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NON-SYSTEMIC OPPOSITION IN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES: ALEXEI NAVALNY CASE IN RUSSIA

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MA Thesis

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ABSTRACT

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Political opposition is a moribund species in contemporary authoritarian regimes since the government pressures it by the state apparatus. It is difficult to explain the current versions of oppositions and authoritarian regimes with the traditional literature. Hybrid regimes and non-systemic oppositions are two of such versions. This study focuses on Russia as an example of a hybrid regime and Alexei Navalny as a non-systemic opposition living in this polity. Moreover, Alfred Stepan's theoretical framework in which he proposes five tasks for the political opposition to democratize the authoritarian rule it opposes provides analytical tools for this examination. This analytical approach has implemented in the case of Alexei Navalny to test whether he has created a credible democratic alternative to Putin's regime throughout his political career. The findings suggest that although Navalny has successfully raised the costs of the authoritarian rule in Russian politics, his way of opposing against the Russian government is undemocratic.

Keywords: non-systemic opposition, authoritarian regimes, Alexei Navalny, Alfred Stepan, democratization

ÖZET

OTORİTER REJİMLERDE SİSTEM-DIŞI MUHALEFET: RUSYA'DA ALEKSEY NAVALNİ VAKASI

Günümüz otoriter rejimlerinde siyasal muhalefet, hükümet onu baskıladığı için can çekişen bir türdür. Muhalefetin ve otoriter rejimlerin güncel örneklerini geleneksel literatür ile açıklamak zordur. Bu gibi örneklerin iki tanesi hibrit rejimler ve sistem-dışı muhalefetlerdir. Bu çalışma bir hibrit rejim örneği olarak Rusya'ya ve bu yönetim biçiminde yaşayan bir sistem-dışı muhalefet örneği olarak Aleksey Navalni'ye odaklanır. Dahası; Alfred Stepan'ın, karşı çıktığı otoriter yönetimi demokratikleştirmek için siyasal muhalefete beş ödev önerdiği teorik sistemi, bu incelemeye analitik araçlar sağlamaktadır. Bu analitik yaklaşım, siyasi kariyeri boyunca Putin rejimine güvenilir demokratik bir alternatif yaratıp yaratmadığını test etmek için Aleksey Navalni vakasına uygulanmıştır. Bulgular, Navalni'nin başarılı bir şekilde otoriter yönetimin maliyetini yükseltmesine rağmen Rus hükümetine karşı çıkma şeklinin demokratik olmadığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sistem-dışı muhalefet, otoriter rejimler, Aleksey Navalni, Alfred Stepan, demokratikleşme

PREFACE

Completing this thesis was a challenging process due to many difficulties. I owe this accomplishment to several people helping me overcome these obstacles. As counting those people required a lengthy paper, I must have unfortunately selected only a couple of them.

First of all, studying under the auspices of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vugar Imanbeyli has been an incredibly special and privileged process. His extensive knowledge of the Russian history and politics contributed tremendously to this study. He has also been very supportive of me from the beginning to the end. I happen to know that I would not succeed in this endeavor had he not been my supervisor. I would like to thank him sincerely for all his efforts.

Secondly, I have to touch on the vital role of Dr. Muzaffer Senel in my academic career. As a research and teaching assistant, I had the chance to work with him for one year at Ankara Medipol University. He taught me countless things greatly helping to develop my academic skills. More than that, he became a turning point in my life by broadening my horizon. It is indisputable that a significant part of this thesis is due to his contribution to my perspective.

I am grateful to my respectable jury panel, most notably Prof. Dr. Emre Ersen. I also wish to express my most sincere gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emirhan Goral and Dr. Sirin Duygulu Elcim for their support in the defense process.

Most importantly, I thank my family, specifically my father became a very good academic in his own right, which ultimately led me to academia, too. Being an academician was his career objective; thusly, I believe that he is proud of this thesis more than I am. My mother's emotional support is also worth noting. If you have such a lovely and motivating mother, you can easily deal with the tedious aspects of academia. Likewise, I appreciate my dear auntie's confidence in me along with her invaluable attempts for bracing me up.

Finally, although it does not legally exist anymore, I must mention about the most valuable institution I have ever seen in Turkey: Istanbul Sehir University. It was a place in which I first encountered true academia, found the opportunity to learn from its distinguished academic staff, made precious friendships, took part in a true family-like atmosphere.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBC : British Broadcasting Corporation

CEC : Central Electoral Commissions

CNN : Cable News Network

CPSU : Communist Party of Soviet Union

DPR : Democratic Party of Russia

DW : Deutsche Welle

FDP : Free Democratic Party

FFE : For Fair Elections

FSB : Federal Security Service

KGB : Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti

KPRF : Communist Party of Russian Federation

LDPR : Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

LGBT : Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

LGBTQ+ : Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer

LLC : Limited Liability Company

NATO : North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NTV : Novoye Nezavisimoye Negosudarstvenoye

OMON : Otryad Mobil'nyy Osobogo Naznacheniya

ORT : Obshchestvennoye Rossiyskoye Televideniye

OSCE : Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PARNAS : People's Freedom Party

PRES : Party of Russian Unity and Accord

RC : Russia's Choice

RPR : Republican Party of Russia

SEC : Subject Election Commissions

SPS : Union of Right Forces

TV : Television

UBOP : The Regional Anti-Organized Crime Directorate

UR : United Russia

US : United States

USA : United States of America

USSR : Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

YABLOKO : Russian United Democratic Party

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INTRODUCTION

Is it still possible to oppose an authoritarian regime if it holds the power of a state mechanism? Are there any alternative ways for oppositional activities if the parliamentary opposition is controlled by the regime? This study has started asking such questions. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, democratic values have spread to various post-Soviet countries. Despite the expansion of democracy, political scientists have observed the emergence of a new type of polity in which democratic and undemocratic elements simultaneously exist. This hybrid nature of these political systems led to an inflation of concepts with tiny differences because it is difficult to find a pattern in several practices of contemporary authoritarianism.

Even if the scholars reached at a consensus on a concept, it would be still complicated to analyze the actors within these types of regimes. An authoritarian rule is an obstacle to political pluralism, therefore, competitive politics too. In such a rule, due to the regime's preventive actions against any potential challenges to itself, the emergence of a political opposition is arduous. When democracy does not function well, the opposition overflows the parliamentary politics. In the political environments where a certain political party or a leader dominates, the opposition cannot function in its traditional democratic sites. The dissatisfaction about the existing political order can be manifested in the streets or social media in which the intervention of the government is relatively less.

The role of political opposition in such authoritarian regimes is controversial. One can say that an opposition demands to be formally represented in the political system. Is it certain, however, that the opposition would rule the country democratically if it successfully replaced the authoritarian regime? How can a country avoid a loop in which a political groups' democratic commitments turns into the authoritarian tendency when they came to the power?

The literature does not give a clear response to these questions since those regimes have recently appeared in world politics. There are observations on the peculiarities of such political systems. Those are ruled by the high degree of populism, unaccountable leadership, and nontransparent decision-making since the democratic institutions in such regimes are not credible and thus political participation is outside of the formal institutions (Rocha Menocal et al., 2008, pp. 29–40). Yet, except these observations, the literature does not have a consensus on a concept defining contemporary authoritarian regimes.

When it comes to the political opposition as an essential component of the political systems, it has already been a complex structure to examine for years. Even today, it is still a difficult task to make progress on famous political scientist Robert A. Dahl's conceptualization that was proposed in 1966 (Dahl, 1966, p. 332). Apart from the new definition of the political opposition, there are criticisms to the existing literature indicating that it is old-fashioned to implement on the current examples (Blondel, 1997, pp. 455–456; Weinblum & Brack, 2011, p. 70). There is an abstruseness in the literature: the more such examples that the world politics have been experiencing, the more complications that the literature should respond.

In this chaotic environment, the non-systemic opposition emerged as an interesting concept (Bol'shakov, 2012, p. 83). While the discussions on the new types of authoritarian regimes have been continuing, this concept was created to explain what these political systems have changed in the political opposition. Therefore, there are many gaps in the literature to account for the recent developments in world politics.

The research of this study headed towards these complications in the literature. On the one hand, this study can simply contribute to the literature due to the countless gaps. On the other hand, it is risky to do scientific research without the support of a broad literature. Regardless of this bidirectional situation, this study is expected to draw attention to the shortcomings in the literature.

The aforementioned regimes have appeared after the collapse of Soviet Union, and they can be traced in almost all post-Soviet countries. Among these countries, Russia is one of the interesting examples since its political system was challenging the Western-led democracy promotion before it has gone through a democratization process in 1990s. Vladimir Putin, the leader of Russia since 2000, has attracted the political scientists' attention due to the authoritarian regime he has gradually built after Boris Yeltsin's relatively liberal rule. Although Russian polity is somehow unique considering its Soviet legacy, it best illustrates the hybrid regime. Thus, conducting research on Russian politics fitted this study's concerns about the gaps in the literature.

Given its sophisticated historical background, studying in the structure of the authoritarian regime requires in-depth research. However, the focus of this study is only the contemporary forms of undemocratic practices. Hence, the time scope can be narrowed down to post-Soviet period when the democratic elements entered into the Russian political system. The examination of this country that influenced all post-Soviet countries promises an important outcome that can be useful for further research. To illustrate the usefulness of studying Russia, Putinism emerged as a model of governing that can be observed in different political systems (Taylor, 2018, pp. 12–22). These developments

determined the direction of this thesis to Russian politics which is a research area like a grain of a mustard seed.

Narrowing down the scope to the political opposition in Russia, it does not decrease the difficulty of research. Despite the ability to research in Russian language, the difficulty to access to the information about an authoritarian regime was a serious limitation on this study. As Russian political opposition has been facing a state repression including censorships, seeking information about it was a difficult task. Moreover, studying ongoing activities is always risky that the subject of the research can undergo change at any moment. Considering the ongoing battle between Putin's regime and its opponents, this situation became another limitation of this study.

For all that, Russia was a satisfying case to seek for the nature of the political opposition in authoritarian regimes. Given the increasing intensity of authoritarianism in Russian politics, it was observed that the political opposition might be examined in a case of a non-systemic opposition. The reason was that Putin's regime had successfully dominated the formal sites in which an opposition can grow and challenge the regime in parliamentary politics. For this reason, the scope of this study was narrowed down to the non-systemic opposition in politics of post-Soviet Russia.

During the research on the political opposition in the authoritarian regimes, American political scientist, Alfred Stepan's (1936-2017) theoretical approach to this issue seemed appealing. In the beginning of his famous article titled "On the Tasks of a Democratic Opposition", it is written: "What must be studied in all these cases is not merely the final collapse or overthrow of authoritarian regimes, but the incremental process of "authoritarian erosion" and the opposition's contribution to it." (Stepan, 1990, pp. 41–42). This approach evaluates the opposition based on five tasks in the context of democratization which are: "resisting integration into the regime, guarding zones of autonomy against it, disputing its legitimacy, raising the costs of authoritarian rule, and creating a credible democratic alternative." (Stepan, 1990, p. 44). On these tasks, especially on the last one called *creating a credible democratic alternative*, Stepan notes: "If the opposition attends only to the task of erosion, as opposed to that of construction, then the odds are that any future change will merely be a shift from one authoritarian government to another, rather than a change from authoritarianism to democracy." (Stepan, 1990, p. 47). This is to say that this theoretical approach provides an analytical perspective to examine a political opposition and to test whether its activities serve a function of democratization. The literature has been checked whether this framework was implemented in any cases. The result was interesting more than it was expected. Stepan's perspective was not only applied to any cases but also was not criticized. Considering the convenience of this framework for analyzing a non-systemic opposition's political activities in authoritarian regimes, Stepan's approach was picked up to constitute

the basis of this study. Therefore, the significance of this study is that its research area and theoretical framework focus on the untouched parts of the literature.

During the preparations for this study, the most prominent opposition figure in Russia was Alexei Navalny. He still has an international reputation with his anti-corruption activities. As Navalny was pushed out of the Russian political system by the regime's repression, he was a fitting case for the application of Stepan's theory. The most fitting part, at first glance, was the way he has internationalized the political issues in Russia because Stepan stresses "In addition, since the international climate can be a support or an obstacle to an authoritarian regime, the active opposition should appeal to world opinion by documenting and publicizing the regime's most flagrant violations of civilized standards of conduct." (Stepan, 1990, p. 45). Based on the compatibility of Navalny's activities with Stepan's point of view, this study was designed accordingly.

It should be noted that Alexei Navalny is not the only one illustrating the non-systemic opposition in world politics. There are also many Navalny-like politicians or political activists that could be seen in the study of Andrew Stroehlein (Stroehlein, 2021). This study only covers one case that can give clues about the concept of non-systemic opposition for the field of comparative politics. Yet, mentioning about the other examples requires different contexts. For this reason, this thesis will be narrowed down to the comparable aspects of Alexei Navalny case.

Stepan's five tasks that was listed above refers to a path towards democratization. As the last task, creating a credible democratic alternative, tests whether the goal of the opposition is to democratize the country or to take possession of the authoritarian rule, process tracing method was selected to implement Stepan's theory in the case of Navalny through specifying the time period between 1991 and 2021.

The methodology of this thesis has been designed as the instrumental case study. According to Sarah Crowe *et al.*, an instrumental case study examines a particular case in order to bring a broader explanation to a phenomenon (Crowe *et al.*, 2011, para. 5). Process tracing method has also been used within case study methodology. Collier (2011) claims "Given the close engagement with cases and the centrality of fine-grained case knowledge, process tracing can make decisive contributions to diverse research objectives" (p. 824). As process tracing contributes to identifying a phenomenon by analyzing the events of a particular sequence, it has been selected to strengthen the explanatory power of this study. Thus, this study was organized to use process tracing method in an instrumental case study of Navalny's political activities in a hybrid regime established in post-Soviet Russia.

Pertaining to the outline of the chapters, this thesis consists of three chapters which are "Political Opposition", "Political Opposition in Post-Soviet Russia", and "The Leader of Non-Systemic Opposition: Alexei Navalny". In the first chapter, the political opposition literature will be evaluated from the traditional perspectives to the emergence of non-systemic opposition concept. After explaining the subject that this study examines, the habitat of this type of opposition will be introduced which is the hybrid regime.

The second chapter examines on Russian politics by tracing the process of the establishment of an authoritarian regime. This chapter will draw a spatial and temporal scope for this study. It is significant to demonstrate the turning points in which the regime has increased the authoritarian measures that created the non-systemic opposition.

Further in the third chapter, the main research subject will be examined. The account on the background of Alexei Navalny, his political career will be the roadmap of this chapter. Tracing his political activities, this study will test the Stepan's tasks for a democratic opposition. Coming to the conclusion, Navalny will be evaluated whether he represents a credible democratic alternative for post-Putin era in Russian politics.

Traditional literature on the political opposition and the authoritarian regimes have been criticized since they lack explanatory power in relation to the recent developments. New types of opposition and different authoritarian practices have been observed. For this reason, this thesis will examine the gaps in the literature in association with the non-systemic opposition and the hybrid regimes. Moreover, this study will trace the development of authoritarianism in Russian politics starting from the collapse of the Soviet Union. Under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, the authoritarian measures have been increased enough to produce the non-systemic opposition. Following the description of Russian polity, Alexei Navalny's political career will be traced in order to seek for the signs of Stepan's tasks for the political opposition.

It seems that Navalny has not successfully completed all five tasks of Stepan's framework. This study demonstrates that although Navalny has succeeded in the resistance of integration into the Putin's rule, the use of guarded zones, the disputing its legitimacy, and the increasing the costs of authoritarianism, he could not carry out *creating a credible democratic alternative*. Therefore, this thesis will explain the reasons why Navalny's opposition could not contribute to the democratization of Russian politics.

CHAPTER 1: POLITICAL OPPOSITION

1.1.Political Opposition Literature

1.1.1. Definition and Significance of Political Opposition

Political opposition is *sine qua non* for democracy. However, the existence of different ways to oppose makes a general definition for the political opposition difficult. Rodney S. Barker, who collects the articles from the famous comparative politics journal named *Government and Opposition* into a book, notes in the introduction that the concept of opposition resembles a balloon in a vacuum destroying itself with its own expansion since its meanings have a wide range from revolutions to mild criticisms (Barker, 1971, p. 4). One of the most cited definitions of political opposition is provided by American political scientist Robert A. Dahl, who is one of the most cited professors in this field, that when *A* determines a conduct of a government in a particular political system, *B* which cannot determine the conduct of the government and opposed to *A*'s conduct during a specific time period is opposition (Dahl, 1966, p. xviii). This definition is inclusive enough for explaining the action of opposing. Another contribution to define the concept of opposition is made by Ghita Ionescu and Isabel de Madariaga whose book is famous for defining the opposition as the most advanced and institutionalized form of political conflict (Ionescu & Madariaga, 1968, p. 16). Therefore, it can be said that political opposition is systematized opposing actions that actor *B* uses in Dahl's definition. On the contrary, Nathalie Brack and Sharon Weinblum criticize these two definitions by stating that they lead to normative biases and restrictive perspective (Weinblum & Brack, 2011, p. 70). Instead, they offer a *neutral* definition: "a disagreement with the government or its policies, the political elite, or the political regime as a whole, expressed in public sphere, by an organized actor through different modes of action" (Weinblum & Brack, 2011, p. 74). In this definition, "disagreement with the government or its policies" and "organized actor" can be regarded as common points with other definitions. Thus, to name something as political opposition requires a political disagreement and organized opposing actions.

Political opposition is a significant concept for political science since it provides an explanation on understanding the concept of government. In case that government-based approach to politics may error in explaining the full picture, political opposition is worth studying as a single entity. For this reason, a notable British political scientist in the field of comparative politics, Leonard Schapiro points out that the process of government must be studied in the light of not only those in power but also those who oppose to them (Schapiro, 1965, p. 2). One of the common ways in the literature to examine the political opposition is to analyze the opposition in the context of its function

within a particular political system. Sylvie Giulj underlines that the presence of a genuine opposition is needed so that democracy functions properly (Giulj, 1981, p. 493). Freedom of expression is the principle of democracy that provides a basis for a political opposition. In this manner, Jerzy J. Wjatr and Adam Przeworski highlight that political scientists are interested in the variations of the extent and the form of open expression of interests (Wjatr & Przeworski, 1966, p. 233). Furthermore, political opposition brings about not only freedom of expression but also a control over government. Giulj mentions that the control in a broadest sense is to cover classical modalities (motions of censure, budgetary procedures etc.), to have a direct access to the sources of information and media networks (Giulj, 1981, p. 485). In this context, a well-known Italian comparativist Giovanni Sartori notes that pessimists explore alternative control mechanisms while optimists regard controlling function in the existence of the opposition (Sartori, 1966, p. 154). Hence, there are different interpretations in the literature that evaluates the relations between government and opposition as dialectics. Given the general approach of political science to political opposition, the scope of this study will be within the borderlines of opposition's functionality.

