

FOREIGN POLICY: RUSSIA

ALEXEI NAVALNY: A THREAT TO PUTIN?

Background

How does power work in Russia?

The Western image of Russia is an authoritarian, one-man country based on Vladimir Putin, but a lot is going on behind the scenes. Putin's success comes from **1) balancing elite factions; 2) enforcing order on the bureaucracy; and 3) defining a clear purpose to make Russia a Great Power once again.**

What has happened over the past month?

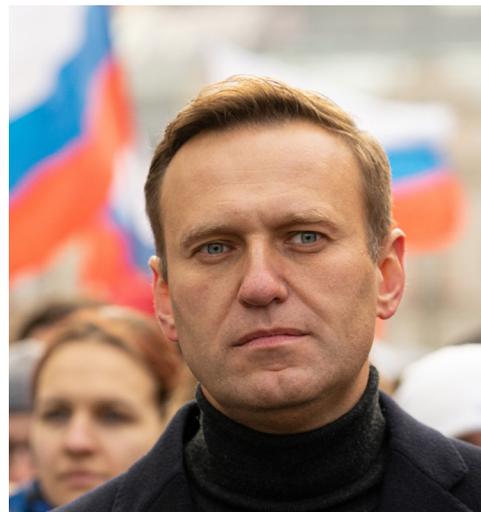
Navalny was **poisoned in Siberia** and allowed to go to Germany to recover. He decided to come back to Russia, was detained immediately, and sentenced to 2.5 years. While in jail, he **released a video of the largest private house in Russia, discreetly belonging to Putin**, which stoked anger in the Russian population. More than 10,000 people were arrested in connection with **pro-Navalny protests.**

What are Navalny's politics?

His core topic for 20+ years has been **anti-corruption.** He has supported liberal, libertarian, nationalist, and populist ideologies; consistently taking the angle of the day, but delivering through the fundamental message of anti-corruption. Navalny's position has been to run in a **free and fair election** against Putin and to limit Russia's foreign policy conflicts.

How popular is Navalny in Russia? What is Putin's support?

Russia is richer than 20 years ago, but **economic dissatisfaction with Putin remains.** Putin's base includes voters **55 or older**; Navalny has more support among **younger voters.** Any change from Putin would be a bold jump into the unknown. If more of the Russian population becomes convinced that life is better without Putin than with him, then Putin is in danger.



Information courtesy of

Yuval Weber, PhD.

Research Assistant Professor,
Bush School of Government and
Public Service, Texas A&M
University

More info on Dr. Weber [here](#)



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U.S. Approach

How has the U.S. approached this issue?

The U.S. has previously pushed sanctions to change Russia's policies, but could take it to the next level through the **Chemical and Biological Weapons Act**. The Russian opposition urges the U.S. to continue sanctioning the flow of misappropriated money coming from Russia. Biden wants to focus on diplomatic engagement with issues of mutual interest, such as **arms control**. He may be more confrontational in the realms of **Navalny, cyber, human rights and anti-corruption**.

What should the U.S. and West avoid doing?

Russian state media has painted Navalny and his supporters as spies and agents for the U.S., so a **direct embrace of the opposition leader may be counterproductive**. Navalny himself has not asked for American assistance in securing his freedom, instead advocating for the U.S. to **place anti-money laundering and anti-kleptocracy policies** at the core of the U.S. approach to Russia.



Go Deeper! More Resources

Need To Know Podcasts

[Tried Plan C- What's Plan D? Navalny Phenomenon Inside and Outside Russia](#)
with Yuval Weber

[A Russia Roundtable](#)

Kennan Institute's Analysis

[Alexei Navalny's Arrest Sparks Nationwide Protests: An Expert Analysis](#)

[Putin vs. Navalny Who Is More Dangerous for Russia's Regime?](#)