Russia's ethnic republics are, for a number of reasons, more repressive, so this measure may also act as a

proxy for repression. We also control for *Log(Population)*, the two capitals Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the level of economic development in the region, *Log (GRP/Capita)*.

It is also worth noting that several prominent explanations of opposition coordination are held constant in the above research design. Electoral rules do not vary significantly across the regions over the period of analysis. Moreover, interethnic distrust, which is a prominent explanation of coordination failures in sub-saharan Africa, is not a salient issue in most Russian regions (Koter 2013, Arriola 2012). Ethnic cleavages, although they were very often mobilized for political gain in ethnic republics in the 1990s, are not an axis that divides the Russian opposition in the 2000s. To the extent that they may be a salient issue in the ethnic republics, we control for the percent of the region that is Russian (see above).

Statistical Method and Results

The data discussed above present an unusual opportunity to test coordination with quantitative data. They do not, of course, solve all problems that hinder quantitative analysis of coordination. There are at least two potential problems with the approach. First, we identify instances of coordination employing a mechanical algorithm – protesting in the same place at the same time with the same demand. This approach puts a lot of weight on the coding of demands (dates and places should be less open to interpretation). Coders must interpret a written text to generate up to two demands and then these demands must be mapped into categories. It is possible that at the end of this process we have some false positives and false negatives. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the qualitative news reports that underlie the quantitative data makes us confident that our measure is actually a conservative one, with false negatives probably more of an issue than false positives.

More importantly, even with a close reading of a limited number of groups, what our quantitative data show is coincidence of protest – same place, same time, same issue. We have no direct information that the participants actually communicated and cooperated in the run-up to the event. Consequently, the data still only allows us to infer coordination rather than to observe it directly. As a result, we have little to say about the quality of coordination.

Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume at least some coordination or interaction among groups that protest on the same issue at the same time in the same place, particularly when we can rule out that the patterns are produced by chance. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that the regime, which is watching the behavior of these groups, makes the same assumption. The regime observes similar protests in the same place at the same time by different groups and likely infers coordination and cooperation whether or not there was coordination in any meaningful sense.

To evaluate the correlates of coordination, we aggregate protest days across the regionconvocation. If we used the raw aggregate counts, a simple poisson or negative binomial model might allow us to test the hypotheses of interest. However, while it is easy to simply count the number of times coordination happens, it is less clear how these counts should be compared. For example, consider Yaroslavl from March 2008 through September 2012. In this time-period, the KPRF protested on material demands 32 days, the non-systemic opposition protested on the same issue a total of 62 days. The two groups protested about material demands on the same day in this region a total of 20 times. One immediately apparent issue is that coordination on a given issue will be more likely on issues that see frequent protests. For instance, as Table 1 shows, the most common protest demand for both groups is *Material* issues. If we did not account for differences in the baseline level of protest on this issue, we might erroneously conclude that

coordination on *Material* issues is more common, simply because there are higher rates of protest on these issues. Returning to the Yaroslavl example, the question is: given the baseline level of protest activity by each group on each issue, how unusual would it be for these groups to coordinate 20 times? That is, how do we evaluate coordinated events in the light of differential opportunities to cooperate across region and time?

We also consider several other aspects of the data to compare coordination across regions. First, the region-convocations do not all have the same temporal range. The range of convocation days ranges from 1 to 2171 with an average of approximately 1100 and a standard deviation of roughly 575. If this were the only complication, we could specify the simple models with an exposure term counting the number of convocation days. Presumably, coordination is more likely to happen (or happen at greater levels) when there are more opportunities. The exposure term in a count model would allow us to model this sort of mechanism.

There are, however, other complications as well. The KPRF does not protest at the same rate in all regions (or on the same set of demands with equal frequency). The number of KPRF protest days (regardless of demand) ranges from 0 to 182 with an average of roughly 30 and a standard deviation of roughly 25. Thus, we cannot simply specify an exposure term in a simple GLM. Further, from region-to-region, the number of IKD protest days varies as well. The KPRF can only coordinate with IKD groups if those groups are in the streets. This three-fold set of exposures makes conventional inference more challenging.