1.1.2. Variations in Political Opposition

One of the early studies to classify the types of political opposition is German political scientist Otto Kirchheimer's three models which are classical opposition, opposition of principle, and elimination of opposition by cartel arrangements in the government (Kirchheimer, 1957, p. 127). The classical opposition respects the government, whereas opposition of principle is against the legitimacy of the government. Elimination of opposition is the model in which opposing actors are not identifiable due to the chaotic structure of the government. Moreover, Sartori proposes three basic types of opposition which are a responsible constitutional opposition, a constitutional but non-responsible opposition, an opposition which is neither responsible nor even constitutional (Sartori, 1966, p. 153). The terms "constitutionality" and "responsibility" represent two distinctive features of political oppositions. Constitutionality refers to the loyalty of opposition to the political system it belongs to. As for responsibility, it refers to the consideration that an opposition might eventually be a government. Although these models include distinctive aspects for different principles and practices of opposing, they do not lead to the necessary analytical tools for the examination of the political opposition. As explained above, political opposition is worth studying as an independent entity from a political system or a government. At this point, Robert A. Dahl's explanation of different kinds of political opposition is worth noting because it brings about analytical tools to understand political opposition as a single political entity.

In his mostly cited work named *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, Dahl suggests six variables in order to explain different patterns of political opposition which are *organizational cohesion or concentration of opponents, competitiveness of the opposition, sites or settings in which government and opposition encounters, the distinctiveness or identifiability of the opposition, goals of opposition,* and *strategies of the opposition* (Dahl, 1966, p. 332). These variables are interrelated. For instance, more concentrated oppositions lead to more competitive oppositions. Similarly, the goal of the opposition also determines the strategy of the opposition. Regardless of the conceptual discussions on these variables, Dahl's approach is convenient to analyze political opposition as a single entity. Moreover, Dahl points out that there are five determinants for the variation among oppositions (*constitutional structure or electoral system, widely shared cultural premises, specific subcultures, the record of grievances, social and economic differences*) with two intervening factors (*specific patterns of conflict* and *agreement and the extent of polarization*) (Dahl, 1966, p. 348). It can be inferred that Dahl's operationalization of political opposition and the causal mechanism he proposes involve Kirchheimer's and Sartori's models. As Peter Mair points out, Dahl's categories can be seen as the developed version of Kirchheimer's classification (Mair, 2007, p. 5). In addition to this, Sartori's terms can be found in Dahl's framework. To illustrate, the goals of the opposition and the strategy of the opposition variables can explain whether an opposition is loyal to the constitution that Sartori regards this type of opposition as constitutional. Therefore, Dahl's framework and early studies about political opposition help to approach to the political opposition as an analyzable subject.

Apart from analytical approach Dahl developed, there are several concepts referring to different kinds of political oppositions. Extra-parliamentary opposition is one of these concepts that emerged as a result of changing political dynamics after 1960s when Dahl published his book named *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*. Karlheinz Neunreither claims that extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany that became popular in 1966 when the role of parliamentary opposition was performed by a small liberal party named Free Democratic Party (FDP), and new groups and social movements that emerged in the United States of America (USA) with new types of protest are not included in Dahl's formulation of opposition (Neunreither, 1998, p. 423). As extra-parliamentary opposition is a wide concept that might be used to refer any kinds of opposing action outside of the parliament, it is useful to examine political opposition exhaustively. In this context, Pizzorno comments that extra-parliamentary opposition such as trade unions and social movements and their relations with political parties including the government should be taken into consideration in order to understand the social context of political opposition (Pizzorno, 1997, p. 651). Consequently, political opposition is not a static notion, it evolves with regard to changing political dynamics. Since different

variants emerged after the classical definitions such as extra-parliamentary opposition, it demonstrates the need of broader and more specific definitions within the concept of political opposition.

1.1.3. Critics on the Classical Literature

The contribution of classical literature can be summarized as a definition of political opposition and related concepts to analyze it. However, there are also critics claiming that the classical literature is normative and restrictive.[1] Before explaining the critics of Brack and Weinblum, Jean Blondel's criticism to classical works on political opposition should be covered to be in accordance with chronological order. Although Blondel criticizes several points, there are two major criticisms related to the scope of this thesis. First, Blondel stresses that since the role of extra-parliamentary opposition was not mentioned in neither Dahl's nor Kirchheimer's works, the concepts they suggest are not applicable to different types of political systems (Blondel, 1997, pp. 455–456). As classical literature mostly focused on Western democracies, it resulted in a bias that parliament is the only place to express contention. Yet, extra-parliamentary entities also represent opposition groups, and they can affect the decision-making process. As an example, the negotiations with unions about the salaries influence budget talks in the parliaments. For that matter, extra-parliamentary opposition should be added to Dahl's classification. Second, according to Blondel, the distinction between authoritarian and liberal political systems must be attached to Dahl's causal mechanism that determines the variations in the patterns of opposition (Blondel, 1997, p. 472).[2] The difference between authoritarian and liberal regimes matters for political opposition because the regime is the political establishment in which the regulations on manifesting the contention are legislated. Even though there are not huge discrepancies among Western democracies in terms of such regulations, authoritarian regimes may not even give a legislative place to opposition. The influencing role of regime type in political opposition will be scrutinized in the following section, "Authoritarian Regimes and Political Opposition".

When it comes to Brack and Weinblum's criticism, they raise three questions in the literature of political opposition. First, examining opposition based on majority-minority relations in the parliament and treating opposition as loyal to the rules of the existing regime result in excluding some actors from the scope of opposition studies (Weinblum & Brack, 2011, pp. 71–72). If the actors out of the parliament or the actors who are against the political system itself are not included in studies of opposition, it causes a normative and restrictive approach. To exemplify, Oakeshott notes in the chapter in which he discusses the origin of "opposition" that an opposition is opposed to an authority

[1] The terms "normative" and "restrictive" refer to Brack and Weinblum's critics that were mentioned above in the first section of this chapter.
[2] Dahl's causal mechanism refers to the interplay of five primary and two intervening variables that were mentioned in the section of "Variations in Political Opposition".

not to the rules (Oakeshott, 1971, p. 108). In a similar vein, Ghita Ionescu and Isabel de Madariaga writes "A certain loyalty, if not to the regime itself, at least to the voters, must be shown" (Ionescu & Madariaga, 1968, p. 82). Sartori's words are also akin to these statements: "What the opposition opposes is a government, not the political system as such. Thus 'separatism' is something different from opposition proper." (Sartori, 1966, p. 151). It can be realized that classical approach to the opposition excludes anti-system opposition groups. To the contrary, if political opposition matters to what extent it influences the government, anti-system opposition may also be involved to the decision-making process. Silvano Tosi echoes that the lack of political morality among administrators, the misinterpretation of constitutionalism, the disintegrated political movements of the majority, and the electoral system made anti-system opposition influential in Italy (Tosi, 1971, p. 166). Hence, normative approach of the classical literature is not compatible with the dynamic nature of political opposition.

The second question that Brack and Weinblum raise about the weaknesses of the classical literature of political opposition is its limited approach to the action repertoires of opposition (Weinblum & Brack, 2011, p. 72). This criticism is related to the classical literature's bias that the contentious issues should be manifested in the parliament. If an opposition is regarded as an alternative to the government, the parliament may be insufficient for its strategies. As a matter of fact, technological developments have created new sites and settings in which the government and the opposition encounters. It would not be convenient to analyze the opposition without considering these developments. Ghita Ionescu and Isabel de Madariaga underlines that since the process of modernization allowed the governments to expand their sphere of influence, the opposition should go through the same process to keep up with the government (Ionescu & Madariaga, 1968, p. 131). For instance, as the governments are capable of controlling the media to have an advantage in the elections, the opposition's accession to media should also be in the scope of the studies of political opposition. Thus, the action repertoires should be diversified in the literature of political opposition.

Thirdly, Brack and Weinblum criticize that focusing on the parliament as the only arena of contention is not proper to analyze the opposition because the strategy of the oppositions varies in association with multi-level of governance, different regime types, and the spread of extra-parliamentary tools (Weinblum & Brack, 2011, p. 73). This argument is similar to Blondel's criticism that includes the lack of extra-parliamentary opposition in Dahl's conceptual map and the role of regime types on opposition in Dahl's causal mechanism. Besides, the term, multi-level of governance, is worth mentioning. By using this term, Brack and Weinblum refer to the effect of *regionalization*

and *supra-nationalization*[3] on the decision-making process of the opposition (Weinblum & Brack, 2011, p. 73). Since international organizations might impose sanctions against a country based on undemocratic actions of its government, the strategy of the opposition can be international negotiations rather than parliamentary-based actions. Therefore, the focus of the parliament as the sole arena for the actions of opposition is inappropriate given the influence of multi-governance.

Considering the critics of the classical literature of opposition, this study will use the term of opposition by involving extra-parliamentary opposition and different strategies that were not mentioned in Dahl's conceptual map. In the next section, non-systemic opposition as one of the current terms related to the variations in political opposition will be analyzed. To explain the term "non-systemic opposition" is significant since it is a result of changing dynamics of political opposition.

1.1.4. Non-Systemic Opposition

Non-systemic opposition is a contentious term emerged as a result of the unclear strategies of the opposition groups facing the authoritarian rule and the ambiguous structure of *hybrid regimes* in which both democratic and undemocratic elements simultaneously exist. In the context of opposition strategy, it is unclear to what extent an opposition should challenge to the system. Ionescu and de Madariaga highlight that from an *intransigent* point of view, it is obligation for an opposition to challenge the system for the purpose of transforming it to a better one (Ionescu & Madariaga, 1968, p. 77). Considering the opposition's relation with the government as dialectics, it is convenient to agree with this statement. Yet, it is still controversial to name such opposition groups. Sartori uses the term, anti-system opposition, by defining it as *undermining the legitimacy* of the *regime* it opposes (Sartori, 2005, p. 117). Although this term generally refers to Communist and Fascist political parties in parliamentary democracies in Sartori's work, it also provides a basis for identifying extra-parliamentary variants of the opposition which are against the system. Even though Communist and Fascist parties are against the democracy as a system of governing, Giovanni Capoccia discusses that an anti-system party can be against not only the democracy but also *diminished subtypes* of democracy (Capoccia, 2002, p. 23). From this point of view, pro-democracy groups within an undemocratic political system can also be called as anti-systemic.

The concept of non-systemic opposition is similar to anti-system opposition in terms of the strategy of challenging to the system. Non-systemic opposition as the name indicates mostly refers to the parties or the groups which are somehow excluded from the political system. Given the similar

[3] Regionalization and Supra-Nationalization are the terms referring to the emergence of new actors in politics consisting of more than one nation-state.

strategy to anti-system opposition and the exclusion from the political system, Russian political scientist Ivan Bol'shakov, whose article discusses the use of non-systemic opposition concept in the current literature, lists the indicators of a non-systemic opposition as follows: *unconventional methods of political struggle*, *limited resources*, *virtualization of political activity*, *a small number of supporters*, and *little trust among citizens* (Bol'shakov, 2012, p. 83). These indicators bring about a conceptual map to analyze a non-systemic opposition regarding its goals and strategies in Dahl's terminology. Moreover, non-systemic opposition is likely to appear in authoritarian regimes since authoritarian governments tend to suppress the opposition via state apparatus. Although it is not to state that there is a casual relationship between authoritarian regimes and the emergence of non-systemic opposition, there is a correlation between them. As authoritarian rulers try to eliminate their political rivals, excluding the political opposition from their political system through legally restricting them from the elections or limiting their visibility to the electorates brings about the emergence of non-systemic opposition.

As a consequence, non-systemic opposition consists of the parties or the groups that are not legally represented in the existing political establishment. A non-systemic opposition is opposed to the legitimacy of the regime with "limited" accession to the political system and particular strategical arrangements. One might question the vague interaction between the non-systemic opposition and the regime by referring to the term, "limited" accession to the political system in which both the regime and the non-systemic opposition exist. It can be asked that if a non-systemic opposition is excluded from the political establishment, it should not be interacting with the system (Bol'shakov, 2012, p. 84).[4] Related to this, Bol'shakov links non-systemic opposition to the term, *voice*, that is contributed by Albert O. Hirschman (Bol'shakov, 2012, p. 86). Hirschman defines the concept of voice as such "To resort to voice, rather than exit, is for the customer or member to make an attempt at changing the practices, policies, and outputs of the firm from which one buys or of the organization to which one belongs" (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30). Therefore, the non-systemic opposition is against what it is excluded from. This ambiguity comes from the hybrid nature of current authoritarian systems in which there are both democratic and undemocratic components at the same time. In the following section, "Authoritarian Regimes and Political Opposition", the conceptualization of an authoritarian regime will be given in association with the current hybrid regimes. Defining the basics of an authoritarian regime and analyzing its contemporary variants, mostly called as hybrid regime, are important to understand the emergence and capabilities of non-systemic oppositions.

[4] Bol'shakov explains that exclusion of a political opposition from the political life is unthinkable because a political system is defined as the "aggregate of social relations associated with political power".

1.2.Authoritarian Regimes and Political Opposition

1.2.1. Defining an Authoritarian Regime

It is not simply saying that an authoritarian regime is the opposite of a democratic regime because there is a wide array of nondemocratic regime types in which some of them are partially democratic. The borderlines between democratic and authoritarian regimes have become indistinct due to the emergence of hybrid regimes.[5] Despite the various forms of authoritarian rule, it is possible to detect the peculiarities of an authoritarian regime. Juan Linz's definition is broad enough to understand the characteristics of an authoritarian regime:

> "Political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones."(Linz, 2000, p. 159)[6]

In this definition, Linz mentions about useful variables by which an authoritarian rule can be indicated such as the degree of political pluralism, the degree of mobilization, the ruling mentality, and the degree of development. However, he does not elaborate on the ruling elite's accession to the political power in his definition. Wahman, Teorell, and Hadenius point out three different patterns of accessing which are *hereditary succession*, *the actual or threatened use of military force*, and *popular elections* (Wahman et al., 2013, p. 20). The cases in which an authoritarian ruling elite is popularly elected are significant to explain the emergence of hybrid regimes. Authoritarianism might manifest not only within absolute monarchies but also within democratic institutions. More to the point, since this study will focus on the contemporary form of authoritarian regimes, it is important to elaborate the hybrid regimes rather than classical authoritarianism.

1.2.2. Hybrid Regimes

Hybrid regimes are the political systems in which the authoritarian rule exists under democratic institutions. To understand the appearance of hybrid regimes, the process of democratization should be highlighted. It is not just that all nondemocratic regimes successfully accomplished a democratic transition. As the process of liberalization had progressed along with democratization in 1990s when communist regimes were collapsing, illiberal democracies emerged as the early form of hybrid regimes (Zakaria, 1997, p. 24). Although there are diverse factors which make the outcome of democratic transition problematic, the focus on liberalization here is useful to

[5] Since the hybridity in authoritarian regimes will be explained in the following section, "Hybrid Regimes", here only the basics of authoritarianism will be given.

[6] Linz uses the term "mentality", instead of "ideology", in order to demonstrate that authoritarian rules are not based on a rational and a codified system of thought, see p. 162.

understand the relation between the authoritarian regime and the opposition. This is because liberalization with its broadest meaning influences not only economics but also politics by creating competitiveness for accessing to political power. Joseph Alois Schumpeter's mostly cited definition of democracy leads to a better understanding of what liberalization process should end up with: "the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter, 2003, p. 269). Therefore, liberalizing economic principles suggesting to increase the competition in the market should also be reflected in the way of accessing to political power. In line with this, Dahl notes that mutual security among conflicting groups is a prerequisite for liberalization; otherwise, it has the risk of failure in which one of these groups may break the transition with its hegemonic actions (Dahl, 1971, p. 39). For instance, Juan José Linz and Alfred C. Stepan evaluate the reform process in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, *glasnost and perestroika*, as "liberalization but not democratization" in a post-totalitarian regime since these reforms resulted in a liberal economy but not a democratic state structure (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 367).[7] Similarly, Fareed Zakaria, who firstly coins the term, "illiberal democracy" counts Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia as the examples of liberalizing autocracies in order to support his argument that democracy did not bring about constitutional liberalism as it did in Western countries (Zakaria, 1997, pp. 27–28). To conclude, the disharmony between liberalization and democratization processes has produced anomalies in the democratic transitions that nondemocratic regimes experienced.

To conceptualize hybrid regimes is another problematic issue in the political science literature. Guillermo A. O'Donell uses the term *delegative democracy* to describe the regimes in which democratization process is still *enduring* because there is no clear sign for neither authoritarianism nor for democracy (O'Donell, 1994, p. 56). As long as the results of democratization examples have become salient, different concepts emerged to label hybrid regimes. One of those salient results is the manifestation of authoritarianism in the electoral arena of hybrid regimes. Larry Diamond writes "In the contemporary world of mass participation, this gradualist path has been closed off, and anxious elites have thus sought out other ways to limit and control competition" (Diamond, 2002, p. 24). It can be said that electoral competition is one of the prominent features of hybrid regimes. Diamond, Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset explain this situation by defining their concept, *pseudodemocracy*, as "in that the existence of formally democratic political institutions, such as multiparty electoral competition, masks (often, in part, to legitimate) the reality of authoritarian domination" (Diamond et al., 1989, p. xviii). In a similar way, Schedler proposes the concept of *electoral authoritarianism* in which the electoral contests are open to authoritarian manipulation (Schedler, 2006, p. 3). The last but

[7] For the definition of post-totalitarian regime, see p.42.

not the least, Levitsky and Way offer to focus on the "playing field" between the incumbents abusing the state power and the opposition, they call such cases as *competitive authoritarianism* (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 24). According to Diamond, this concept is more accurate to use for contemporary authoritarian regimes comparing to Linz's definition of authoritarianism that was quoted in the previous section, Defining the Authoritarian Regime (Diamond, 2002, p. 24). In a nutshell, the salient outcomes of the democratic transitions occurred after 1990s when communist regimes collapsed, and the dynamics of contemporary politics resulted in different names for hybrid regimes. All these concepts[8], albeit small differences, refer to the hybrid regimes. As the concept of hybrid regime is more general than all these labels, it will be used in this thesis to hint at the authoritarian rule through democratic institutions.

Menocal *et al.* mention about the notable peculiarities which are as follows (Rocha Menocal et al., 2008, pp. 29–40). Hybrid regimes are ruled by the high degree of populism, unaccountable leadership, and nontransparent decision-making. Democratic institutions in such regimes are not credible and thus political participation is outside of the formal institutions. As the law is mostly manipulated in hybrid regimes, the formal and the informal institutions are not "complementary". Moreover, corruption and clientelism is prevalent in administrative structures. Related to this, state capacity is not strong enough to meet the increasing demands. Finally, ruling elite attempts to promote authoritarianism to overcome the limitations of democracy on the executive power.

