

The Russian Presidential Election March 2024

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The Russian Presidential Election March 2024: Context and Prospects

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This analysis endeavors to present a comprehensive portrayal of the political landscape in post-Soviet Russia. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 ushered in a period of significant political transformations, marked by economic tumult and a quest for a renewed national identity. The shift from a party-led state to a more diverse system, steered by charismatic figures like Boris Yeltsin, witnessed legal reforms culminating in the adoption of a semi-presidential system in 1993. Despite facing challenges on economic and social fronts, Vladimir Putin's rise in 1999 prioritized stability, yet constitutional amendments in 2008 and 2020 prompted concerns about the concentration of power and the erosion of democratic norms.

This groundwork provides a solid foundation for delving into the prominent figures shaping the imminent Russian presidential elections in March 2024. Vladimir Putin's decision for an independent candidacy, despite backing from United Russia, underscores his confidence and a deliberate distancing from perceived party affiliations. The meticulous selection of candidates, excluding dissenting voices on Russia's role in Ukraine, underscores Putin's intent to shape the narrative and ensure a predetermined electoral outcome, reinforcing his image as the indispensable leader.

This is followed by a broad overview of Vladimir Putin as a leader, depicting Russia's descent into a repression under his stewardship, notably evidenced by the invasion of Ukraine. His "strong man" approach, characterized by a lack of remorse and a reluctance to shoulder responsibility, aligns with authoritarian tendencies. Studies on leaders like Putin illuminate dark personality traits, contributing to a diminished understanding of others. Counteraction strategies necessitate a nuanced two-level approach, involving direct engagement with Putin and adept navigation of his intricate network of relationships. Recognizing the psychological control he exerts, alternative measures such as improving socioeconomic conditions and fostering international solidarity emerge as imperative components of an effective response.

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Russia's Political Journey: Transformations, Challenges, and the Presidential Electoral Process after the collapse of the Soviet Union

The dissolution of [the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the dawn of a new era for Russia, ushering in profound political changes and challenges that would shape its trajectory in the post-Soviet landscape.](#)

The transition from a monolithic, one-party state to a more pluralistic political system was characterized by economic turmoil, social upheaval, and the quest for a new national identity.

The emergence of a multiparty-like system reflected the evolving political dynamics, though its vibrancy fluctuated. Charismatic figures like Boris Yeltsin dominated the early post-Soviet political scene. His presidency, marked by economic reforms and social unrest, saw legal changes, including the adoption of a new constitution in 1993, establishing a semi-presidential system. However, the party system struggled to stabilize, with frequent shifts and realignments hindering the establishment of enduring political institutions. The Yeltsin era faced challenges, including a controversial military intervention in Chechnya, economic crises, and political instability.

Vladimir Putin's ascent in 1999 marked a turning point. Prioritizing stability and economic recovery, Putin consolidated power in the presidency, altering the balance of authority. Constitutional amendments in [2008](#) and [2020](#) raised concerns about the concentration of power and the erosion of democratic norms. The former one enacted significant constitutional amendments, extending the presidential term from four to six years. This change aimed to provide presidents with more time for policy implementation and stability. Additionally, the president gained the authority to appoint the prime minister with the State Duma's approval, altering the power dynamic within the executive branch. [The 2020 one restored the presidential term limits, allowing Vladimir Putin to potentially run for two more terms.](#) The changes also included social and cultural provisions, explicitly defining marriage and emphasising Russian as the state language. The role of the Council of State was formalised and provisions were introduced to guarantee social welfare and minimum wage levels, triggering a variety of reactions and debates about the trajectory of the Russian political system.

The party system evolved with United Russia's emergence in 2001 as a dominant force, closely aligned with the presidency. Opposition parties faced challenges gaining widespread support, reflecting the complex interplay of political forces. The contemporary Russian political landscape grapples with ongoing challenges. Questions about democratic practices, political restrictions, and allegations of electoral irregularities persist. Tensions with Western nations, particularly post-2014 Crimea annexation, have influenced both domestic politics and international relations.

With rising tensions between Russia and the West over the Ukraine conflict, the specter of regime change in Moscow looms. This could reshape geopolitics, demanding a nuanced strategy. History reveals Russia's past political upheavals, from Gorbachev's reforms to the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, ushering in an independent Russia under Yeltsin. However, a failure to reform the security sector has fueled repression and aggression. The crucial lesson is clear: any new Russian leadership must address the security sector's influence for improved relations with the West. The West should use sanctions strategically to encourage reform, recognizing its role as a potential obstacle. Personal engagement with new leaders, exemplified by Clinton's relationship with Yeltsin, can foster cooperation. Patience and restraint from the West, even amid setbacks, may pave the way for more peaceful policies.

