

Staying out of Trouble: Criminal Cases against Russian Mayors

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- On July 9th, 2020, **two important events** took place
- The governor of the Russian region of Khabarovsk, Sergei Furgal, was arrested by special forces sent from Moscow
- We submitted this paper to an academic journal
- Both events are linked
- This presentation will show you how they are linked



- Arrests of public officials in Russia do happen frequently
- They fit into a larger picture of **repression against elites in authoritarian states** (other recent examples include China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Vietnam...)
- **Why do arrests happen?**
- **Purges to eliminate political threats via repression** (Montagnes and Wolton 2019; Sudduth 2017; Tyson 2018; Gregory, Schroeder, and Sonin 2011)
- **Anti-corruption campaigns: real fights against corruption or just a cover for intra-elite conflict?** (Lorentzen and Lu 2018; Zhu 2017; Szakonyi 2018)

- For many of these cases, it is hard to pin down the **real motivation** why elites are arrested
 - Anti-corruption efforts?
 - Politically motivated arrests?
 - Intra-elite economic conflicts?
 - Something else...?
- Our approach: What factors **can help protect** an individual from arrest, irrespective of the proximate cause?
- We will especially focus on **popularity** as a potential protection mechanism

- **Conventional wisdom:**
 - **Popular officials will be targets because they pose a threat to regime leaders** (Leon Trotsky or Sergei Kirov in the Soviet Union, Ernst Röhm in Nazi Germany, Bo Xilai in China...)

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- **An alternative view:**
 - **Popular officials are useful to the regime**
 - **The regime relies on their political capital**
 - **Fear of public backlash if a popular official is arrested**

- We will test these questions for **Russian regional officials**
- Are popular officials **more likely** to be targeted, because they pose a threat to the regime?
- Or are they **less likely** to be targeted, because:
 - ... the regime relies on popular officials to help it mobilize voters/win support?
 - ...electoral authoritarian regimes are vulnerable to popular backlash?
 - ...regional-level officials are less threatening than national-level officials?

- **New Dataset on career paths of Russian mayors**
- **Data from 220 large Russian cities (population > 75,000)**
 - We updated our previous mayors dataset to cover the years **2000-2018** (Buckley, Garifullina, Reuter, Shubenkova 2016)
- **1051 unique mayors**
- **Comprehensive data on:**
 - Models of selection (elected, appointed, city manager, head of city)
 - Work history and brief biography
 - Electoral data, including information on regime affiliation
- **Data on criminal cases, including:**
 - Dates (including after leaving office)
 - Type of charge
 - Outcome (arrest, conviction, exoneration)
- **Qualitative dossiers**

- How common are arrests of Russian mayors?

Table: Mayoral Arrest Descriptives

Number of arrests	110
Share of mayors arrested	0.11
Share of cities with an arrest	0.38
Share of mayor-years with an arrest	0.02