In conclusion, the hybrid regime is a contemporary form of authoritarianism that shows up as a result of the anomalies in a democratic transition. Notwithstanding the existing democratic institutions, hybrid regimes are ruled by authoritarian measures. In this section, hybrid regime is defined to explain the current political system in which the authoritarian rulers and the opposition encounters. The term "hybrid regime" is not used to mention about a separate entity, it is rather used as a contemporary example of how authoritarian rule manifests.

1.2.3. The Status of Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes

After describing the playground in which an authoritarian government challenges the political opposition, it can be said that in such regimes, the opposition is a complex phenomenon to explain since the formal institutions of democracy are not credible. According to Linz, the borderlines between the regime and the opposition are unclear due to the distinctive features of the authoritarian regimes which are *limited pluralism*, *the process of liberalization*, and *the absence of institutional channels for political participation and for reaching the mass of the population* (Linz, 2000, p. 170). Although, for

[8] In Polity IV dataset, there is another significant term -*anocracy*- which is used to label the authoritarian tendency in hybrid regimes. As anocracies are calculated by a quantitative method, this thesis will only cover the conceptual discussions. For the details about anocracies, see also, (Center for Systemic Peace, n.d.)

example, the parliamentary politics is an effective measure for the opposition in democratic countries, the state manipulation over the parliament might increase the importance of different sites to contest such as social media and streets. Moreover, Linz emphasizes that *semifreedom* in authoritarian regimes causes *semioppsition* which is *alegal but tolerated* (Linz, 2000, p. 170). As for the toleration of the opposition by the authoritarian regime, Dahl stresses "The likelihood that a government will tolerate an opposition increases as the expected costs of suppression increase." (Dahl, 1971, p. 15). Therefore, as Blondel points out, the opposition is a dependent concept on the government (Blondel, 1997, p. 463). Given this interrelationship, it can be noted that the ambiguity of contemporary authoritarian regimes also creates an ambiguity for the opposition.

Even if party politics exists with a considerable degree of toleration in authoritarian regimes, it does not show that the opposition has an effective role in decision-making process. Linz points out that presidentialism might produce *anti-party sentiments* (Linz, 2002, p. 292). As authoritarian regimes are ruled by a single leader or a small group, it may spoil the functions of the party politics. Linz also echoes that when "parties are all the same", it creates a negative attitude towards party politics (Linz, 2002, p. 299). If people do not believe that the opposition parties challenge the government, it would not be felicitous to examine the parliamentary politics for understanding the status of the opposition in authoritarian regimes. In addition to this, Dunleavy shows how opposition parties are ineffective in terms of voter preferences in the regimes which the governing party dominates the parliament (Dunleavy, 2010, p. 8). Even though this thesis does not focus on the parliamentary politics, the concept of "dominant-party regime" is still useful to understand the ineffectiveness of the parliamentary opposition in contemporary authoritarian regimes in which the governing party is able to dominate the parliament with the abuse of state power.[9] Consequently, authoritarian regimes have a negative impact on the functions of the political opposition.

After mentioning about the effects of authoritarian regimes on the opposition, one may raise the question whether an opposition has any roles on democratization of a regime.[10] Whilst the authoritarian rule prevents the opposition to manifest under democratic institutions, an opposition can still be democratic as an alternative to the existing polity. Linz and Stepan note that growing pluralism, as a consequence of the process of liberalization in the contemporary authoritarian regimes, constitutes a *democratic opposition* (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 43). Since one of the main functions of the opposition is an alternative to the government, a democratic opposition can also contribute to the democratic transition. For instance, there are some cases in which elections in authoritarian regimes are freer and fairer. In such cases, the results may signal a democratic transition. Howard and Roessler

[9] For further information about dominant-party regimes, see also (Arian & Barnes, 1974, pp. 592–614).
[10] Democratization here does not refer to the democratic transition of communist regimes in 1990s. It is rather about the ending of existing authoritarian rule and applying democratic principles correctly in hybrid regimes. In the section of "Alfred Stepan's Model", such a transition will be explained in detail.

call this situation as *liberalizing electoral outcome* (Howard & Roessler, 2006, p. 369). This does not mean that a democratic opposition causes democratization in an authoritarian regime. However, Howard and Roessler's analysis shows that the strategic preferences of the opposition can play a significant role in changing the authoritarian direction of a country (Howard & Roessler, 2006, p. 375). In conjunction with this, Norman Schofield and Micah Levinson propose four theoretical prerequisites for regime change which are as follows (Schofield & Levinson, 2008, p. 247). First, there should be unequal distribution that creates an opposition to demand the redistribution. Second, the degree of the inequality should not be as high as the authoritarian rulers take any risks to hold the power. Third, the collective action problem of the opposition should be solved. Finally, reformist groups on the side of authoritarian rulers should approach to the moderate opposition to bolster a transition. Hence, a cohesive democratic opposition may lead to a regime change. Nicolas Van de Walle explains this kind of cases as "A 'tipping game' in which opposition cohesion is not a cause of transition but rather a consequence of a growing probability of transition due to a number of interrelated factors." (Van de Walle, 2006, p. 78).

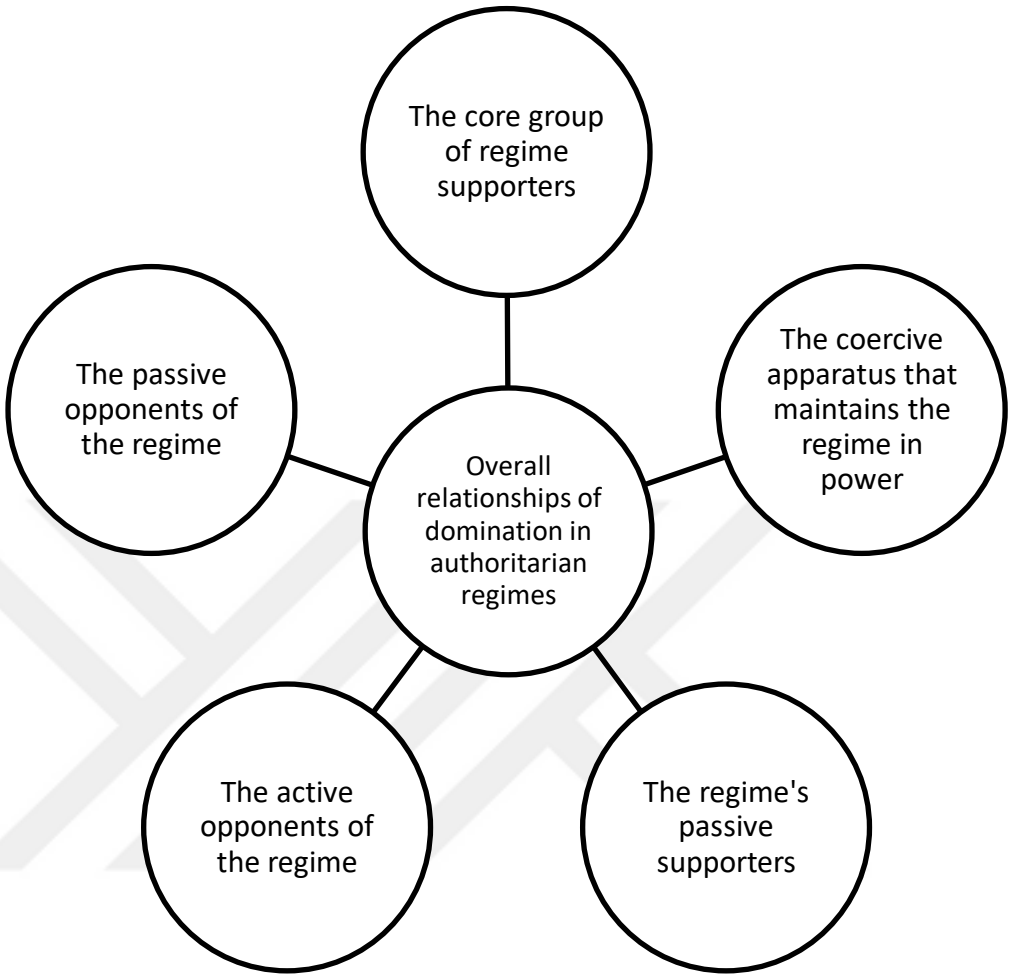
In conclusion, as the opposition depends on the actions of the authoritarian government, it can also bring about a possible regime change in some cases. In the following section, Alfred Stepan's model for the democratic opposition in authoritarian regimes will be mentioned as a useful analytical approach to the opposition groups in such cases.

1.3.Alfred Stepan's Model on the Tasks of Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes

1.3.1. Concepts and Framework

As the opposition in authoritarian regimes is a complex phenomenon to study due to the immature democratic institutions in such political structures, structural explanations based on Western models may error. It does not mean that comparative terms which Western scholars developed are inapplicable to the opposition in these regimes. They are rather useful to conceptualize the opposition and the regime. However, when it comes to the relations between these two actors, one must consider the different dynamics in authoritarian regimes comparing to the structure of Western democracies. For this reason, in his article titled "On the Tasks of a Democratic Opposition", American comparativist Alfred C. Stepan focuses on *the overall relationships of domination* which allows him to eliminate the structural biases (Stepan, 1990, p. 42).

Figure 1: Five Primary Groups in Authoritarian Regimes[11]



Source: Alfred Stepan, "On the Tasks of a Democratic Opposition", Journal of Democracy, vol. 1, no. 2 (1990), 42.

Figure 1 represents Stepan's five primary groups interacting within an authoritarian regime. The interactions among these groups give an idea about whether an authoritarian regime is eroding. The term, *authoritarian erosion*, refers to the process of overthrowing an authoritarian regime. This concept does not only include the democratic transitions occurred in 1990s, but it also rather gives a theoretical model which can be applied into the current authoritarian regimes. Stepan explains how to indicate whether an authoritarian regime is about to collapse by the examining the overall relationships of dominance. As this thesis aims to use Stepan's approach in eroding regime cases, the details of these relations will be given in the following section, "Authoritarian Erosion". Moreover, Stepan mentions about the opposition's role during the authoritarian erosion which means on the eve of a

[11] Later, Stepan added a sixth group named "non-democratic opponents to the regime". Since he refers to his previous article for detailed explanations, it is not necessary to add the sixth group for this figure. For further details see also (Stepan, 1992, p. 662).

democratic transition (Stepan, 1990, p. 42). The opponents' transforming role in the relationship among these five groups is not normative that conditions the authoritarian regime to be transformed to a democracy. Yet, it is based on the assumption that a democratic opposition's ultimate goal is to challenge the authoritarianism.

Table 1: Five Tasks of the Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes[12]

Five Tasks of the Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes
1- Resisting integration into the regime
2- Guarding zones of autonomy against it
3- Disputing its legitimacy
4- Raising the costs of authoritarian rule
5- Creating a credible democratic alternative

Source: Alfred Stepan, "On the Tasks of a Democratic Opposition", Journal of Democracy, vol. 1, no. 2, (1990), 44.

As for the role of the opposition during authoritarian erosion, Stepan proposes five functions/tasks that the opposition performs which are listed in Table 1. Although supposing five functions for the opposition seems deterministic, Stepan notes that the aim of his approach is to give a fuller picture about the possible democratization in authoritarian regimes without focusing on the political structure that is manipulated by authoritarian rulers (Stepan, 1990, p. 49). These five functions can also be regarded as the natural components of the opposition since they are the ways to challenge the system that is not different from opposing the government in authoritarian regimes.

1.3.2. Authoritarian Erosion

During the authoritarian erosion, Stepan illustrates the behaviors of the five groups in both a strong authoritarian regime and an eroding one so that he explains how the opponents play a transforming role (Stepan, 1990, p. 42). In strong authoritarian regimes, the psychology of the core supporters of the regime is on the side of the regime because they think that the regime provides a security against the possible threats (Stepan, 1990, p. 42). In such an environment, the security elites which constitute the coercive power such as the military and the intelligence service align their interests with the rulers (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). Under these conditions, the regime can have many

[12] Later, Stepan added a sixth task named "staying in or coming into existence". Since he refers to his previous article for detailed explanations in the article that he counts six tasks, it is not necessary to add the sixth task for this figure. For further details see also (Stepan, 1997, p. 662).

passive supporters consisting of middle-class professionals who can be evaluated as loyal to the regime (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). When it comes to the opposition, the active opponents are demobilized and they have a small number of passive supporters who do not want to be associated with them (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). It should be considered that the demobilization of active opponents and the concern of passive opponents come from the cohesion of the authoritarian regime that causes a high degree of coercion.

In the case of eroding regime, fragmentation among the core supporters of the regime can be seen because some of them become suspicious about their political preferences (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). It triggers a shift in which some supporters of the regime turn to the side of the opposition (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). Military officers may also be the opposition in some cases which sometimes ends up with a coup de 'tat (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). The passive supporters of the opposition prefer to align themselves with the active opponents by committing their political ideas to the public or participating the events which are organized by the opposition groups (Stepan, 1990, p. 44). Given the shift among the five groups in both scenarios, it can be said that the authoritarian erosion brings about the growing number of the opponents. In this respect, the opposition can obtain the power to challenge the political system. Stepan claims that although authoritarian regimes generally collapse because of external factors, the opposition can trigger internal conflicts which accelerate this process (Stepan, 1990, p. 44). To illustrate, Qaddafi's regime was overthrown by the intervention of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces. Despite NATO's military capabilities to collapse the regime in Libya, one should also consider the opposition's anti-regime activities before this military intervention. Stepan's perspective is significant to understand what role the opposition plays while a regime is about to collapse. Therefore, Stepan's five tasks of the opposition in the eroding-regime cases is useful to understand the opposition's contribution to the regime change.

1.3.3. Five Tasks of the Opposition

As the authoritarian rulers can use the state power to empower its sphere of influence and to suppress the opposition, *resisting integration into the regime* is the most important task for the opponents. The active opponents must protect their ideological or cultural realm of existence against the regime's efforts to intimidate them (Stepan, 1990, p. 44). It provides an identity that is necessary to follow other tasks. Thereafter, the active opponents can enhance its zones of influence by recruiting new passive supporters (Stepan, 1990, p. 45). Stepan writes that *guarding zones of autonomy against the regime* and *disputing the regime's legitimacy* are two ways for this purpose (Stepan, 1990, p. 45). He notes that if the passive supports to the opposition increase through newcomers, this situation also increases the effectiveness of other tasks (Stepan, 1990, p. 45). For instance, if the demands of a trade union of workers were not responded by the government, the active opponents could incorporate this

union in its activities. Such an incorporation would *raise the costs of authoritarian rule* since the government is exposed to a danger to lose its passive supporters among the workers. In a similar vein, the active opposition can also attempt to have international attention to the nondemocratic activities of the regime in order to drive the regime into the corner (Stepan, 1990, pp. 45–46). According to Stepan, the regime thus responses to this *international opprobrium* by claiming that there is not a viable alternative except its rule, such a claim gives a chance to the opposition to rise as a democratic alternative (Stepan, 1990, p. 46). What is more, Stepan stresses "If the active opposition can encourage activities -such as strikes, slowdowns, widespread protests, samizdatstyle publications, 'flying' university classes, and noncooperation generally- that give the lie to this belief, it will have increased the costs of rule yet again." (Stepan, 1990, p. 46). Considering such activities with anti-systemic motivations, it can be claimed that Stepan's framework also contains non-systemic opposition.

Creating a credible democratic alternative is the risky tasks for a democratic opposition. Constructing a democratic opposition is significant to persuade the people for an alternative to the authoritarian rule. However, opposition cohesion including all those different opposition movements is difficult. Even if opposition groups can successfully coalesce into a democratic front, their unity might be disrupted due to either the clash of their interests or the regime's effort to demobilize them. In addition to this, Stepan points out that if the opposition only aimed at collapsing the regime without neglecting the democratic principles, it would lead to a transition to another authoritarian rule (Stepan, 1990, p. 47). Besides, alternating the government through acting as a shadow government is not plausible since the growing opposition means many contentious issues in which various interests can conflict (Stepan, 1990, p. 47). For this reason, Stepan underlines that a consensus on *the rules of the game*, rather than the detailed discussions about solving every single contentious issue, should be reached since it decreases the risk of polarization within the democratic opposition (Stepan, 1990, pp. 47–48). Such a consensus is important to *raise the costs of authoritarian rule* because this situation causes the questioning of the regimes "indispensability" (Stepan, 1990, p. 48). Therefore, the degree of cohesion in the democratic opposition influences the effectiveness of challenging the regime.

It can be seen that the tasks of the opposition which Stepan proposes are interrelated. The first task of *resisting integration into the regime* is existential for the oppositions in the authoritarian regimes. As for *creating a credible democratic alternative*, it is related to the opposition's destination in which transforming the authoritarian rule into a democratic one. Stepan suggests "Analytically, the degree to which the opposition can perform these functions is a useful indicator of the severity of authoritarian control."(Stepan, 1990, p. 44). Overall, Alfred Stepan's framework provides a theoretical basis to analyze the contemporary form of the authoritarian regimes and the opposition living in such regimes.

As this study focuses on non-systemic opposition in authoritarian regimes, Alfred Stepan's model is convenient to explain such cases in many respects. Firstly, this model is overarching enough to analyze different types of the opposition since it covers both non-systemic opposition and the contemporary form of the authoritarian regimes. As mentioned in the first section, the classical literature has been criticized in terms of its normative and restrictive approach. Although Stepan's model does not include the definition for the opposition, it is neither restrictive nor normative. His approach remains flexible while mentioning the types of the opposition. The basis of this framework consists of the five groups that represent the power relations in authoritarian regimes which also involves the anti-system activities. By the same token, Stepan does not focus on the ambiguous institutional arrangements in hybrid regimes. This saves his model from overuse of the concepts about defining actors and dynamics in such political systems. Indeed, he only examines the opposition behavior without theoretical discussions about the authoritarian rule the opposition lives in. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a particular degree of competitiveness existing either in the parliament or out of the parliament is a prerequisite for eroding regime cases. Otherwise, it would be inappropriate to state the existence of a democratic opposition or the possibility of a democratic transition.

Another aspect that makes Stepan's theoretical approach useful for this study is that considering the possibility of democratization in contemporary authoritarian regimes brings about the ability to use comparative concepts which were created based on Western democracies. Despite the generalization problem of such concepts in hybrid regimes, framing the opposition with an eventual goal of democratization allows the use of the concepts which were created based on Western societies. According to Stepan, "What must be studied in all these cases is not merely the final collapse or overthrow of authoritarian regimes, but the incremental process of 'authoritarian erosion' and the opposition's contribution to it." (Stepan, 1990, p. 42). Therefore, considering democratization as an unfinished process provides a broader understanding of liberalization of the politics in authoritarian regimes than Howard and Roessler's term *liberalizing electoral outcome* (Howard & Roessler, 2006, p. 369). Whilst the focus of this term is only the elections, Stepan's approach contributes social factors to it by focusing on the *overall relationship of domination* (Stepan, 1990, p. 42).