To deal with these problems, we propose a randomization inference approach (Fisher 1935, Bowers and Panagopoulos 2011, Ding, Feller and Miratrix 2016). The first step in the process is to establish the null level of coordination. Here, we don the hat of the skeptic and consider how often would we expect to see protest events appear to be coordinated if the KPRF

and IKD groups were, in fact, making independent, unrelated decisions (e.g., if each day, each group just flipped a coin to figure out whether or not it would protest that day on a specific issue). To implement this procedure, we use the observed protest levels for both the KPRF and the non-systemic opposition. Assuming the marginal level of protest and the allocation of protest across demands is fixed for both the KPRF and IKD groups, we randomly reorder each group's observed protest behavior for the time-period and region under consideration. This produces a series of zeros and ones across a series of demands. Since these have been randomly reordered, they are independent by definition.

Next, we record how often the two groups protested on the same day with the same demand for each of the ten possible demands. We repeat this process 10,000 times for each region/convocation to build a null distribution of coordination on each of the demand categories. Figure 1 presents histograms of the extent of maximum coordination under the null hypothesis. Note that on foreign, national and security issues, we anticipate very little, if any, coordination by random. After all, protests on these issues are rare. In contrast, there is considerable "random" coordination possible on civil rights, elections, environmental and material issues.





We operationalize our dependent variable in the following way. We define C_{ij} as the observed level of coordination among the KPRF and the non-systemic opposition in

region/convocation i on demand j and $C_{0ij}^{(t)}$ as the null level of coordination in region/convocation i on demand j for iteration t of our randomization mechanism described above. We define C_{ij} as:

$$C_{ij} = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{n_i} KPRF_{kj} \times IKD_{kj}}{\sum_{k=1}^{n_i} KPRF_{kj}},$$

where i is an index for region/convocation, k is a binary variable indicating KPRF protest on day $k = \{1, ..., n_i\}$ of the convocation and j is an index for the demand about which the KPRF was protesting. Next, we define as

$$\Delta_{ij}^{(t)} = C_{ij} - C_{0ij}^{(t)}$$

and the average over the randomization mechanism as:

$$\bar{\varDelta}_{ij} = \frac{1}{10000} \sum_{t} \varDelta_{ij}^{(t)}.$$

Figure 2 presents the distribution of $\overline{\Delta}_{ij}$, the average across all of the t iterations of the randomization mechanism for each issue in each region/convocation. Negative values here indicate coordination levels that are, on average, less than we would expect by chance. Values greater than zero indicate coordination among groups that is greater than we would expect by chance. While not always the case, extra-random coordination greater than about 0.04 is typically statistically bigger than zero with 95% confidence. It is worth noting here that extra-random coordination is not the norm. Significant levels of extra-random coordination happen the most on material issues (33 of 167 legislative convocations) then civil rights issues (15 of 167 legislative convocations) and political and historical issues (9 of 167 legislative convocations).

Figure 2: Extra-random Coordination



Average Extra-random Coordination

Of course, coordination may appear "extra-random" because both sides are responding to external events. The two sides protest on the same day at the same time in the same place because they are both responding to some local political crisis, election campaign or economic crisis. As noted above, we think it is unlikely that such protests would be uncoordinated, especially given the nature of the Russian protest permit process. If such a dynamic were to bias our results, it would have to be the case that the two sides are more likely to respond independently with only certain kinds of demands---specifically material demands. This seems unlikely especially given that election related and political protests should be just as, if not more, driven by time-specific events. It is also worth noting that event-driven protest dynamics should not bias results on our cooptation variables.

Our first and second hypotheses suggested that the KPRF would coordinate with the nonsystem opposition more on material demands and less on civil rights than other issues. To evaluate these hypotheses statistically, we use the same randomization design as above. Here, we calculate

$$\bar{\varDelta}_j^{(t)} = \frac{\sum_i \varDelta_{ij}^{(t)}}{167},$$

which is just the average extra-random coordination for each issue in the t^{th} iteration of the randomization mechanism described above over the 167 region-convocations. Next, we can calculate the difference among each distinct pair of issues, of which there are 45, as follows:

$$D_{lm}^{(t)} = \bar{\Delta}_l^{(t)} - \bar{\Delta}_m^{(t)} \quad \forall \ l \neq m.$$

We use this to compute the average difference in coordination between the two issues:

$$\overline{D}_{lm} = \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^{T} D_{lm}^{(t)},$$

and we can compute the p-value as:

$$p_{lm} = \frac{\sum_t I(D_{lm}^{(t)} > 0)}{T}$$

where $I(\cdot)$ is an indicator function that returns one if the inequality inside the parentheses is true and zero otherwise. Essentially, this provides the proportion of times that the difference is greater than zero. If $0.025 < p_{lm} < 0.975$, then there is no significant difference between the pair of demands.