Amidst potential regime change, the focus should be on promoting open governance through elections and anti-corruption measures, drawing on past successes in the Yeltsin and early Putin eras. Addressing

security risks post-regime change requires NATO to reevaluate policies, maintaining objective admission criteria to build confidence in Central and Eastern Europe. While the West sought to integrate democratic Russia, caution is needed. Expanding the G7 may be unwise, but supporting Russia's OECD membership if criteria are met is a viable option. Future policies must establish new criteria for easing sanctions, demanding a halt to military operations in Ukraine and the withdrawal of Russian forces from Belarus, vital for stability and respect for international norms. As the geopolitical landscape evolves, the West faces unprecedented choices. Learning from history and adapting to unique circumstances will be crucial in navigating the challenges of potential regime change in Russia.

In conclusion, Russia's post-1991 political journey has been characterized by transformations, challenges, and a dynamic interplay of forces. The evolution of its party system, legal changes, and the presidential electoral process reflects the complex and sometimes turbulent nature of its political landscape. The ongoing trajectory raises critical questions about governance, democracy, and Russia's role in the global arena. Observers keenly monitor these dynamics, recognizing their far-reaching implications.

Election Dynamics: Navigating Putin's Strategic Landscape

The [impending Russian presidential election, scheduled for 15–17 March 2024](#), presents an intriguing political landscape, marked by strategic moves and careful orchestration. Set against the backdrop of constitutional amendments in 2020, this election signifies the eighth iteration in Russia's history. A potential second round on 7 April 2024 looms if no candidate secures a majority, and the inauguration of the winner is slated for 7 May 2024. However, the process is already rife with notable intricacies.

A total of 15 candidates, a mix of self-nominated individuals and party representatives, have submitted their candidacy documents, marking the initiation of a multifaceted electoral season. The political stage was set [in November 2023 when Boris Nadezhdin, a former State Duma member, declared his candidacy, emphasizing an anti-war platform](#). Subsequently, in December 2023, Vladimir Putin, the incumbent and an independent candidate, announced his participation, leveraging the constitutional amendments from 2020 that allow him to seek re-election.

The candidate pool expanded with [the entries of Leonid Slutsky, Nikolay Kharitonov, and Vladislav Davankov](#). Notably, [Alexei Navalny](#), a formidable figure in the Russian opposition, remains excluded due to a prior criminal conviction, raising concerns about the fairness of the election process. The eligibility criteria for candidates, outlined in the 2020 constitutional amendments, entail being at least 35 years old, having a minimum 25-year residency in Russia, and lacking foreign citizenship or residence permits.

As of 30 January 2024, the Central Election Commission has officially registered four candidates: Vladimir Putin, Vladislav Davankov, Leonid Slutsky, and Nikolay Kharitonov. Each candidate brings a unique political background, with Putin being the incumbent president with a significant political history, Davankov representing New People, Slutsky leading the Liberal Democratic Party, and Kharitonov affiliated with the Communist Party.

A critical aspect of this election lies in the careful curation of candidates, seemingly tailored to strengthen Putin's narrative of indispensability. Putin's decision to pursue an independent candidacy, despite unwavering support from the 'United Russia' party, sends a resounding message to the electorate. It communicates that while he functions within the framework of the political system, he stands above the fray, unencumbered by what he perceives as 'petty' party politics. Opting for an independent run not only underscores his confidence in his cult of personality but also symbolically distances him from other contenders, some of whom bear unsavory pasts lingering in the public

consciousness. A prime illustration of this contrast is evident in [Leonid Slutsky, whose history is marred by a litany of controversies](#), encompassing political corruption, financial improprieties, and allegations of sexual harassment in 2018. His ultra-nationalistic stance, bordering on the barbaric, reached a troubling zenith when, as a member of the Russian negotiating team with Ukraine, he callously remarked that Azov fighters 'don't deserve to live.' While Slutsky's patriotic inclinations may appeal to those endorsing Putin's neo-imperialist aspirations, his tarnished reputation is likely to leave a distasteful impression on those acquainted with his checkered past. This stark disparity in reputations becomes pronounced when juxtaposed with Putin's carefully crafted conservative Christian image. His recent televised appearance on Russian Orthodox Christmas, where he pledged support for those defending Russia's interests, appealed for public assistance in the war effort, all while maintaining an air of mercy, seamlessly contributes to his desired persona as a sagacious leader navigating his country through formidable challenges. In contrast, Slutsky's equally patriotic yet bellicose demeanor is poised to drive the moderate vote firmly into Putin's camp. The divergence in their public images underscores Putin's strategic approach to maintain a veneer of statesmanship and stability, casting his leadership in favorable contrast to those with less savory profiles.