The actors which Stepan mentions in his framework are also useful tools for the analysis of this thesis. It makes available to analyze "the active opponents" within a theoretical roadmap. Thus, the commitments of the oppositions in which they claim of being democratic can be elaborated through Stepan's fifth task of *creating a credible democratic opposition*. Moreover, as Stepan examines the power relations among five main groups, it brings wider explanations than elite-based or structure-based approaches. For instance, regarding the ambiguity of modern authoritarian regimes,

Linz clarifies from an institution-based perspective that presidentialism causes "anti-system sentiments" and thus decline of party politics (Linz, 2002, p. 292). Similarly, Levistky and Way mentions about "Western leverage and linkage to the West" as one of the causes of competitive authoritarianism which is a structural explanation (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 40). The relative advantage of Stepan's model, for this thesis, is that it avoids the complexity of macro dynamics. In this sense, he echoes "While structural or institutional studies place the coercive elite on center stage, an analysis of power relations within the authoritarian regimes gives a fuller picture by examining the interactions among these five groups." (Stepan, 1990, p. 42).

To conclude, Alfred Stepan's model is convenient to this thesis for three main reasons. First, even though the defining the opposition is a controversial issue in the literature, all types of the opposition fit Stepan's model including non-systemic opposition. Second, thanks to its assumption that democratization is still possible for authoritarian regimes not a finished process, this approach does not prevent the use of Western concepts for analyzing the opposition behavior. Third, the focus on the power relations between five primary groups leads to deeper understanding than institution-based or structure-based explanations for the opposition in the literature.

CHAPTER 2: POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

2.1.Towards an Authoritarian Regime in Post-Soviet Russia (1993-2021)

Comparative politics researchers use the themes such as authoritarianism that bring about useful generalizations while comparing different polities. However, such themes may error in the cases which a polity is somehow unique. Neil Robinson, who is a professor studying Russian politics in University of Limerick, notes "It does, however, mean that we should be very specific about how and when we use them, and about what we are referring to when we do use them" (Robinson, 2018, p. 247). Since Russia is a country where sudden political changes have occurred throughout its history, one must be careful while using comparative terms to explain Russian politics. Therefore, using "authoritarian regime" and "non-systemic opposition" terms for Russia requires a focus on post-Soviet period when democratic elements have entered to Russian polity. In order to understand the current status of the regime and the opposition, this chapter will explain the formation and evolution of Russian polity after the collapse of Soviet Union in the light of Alfred Stepan's terms which are *Strong Regime* and *Eroding Regime*.

The authoritarianism in post-Soviet Russia has gradually developed since the constitution of 1993 brought excessive power to the president. This section focuses on this development through explaining the authoritarian measures of Yeltsin and Putin Eras. As Russian politics went towards an authoritarian direction, parliamentary politics lost its significance. Therefore, non-systemic opposition birthed shortly after the riots of 2011-13 in Moscow. This section examines the political atmosphere that led to a high degree of authoritarianism, thusly, the emergence of non-systemic opposition by demonstrating the politically motivated legal arrangements under the presidency of Putin.

2.1.1. The Yeltsin Era (1991-99)

Weakening central authority of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) under its last leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, created a power vacuum in which the leaders of the republics within Soviet Union started seeking for independence. Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007) was one of those leaders whose popular support and political power coming from their high ranks in Soviet bureaucracy allowed them to take precedence over the political decisions of the central government. This duality in administration has step-by-step caused the disintegration of Soviet Union and brought Yeltsin to the fore[13]. Nonetheless, the collapse of Soviet Union resulted in political struggle and economic crisis for

[13] Robinson describes how Yeltsin possessed the political power through challenging Gorbachev. For further details, see (Robinson, 2019b, pp. 55–58).

former Soviet socialist republics. To delineate the peculiarities of this chaotic period and its consequences on behalf of Yeltsin, it is worth quoting Robinson's full explanation to understand the chaos in this period:

> Crisis provided opportunities for leaders to try to force through change to rebuild state and economy, but political struggle over the nature of the regime soon helped create other crises, which meant that state development was compromised and no resolution to Russia's deeper problems was reached. Instead Russia's leaders made concessions over state development in return for agreement over regime stability. Elite factions agreed to mute their challenges to Yeltsin's leadership in return for privileged access to wealth and power.(Robinson, 2018, pp. 60–61)

Therefore, President Boris Yeltsin's personality played a significant role in state-building after the collapse of Soviet Union. Fareed Zakaria, journalist and political commentator, writes about the presidency of Yeltsin "He may well be a liberal democrat at heart, but Yeltsin's actions have created a Russian super-presidency." (Zakaria, 1997, p. 34). "Super-presidency" refers to the excessive executive power in the hands of Russian president as a result of the constitution of 1993. There are many writings mentioning about super-presidentialism, but this study only requires a brief definition. Timothy Colton, who is Professor in Government and Russian Studies at Harvard University, eloquently describes this power as follows: "the power to dissolve the lower house (the State Duma) for cause; a monopoly over all ministerial appointments other than that of the prime minister; a nearly unrestricted right to emit decrees; and the immunity of the presidential establishment and the bureaucracy from legislative oversight" (Colton & Skach, 2005, p. 120). Thus, the constitution of 1993 prepared a legal basis for an authoritarian rule. In this section, it will be later explained how this constitutional adjustment has resulted in a political dominance over the other branches when Yeltsin's relatively liberal use of this super authorization was replaced by Vladimir Putin's presidency.

While the political system post-Soviet Russia was being established by Yeltsin's presidential decisions, the political opposition was also coming into the existence under the parliament, State Duma. Despite the fragmented structure of Duma in the Yeltsin Era, it remained as a symbolic[14] parliamentary opposition against Russian super-presidency. Table 2 and Table 3 shows the divided texture of Duma in the elections of 1993 and 1995 during Yeltsin's presidency. One might ask whether the existence of various political parties in Duma represents pluralism and a democratic rule. Veteran researcher on Russian Studies at University of Kent, Richard Sakwa answers, "It was, rather, a sign of a profound crisis in Russia's multi-party system. With the decline of the democratic insurgency and waning public interest in politics, parties came to represent only a few professional politicians, concerned mainly about their own status and position on the party-list." (Sakwa, 2002, p.

[14] This does not mean that the parliamentary has not ever had a political power in Russian politics. It refers to the victory of Yeltsin against a chaotic parliament after establishing a super-presidency with the constitution of 1993. For further details of the battle between Yeltsin and the parliament until 1993, see also (Robinson, 2019g, pp. 65–69).

151). Holding 1995 Duma elections, Russian electorate became "matured" and parliamentary politics in Russia set off a stabilized value within the society (Sakwa, 2002, pp. 154–155). Furthermore, Yeltsin was not directly associated with any political parties in Duma because his political power based on the presidential authorization that made the oppositions in the Duma functionless. Instead, Yeltsin enlarged the bureaucracy with creating many overlapped institutions which reduced the significance of constitutional form of the Russian politics (Robinson, 2019d, p. 117). Thus, the new polity emerging in post-Soviet period turned to be a democracy which is highly dependent on the president's decisions.

Table 2: State Duma Elections, 12 December 1993[15]

Party/bloc	Party list		Single-member seats	Total seats	
	%	Seats		No.	%
Russia's Choice (Y. Gaidar)	15.51	40	30	70	15.6
LDPR (V. Zhirinovsky)	22.92	59	5	64	14.2
Communist Party (KPRF – G. Zyuganov)	12.40	32	16	48	10.7
Agrarian Party	7.99	21	12	33	7.3
Russian United Democratic Party (YABLOKO - G. Yavlinsky)	7.86	20	3	23	5.1
Women of Russia	8.13	21	2	23	5.1

[15] This table does not show the parties which are under 5% threshold. For further details see also (Sakwa, 2002, p. 147)

Party of Russian Unity and Accord (PRES – S. Shakhrai)	6.76	18	1	18	4.0
Democratic Party of Russia (DPR – N. Travkin)	5.52	14	1	15	3.3

Source: Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, (2002), 147.

Table 3: State Duma Elections, 17 December 1995[16]

Party/bloc	**Party-list**		**Single-member seats**	**Total seats**	**1993 seats**
	%	**Seats**			
KPRF	22.30	99	58	157	45
LDPR	11.18	50	1	51	64
Russia Our Home (V. Chernomyrdin)	10.13	45	10	55	N/A
YABLOKO	6.89	31	14	45	25

Source: Richard Sakwa, Russian Politics and Society, (2002), 153.

To describe the transition from Soviet system to a newborn democracy in Russia, Linz and Stepan point out that Perestroika and Glasnost can be described as "liberalization but not democratization" which led to the decrease of ideological, economic, and coercive control of party-state while bringing very few democratic tools for emerging states (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 367). Hence, the eclectic political environment of Russia is a heritage of democratic transition started in Soviet Union. More to the point, Jean Blondel, French political scientist, suggests that since Soviet transition has occurred not by the opposition forces but the government itself, this situation resulted in what he calls "pessimistic" scenario that oppositional attempts in the new regime are frustrated by the actions of government (Blondel, 1997, p. 484). Therefore, the formation of political opposition under Yeltsin's presidency has not developed gradually by democratic means.

[16] (Sakwa, 2002, p. 153)

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, using comparative politics terms is a sensitive issue when it comes to Russian experience of democracy. For this reason, Yeltsin's use of political power should be differentiated from his successors. Although the constitution of 1993 includes excessive power for the president of Russia, Yeltsin personally tolerated the existence of the opposition to some extent. Russian researcher, Tania Rakhmanova, states that paying attention to many criticisms casted by the media, Yeltsin retreated his pressure on the newspaper named Pravda which was once a communist media organ (Rakhmanova, 2016, p. 38). She also notes a part of an interview with Georgy Satarov, a former Russian politician who was an aide for Yeltsin. Satarov says that journalists knew that Yeltsin was an assurance for freedom of press, therefore, they took sides with him in the presidential elections of 1996 (Rakhmanova, 2016, p. 38). Given Yeltsin's personal tolerance to political opposition and the fragmented structure of Duma, Russian political scientist Vladimir Gel'man's conceptual map for three main opposition groups "the Communists, the liberals, and the democrats" is useful to understand the opposing groups during the Yeltsin Era (Gel'man, 2005, p. 34). Until the emergence of non-systemic opposition in 2010s[17], the parliamentary have been used by different opposition groups trying to adapt the new politics in post-Soviet Russia. Consequently, these three groups can be analyzed through Communist Party of Russian Federation (KPRF), Russia's Choice (RC), and Yabloko.

Communists in Russia was one of the leading groups in State Duma (see Table 2 and Table 3). Rather than focusing on its establishment, ideological position, and discourse, this study concerns about what type of opposition it functions. After experiencing existential problems in Russian polity such as the ban of Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1991-92, this group evolved in order to survive in post-Soviet politics. Michael McFaul, who served as United States (US) Ambassador in Russia between 2012 and 2014, wrote "After his electoral defeat in the 1996 presidential election, Zyuganov pledged loyalty to the electoral process" (McFaul, 2001, p. 361). Based on this evolution of the communists, Gel'man claims that the system made them semiopposition[18] at first and turned them into a principled opposition[19] in 2000s (Gel'man, 2005, p. 37). Regarding the creation of an authoritarian rule in post-Soviet Russia starting with the constitution of 1993, this regime has reached a capability to absorb the communist opposition which can be seen as the most powerful alternative to Yeltsin in 1990s.

[17] The emergence of non-systemic opposition in Russian politics will be comprehensively covered in the second section of this chapter titled "Is Russian Regime Strong or Eroding?".

[18] Linz defines semiopposition as "There is semiopposition by groups that are not dominant or represented in the governing group and that engage in partial criticism but are willing to participate in power without fundamentally challenging the regime." (Linz, 2000, p. 168).

[19] Kircheimer's concept, "opposition of principle", is an opposition that tries to obtain full electoral power through elections in order to change the whole political system (Kirchheimer, 1957, p. 135). Gel'man uses this concept to emphasize that communists acknowledged that they lost their chance to succeed within this polity.

Liberals cover a large group which consists of the people favored free market and privatization after the collapse of Soviet Union. By calling this group as liberals, Gel'man refers to Russia's Choice (RC – Vybor Rossii) whose members were economic reformers in the government during Yeltsin's presidency such as Anatoly Chubais and Yegor Gaidar (Gel'man, 2005, p. 38). Although this group played a significant role in economic reforms, their political party (RC) was not an effective opposition concerning their electorates and parliamentary capabilities. As Robinson echoes, "Their existence and relative electoral success depended on their founders' and leaders' continued access to government resources. The parties faded from prominence when the composition of government changed, as it did after the 1993 and 1995 Duma elections, and leaders' access to official resources ended.", RC's status can barely be counted as an opposition (Robinson, 2019c, p. 154). Accordingly, Gel'man counts it as a semiopposition with its "moderate criticisms" to government actions (Gel'man, 2005, p. 38). Once again, liberal opposition to Yeltsin can be considered as absorbed by the Kremlin-led political system.

The identity of Yabloko (The Russian United Democratic Party) that Gel'man regards as democrats can be also considered as liberal, however, its "vast ideological distance" between communists and the regime turned it to moderate and principled opposition at the same time which made its electoral power too weak to be a serious alternative to the government without a coalition partner in Russia's super-presidential system (Gel'man, 2005, p. 41). As Yeltsin-led liberal reforms had been already conducting by Chubais and Gaidar, Yabloko's liberal identity have become less needed for the regime. These circumstances pushed Yabloko to more marginal position. Moreover, Grigory Yavlinsky, who was leading this party, put his personality forward rather than Yabloko's ideological agenda (Hale, 2004, p. 1010). This personification also decreased Yabloko's capability of political leverage. For instance, Yavlinsky was defending the idea to negotiate with Chechen leaders during the Second Chechen War in 1999 but even liberals criticized his stance that has a part in the unsuccessful results of 1999 legislative elections (Gel'man, 2005, p. 42). Another example that reduced Yabloko's significant was the political conflict between Sergei Stepashin, who served as prime minister in 1999, and Yavlinsky. Although Yavlinsky invited Stepashin to a political alliance, their opinions differed in security issues especially when it comes to Second Chechen War. Hale underlines, "The statements of Stepashin, given his experience in the security sphere, had more gravitas than those of Yavlinsky and might have enabled the party to pull off a law-and-order campaign strategy. But the party initially stuck by its decision to focus primarily on Yavlinsky during the campaign" (Hale, 2004, p. 1011). Under the circumstances in which post-Soviet Russian politics has been on course for authoritarianism in 1990s, Yabloko could not overcome neither its dependence

on Yavlinsky's personality nor its limited access to the governmental resources. Thus, its parliamentary importance has declined in the Yeltsin Era.

Last words on the Yeltsin Era, Levitsky and Way discuss that Russia is a country which did not become the target of Western pressure of democratization[20] as much as other post-Soviet countries did in 1990s (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 186). This situation caused Russian elites' political preferences to serve relatively central function in the emergence of democratic institutions with less Western intervention. However, it is not accurate to explain the development of authoritarianism in Russia only with its Soviet background. According to Gel'man, "The postulate of 'wrong-headedness' of Russian political culture is not supported by empirical evidence" (Gel'man, 2005, p. 26). In this study, evaluating the constitution of 1993 as the starting point of Russia's authoritarianism is not a determinist approach by linking the failure of building democratic institutions to the Soviet past. In lieu of this, this thesis tries to examine the uniqueness of Russia's response to the widespread democratization trend while tracing the party politics in 1990s. In the first parliamentary experience in post-Soviet Russian politics, it can be seen how the opposition was born dead due to the excessive powers of the president and consequently the marginalization of opposing against the rule of Yeltsin. The opposing groups' strategy of approximating to the authoritarian regime in order to politically survive has transformed them into unchallenging entities.

2.1.2. Putin Era (2000-2021)

The first two presidential terms of Putin can be seen as the continuation of the building of the authoritarian regime in post-Soviet Russia. It can be argued that Putin's consolidation of oligarchs, leadership of a political party (United Russia), and establishment of power vertical[21] are three main political actions of how he kept moving forward to an authoritarian system. As particular political events in the tandem period, that is, Dimitri Medvedev's presidency (2008-12) are essential to understand Putin's third presidential term and thusly how Russia's authoritarian level increased, this study will periodize the Putin Era as two sections which are "Until 2008" and "Medvedev's Presidency and Afterwards".

2.1.2.1. First Two Terms (2000-2008)

In the Yeltsin Era, the excessive executive power of the constitution of 1993 already gave to the president a safe zone from the interest groups. Robinson indicates, "Yeltsin preserved his influence by playing off institutions and forces against one another. What was a problem in the early days of

[20] In their book, Levitsky and Way note, "Russia is a case of low linkage and low leverage". For the explanation of linkage and leverage see also (Levitsky & Way, 2010, pp. 38–54).
[21] This is a power hierarchy referring to the administrative system that Putin has established in order to strengthen the central authority through particular legal adjustments. For further details, see (Ross, 2002, pp. 138–139).

post-communist governance in Russia became almost an art form after 1993 as Yeltsin balanced institutions and competing and shifting policy coalitions." (Robinson, 2019g, p. 70). Although allying with the president was the only alternative for interest groups, this situation pushed Yeltsin into a network from the politics and the private sector in order to survive in the presidential elections (Robinson, 2019g, p. 71). Forcing the oligarchs to obey the president by politically pressuring them was Putin's one of the first changes after the Yeltsin Era. What Gel'man defines as "imposed consensus" was that unlike Yeltsin's political maneuvers among the competing groups, Putin attacked to some banks and companies with the prosecutors and tax inspectors and used informal institutions to limit the power elites in domestic politics (Gel'man, 2002, p. 358). Thus, consolidating the elites in favor of the president increased the authoritarian capabilities in Russian political system without needing private sector's support for the elections.

Despite the ineffectiveness of its democratic functions in the Yeltsin Era, State Duma was distant from the president's direct intervention. Creation of United Russia Party (UR) with the coalescence of Unity Party and Fatherland-All Russia Party supporting Putin brought about a mechanism that mobilizes Russian society on behalf of the president and controls the parliamentary politics for pro-Kremlin actions. Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 show the development of United Russia through three elections under the presidency of Putin.