Our empirical strategy here is akin to a t-test. The difference between ours and a conventional t-test is that we do not rely on asymptotic theory to define the sampling distribution. Instead, we use a randomization inference to evaluate sampling variability under the null hypothesis.

Figure 3 provides a visual depiction of all hypothesis tests (Armstrong, 2013). The dark gray blocks indicate that the demand identified in the row of the figure sees significantly more coordination than the demand identified in the column. If the block is light gray, the converse is true – the demand identified in the column sees significantly higher coordination than the demand identified in the column sees significantly higher coordination than the demand identified in the row. If the square is white, no significant difference exists in coordination between the demands identified in the row and column. The most striking finding here is that material demands see significantly more coordination than any other demand. This is consistent with our first hypothesis. Further, the magnitude of these differences (represented by the bold-faced type on the top in each square) is higher, by a factor of at least two, than any other difference identified in the figure. To the extent that other differences are significant, it seems to be that foreign events and those in the catch-all category of "other" are less coordinated than almost all the others, suggesting that there is no support for our second hypothesis – that the KPRF will coordinate less on civil rights.



Figure 3: Pairwise Comparisons of Differences in Coordination by Demand

Strictly speaking, these findings should be interpreted as suggestive correlations, not causal effects. Causal identification is hard in any observational study. Here the difficulty is that our data provide no information on the direction of coordination. We observe only that protest was coordinated; we do not observe which group decided to coordinate with the other. Our grievance hypothesis suggested that the KPRF would be more likely to coordinate with the non-system opposition, when the latter is protesting on issues that are of special relevance to its base

(i.e. material issues). And while we do observe that coordination is more common when protest demands are material, we cannot exclude the possibility that this coordination is driven by the non-system opposition joining the KPRF on those issues. But because there is no theoretical reason to believe that the IKD would seek to coordinate more with the KPRF on certain issues, we are more inclined to interpret this as suggestive evidence that the KPRF is more likely to coordinate on material issues. Moreover, even if it is the IKD that is initiating protest coordination, it is noteworthy that the KPRF is not pulling out of these protests in response. Whether it is the initiator or not, the KPRF appears more willing to coordinate on material issues.

Our third hypothesis posits that there will be less coordination when the KPRF are in leadership positions. Figure 4 gives the differences in the distribution of coordination between those regions where the KPRF holds a leadership position and those regions where the KPRF holds no leadership position. For each issue, for each iteration of our extra-random calculation measure, we calculate the average extra-random coordination for each of these two conditions. We then subtract the latter from the former plot a histogram of those differences. The figure suggests that coordination on material demands, in particular, decreases significantly when KPRF holds leadership positions. To test this proposition more rigorously, we can evaluate the effect of KPRF Leadership on extra-random coordination by regressing \bar{A}_i (average extra-random coordination within each region-convocation) on KPRF leadership during the convocation and a set of controls (described above).²

² For the controls that vary within convocation, we simply take the within-convocation average. This creates a between convocation-region design.





(Coordination | KPRF Leadership) - (Coordination | No KPRF Leadership)

Note To generate these values, we first calculate average extra-random coordination for each demand for those convocations where the KPRF held leadership positions for each of the 10,000 iterations of our randomization mechanism. We then calculate average extra-random coordination in a similar manner for each of the convocations where the KPRF lacks a leadership positions. We subtract the latter from the former which produces 10,000 differences in extra-random coordination for each demand. The histogram provides the distribution of those values.

Table 2 presents our regression results. The column labeled "All Events" shows how extra-random coordination is affected by KPRF leadership and the other columns indicate similar dependencies by particular demand types. KPRF leadership significantly depresses coordination on all events (first column). The coefficient is -0.0525. To put this in context, the average level of extra-random coordination is about 0.056. A decrease of 0.0525 from the mean would be a change in predicted extra-random coordination from the 72nd to the 53rd percentile value. This is about a third of a standard deviation, which is substantively interesting. These findings are essentially constant across the various specifications in the table.