The opposition, while present, appears limited and strategically aligned with Putin's interests. [Notably, the rejection of candidates like Yekaterina Duntsova and Igor Girkin, who openly criticize Russia's involvement in Ukraine, underscores Putin's strategic maneuvering](#). His aim is to maintain a narrative that downplays the Ukraine conflict, a potential threat to his political position. The controlled opposition becomes evident in the selection of candidates such as Kharitonov, whose ideological stance aligns with communism but remains cautiously unremarkable. Kharitonov, having previously run in the 2004 presidential election, presents a known entity, minimizing potential disruptions to the status quo. Furthermore, the rejection of certain candidates, like journalist Yekaterina Duntsova and milblogger Igor Girkin, reflects Putin's effort to ensure that the Ukraine question remains outside the election debate. This strategic move shields Putin from criticism regarding Russia's military involvement in Ukraine, a contentious issue that could threaten his political standing. Vladislav Davankov, leader of the New People party, exemplifies another facet of Putin's strategy – the manipulation and spoiling of the Russian liberal vote. Davankov's party connections and his father's association with Putin's All-Russian People's Front raise questions about the party's legitimacy and its role in diverting support away from genuine reform-focused candidates.

As the election season unfolds, the focus of analysis shifts from the outcome, seemingly predetermined, to Putin's election campaign strategy. The carefully chosen candidates, their lackluster commitment to campaigning, and the suspiciously poor selection of opposing candidates add to the foreboding indicators for Russia's short-term political future. In conclusion, the 2024 Russian presidential election serves as a stage for Putin's strategic political maneuvers, shaping a narrative that reinforces his image as the indispensable leader. The orchestrated selection of candidates, the exclusion of certain voices, and the careful management of opposition contribute to a political landscape where the election outcome appears predetermined, and Putin's dominance remains unchallenged.

The presidency and who is behind it: Vladimir Putin as leader

Vladimir Putin, the longstanding President of Russia, has steered the nation for over 22 years. His recent prominence in the media stems from the consequential choice to engage in the invasion of Ukraine. While President Putin's tenure has been marked by longevity, his persona is one of considerable controversy, sparking divergent perspectives within Russia and across the global stage.

Some see him as a robust and charismatic leader who has diligently positioned Russia among the world's most influential nations. Public opinion surveys in Russia consistently underscore his widespread popularity among the populace. Russia, under Vladimir Putin's leadership, has plunged into a disturbing era of repression, with the invasion of Ukraine serving as a pivotal moment. This aggressive military campaign, marked by unlawful actions and nuclear threats, has ignited debates on the rationale, motivations, and psychological intricacies underlying Putin's decisions. On the other hand critics think he leads by force, that he has taken away many people's freedom, and disagree with how he runs Russia and deals with world affairs. So, who is this leader? And why do so many people have such different opinions about him?

[Putin's leadership demeanor is emblematic of a "strong man" approach](#), revealing an alarming absence of remorse for ethical transgressions and a reluctance to shoulder responsibility for adverse outcomes. Analyzed through the prism of organizational psychology, Putin's autocratic and authoritarian proclivities surface, evident in his penchant for autonomous decision-making, a task-centric focus, and a proclivity for wielding punishment and threats to maintain distance from others.

Studies probing authoritarian leaders, Putin included, expose traits that are less agreeable, emotionally unstable, and characterized by dark personality traits like machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. These traits contribute to a diminished understanding of such leaders by others, with Putin's treatment of political rivals and international figures reflecting these tendencies.

In devising counteraction strategies, a nuanced two-level approach is advocated, honed from dealing with antisocial traits in corporate settings. [Directly addressing Putin is essential, but equal attention must be given to the intricate web of relationships he has cultivated domestically and internationally.](#) Conventional diplomatic approaches may falter, as autocratic leaders with dark personalities resist customary conflict resolution efforts.