Table 4: State Duma Elections, 19 December 1999[22]

Parties	**Votes %**		**Seats**		
	List	**SMD**	**List**	**SMD**	**Total %**
KPRF	24.3	13.4	67	46	25.1
Unity (Yedinstvo)	23.3	2.1	64	9	16.2
Fatherland-All Russia (Otechestvo - Vsya Rossiya)	13.3	8.6	37	31	15.1
Union of Right Forces (SPS – Soyuz	8.5	3.0	24	5	6.4

[22] SMD refers to Single-Member District, in which there are also independent candidates, and this table does not show the parties which are under 5% threshold. For further details see also (Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 2021).

Pravykh Syl)					
Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR)	6.0	1.5	17	0	3.8
YABLOKO	5.9	5.0	16	4	4.4

Source: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, (2021), *Russia Votes*, Retrieved from URL: https://www.russiavotes.org.

Table 5: State Duma Elections, 7 December 2003[23]

Parties	**Votes %**		**Seats**		
	List	**SMD**	**List**	**SMD**	**Total %**
United Russia (Yedinaya Rossiya)	37.6	23.2	120	102	49.3
Communist Party	12.6	10.8	40	12	11.6
Liberal Democratic Party	11.5	3.1	36	0	8.0
Motherland	9.0	2.9	29	8	8.2

Source: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, (2021), *Russia Votes*, Retrieved from URL: https://www.russiavotes.org.

Table 6: State Duma Elections, 2 December 2007[24]

Party	**Percentage of Vote**	**Seats**
United Russia	64.3	315
Communist	11.54	57
LDPR	8.14	40
A Just Russia	7.74	38
Total	**91.72**	**450**

[23] (Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 2021).
[24] Parties which are under the threshold of 7% are not listed. RLDP refers to Russian Liberal Democratic Party. For further details, see also (Nichol, 2007, p. 4).

Source: J. Nichol, (2007), *Russia's December 2007 Legislative Election: Outcome and Implications* (Report No. RS22770). Congressional Research Service. https://sgp.fas.org.

The domination of United Russia not only provided a societal basis supporting the president but also prevented Duma's chances not to obey the president albeit a few. Thomas F. Remington, who served as the chair of Political Science Department at Emory University, highlights that Putin's presidential message to Duma in 2000 and 2001 indicates a different strategy than Yeltsin's presidency in which his messages were detached from actual decision-making and law-making process of the government (Remington, 2001, p. 290). Apart from this, promoting the profile of Putin as a uniting character above all ideologies with catch-all party identity of United Russia created a "party of power"[25]. Gel'man underlines that the UR membership of 65 out of 85 regional chief and high-ranking politicians such as Dimitry Medvedev and Boris Gryzlov who was elected as the chairman of Duma, can be seen as a proof of the rising parliamentary power of Putin compared to Yeltsin (Gel'man, 2008, p. 913). David White, professor at University of Birmingham, emphasizes that the candidates trying to climb in their political career through public offices preferred UR which both increased its electoral power and maintained it by the offering such career opportunities (White, 2011, p. 659). Hence, the establishment of UR enlarged Putin's popularity as a guarantee for reelection that allowed him to build a sustainable regime by preventing the emergence of any possible parliamentary opposition.

Another political action of Putin that increased his authoritarian capabilities was the adjustments related to the relation between the central government and federal entities. Ross lists the six legal arrangements that led to "power vertical" as Table 7 demonstrates (Ross, 2002, p. 139).

Table 7: Legal Arrangements of Power Vertical

Legal Arrangements of Power Vertical
1- The creation of seven new federal super-districts
2- A reform of the Federation Council
3- The creation of a New State Council
4- The granting of new powers to the President to dismiss regional governors and dissolve regional assemblies
5- New rights for regional governors to dismiss municipal officials
6- A major campaign to bring regional charters and republican constitutions into line with the Russian Constitution

Source: Cameron Ross, *Federalism and Democratization in Post-Communist Russia*, (2002), 139.

[25] This term is used to describe a dominant party which is a tool of an authoritarian regime to manage the parliamentary politics. For further details about dominant party regimes, see (Dunleavy, 2010).

Creation of new federal districts ensured the central government to control and coordinate vast territories under a strict hierarchy that eliminates the growth of any possible regional power. The reform of the Federation Council refers to the presidential power threatening to prosecute the governors. This regulation forces every governor to be subordinated to the Kremlin if they want to benefit legal immunity. Further, a State Council is a new political entity which can also be dissolved by the president. This council had functioned only for consultation chaired by the president until the constitutional amendments of 2020. Regional leaders had been periodically meeting the president with no legislative power at their hands. The president also has the authorization of dismissing popularly elected governors, thereby, Putin can ignore the masses of opposition appearing in municipal elections. In this new administrative structure, not only the elected leaders but also the lower officers cannot politically survive due to the president's dismissal power. In sum, the legislated "power vertical" can be regarded as a preventive action against arising oppositions from noncentral political bodies.

As for the personality of Putin, unlike Yeltsin, he was not tolerant to criticism in media which is another site of oppositional activities. Boris Nemtsov, who was a government official in the Yeltsin Era, once stated that he believed that nobody actually read Information Security Doctrine of Russian Federation signed by Putin on 9 September 2000 but its articles announced the direct control of the state over media organs (Rakhmanova, 2016, p. 187). In a similar vein, since they criticized against him, Putin targeted Vladimir Gusinsky, who was the owner of a television (TV) channel, Novoye Nezavisimoye Negosudarstvenoye (NTV), and Boris Berezovsky, an oligarch, by forcing Gusinsky into exile and taking away the control of Berezovsky over Obshchestvennoye Rossiyskoye Televideniye (ORT) that is a TV broadcaster in Russia (Robinson, 2019e, p. 82). Nemtsov even further added that Putin himself joined the editions of the news related to him, controlled the content of TV news, concerned about mount arrangements (Rakhmanova, 2016, p. 192). Given Putin's political control over the sites of political opposition, his presidency has increased the level of authoritarianism in post-Soviet Russian politics. In addition, social movements were established to mobilize the young generation for the sake of Putin's political aims such as Nashi and Vazhnoe Delo. Julie Hemment, the chair of Anthropology Department at University of Massachusetts Amherst, stresses "All the youth movements and projects this research has surveyed so far have one thing in common: They affirm the importance of Soviet-era categories and identities. In their different ways, both organizations attend to the symbolic order that Law 122[26] disrupted." (Hemment, 2009, p. 46). This similarity that Putin's rule resembles Soviet system shows that Russia started retreating from Yeltsin's relatively democratic approach to politics.

[26] This law changed Soviet economic support for military veterans and the disabled with cash payments. For further details, see (Hemment, 2009, p. 40).

Last but not least, in the literature, Putin's preventive actions against the birth of a political opposition can be interpreted as his threat perception coming from the so-called color revolutions such in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005). It is worth fully quoting the evaluation of Graeme Robertson, professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, about the effect of these revolutions in post-Soviet states on authoritarian leaders:

> Nevertheless, the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic and Edward Shevardnadze and the defeat of Viktor Yanukovich concerned presidents Putin, Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, and the like. For while they may face little credible opposition now, these authoritarian rulers understand that successful authoritarianism does not just happen but requires extensive coordination among elites over time. Ruling coalitions are politically constructed across a more or less broad range of players with different resources, and these coalitions need to be maintained. At any given moment, key elite players, whether from the security apparatus, from business, or from politics, can choose to ally themselves with existing rulers, or they may decide they are better off throwing in their lot with the opposition and challenging for power. (Robertson, 2009, p. 529)

Regardless of its reasons, Putin, in his first two presidential terms (2000-2008), both increased the authoritarian capabilities of the regime and hindered the development of a political opposition against his rule. Taking his illiberal arrangements and threat perception stemming from the color revolutions into consideration, Putin contributed the construction of an authoritarian regime in Russia in three main ways which are consolidation of oligarchs, dominating Duma with the UR, and creating the power vertical in state bureaucracy. Even though Medvedev had been the president between 2008 and 2012, Putin has served as the prime minister during this period and re-elected as the president in 2012 presidential elections. This study will commentate Medvedev's presidency as a tandem period within the Putin Era based on the continuities related to the authoritarian direction of Russia.

2.1.2.2. Medvedev's Presidency

In the early 2010s, with Putin's announcement on his candidacy for presidential elections of 2012, the protests demanding fair elections were organized in Moscow. According to White, at the beginning of the widespread protests lasted between 2011 and 2013, Solidarity was planning a protest for fair elections in the autumn of 2010 (White, 2013, p. 583). Just after 2011 State Duma elections, he describes the large-scale protests as "The protests brought together a range of political and social movements together with large numbers of individuals, most of whom had never taken to the streets before. Of the groups involved, the Solidarity movement played a key organizing role." (White, 2013, p. 584). This popular reaction against Putin's rule played a critical role in Russian politics regarding the regime's authoritarian response after reelection of Putin in 2012 and the emergence of non-systemic opposition. 2011-13 Moscow protests raised many questions about what kind of polity Russia is and what type of political opposition it is facing. The protests were mainly targeting the

regime he continued building during Medvedev's presidency. In the news of Russian Newspaper (Rossiyskaya Gazeta), the constitutional amendments of 2008 that increased the presidential terms from four to six years and the parliamentary terms from four to five years can be seen (RG, 2009). The dissatisfaction in Russian society during Moscow riots of 2011-13 were mainly against such authoritarian actions. Yet, how did masses mobilize and protest him despite his preventive attacks against a possible growth of a political opposition? To understand the national and international conditions causing such a dissent and the motivation of opponents, the political atmosphere of the early 2010s should be underlined.

In his famous Munich Speech (2007), Putin criticized the existing unipolar order in international politics and emphasized the inevitable multipolarity based on the economic changes (Putin, 2007). This was to show that Russia under Putin's leadership was positioning itself on the opposite side of the Western domination. Understanding Russian ideological-like orientation is significant to realize the rationale behind Kremlin's illiberal direction in 2010s. Together with the Munich Speech, the threat perception emerged after color revolutions, the recognition of Kosovo's independence from Serbia, NATO's enlargement towards post-Soviet countries in Eastern Europe, and Russian aggression such as Russo-Georgian War (2008) are the evidence of Russia's effort to confront the West. On this confrontation, Robinson writes, "Russia's geopolitical reach is a lot smaller than that of the USSR, and the anti-liberal message that it has been pushing resonates with local complaints about liberal democracy but offers no solution to these complaints in the form of a different socio-economic model." (Robinson, 2019f, p. 235). Complaining about the liberal hegemony without offering a credible alternative in Russian foreign policy is related to the popular support for Putin in domestic politics. After mentioning about how popular support for Putin at his first two terms turned the government to be unaccountable, Olga Oliker, who is International Crisis' Program Director for Europe and Central Asia at Brussels, and her colleagues comment on the relation between domestic and foreign policy of Russia "On the other hand, depending on to what extent domestic problems truly consume resources, it is possible that Russia might respond to difficulties at home with a more adventurous foreign policy designed in part to distract its public from domestic woes." (Oliker et al., 2009, p. 44). Hence, Russia's Putin-led anti-Western politics in international arena is not independent from the authoritarian direction in domestic politics.

In 2008, when an economic crisis came out in Russia related to the political doubts of the market based on Russian aggressive foreign policy, Robinson touches upon the "disenchantment with Putin and Medvedev" as a result of the economic stagnation (Robinson, 2019a, p. 189). Table 8 illustrates how the votes of UR fell off in 2011 elections. Robinson adds, "The 7 per cent threshold meant that United Russia's share of 49.3 percent translated into 52.9 per cent of the seats, but this was

not viewed as legitimate and was a humiliating slump in the proportion from 2007, when it had captured 70 per cent of seats." (Robinson, 2019a, p. 190). Nevertheless, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Russian opponent against Putin, argues that "A Just Russia" is only a puppet party that was established by the Kremlin (Kara-Murza, 2013). Therefore, the decline of the UR's votes is not enough to indicate a change in Russian society. However, it explains why the main point of the Bolotnaya riots of 2011-13 were for fair elections. The creation of "A Just Russia" shows that the UR did even manipulate the elections as if there was a competition in Russian politics.

Table 8: State Duma Elections, 4 December 2011[27]

Parties	**Votes %**	**Seats**	**Seats %**
United Russia	49.3	238	52.9
KPRF	19.2	92	20.5
A Just Russia	13.3	64	14.2
LDPR	11.7	56	12.4

Source: Neil Robinson, *Contemporary Russian Politics: An Introduction*, (2019), 190.

On top of that, George Washington University's professor Henry E. Hale's survey study in 2008, draws a picture of Russian society in which Putin's authoritarian actions such as being Russian president in the third time are not welcomed even by some of his supporters (Hale, 2011, pp. 1359–1360). Concordantly, Putin's decision to return to the presidency after Medvedev faced negative reactions in addition to electoral fraud criticisms against Putin's regime (Robinson, 2019a, p. 189). In a nutshell, from 2008 to 2011, an anti-Putin opposition has developed along with the international developments shaping the perception of Putin's administration.

When it comes to the amendments on political parties in Medvedev's presidency, these regulations might seem liberalizing at first glance. Making concessions or paying attention to what the opposition says, Medvedev led to the legal changes[28] related to the party registration and the ratification of governors. First, even though he opened the door for new party registration by bending the party law of 2005, the new law was restrictive since it does not allow for coalition politics such as not permitting the parties to involve other parties' candidates for their list as a part of the election strategy. Head of Political Science Department at European University in Saint-Petersburg, Grigorii Golosov claims that this rule forced political parties to make choice between their political identity and electoral success (Golosov, 2012, p. 7). Second, instead of the authority of president to dismiss the

[27] The parties which are under 7% threshold are not listed. For further details, see (Robinson, 2019a, p. 190).
[28] It refers to the amendments of 2011 on easing the registration political parties. For further details, see (Medvedev, 2011).

elected governors, Medvedev increased the minimum limit of signatures they must collect from the municipal deputies (Russian Legal Informaiton Agency, 2011). Golosov analyzes this amendment as "In practice, this means that opposition parties must obtain support from some members of United Russia before they can run" (Golosov, 2012, p. 12). Thus, Medvedev's liberalizing attempts were not "liberal" at all if one looks at the outcomes of his political reforms.

Before mentioning the regime's repression on the opposition in Putin's third presidential term, Gel'man's causal mechanism for "rebirth of opposition" in 2010s is worth underlying. He asserts three main reasons which were taking the stage of a new generation, Medvedev's liberal rhetoric, and the populist strategy of the opposition (Gel'man, 2015, pp. 179–180). First of all, he claims that nomination of Alexei Navalny for Moscow mayoral elections of 2013 by the opposition leaders who were much more older and experienced than him indicates how the new generation overshadowed its older counterparts (Gel'man, 2015, p. 179). Secondly, although Medvedev's political reforms were not as libertarian as it seemed, its rhetorical power triggered the awakening of Russian civil society by Kremlin's dialogue attempts (Gel'man, 2015, p. 179). Lastly, the target of the opposition became the whole system of the regime rather than seeking the electoral success within it (Gel'man, 2015, p. 180). For example, Navalny's words on the United Russia, "party of crooks and thieves", turned to a famous motto among these younger opponents (Ioffe, 2011, para. 3). Regarding Gel'man's points on the dynamics of the opposition in 2010s, it can be seen that parliamentary politics went into a decline and the opposition started growing out of the existing Russian political system consisting of the strict laws and regulations against disobedience.

2.1.2.3. Putin's Third and Fourth Terms (Since 2012)

Putin's third term of presidency started while the protests which were against the ruling regime as a whole had been still holding in 2012. Unlike Medvedev's liberal discourse, Putin's new term brought about a state-based approach to Russian politics. His ideas constitute the basis of the government's reaction against the opposition. Putin, during his message to Federal Assembly in 2013, complaints about the destruction of traditional values in the world and underlines the need of a strong state to confront this (Putin, 2013). Sakwa argues that Russian politics faced a "cultural turn" throughout Putin's re-election in 2012 such as the adoption of prohibitive laws against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ+) activities (Sakwa, 2013). Consistently, Russian foreign policy aggressions such as the annexation of Crimea (2014) and the military operation in Syria (2015) occurred under Putin's leadership. There is a new phenomenon in the literature, named as Putinism, referring to Putin's ideational basis. Brian Taylor, professor at Syracuse University conceptualizes this phenomenon by explaining its components as statism, anti-Westernism, and conservatism (Taylor, 2018, pp. 12–22). Putin's political actions determined the authoritarian identity of Russian state. His

leadership led Russia to become more authoritarian despite the democratic elements used in the existing political system.

As a response to the protests began in 2011, Putin mobilized his supporters for "counter-demonstration" such as the meeting in Luzhinki Stadium. The director of Levada Center, Denis Volkov, emphasizes that the regime's response had changed after Putin reelected:

> Not long after the election, the Kremlin's reaction to the protests changed from concessions and counter-mobilisation toward a new policy of tightening state control over independent sectors of society. New laws were introduced imposing tougher regulations on the media, online content, NGO funding, the conduct of mass rallies, the activities of volunteers and independent observers, and a number of discriminative laws towards sexual minorities were adopted. (Volkov, 2015, p. 47)

Starting from the legislation of these new laws, Putin's administration did not let another nation-wide protest occur again. The state repression has increased over time. Russian journalist Mikhail Zygar exemplifies how Putin's government approached to the protests by pointing the pass of law banning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) propaganda:

> A wave of protest swept across the globe, which was actively covered by Russian state media, whose interpretation of events was unambiguous: the Western gay lobby could not stomach Putin's defense of traditional values. Russia's state-owned Channel One even coined the term "Gayropa" ("gay" + "Europe") to characterize Putin's opponents in the West (and inside Russia), who were all viewed as "representatives of sexual minorities" themselves. (Zygar, 2016a)

It can be noted that Putin's third term was a turning point in which authoritarian measures of Russian government increased. Since the oppositional activities were responded by state repression after reelection of Putin, political opposition disappeared from the political system and became non-systemic.