Columns 2-5 of Table 2 provide similar results for the demand-specific models. The effect of KPRF leadership is not homogeneous. It seems to depress coordination on material and political demands the most. The average extra-random coordination on material issues is around 0.066. A decrease of the size of the coefficient (-0.055) from the mean would move a region from the 78th percentile to the 69th percentile in terms of coordination on material issues. Average extra-random coordination on political issues is around 0.01. A change on the order of the coefficient (-0.018) from that value would move a region from the 92nd to the 1st percentile in terms of coordination. Thus, KPRF leadership, holding all else equal, has a big effect on depressing coordination on political and, to a lesser degree, material issues.³

³ The results are not interestingly different if we treat the randomization mechanism more systematically. Here, coordination is a random variable and we know its distribution p(y). We could treat our modeling exercise as a Bayesian one where we are modeling $p(\beta|y, X) = \int_{y} p(\beta|y, x)p(y)d(y)$, with flat priors over the support for model parameters, integrating over the uncertainty in y, via the Monte Carlo method. The posterior mean coefficients for KPRF leadership (Bayesian one-sided p-values in parentheses) are – All events: -0.053 (0.024), Material demands: -0.055 (0.043), Civil Rights demands: -0.0003 (0.0.50), Political Demands -0.018 (0.021), Historical demands: 0.0005 (0.508).

	All	Material	Civ. Rights	Political	History
	Events				
(Intercept)	0.287	0.103	-0.212	0.178	0.021
	(0.562)	(0.688)	(0.245)	(0.178)	(0.407)
KPRF Share of Seats	0.119	-0.086	0.018	0.183*	-0.120
	(0.180)	(0.221)	(0.079)	(0.057)	(0.131)
KPRF Leadership Position	-0.053*	-0.055*	-0.000	-0.018*	0.000
	(0.024)	(0.029)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.017)
Log(Population)	0.016	0.018	0.003	-0.003	0.007
	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.010)
Log(GRP/Capita)	-0.041	-0.028	0.016	-0.010	-0.012
	(0.042)	(0.051)	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.030)
Urbanization	0.024	0.022	-0.010	-0.006	0.062
	(0.124)	(0.152)	(0.054)	(0.039)	(0.090)
% Russian Population	-0.026	-0.017	0.013	-0.022	0.016
	(0.068)	(0.083)	(0.030)	(0.021)	(0.049)
Lagged Unemployment	-0.001	0.002	0.002	-0.005	-0.010
	(0.036)	(0.044)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.026)
Press Freedom	0.026	0.042*	-0.010	0.003	0.010
	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.013)
Natural Resources	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.001	0.000
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Capitol City	-0.102	-0.062	0.004	0.180*	-0.012
	(0.113)	(0.138)	(0.049)	(0.036)	(0.082)
Ν	156	156	156	156	156
R2	0.088	0.082	0.036	0.211	0.034
adj.R2	0.025	0.019	-0.031	0.156	-0.033
Resid.sd	0.132	0.162	0.058	0.042	0.096

Table 2: OLS Regression Results

In sum, our findings indicate that coordination between the KPRF and IKD is much less frequent when the KPRF has been coopted with legislative spoils. This is especially true for what are probably the most sensitive issues – material and political issues. While we have no direct evidence of the motives behind such behavior, it seems plausible to speculate that the KPRF is selective in reducing its coordination on the one hand to steer clear of issues most sensitive for the authorities (such as economic performance) and on the other to protect its reputation as an opposition. If all coordination stopped, the coopted nature of the KPRF might be harder to mask than if coordination is selectively reduced.

One shortcoming of our analyses is that they do not permit us to determine whether KPRF leaders are rewarded for low levels of coordination or whether they are punished for high levels of coordination. On the one hand, either of would be consistent with our main argument. Whether KPRF leaders are rewarded for good behavior or punished for bad behavior, personal cooptation still works to reduce coordination by providing opposition leaders with strong incentives to make sure that their followers do not coordinate their protest activities with the non-systemic opposition.