Research on narcissistic leadership underscores the importance of honest feedback on behavior as a means of control, cautioning against public humiliation. The act of naming and shaming actions breaching international norms can signal consequences, given autocratic leaders' sensitivity to criticisms affecting their public image. The efficacy of economic sanctions remains a subject of debate, considering their potential to deepen poverty and authoritarianism. Instead, recognizing the psychological control wielded by Putin, especially in manipulating information to instill fear, necessitates alternative approaches. Strategic efforts to enhance socioeconomic conditions for ordinary Russians emerge as potentially more effective than punitive measures. Moreover, validating Russians seeking an identity beyond the state-promoted narrative could challenge the divisive propaganda employed by the Kremlin. Post-accountability for autocratic regimes, fostering solidarity within international communities becomes paramount to mitigate the fear sustaining violent dictatorships.

The emergence of autocratic leaders poses a formidable challenge to global stability, yet leveraging insights into their psychological functioning becomes a potent tool to curtail their disruptive influence. Counteracting Putin's strategies demands a thoughtful blend of diplomatic measures, honest feedback, and a nuanced understanding of the psychological levers he employs for control.

In order to provide a concrete example during the lead-up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin's emotional state -as analyzed by clinical psychologist Nirit Pisano- revealed a notable absence of fear in his speeches. [Cognovi Labs, utilizing technology to measure emotions, identified high levels of anger, disgust, and contempt in Putin's communications, forming his baseline emotional expressions.](#) Surprisingly, there was no expression of fear, indicating a lack of apprehension or concern

in his rhetoric. As the invasion unfolded, Putin's emotional signature evolved. A year later, in his address to the Federal Assembly, the absence of fear persisted, accompanied by increased hope and trust. Despite the war not proceeding as envisioned, Putin maintained emotional resilience, with an Intent Score indicating heightened activation. Even in more recent interactions, such as a news conference with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Putin's emotional signature remained consistent, featuring high levels of anger, disgust, contempt, surprise, hope, and trust, but still devoid of fear. The technology employed by Cognovi Labs demonstrated that Putin's spontaneous responses aligned with his prepared speeches, emphasizing the authenticity of his emotional attitude.

Understanding Putin's Popularity in Russia: A Complex Portrait

Vladimir Putin, Russia's enigmatic leader, has managed to maintain a significant level of popularity within the nation, despite an extended tenure marked by both achievements and controversies. Unraveling the intricacies of Putin's appeal requires delving into historical contexts, socio-economic changes, and the cultivation of a strong, charismatic image.

One crucial aspect of Putin's enduring popularity lies in the economic improvements witnessed during his initial two terms as president, up to 2008. Living standards for many Russians showed marked enhancements during this period, fostering a sense of stability and progress. The correlation between economic well-being and political favorability is a phenomenon not unique to Russia, and Putin's ability to deliver tangible improvements played a crucial role in solidifying his support.

Furthermore, Putin strategically nurtured a nationalistic sentiment, instilling a sense of pride in being Russian. This emphasis on patriotism has resonated with many citizens who perceive Putin as a leader capable of restoring Russia's standing on the global stage. His perceived strong image, charisma, and resolute approach to governance contribute to a narrative of strength and authority, qualities that resonate with a populace historically drawn to leaders projecting power.

The intricate dance between Putin's leadership style and Russia's geopolitical aspirations also plays a pivotal role. Many Russians perceive Putin as a leader who has worked diligently to elevate Russia's status among the world's most powerful nations. His assertive approach to foreign policy, coupled with efforts to secure Russia's interests on a global scale, contributes to the perception of him as a leader committed to advancing the nation's influence.

[However, Putin's popularity is not without its challenges, both domestically and internationally. Critics argue that his leadership style leans towards authoritarianism, limiting political freedoms and stifling dissent.](#) Despite these concerns, a significant portion of the population seems willing to accept a trade-off between individual liberties and the perception of a strong, stable Russia under Putin's guidance.

Internationally, Putin's relationships with world leaders vary widely. While he faces diplomatic challenges with the United States and the United Kingdom, he cultivates alliances with leaders like China's Xi Jinping and Belarus' Alexander Lukashenko. These alliances further contribute to the complexity of Putin's global image, where geopolitical considerations intertwine with personal relationships.

In conclusion, understanding Putin's popularity in Russia requires navigating through a web of economic, political, and international dynamics. The enduring support he commands reflects a nuanced blend of economic improvements, nationalist sentiment, and a carefully crafted image of strength. However, this popularity is not universal, and Putin's leadership style remains a subject of debate both within Russia and on the global stage. As the complexities of his rule continue to unfold,

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the portrait of Putin's popularity remains a multifaceted mosaic shaped by historical legacies and contemporary geopolitics.



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