Controlling the protest movements and restricting civil society with new regulations resulted in the decline of importance of parliamentary politics in Russia, since it did not represent the opposition that masses manifested in the streets during Bolotnaya Riots in 2011. To illustrate the decreasing significance of the elections, the State Duma elections of 2016 were held under the authoritarian conditions. It is stated in the Election Observation Report of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reported on 23rd December 2016:

> Since the 2011 State Duma elections, the electoral system was modified from proportional to mixed, the parliamentary threshold was reduced, and independent candidates are now allowed to stand. The legal framework is comprehensive and can serve as an adequate basis for the conduct of elections. However, it remains overly complex and micro-regulates the electoral process, including through unnecessary restrictions on candidate registration, formation of party blocks, campaigning, media and citizen observation. (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2016, p. 3)

Taken the legal limitations on the opposition into the consideration, United Russia Party's (UR) domination of State Duma with 54.20% of votes was not surprising (Tsentral'naya izbiratel'naya

komissiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2016). The State Duma elections of 2021 was similarly mentioned in the Election Observation Report of OSCE:

> The electoral legal framework has been repeatedly amended, with the most recent changes introduced in 2020 and 2021. Some of these amendments further limited the right to stand, introduced the possibility of extension of the voting to three days, provided for electronic voting and voting by mail, empowered the Central Electoral Commissions (CEC) and Subject Election Commissions (SECs) to ban online campaign material and activities, and required contestants declared as 'foreign agents' to include this designation in their campaigning. These also shortened deadlines for appealing non-registration of candidates and introduced certain safeguards into the candidate registration process. (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2021, p. 3)

When it comes to the constitutional amendments of 2020, these laws systematized the excessive powers of the president in Russian politics. Associate Professor of Melbourne Law School, Wiliam Partlett, emphasizes that 2020 constitutional amendments (with a possible extension for Putin's presidency and limitations on the presidential opponents) brought about an "excessive centralization" by opening the door for a possible extension of Putin's presidency, restricting the potential candidates, and hierarchizing the regional and local governments as well as the cabinet subordinated to the president, therefore, Russian system headed towards the hyper-presidentialism[29] existing in Africa (Partlett, 2021, p. 326). It can be said that starting from the constitution of 1993 through 2020 amendments, Russia has developed a constitutionally backed authoritarian regime without abolishing the democratic features in its political system. Hence, Russia can be regarded as a hybrid regime with the overextension of presidential powers as well as the undemocratic actions against the opposition. As Stepan's framework will be used to analyze the political opposition living in this kind of regimes[30], it will be applied to Russian politics in the following sections.

2.2. Is Russian Regime Strong or Eroding?

In Stepan's theoretical framework, erosion of an authoritarian regime is not directly caused by the political opposition, however, it contributes to eroding process (Stepan, 1990, pp. 41–42). Before analyzing the dynamics of political opposition, it should be examined what kind of role the opposition plays in the overall relationship of domination for the sake of a possible democratization. In this section, the regime and the opposition will be analyzed in order to indicate whether Russian political system is eroding or still strong from Stepan's point of view.

2.2.1. Regime in Overall Relationships of Domination

The supporters of Putin's regime in Stepan's overall relationships of domination (see Figure 1, p. 13), consist of three components which are the core group (politicians, bureaucrats, and oligarchs),

[29] For further details about this term, see (Rose-Ackerman et al., 2011).
[30] For further details, see "D. Concluding Remarks" section of the First Chapter of this thesis.

the coercive apparatus (security forces such as the army and the police), and the passive supporters (can be regarded as the electorate of Putin, United Russia, and even so-called puppet party A Just Russia). In a case of eroding regime, Stepan highlights that fragmentation around the elites increases along with the doubts whether their interests converge on the side of the government (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). Despite the difficulty of scientifically detecting the cleavages in Kremlin, it can be said that there is a continuity in Putin's cadre regarding some officials throughout his presidency. These cadres can be grouped under three main titles which are security officials, oligarchs, and politicians/bureaucrats.

Starting with the oligarchs, given the economic conditions under which "liberalization but not democratization" experienced, businessmen have a strong position in post-Soviet political system (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 367). Putin fought with the oligarchs who were powerful in Yeltsin Era. As Zygar explains in detail, Putin targeted Boris Berezovsky who were involved in politics by supporting himself at the beginning of his political career as well as other oligarchs such as Gusinsky and Mikhail Khodorkovsk (owner of Yukos) through capturing their wealth by the state apparatuses (Zygar, 2016b). Following this, a scholar at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Tatiana Stanovaya, notes about the supporters of Putin in these operations against the oligarchs "In the end, they became oligarchs themselves, albeit ones operating in partnership with the Russian state. Their ranks include Igor Sechin (Rosneft), Sergey Chemezov (Rostec), Alexey Miller (Gazprom), German Gref (Sberbank), Nikolai Tokarev (Transneft), and Anatoly Chubais (Rusnano)." (Stanovaya, 2020, p. 4). Considering that the companies they lead are the largest businesses in Russia related to baking, oil, gas, construction, and technology, they are able to provide Putin with a huge amount of economic support. Their domination of Russian market also eliminates the growth of a funders for the political opposition on behalf of Putin. Stanovaya claims that apart from the businesses which have direct connection with the state, private businesses also helped Putin as Yevgeny Prigozhin who own the internet-related companies which are accused of harassing the opposition members in Russia (Stanovaya, 2020, p. 6). Therefore, oligarchs who replaced their counterparts in the Yeltsin Era and have been supporting Putin in the context of consolidation of political power at his hands can be considered in the category of "core supporters". Stepan writes "They will think it in their interest actively to help the regime and will not shrink from supporting even harshly repressive measures." about the core supporters' attitude in the scenario in which the authoritarian regime is still strong (Stepan, 1990, p. 42). Thus, it is difficult to say that Putin's regime is eroding due to the existing economic support that he created through a mutually beneficial relationship.

When it comes to the politicians who Putin keeps them in the state affairs during his presidency, they contribute to the authoritarianism Putin leads by implementing his political decisions.

Stanovaya lists the key members of Putin's political team of 2020 as "Alexey Gromov[31] is in charge of the traditional media. Deputy prime minister Andrey Belousov leads the economic policymaking process. Finance Minister Anton Siluanov is responsible for fiscal policy and the budget. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov—and Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu—implement decisions on foreign and military policy. Central Bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina and Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin are also part of this group." (Stanovaya, 2020, p. 7). With the "cultural turn" in which Putin increased the pressure of the state on the opposition in his third and fourth presidential terms, these people became his coercive supporters. Stanovaya explains the strategy they seek as "They share hardline ideological views and an instinct to use repression against the political opposition. The protectors' ideology, unashamedly drawing on conspiracy theories, seeks to mobilize society against foreign threats and advocates stricter control over Russians' private and political life." (Stanovaya, 2020, p. 8). To illustrate the help of these politicians to Putin's rule, during Alexei Navalny's investigation that could affect his candidacy for Moscow mayoral elections of 2013, Alexander Bastrykin, who had been a classmate of Putin at the university, was the head of the Investigative Committee and Vyacheslav Volodin who was Deputy at Presidential Apparat taking orders from Putin on the fate of Navalny (Zygar, 2016a). This political team, thanks to power vertical, has been protecting Putin by the state repression over the political opposition. Given the Stanovaya's list, such aides are still in state affiliation which can be inferred as the continuation of their support for Putin.

The most crucial part of the Russian authoritarian regime is the security forces which can be named as "the coercive apparatus that maintains the regime in power" (see Fig. 1, p. 13) in Stepan's terminology. To control the factions in his authoritarian rule, Putin has relied upon the people called as *siloviki* who formerly served in the security agencies such as the armed forces, intelligence services (mainly Federal Security Service of Russian Federation known as Federal Security Service , FSB, the successor institution of *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*, KGB, in Soviet Union) and the Ministry of the Interior (Robinson, 2019e, p. 81). For example, Taylor states "Former KGB colleagues Sergey Ivanov and Nikolay Patrushev, described by Putin as among his most trusted colleagues (along with Kudrin and Medvedev), were also promoted on Putin's initiative. When Putin became prime minister in August 1999, Patrushev succeeded him as director of the FSB." (Taylor, 2018, p. 92). The rise of former KGB members along with the increase of Putin's political power led to a military-like hierarchy to the state mechanism of Russia. Their security-based political perception is one of the main dynamics to prevent the pluralism, therefore, the political opposition in Putin's regime. More to the point, in 2007 when opposition activists were organizing Dissenters' March before State Duma elections, they had to eschew "preventive arrests" by *Otryad Mobil'nyy Osobogo Naznacheniya*

[31] Alexey Gromov was also Deputy at Presidential Apparat.

(OMON), a Russian riot police unit (Robertson, 2009, p. 528). This case demonstrates how Putin's team has been reacting against the political opposition through using the state apparatuses. Robertson echoes that the confrontation of the pensioners' protests with The Regional Anti-Organized Crime Directorate (UBOP), arrests in 2005 was only the beginning of a systematic repression over the civil society which would turn into the use of state resources to organize counterdemonstrations and pro-regime propaganda via media means (Robertson, 2009, p. 534). Besides, Stanovaya claims that in 2019, Naryshkin and Patrushev convinced Putin that external powers are about to organize a street protest in Russia in order to obtain his permission to quell it (Stanovaya, 2020, p. 9). Based on the continual role of *siloviki* on Putin's decisions in contemporary politics of Russia, it can be seen that the authoritarian rule is guaranteed by the people who hold the coercive apparatus in Stepan's framework.

To mention about the passive supporters of the authoritarian rule, despite the accusations of electoral fraud, the elections seem as the only scientific indicators of measuring the popularity of the regime. Another indicator might have been the surveys about democracy unless it would error due to the misperceptions of Western concepts in Russia. As Hale suggests, Russian people generally identify the term, democracy, with the welfare whereas Western scholars primarily give a reference to its political aspects such as elections, pluralism, rights and freedoms etc. (Hale, 2011, p. 1359). Therefore, elections will be used to indicate the rigid status of Putin's regime in Russia instead of the surveys. The last elections which are the presidential elections of 2018 (Table 9) and the State Duma elections of 2021 (Table 10) illustrate the strength of existing authoritarian power. Given the possibility of Putin's reelection owing to the amendments of 2020 and the UR's domination in State Duma, indicating a challenging opposition activity is still difficult in today's Russia.

Table 9: Russian Presidential Election, 18 March 2018[32]

Candidates	Votes %
Baburin Sergey Nikolaevich	0.65%
Grudinin Pavel Nikolaevich	11.77%
Zhirinovsky Vladimir Volfovich	5.65%
Putin Vladimir Vladimirovich	76.69%
Sobchak Ksenia Anatolyevna	1.68%
Suraikin Maxim Alexandrovich	0.68%
Titov Boris Yurievich	0.76%
Yavlinsky Grigory Alekseevich	1.05%

Source: Tsentral'naya izbiratel'naya komissiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii, (2018), Retrieved from URL: www.vybory.izbirkom.ru.

[32] For further details, see the website (Tsentral'naya izbiratel'naya komissiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2018)

Table 10: State Duma Elections, 19 September 2021[33]

Parties	Votes %
Communist Party of Russian Federation	18.93%
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	7.55%
United Russia	49.82%
Just Russia	7.46%
New People	5.32%

Resource: Tsentral'naya izbiratel'naya komissiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii, (2021), Retrieved from URL: www.vybory.izbirkom.ru.

Stepan's emphasis on "demobilization of activists by a massive coercion of the regime" and "the passive opponents holding themselves aloof from the active opponents" in the strong regime case can be seen in the aftermath of Putin's third term of presidency (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). Assistant Professor at Perm State University, Andrei Semenov, analyzing the regional elections between 2012 and 2016 with a focus on the relationship between the strategies of the regime and the opposition concludes that although 2011-13 protests created a chance for the rise of the opposition, the post-Crimean consensus of systemic opposition and the prosecution of non-systemic opposition leaders show how the regime had confronted the opposition until 2016 (Semenov, 2017, p. 20). This is to say that the state repression of Putin's regime led to demobilization by coercion in compliance with Stepan's strong regime scenario. Additionally, a group of notable academicians' article indicates that Putin's image within Russian society is a significant cause of preventing the action against the majority of Russia (Smyth et al., 2015, p. 74). This is a confrontation strategy of the regime to hamper the recruitment of active opponents. Likewise, Bryn Rosenfeld, assistant professor at Cornell University, notes "While the opposition movement drew support from the private-sector middle class, the public-sector middle class – the fastest growing segment of Russia's middle class – was more likely to stay home and less likely to identify as democrats." (Rosenfeld, 2017, p. 13). Considering the passive character of the middle class, it can be said that passive citizens are not completely willing to be active opponents. In a nutshell, the passive supporters of the regime can be demonstrated through the results of both presidential and parliamentary elections as well as the societal dynamics preventing them to shift to the category of active and passive opponents.

[33] The parties which are not represented in State Duma are not listed. For further details, see the website (Tsentral'naya izbiratel'naya komissiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021).

2.2.2. Opposition in Overall Relationships of Domination

Starting with Stepan's argument, "Although authoritarian regimes may buckle because of external setbacks like military defeat, foreign occupation, or international economic reversals, they are more likely to collapse under the strain of conflicts and contradictions that are purely internal.", political opposition could accelerate the erosion process of an authoritarian regime without being the main cause of it (Stepan, 1990, p. 44). To do this, Stepan claims that the opposition should follow five main tasks (see Table 1, p. 14). As explained in the previous sections, 2011-13 protests can be considered as the peak of oppositional activities in Russia before Putin's repression in his third presidential term. Given the leading figures and critical activities, the process that the opponents went through will be examined in Putin Era. Thereafter, it will be indicated that the Russian opposition completed them except creating a credible democratic alternative.

Before the Moscow Protests of 2011-13, opposition efforts were limited due to Putin's preventive political moves, but the Strategy 31 can be seen as one of the roots of contentious politics in which the opposition started fulfilling Stepan's tasks. Initiated by Eduard Limonov, who was the leader of National Bolshevik Party, and followed by activists from different opposition groups, it was a practice of the right to assembly peacefully based on the Article 31 in the Russian constitution. White highlights the inspirational aspect of Strategy 31 for The Bolotnaya Protests in 2011 by claiming that it raises the costs of authoritarian rule in Stepan's terminology (White, 2013, p. 590). Given the existence of *The Other Russia* (Drugaya Rossiya) and *Solidarity* (Solidarnost) which are political entities supporting Strategy 31, this situation both illustrates the guarding zones of autonomy and the resistance against integration into the regime. Garry Kasparov, a member of The Other Russia and the world chess champion between 1985 and 2000, elucidated:

> To further this mission, The Other Russia, in addition to its continued efforts at home, is working to establish a communications structure beyond the long reach of the Kremlin. We need to expose the daily crimes that are occurring and to get the story into the hands of the right people, like the people right here in this room. Our hundreds of activists on the ground in Russia are also in need of support. We are building a legal-defense fund to force the regime at least to follow its own laws, however draconian they may be. (Kasparov, 2007, p. 119)

Therefore, until Moscow Protests of 2011-13, it can be noted that the opposition came into the existence and resisted integration into the regime. White argues that Russian opposition completed other tasks in 2011-13 protests (White, 2013, p. 586). To identify a credible democratic alternative which is the last task in the Stepan's list, there must be a cohesion among the opposition groups in the post-Bolotnaya period. However, White adds in his conclusion that since the regime could repress the street protests or make an offer for opposition leaders to convince them not to continue attending such activities, it would be difficult to protect the cohesion (White, 2013, p. 595). Agreed with White's claim that 2011-13 protests disputed the regime's legitimacy and raised the cost of authoritarian rule,

this study had a position in which the opposition could not succeed in forming a credible democratic alternative due to both the regime's action and the intra-opposition cleavages.

To understand the success of opposition during 2011-13 protests, the increase of their mobilizational capabilities should be underlined. Professor at King's College, Samuel A. Greene discusses that as it can be seen in Arab Spring protests, Twitter and Facebook brought about new communication ways, thusly, this situation supported the street protests by providing a social network to the existing opposition forces (Greene, 2013, p. 41). Moreover, together with these new techniques, the opposition overflew the parliamentary politics during these protests that created a division of "loyal" opposition groups and those challenging the regime as a whole (White, 2015, p. 320). As White echoes, despite the nomination of People's Freedom Party (PARNAS) which is linked to the Solidarity movement, Navalny was shown as not associated with any political party in order to achieve maximum support (White, 2015, p. 321). PARNAS is a significant party due to its function as a bridge between systemic and non-systemic opposition. In a special news of Meduza written on 7th September 2018, Andrey Kozenko who is a special reporter stresses "In the fall of 2013, Boris Nemtsov staged an equally major campaign in Yaroslavl, where he managed to win a seat on the regional parliament. Nemtsov's victory made Parnas the country's only "non-systemic" opposition party legally empowered to nominate State Duma candidates without collecting public signatures." (Kozenko, 2018, para. 4). By nomination of Navalny for Moscow mayoral elections of September 2013 and election of Nemtsov in the regional parliament of Yaroslavl were the examples of how non-systemic opposition tried to be included to formal politics. Nonetheless, Kozenko adds about the split in PARNAS: "A year later, Boris Nemtsov was shot and killed in downtown Moscow, robbing the party of its most influential and talented mediator. Afterwards, the situation at Parnas (which dropped "RPR" from its name after Ryzhkov departed) only got worse. Next, Ilya Yashin (one of Nemtsov's longtime associates) briefly joined the party as a co-chairman." (Kozenko, 2018, para. 6). Nemtsov's mediation attempts between Russian political system and non-systemic opposition illustrated how Russian political opposition's nature has changed throughout 2011-13 protests regarding Dahl's conceptualization[34].

Robertson explains this change under three main titles which are the repertoire of actions, spatial differences, and the new demands (Robertson, 2013, p. 12). First, as an example, Pussy Riot is a Russian band which three of its members were arrested by the accusation of "hooliganism" during their performance in Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral (Lipman, 2012). Robertson comments as "The emphasis has clearly changed from using direct action to try to force redress of specific problems to adopting a strategy in which public displays of symbolic dissent are increasingly (though far from

[34] Dahl's six main variables that oppositions differ is listed in the First Chapter.

exclusively) used in an attempt to influence broader publics and political decision makers." (Robertson, 2013, p. 18). Second, Robertson claims that the location of protests has come towards Moscow from the rural areas (Robertson, 2013, p. 18). This centralization shows the changing characteristics of the oppositional activities by its increasing importance. Third, while the demands were mostly about economics in the previous political protests, it is turned out that in Bolotnaya Protests the focus of the demands was mostly social and political such as free elections, electoral fraud, ecological issues, and the freedom of press (Robertson, 2013, pp. 20–21). Based on these developments, 2011-13 period became a critical juncture for the nature of political opposition living in the Russian authoritarian regime.

Starting with the third presidential term of Putin, it can be seen that opposition groups have not been seen as united as in Bolotnaya protests. Given the repressive approach of the Putin's government, the opposition has also been split. To exemplify, Virginie Lasnier, the Executive Director of Jean Monnet Centre Montreal, points out that Vladimir Ryzhkov, co-chair of PARNAS between 2006 and 2014, created his own party after leaving PARNAS because of Navanly-like strategies which his personality was more moderate (Lasnier, 2018, p. 5). As Mariia Baronova, one of the protesters in 2011-13, complains, the rise of Navalny also brought about an "unascendable" charismatic leadership that negatively affected the unison beyond ideologies in Bolotnaya (Lasnier, 2018, p. 6). Together with the remaining silence and ineffectiveness of parliamentary opposition, civil society could not manifest a unity to challenge the regime. This is not to say that the opposition is died species in Russia. Yana Gorokhovskaia, who is a senior researcher at Freedom House, writes that albeit the difficulties that opposition has had to face owing to state repression, the lessons it takes from the actions of the government and the existence of elections that is still an effective instrument despite the hybrid nature of Russian polity, should not be undermined in the context of democratization (Gorokhovskaia, 2019, p. 13). Nevertheless, the current situation in Russian politics demonstrates that activists are demobilized, and the passive opposition cannot be indicated as a major threat to Putin comparing to Moscow protests of 2011-13.