Still, it would be nice to probe these findings more deeply and examine the directionality of the relationship. Unfortunately, because few regions experience changes in the number of leadership positions that the KPRF holds between 2007 and 2012, it is difficult for us to statistically disentangle these two processes. However, there are 20 regions that exhibit over time variation KPRF Leadership.4 We calculated θ_j for each of the 20 regions with variance on KPRF leadership. Although, the number of cases is small, the patterns of material protests are consistent with the quantitative results above. Three of the 20 regions (Tambovskaya Oblast, Republic of Mari El and Omskaya Oblast) saw significant differences in cooperation on material issues between those periods where the KPRF held leadership positions and those where it did not. In all three cases, KPRF leadership decreased coordination with the non-systemic

⁴ The regions are: Ivanovskaya Oblast, Lipetskaya Oblast, Orlovskaya Oblast, Tambovskaya Oblast, Republic of Karelia, Republic of Komi, Kabardino-Balkarskaya Republic, Republic of North Osetia-Alania, Astrakhanskaya Oblast, Volgogradskaya Oblast, Republic of Mari El, Kirovskaya Oblast, Nizhegorodskaya Oblast, Republic of Altai, Republic of Khakasia, Krasnoyarskii Krai, Novosibirskaya Oblast, Omskaya Oblast, Sverdlovsk, and Amurskaya Oblast.

opposition. However, in one region (Sverdlovsk), coordination on material issues was significantly higher after the KPRF took a leadership position. In terms of signs, 12 of the 20 regions had differences in the expected (negative) direction, where six had positive differences and two had differences of zero. In one region (Omskaya Oblast), coordination on civil rights issues was significantly higher when the KPRF held leadership positions. In the other 19 regions, no significant differences were found. In one region (Amurskaya Oblask), coordination on political was significantly less likely under KPRF leadership. There are also two regions (Kirovskaya Oblast and Novosibirskaya Oblast) where coordination around election issues is higher when the KPRF holds leadership positions. There is also one region where coordination on environmental (Novosibirskaya Oblast) issues was higher when the KPRF held leadership positions. In general, in other regions and on other issues, differences were not statistically interesting. While this last set of findings run a bit counter to the expectation, there are only five occasions where this happens.

Conclusion

In this paper we sought to investigate a little understood but important feature of opposition politics in contemporary authoritarian regimes – when do in-system or "loyal opposition" parties coordinate protest with non-system groups. This is an important issue, we argued, because there are good reasons to believe that authoritarian regimes that are unable to prevent coordination across different parts of the opposition are more vulnerable than those who are able to effectively isolate non-system groups. Moreover, our analysis also sheds light upon the important issue of how in-system oppositions behave in contemporary dictatorships, a set of issues that deserves more attention in the literature on authoritarianism.

We demonstrated that, far from being pure tools of the regime, there is a significant role for societal pressures in shaping the strategies of even highly coopted oppositions like the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Where core concerns of constituents are at stake, coordination is much more likely. However, we also showed how the resources available to coopt the in-system opposition can be effectively deployed to reduce the extent of coordination with more radical groups. We found that cooptation reduced coordination over all, but it was particularly effective in reducing coordination on the politically most sensitive issues, in this case material and political issues. More generally, our findings suggest that coopting part of the opposition can be an effective way for authoritarian leaders to reduce both protest and protest coordination.

If these findings hold in other settings, there are a number of important implications for our understanding of protest in authoritarian regimes. Most obviously, we have contributed some real world sense of the trade-offs that loyal oppositions face in contemporary authoritarian regimes. To date, we know very well that the strategies of regime insiders such as the in-system opposition arecrucial to regime dynamics, but scholars have not focused much on the various pressures that insiders face. Our research suggests that insiders are very responsive to cooptation efforts, but nonetheless continue to cooperate with more radical opposition on issues that are perceived as less sensitive in an effort to maintain their opposition *bona fides*. However, more research is needed to develop explicit theories of how loyal oppositions act either in supporting or defecting from dictatorships.

One crucial dimension on which in-system oppositions are likely to vary is the degree of their connection with mass publics. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation is a mass party with a real membership base and active organizations in regions across the country.

Nevertheless, as a communist party it also takes a hierarchical approach to ideology. It may be that loyal oppositions that are differently organized – for example more elite-based, economically liberal groups – would behave differently under authoritarian conditions. More research in more cases would be required to help understand the factors that shape the strategies of different in-system oppositions.

Finally, our findings suggest a more nuanced approach to understanding regime vulnerabilities. Although much of the existing literature has focused on corruption and election fraud as key factors in triggering broad anti-regime collective action, our research suggests that the reach of such claims may not be universal. Rather, even in autocracies, groups are likely to mobilize around the concerns of their constituents. In some cases, it might be that electoral fraud is among those concerns, but in other cases material and economic concerns might matter more for the generation of broad coalitions. For instance, while the mid-2000s the world saw a wave of election-related protest, economic problems returned to the forefront in the non-electoral revolutions of the Arab Spring.

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