Figure: Arrests of Mayors, 2002-2018

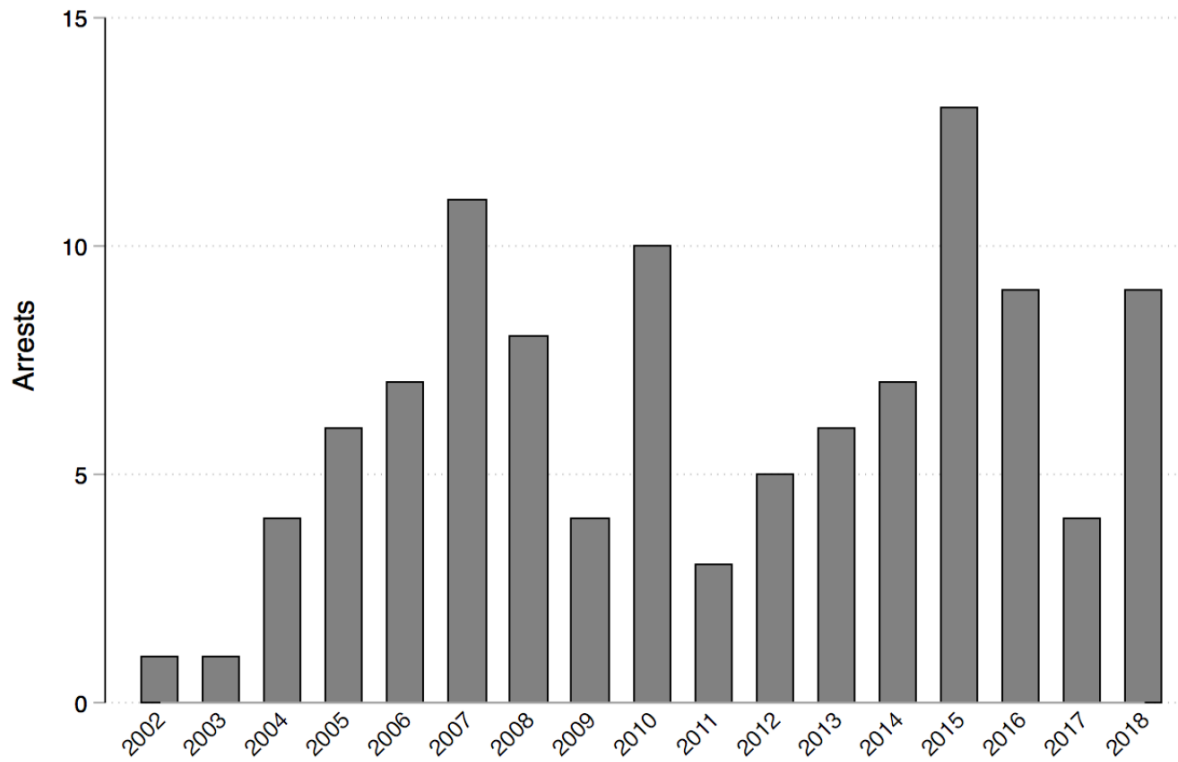


Table: Types of Charges Brought against Mayors

Corruption	0.78
Economic Crimes (e.g., fraud)	0.15
Miscellaneous	0.04
Violence	0.03



Table: Proportion of Mayors Ever Arrested, by Regime Affiliation

Oppositional	0.32
Independent	0.21
Regime-Affiliated	0.08

	Mayor Arrest, avg marginal effects from logistic regression				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Most recent work: Business		0.0004 (0.013)			
Most recent work: Local admin		-0.006 (0.012)			
Most recent work: Regional admin		-0.005 (0.014)			
Most recent work: Regional legis		0.013 (0.013)			
Most recent work: Federal govt		-0.008 (0.019)			
Outsider	0.005 (0.006)	0.002 (0.007)			
Non-Elected			-0.017*** (0.006)		-0.010 (0.006)
Regime Affiliated				-0.034*** (0.007)	-0.030*** (0.008)
New Governor	0.010 (0.007)	0.009 (0.007)	0.009 (0.007)	0.010 (0.007)	0.011 (0.007)
Percent Ethnic Russian (region)	-0.001*** (0.0002)	-0.001*** (0.0002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.001*** (0.0003)	-0.001 (0.001)
Log City Population	0.005* (0.003)	0.004* (0.003)	0.004* (0.003)	0.005** (0.003)	0.005** (0.003)
Petrov-Titkov Democracy (region)	0.001** (0.0004)	0.001** (0.0004)	0.001* (0.0004)	0.0002 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0004)
Constant					
N	4,158	4,200	4,367	3,803	3,803

* p < .1; ** p < .05; *** p < .01

	Mayor Arrest, avg marginal effects from logistic regression				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Regime Affiliated	-0.016*** (0.006)	-0.016*** (0.005)	-0.009 (0.007)		
UR Vote Share in Regional Elections, by mayor	-0.0001 (0.0003)				
UR Vote Share in Regional Elections, by city		-0.0002 (0.0002)			
Mayor Margin of Victory			-0.001*** (0.0002)	-0.0002 (0.0002)	-0.001*** (0.0003)
New Governor	-0.004 (0.011)	0.009 (0.008)	0.018 (0.013)	-0.030 (0.030)	0.054*** (0.020)
Percent Ethnic Russian (region)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.021 (0.035)	-0.036 (0.027)	0.122 (0.117)
Log City Population	0.002 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.004 (0.004)	0.004 (0.006)	0.0005 (0.007)
Petrov-Titkov Democracy (region)	0.0004 (0.001)	-0.0001 (0.001)	0.0004 (0.001)	0.0004 (0.001)	0.00001 (0.001)
Constant					
N	2,358	3,331	1,729	902	827

* p < .1; ** p < .05; *** p < .01

- **Results**
 - **Mayors affiliated with the political opposition are more likely to be arrested...**
 - **...BUT popularity** (as measured by the vote margin during the most recent election) **can protect** **opposition-affiliated mayors from being arrested**
 - **Why is this the case? What are the mechanisms at play?**
 - **Let's return to the arrest of Sergei Furgal**