To conclude this chapter, as indicated in the section "Regime in Relationships of Domination", the authoritarian rule in Russia is not eroding because Putin's cadre is still in charge and has access to the state apparatus which is the mean of repressing the opposition. It can be seen in the State Duma elections during Putin's third and fourth presidential terms, the authoritarian measures in Russian politics have increased by new laws and regulations. After the Moscow protests of 2011-13, there has not been another nation-wide oppositional activity. Therefore, a shift among the overall relationship of domination could not be detected. Putin, as the leader of this authoritarian rule, has

been keeping the coercive apparatus in his side. Despite the undemocratic implementations, the elections have been monitoring the popular support for Putin in both presidency and parliament.

As for the political opposition, as illustrated in the section "Opposition in Relationship of Domination", although the opposition activities intensified during the Moscow protests of 2011-13 along with the emergence of non-systemic opposition just after these events, the cohesion of dissidents are questionable based on the inner splits they have. As PARNAS example was stated above, its function as a bridge lasted until the assassination of Nemtsov, thusly, the gap between the formal politics and non-systemic opposition figures has been enlarged since Putin's turn to the presidency.

In a case of strong regime, Stepan highlights the status passive supporters who are also potential passive opponents in the case of an eroding regime as follows: "Faced with a strong regime enjoying the allegiance of these two formidable groups, the third group--the passive supporters--will submit to authoritarian hegemony. They will remain quiescent and pliable, even to the point of participating in the institutions that serve as the regime's indirect, noncoercive bulwarks." (Stepan, 1990, p. 43). For this reason, given the strong authoritarianism existed in Russian politics, the non-systemic opposition's role should not be considered as a serious challenge to the regime. Though, the existence of a strong regime does not completely prevent the political opposition to perform Stepan's five tasks. In the following chapter, this study will elaborate the actions of a non-systemic opposition leader Alexei Navalny for testing whether he is compatible to fulfill the opposition functions in Stepan's framework.

CHAPTER 3: THE LEADER OF NON-SYSTEMIC OPPOSITION: ALEXEI NAVALNY

In contemporary authoritarian regimes, in which there are also democratic elements in their political systems, the rulers prevent a potential emergence of political opposition by the state repression. After the collapse of Soviet Union, Russia has gone through an authoritarian direction especially after 2000s when Putin accelerated undemocratization process. As Alfred Stepan's framework based on his article titled "On the Task of Democratic Opposition" focuses on the role of political opposition in the context of re-democratization of such countries, Russia is a significant example to implement his theoretical approach. Within this framework, the rise of Alexei Navalny and its leadership for a non-systemic opposition are important to analyze whether this type of opposition could follow the Stepan's tasks in a case of strong regime in Russia. Following the explanation of Stepan's five tasks for the political opposition in authoritarian regimes and the establishment of a hybrid regime in Russia in the first two chapters, the third chapter aims to seek Stepan's theoretical model in the case of Navalny. To do this, the process of Navalny's political life will be traced under five main sections which will be associated with Stepan's five tasks.

3.1.Navalny's Background

Alexei Navalny (b. 1976), who is a lawyer, activist, and a famous blogger in Russia, became one of the prominent political figures during 2011-13 protests. After the level of authoritarianism increased and dominated the parliament, he and his followers have been associated with the non-systemic opposition in Russian politics. His fame exceeded the Russian border, and he internationalized the oppositional activities by echoing it in foreign media channels/platforms, even in the European Parliament.

Before going further to examine Navalny from Stepan's point of view, mentioning about his family and education background is essential to understand his personality formation:

> Alexei Anatolievich Navalny was born to parents Anatoly Ivanovich and Lyudmila Ivanovna on June 4, 1976, in Butyn, Russia. The son of an army communications officer, he grew up in various military towns around Moscow and spent summers with his grandmother in the countryside near Chernobyl, Ukraine. Navalny graduated with a law degree from Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in 1998, before earning his master's from State Finance Academy in 2001. (Biography.com Editors, 2022, para. 1)

Navalny also worked in different jobs. In a biography section of the website of Svobodnaya Pressa, it is written that he founded Nesna Limited Liability Company (LLC) while he was still in the university in 1997 (Svobodnaya Pressa, n.d., para. 12). As graduated from Law Department, he also worked as deputy director for legal issues in the company, Allekt LLC, and in ST-Group between 1998 and 99

(Svobodnaya Pressa, n.d., para. 13). He is well-experienced in different sectors since he continued his business career and enterprises such as working in Aeroflot Bank and founding Eurasian Transport Systems LLC in 2001 (Svobodnaya Pressa, n.d., para. 15). Moreover, it is significant to hear Navalny's own words about his early life. He emphasizes that being a child of a military officer causes not having childhood friends due to the appointments and missions (pravilamag.ru, 2020, para. 2). His role model was Arnold Schwarzenegger in childhood. (pravilamag.ru, 2020, para. 5). He underlines that Chernobyl Disaster was one of the most dramatic events that he witnessed as his father is from near Chernobyl (pravilamag.ru, 2020, para. 11). To add, Navalny considers himself as an Orthodox although he does not usually go to Church (pravilamag.ru, 2020, para. 58). Consequently, Navalny's early life gives clues about his character formation. Not being deterministic, it is important to take into consideration his family's military background, his education and experiences in various business sectors while analyzing his political actions.

This chapter covers the political life of Navalny with a focus on Stepan's framework. Therefore, the sections will mainly be about how his political actions are related to Stepan's tasks for political opposition in authoritarian regimes rather than an analysis of his personality. Starting with his oppositional activities including both systemic and non-systemic ones, the process he follows during his political journey will be traced in relation to the Stepan's theoretical approach.

3.1.1. Ideational Background

As it was explained in the second chapter that during the 2011-2013 protests, the young opposition figures replaced their older counterparts including their ideological arguments. Instead of new political demands emerged in regard of electoral fraud, corruption, and democracy. In this sense, Navalny's position here should be understood in the light of such a background. In an interview with Navalny held on 27th October 2010, he described the Russian political atmosphere as follows: "I said that the division between democrats and nationalists is in a certain sense artificial – it is a result of the general political nonsense that came to us from the early 90s, when 'democrats' were fighting 'communists-nationalists'. This simplified political science doesn't work anymore." (Asmolov, 2010, para. 2). Therefore, it can be seen how different his ideological understanding is compared to the older generation. However, it does not mean that he did not impress the existing ideologies. On the contrary, he has been a relationship with the nationalists and the liberals when he started his political career.

To mention about his liberal background, Navalny joined Yabloko party in 2000 when he was 24 years old. As he has rapidly climbed the ranks within the party, Golosov claims "It is, however, very likely that Navalny's choice was dictated by the rather more open structure of Yabloko and the opportunities it offered, than by ideology." (Golosov, 2013, para. 4). Although Yabloko can be regarded as freer and more tolerant than other political parties for the new generation such as Navalny,

it does not change the fact that he has been a part of the liberals for a long time. Considering this liberal past, it is not surprising that Navalny has come to the front during the Bolotnaya Protests in which there were various democratic arguments against the authoritarian rule.

Navalny's discourse does not only consist of liberal claims but also nationalist components. Marlene Laurelle, who is a professor at George Washington University and a well-known researcher on Russian nationalism, writes "He never directly opposes the official discourse except that concerning the definition of the state – rossiyskiy (civic) or russkiy (ethnocultural) – but instead participates in the Kremlin-backed general consensus on the "problems" created by migrants from the North Caucasus and Central Asia." (Laruelle, 2014, p. 280). This nationalist side of Navalny has created a contradiction with his liberal network. He was one of the founders of a nationalist group named "Nationalist Russian Liberation Movement" which caused Yabloko leaders to expel him from the party in 2007 (Golosov, 2013, para. 7). When it comes to the contradiction affecting his discourse, Laruelle points out that he has been "blurry" whether he is for assimilation or deportation of the immigrants moving to Russia (Laruelle, 2014, p. 283). Hence, Navalny's mindset contains both liberalism and nationalism in terms of political ideology. As he is "a doer, not a thinker", his political goals and also the political atmosphere in Russia influenced his direction: He uses his liberal network in Russian civil society and criticizes the nationalist groups' imperialist rhetoric, on the other hand, he shows his support for some nationalist groups not only in Russia but also in Europe (Laruelle, 2014, pp. 279–280). Thus, both nationalism and liberalism can be found in Navalny's ideational background.

After his Yabloko experience ended in 2007, Navalny directed his criticisms against the corruption in the government structures. He established "Union of Minority Shareholders" (2008), which was an NGO working to protect private investments, and the project of "RosPil" (2010) in which he declared to the public the abuses regarding public spendings of the government (Golosov, 2013). This is the period when Navalny's pro-democracy arguments can be seen by examining his ideas behind his political activities. Nicu Popescu, from the European Council on Foreign Relations in London, writes about Navalny's democrat identity: "Navalny, who positions himself as a democrat, has a strong record of taking part in democratic groups and movements in the last decade. He favors free and fair elections, the separation of powers, greater transparency, and other democratic reforms." (Popescu, 2012, pp. 50–51). Given that, it can be understood that Navalny's political opinions include an ambiguous combination of liberal and nationalist ideas. Moen-Larsen, a research fellow at Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, analyses the words of Navalny in his LiveJournal Blog in order to find out his "others" based on his nationalistic point of view: "Among those whom Navalny does not like are liberals, anti-fascists – but also fascists, neo-Nazis, Nazis, Muslims, Islamists, Wahhabis, terrorists, football hooligans, corrupt elites, criminals, illegal migrants, guest workers, and

their employers." (Moen-Larsen, 2014, p. 559). Therefore, Navalny's ideological position should be evaluated in consideration of liberal and nationalist components of his ideational background.

To relate these findings to Stepan's first task of political opposition in authoritarian regimes, he underlines "On the other hand, if the active opposition maintains some independent ideological, cultural, and above all institutional existence, it will remain able to carry out its other tasks." (Stepan, 1990, p. 44). Considering Navalny's ideological stance, which is nonmatching the existing political ideologies in Russia, this can be seen as the creation of an independent basis for the mobilization of the opponents in Russia. Even though Navalny's mixture of nationalism and liberalism seems to be illogical, it can be practically regarded as a flexible playground in terms of recruiting various opponents. Hence, Navalny's starting point illustrates the first step of Stepan as well as his political actions which are based on this ideological background.

3.1.2. Political Career

3.1.2.1. Systemic Opposition

Navanly's political career started as a systemic opposition and continued as a non-systemic opposition by the pressure of authoritarian rule in Russia. As it was mentioned in the previous section, he was a member of Yabloko Party which can be counted as an opposition within Russian polity despite its ineffectiveness. All ranks Navalny occupied in Yabloko are the demonstration of his involvement in the Russian political system, Golosov states, "In one way or another, Navalny rose rapidly through the ranks of the party: by 2002 he had already joined the leadership of its biggest Moscow branch and in 2003 he managed the Moscow electoral campaign in the nationwide parliamentary election; by 2006-7 he was a member of the highest party body, the Federal Council." (Golosov, 2013). During his Yabloko membership, he has worked with the Committee for Protection of Muscovites, which is an organization fighting against illegal construction through protesting and making statements to the press, that he describes as the trigger of his famous anti-corruption activities (Khvostunova, 2012, p. 2). Working with this group and being a part of its activities show that Navalny was still within the political system, therefore, could be called as a systemic opposition.

As it was explained in the previous chapter that 2011-13 riots were a turning point in the process of authoritarianism in Russia, one of the most significant signals that demonstrated the decline of United Russia Party (UR) was the results of 2011 Duma elections (see, Table 8). Robinson discusses on the decline of UR's votes as follows: "This increase in votes for all the other main parties was probably the result of a popular response by some voters to the call by Navalny for them to cast their ballots for any party other than United Russia." (Robinson, 2019a, p. 190). This voting strategy, so-called smart-voting, increased Navalny's popularity among the passive opponents. He was also

nominated as a candidate for the Moscow mayoral elections of 2013 in which the candidates must had the approval of United Russia members. Navalny was at the second rank with 27.24% of votes just after Sergei Sobyanin with 51.37% of votes (Tsentral'naya izbiratel'naya komissiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2013). Navalny's success in these elections brought about the regime and some systemic opponents' reaction as pushing him out of the political system. For instance, Vladimir Ryzhkov, who is the co-founder of Republican Party of Russia (RPR-PARNAS), left the party due to his disagreement with the support for Navalny (Robinson, 2019c, p. 170). In addition to this, the official registration of People's Alliance Party[35], which Alexei Navalny was its leader, was rejected by Justice Ministry due to the documentation problems, therefore, the regime obliged him to have relations with the systemic political parties such as RPR-PARNAS (Kynev, 2015, p. 142). Based on the developments during Moscow mayoral elections of 2013, it can be said that it was the milestone where Alexei Navalny was externalized by the Russian political system and continued his oppositional activities as a non-systemic opposition figure.

3.1.2.2. Non-Systemic Opposition

There is not a single event that made Navalny a non-systemic opposition by excluding from the political system, rather, it is a process. In 2010, Navalny said "There's a systematic opposition that exists in the Duma, but in fact it represents a minimum of political views in the society. And there's an informal part that is 10 times bigger." (Asmolov, 2010, para. 2). It can be seen that Navalny's political aims, his nonmatching identity with old opposition figures, and the decline of the parliamentary politics resulted in the birth of a non-systemic opposition. Besides, the regime's pressure on Navalny also influenced his exclusion from Russian political system. A criminal investigation was held for Navalny, that is, The Kirovles Case. According to the accusations, Navalny and his friend from Yabloko, Petr Ofitserov, run a timber company named Kirovles in the field of a state-owned forestry. They were accused of embezzlement and Navalny was sentenced to five-year-long prison as a result of the trial in 2013. This case, for example, has become an instrument of the regime to suppress Navalny. Michael Weiss, the editor of Interpreter Magazine that analyzes the Russian media, notes that Navalny's exposure of corruption which also targets Alexander Bastrykin, who is the head of Investigative Committee resulted in a decision against himself despite the lack of evidences (Weiss, 2013, p. 74). However, this criminal case did not prevent him from attending Moscow mayoral elections of 2013. Weiss claims that the release of Navalny and Ofitserov was because of the "faction fights within Putin's upper echelons" rather than the popular will in which protests supporting Navalny broke up in Moscow (Weiss, 2013, p. 76). After the elections, Navalny's strategy was to

[35] The party's name has been changed several times. It is also known as Russia of the Future and Progress Party.

claim the victory of Sergei Sobyanin as illegitimate through revelation of irregularities in the elections and Sobyanin's wealth owing to his governmental network (Weiss, 2013, p. 76). Running in these elections demonstrates that he can still politically oppose against the regime within its political system. Considering the clash between the existing authoritarian rule and Navalny and its outcomes following Moscow mayoral elections of 2013, it can be regarded as the beginning of Navalny's non-systemic activities.

Despite the restrictions on Navalny's political actions, he non-systemically continued his oppositional activities. For instance, "Smart-Voting Strategy" in which he calls the opposition to consolidate their votes regardless of their political ideologies in order to challenge the domination of United Russia in federal and regional elections[36]. Although this strategy did not start in 2013 when Navalny was pushed out of the political system, it can also be seen a non-systemic effort of an opposition figure who cannot participate in the elections legally but wants to prevent the regime to dominate the electoral arena. To explain the creation of such strategies by the political opposition, the head of History Department at Pontifical University of John Paul II in Poland, Olga Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk, writes: "In the case of the anti-systemic opposition, constant stepping out of not only one's own comfort zone, but also that of the representatives of the ruling elite allows one to identify better the current strategy of the power centre for dealing with expressions of dissatisfaction with the politics. The actions of the anti-systemic opposition are a constant search for effective ways of putting pressure on the government." (Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk, 2020, p. 100). Thus, Navalny's exclusion from the Russian systemic opposition provided a basis for him to increase his political capital through challenging the regime with new instruments such as strong organizational capabilities, and creating an alternative in the perception of the society (Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk, 2020, p. 105). In this context, Stepan states for a political opposition experiencing its first task to resist the integration: "Indeed, its prospects will be promising, for the total elimination of all opposition requires extremely effective mobilization and the full integration of all institutions and social groups into the structures of the regime, a project of surpassing difficulty at which no modern authoritarian government has ever succeeded." (Stepan, 1990, p. 44). It can be inferred that the transformation of Navalny's political career from systemic to non-systemic opposition brought about a successful resistance against the integration to Russian authoritarian regime by providing independent areas.

3.2.The Rise of Navalny after 2013

Alfred Stepan's second and third tasks are interrelated because he points out: "If the active opposition can remain independent, its next task (in order of survival imperatives) is to encourage the

[36] This study elaborates "smart voting" only as a non-systemic oppositional activity. There are also studies on testing the success of this strategy (Bolshakov & Perevalov, 2020b, 2020a).

growth of passive opposition. There are two good ways to do this. One is to contest the government's claim to legitimacy. The other and more important way is to maintain some zones of autonomy in which nonregime organizations can operate." (Stepan, 1990, pp. 44–45). This section focuses on how Navalny became prominent in Russian politics and what his novelty and leadership brought through the prism of the growth of passive opposition in Stepan's terminology.

3.2.1. Becoming Prominent

Moscow mayoral elections of September 2013 was a turning point not only that transformed Navalny to the non-systemic opposition but also that increased his nation-wide popularity. Gel'man's explanation of Navalny's electoral success in this election is worth fully quoting to indicate how influential he was at that time:

> Despite Naval'nyi's electoral defeat, he achieved extraordinary success at the polls, gaining the votes of more than 600,000 Muscovites. Not only did he become the sole undisputable leader of the opposition, but his campaign also converted the potential of connective actions to collective actions in the real world of electoral struggle. Building electoral machinery—with its division of labour, centralised structure and systematic day-by-day hard work—was essential for the organisational development of the opposition. Last but not least, Naval'nyi's appeal in the eyes of ordinary voters greatly extended the pool of potential opposition supporters, even among those Russians who think he may turn out to be another authoritarian leader. (Gel'man, 2015, p. 184)

Since Moscow mayoral elections of 2013 made Navalny prominent within the opposition camp, he had a serious amount of people to lead. The director of Levada Center, Denis Volkov, demonstrates that the Moscow protests in 2011-13 provided a societal support for not only Navalny but also other extra-parliamentary activists, therefore, this event resulted in a turning point for the direction of oppositional politics in Russia (Volkov, 2015, p. 45). This new playground for the opposition activists created an autonomous zone for the dissidents in which they dispute the legitimacy of the regime.

The rise of Navalny in the protests was also appealing for the newly emerging non-systemic opposition activists. A platform named "Opposition Coordination Council" was established in October 2012 by these activists in order to unite and to consolidate themselves. In this platform, an election was held to specify a leader in which Navalny won with 43,723 of the votes (Dozhd, 2012). However, the motivation of opponents to unify did not last long. As Kanak Gokarn who is a researcher in Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi describes, Opposition Coordination Council dissolved itself in 2013 and the groups which are the integral parts of this organization continued their work in the conditions under which the appetite to protest reduced and distrust arouse within the society

(Gokarn, 2018, p. 7). Despite the opposition groups' unsuccessful attempts to coalesce, this organization increased Navalny's fame and network among the increasing non-systemic opposition. Even though the Council was dissolved, Navalny still had People's Alliance which was his unregistered party founded by one of his colleagues, Leonid Volkov. Therefore, he was representing a critical group of active and passive opponents which functioned in other attempts to coalesce such as Democratic Coalition[37] formed in April 2015.

The significance of Navalny's leadership should be interpreted within the framework of Alfred Stepan. According to him "The larger and stronger these various non- or anti-authoritarian subsystems grow, the more effectively they can perform the other tasks of democratic opposition: contesting the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime, raising the costs of maintaining it, and generally grinding it down while building support for a democratic alternative." (Stepan, 1990, p. 45). Therefore, the more Navalny becomes prominent among the non-systemic opposition and passive opponents, the more the effectiveness of third, fourth, and fifth tasks increases. His arguments lie in the accusations to the regime of being corrupted. Thus, it would be proper to say that he disputes the legitimacy of the regime in association with Stepan's third task. Besides, his exclusion from the political system along with the escalating pressure of the regime such as prohibiting his political party and the legal enforcements based on the Kirovles case already demonstrated the increasing cost of authoritarian rule. It is because more the repression of the regime on Navalny became stronger, more his supporters became consolidated as it can be seen in the Moscow mayoral election of 2013. In short, his prominence emerged until 2013 supported his other political activities which an opposition should follow in Stepan's theoretical framework.

3.2.2. Navalny's Novelty and Leadership

Navalny was an extraordinary opponent in terms of the innovative strategies he applied in his political activities. His contribution to the political opposition such as the use of social media and the smart voting strategy brought about guarded zones against the authoritarian measures of Putin's regime aiming to prevent the emergence of any oppositions. Popescu touches upon Navalny's contribution to the political opposition in Russia: "With his three-pronged message— anticorruption, prodemocracy, and a touch of moderate nationalism— he has waged a systematic anticorruption and anti-Putin campaign that smartly fuses Internet activism (blogging, crowd-sourcing, and the like) with offline actions (lawsuits, letter-writing campaigns, and monitoring the use of public funds)." (Popescu, 2012, p. 50). His internet activism is the main autonomous zone against the authoritarian rule in Russia since Putin cannot remove all the media contents which have been posted in several foreign

[37] Democratic Coalition will be detailly examined under the subtitle "Failure of a Credible Democratic Alternative".

websites. To illustrate the contents of Navalny, he released two films which were about the corruptions that Medvedev and Putin alleged that they committed. The video about Medvedev that was released in 2017 has been viewed by approximately 45 million people as of June 2022 and the video about Putin that was posted in 2021 has been watched by more than 123 million people as of June 2022 (Navalny, 2017b, 2021). Although the people watching these videos are not only Russian citizens, reaching out many people, regardless of their nationality, has provided Navalny to escape the restrictions of Putin's regime and to increase the cost of authoritarianism. As "guarding zones of autonomy" also supports "disputing of regime's legitimacy" and "raising the costs of authoritarian rule" in Stepan's terminology, social media leads to a zone where Navalny could continue his arguments against the regime and challenge their rule by avoiding their preventive actions such as censorship. To add, Nadskakula-Kaczmarczyk claims that this tactics also bring about an effective mobilization since the regime either ignores Navalny's actions or is incapable of responding the corruption claims (Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk, 2020, pp. 97–98). It is to say that the use of social media contributes to the growth of passive opponents.

Navalny's novelty mostly comes from his LiveJournal Blog. In an interview with Global Voices which is an international community involving the authors, bloggers, and activists, Navalny answered the question about what a blog means to him as follows: "In contemporary Russian conditions, a blog is a tool for collection and distribution of information, organization of civil campaigns and political pressure. A blog is personal and interactive mass media. I can find specialists in any field, I can find people ready to write thousands complaints to the anti-monopoly committee." (Asmolov, 2010, para. 11). Thusly, Navalny himself explains what he brought innovation to Russian political opposition and how his LiveJournal blog has created a playground in which he could recruit passive opponents, dispute the regime's legitimacy, and increase the significance of his oppositional activities albeit non-systemic.

The elections are the sole mechanisms that could monitor how successful Navalny has been by his innovative strategies. As explained above, Moscow mayoral elections of 2013 showed how the regime underrated Navalny's electoral innovation. In this regard, Assistant Professor at Duke Kunshan University, Irina V. Soboleva, and Professor at Indiana University Bloomington, Regina Smyth, note that the success of Navalny during "For Fair Elections" (FFE) campaign –in addition to his new tactical arrangements such as internet activism– also relied upon a cooperation between business and politics for the first time since Putin attacked to the oligarchs funding the opposition such as Mikhail Khodorkovsky (Smyth & Soboleva, 2016, p. 359). This demonstrates another example of how Navalny created an autonomous zone by contributing the rebirth of political opposition in Russia. Yet, as the opposition took lessons to overcome the restrictions of Putin's regime, the regime itself also

learns how to contain the new tactics of the dissidents. Smyth and Soboleva echo that the regime made a deal with the systemic opposition in order to obtain an advantage against the newborn non-systemic coalition in regional elections (Smyth & Soboleva, 2016, p. 368). For this reason, one may ask whether the elections were still guarded zones of autonomy regarding the coalitions which Navalny contributed and led. To clarify, Navalny's criticisms against the regime consist of corruption in which the rulers arbitrarily waste the money belonging to Russian citizens and electoral fraud that disrespects the decisions of the people. What Navalny did was rather to show the elections as dysfunctional in order to create a guarded zone where is out of the existing political system. In this sense, Stepan argues, "The greater the degree of hegemony or tacit consent an authoritarian regime can acquire, the less pressure will be felt by its coercive elite. Hence one of the active opposition's central tasks is to make the costs that the regime's policies impose on society so clear to the initially passive opposition that the achievement of authoritarian hegemony is rendered impossible." (Stepan, 1990, p. 45). On that account, even though Navalny could not reach a success in the elections, he confines the power of the regime to only the elite level such as dealing with the existing politicians. Consequently, the electoral innovation of Navalny through various coalitions resulted in a creation of a zone in which the recruitment of passive opposition is possible.

3.3.Political Standpoint

Stepan's third task, disputing the regime's legitimacy, can be found in Navalny's arguments. It is already explained that Navalny complains about the corruption and electoral fraud which are against the legitimacy of the existing government in Russia. In his interview with British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2017, Navalny underlined that Russia was an authoritarian regime in which he did not have the access to the Russian TVs, therefore, he would be elected if the regime stopped electoral fraud in Moscow mayoral elections of 2013 because his campaign was representing the majority at that time (Navalny, 2017a). It can be realized that starting from 2013, when Navalny was forced to be non-systemic by the regime, he has been using a discourse in which he emphasizes the illegitimate aspects of the political system in Russia. Given that, Navalny's interactions with the regime and his arguments against it can reveal how he disputes the legitimacy of Putin's rule.

3.3.1. Interactions with the Regime

Navalny's approach to the legitimacy of the regime consists of different disputing strategies. One of them was to boycott the elections. Robinson highlights:

> Pressure was applied to raise turnout in the 2018 presidential election, however, since Putin wanted to demonstrate his personal dominance of the political system. Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader banned from competing in the election, tried to deny Putin a boost in legitimation by running an electoral boycott. But not all opposition

> forces agreed with this strategy, and two candidates associated with the opposition, Yabloko's Yavlinsky and the TV presenter Ksenia Sobchak, did run. In total there were eight candidates, including Zhirinovsky and a CPRF candidate, Pavel Grudinin. Public authorities and organizations, and many private firms, were pressurized to get the vote out to counter Navalny's campaign. (Robinson, 2019a, p. 195)

It can be seen that together with his disputing discourse, Navalny also attempted to challenge the regime through his political strategies regardless of the support of other opposition leaders. The regime's response was one of the reasons why Navalny accused the regime of unfair electoral conditions. To illustrate, Robinson portrays how the regime responded the opposition disputing its legitimacy: "A case in point is Navalny and the Progress Party, which has not been able to register officially. This makes the loss of a leader through arrest, assassination or exile especially damaging. Navalny has been tried and sentenced several times and undergone long periods of house arrest, as have other prominent opposition figures such as Udaltsov and Ilya Yashin." (Robinson, 2019c, p. 170). It can be inferred that the interaction between the non-systemic opposition and the regime has turned to a mutually disputing relationship. This is to say that any sides of this interaction accuse the other of being illegitimate. For example, when a journalist asks Putin why he does not even use Navalny's name while mentioning him, Putin replies as he is open to have a dialogue with everyone including their criticism except the people who only seek for an attention on themselves (CBSNews, 2017). This demonstrates how the regime's strategy to by-pass the existence of the opponents who dispute their legitimacy such as Alexei Navalny. Another example of mutual disputing attempts can be found in the news reported by Fontaka on 17th December 2020. Putin responded the accusations of poisoning Navalny by saying that this patient in Berlin clinic enjoys the support of US intelligence agencies (fontaka.ru, 2020, para. 2). Putin's calling Navalny as "the patient in Berlin clinic" was to stress his relationship with foreign powers to the detriment of Russia. Hence, Navalny and the regime have been interacting to dispute each other. Navalny accuses the regime of being illegitimate whereas it describes him as a "foreign agent" by not even saying his name.

When it comes to how Western countries see Navalny, they regard him as a victim of Russian authoritarian regime. Considering the fact that Stepan's theoretical framework elaborates the political opposition within the process of democratization, Western point of view is significant to understand Navalny's position[38] in this regard. In 60 Minutes interview of Cable News Network (CNN) with Navalny in 2017, the speaker mentions about him as Navalny who is handsome, brave, and rival to Putin for 2018 elections, is seen as the last man standing since other opposition leader either fled the country or found death (CNN, 2020a). As it was noted in this study that Navalny neither represents the whole opposition nor the majority in the country, introducing him with these words might be

[38] Navalny's direction in the context of democratization will be analyzed in the section "Failure of a Credible Democratic Alternative" since this is more about Stepan's last task.

interpreted as exaggeration. Yet, Elena Chebankova from the University of Lincoln points out that the participation of Russians to the political activities consists of the members of a particular economic class, therefore, it is not a widespread phenomenon (Chebankova, 2013, p. 165). Furthermore, Navalny's interactions with the regime such as his political activities and the attacks of the regime rely upon disputing its legitimacy which aims to appeal passive supporters of the government, consequently, to raise the cost of authoritarian rule in Stepan's framework (Stepan, 1990, p. 46). Therefore, the "battle" between Navalny and Putin's regime has determined the shift among the passive supporters of both the opposition and the regime.

3.3.2. Argumentation

This section seeks for how Navalny develops his arguments while disputing the legitimacy of the regime rather than analyzing his discourse. First of all, Navalny's own words criticizing against Putin and the regime will be underlined. Secondly, the ideas he proposes will be clarified in order to detect his political position.

To begin with the "national" position of Navalny, he carefully keeps a distance between his political efforts and the international actors. Smyth and Soboleva, in their study based on the interviews with the supporters of Navalny, highlights "Faced with state claims of foreign interference aimed at affecting regime change the Navalny team took steps to limit transnational organizational influence and contact. None of our respondents mentioned contacts with democracy assistance organizations or activist movements from other countries." (Smyth & Soboleva, 2016, p. 352). The reason why one must be careful about his relations with Western aid is that s/he can be accused of not being nationalist. After the collapse of Soviet Union, many European organizations such as Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) financially helped some institutions covering the civil society for the sake of democratization, however, Russia's ties with these aids were not as strong as other post-Soviet countries[39]. Additionally, Putin's attacks on oligarchs who had political aims in Russia based on their relations with Europe nationalized the opposition to some extent. To exemplify, Navalny says that he does not support the sanctions[40] against the whole Russian economy, in his opinion, it should aim Putin personally (Navalny, 2017a). Navalny's choice of words should be correctly understood in this example as he underlines that he was not one of the foreign-funded opponents. In a similar vein, when Navalny was poisoned in 2020, he accused Putin of being responsible for that. Thereafter, he was cured in Germany and he insisted on coming back to Russia despite his prison sentence. When a CNN presenter asks the reason why despite the life-critical threats

[39] In their book, Levitsky and Way write, "Russia is a case of low linkage and low leverage". For the explanation of linkage and leverage see also (Levitsky & Way, 2010, pp. 38–54).
[40] These are the sanctions which were implemented by European countries after Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.

and the judicial process that he was sentenced to prison, he replies that he tries to change Putin's system's degradation in his country (CNN, 2020b). This answer also illustrates how he developed his argumentation based on the Russian patriotism.

It can be also inferred from the argumentation of Navalny that he stays as a peaceful opponent without calling a military coup, armed conflict, or any extremism. In an interview of a TV Program in PBS NewsHour held in 2012, Navalny responded a question about whether Putin can lead reforms as follows: "He must arrange competitive elections; we assure peaceful actions and power shift. There is a consensus in the opposition for peaceful transition for the sake of the country and the security guarantee for Putin and his family." (PBS, 2012). His pro-democratic approach can be realized in his expectations about the post-Putin era. This is another example of his careful attitude while giving speeches to the public. Related to this, Moen-Larsen states "It is therefore important to investigate the content of Navalny's discourse both because it is indicative of the mood of his followers and because it may have implications for the direction Russian politics will take, should he come to power." (Moen-Larsen, 2014, p. 563). Considering the regime's perception of Navalny as a serious threat, Navalny's argumentation provides him to dispute the legitimacy of the existing regime without being only destructive which means the correction of the regime's criticisms about him.

As explained in the first section above, Navalny's ideological position was a combination of liberal and national identity. That position determines the amount of the Russian citizens who he wants to take their support. Avoiding from extremism leads to addressing the majority. At this point, Moen-Larsen, after analyzing Navalny's discourse, concludes that since Russian society generally gives importance to particular historical events such as the Second World War victory over Nazis, a patriotic approach in Navalny's ideological identity brings about "normal nationalism" that covers Russian citizenship despite excluding few ethnic groups such as Chechens (Moen-Larsen, 2014, p. 563). Although this political position catches the mainstream Russian electorates' fancy, it might error in creating an alternative. Moen-Larsen adds that Navalny's nationalism, albeit its "normality", is unclear about how the policies would be made if he was elected (Moen-Larsen, 2014, p. 563). Similar to this, Navalny's calls, albeit non-extreme, are based upon the street protests. Since 2013 when he became prominent as an opposition leader, he has called for the people to stand in street protests. For instance, he invited people to protest his arrest by the regime when he returned to Russia after the poisoning and recovering in Germany (SkyNews, 2021). To conclude, Alexei Navalny's argumentation to dispute the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime in Russia consists of the patriotic components that demonstrate his aim to catch the majority of Russian electorates and his willingness to replace the regime with a more democratic one. To do this, he carefully designs his argumentation by eliminating the allegations about foreign aids and avoiding extremism.

3.4.Raising the Cost of Authoritarianism

Raising the cost of an authoritarian regime is composed of the previous three tasks. If an opposition successfully resisted against an integration to the regime, it could lead to performing other two tasks which are to guard zones of autonomy and to dispute the legitimacy of the regime. Autonomous zones provide a basis to dispute the regime. An opposition tries to raise the authoritarian rule by completing these tasks in order to challenge the regime. Stepan's tasks should be examined in the context of democratization. For this reason, the last and the most essential task is to create a credible democratic alternative. It can be said that raising the cost is the destructive part, on the other hand, creating an alternative is constructive. According to Stepan, raising the cost of authoritarianism causes the shift among the overall relationship of domination (see, Fig. 1) meaning the active and passive supporters of the regime lose their belief that their interests lie in the regime's survival and participate the opposition front actively or passively (Stepan, 1990, p. 46). In this matter, this section will explain whether and how Navalny could raise Putin's authoritarian rule.

3.4.1. National Enlargement

Under the title "His Novelty and Leadership" and "Interactions with the Regime", it was explained how Navalny became a threat to Putin's regime by being excluded from the existing political system. His raising popularity is the main way to raise the authoritarian cost. Especially in Moscow mayoral elections of 2013, he displayed a political success which challenges the existing politicians in parliamentary politics.

Mikhail Myagkov, who is a professor at the University of Oregon, and his colleagues suggest that non-systemic opposition in Russia generally tend to follow charismatic leadership rather than the principles, therefore, Alexei Navalny's supporters are united under his personality (Myagkov et al., 2018, p. 14). To understand the dynamics of his leadership is significant since it illustrates how Navalny has turned to be a sort of a politician challenging Putin. As it was explained in the first section of this chapter, his ideological position is a mixture that mirrors the majority in Russia (it is the intended population at least). What Navalny has done through increasing his popularity provided him a control over a group of the people who could raise the cost of authoritarianism. Street events, as it could be seen in the Moscow protests of 2011-2013, could force the regime to negotiate. Since the parliamentary politics lost its importance, non-systemic opposition represents a serious portion of the total population of Russia. Given Navalny's prominence within the opposition leaders, it can be realized that his personality itself is his main tool to oppose. Thus, Navalny's charismatic leadership can be seen as one of the national aspects of raising the cost of ignoring a particular group of Russian citizens.

Navalny's intended population has a common ground with the regime due to their nationalistic ideas. This commonality causes both an advantage and a disadvantage for him. Myagkov claims that the regime's policies including nationalistic themes resulted in a shift in which passive opponents can change their political position in favor of Putin (Myagkov et al., 2018, p. 16). As Stepan's task of raising the authoritarian cost aims to recruit more active and passive opponents, the regime's nationalistic policies are risky for Navalny. In this respect, the focus of Navalny's supporters on his charisma rather than his ideology could be seen an advantage because underpinning his leadership is not only dependent on his nationalistic arguments.

Nadskakula-Kaczmarczyk stresses that non-systemic oppositional activities including Navalny's efforts have changed the perception of the society from remaining aloof on street activities to being politically aware and motivated (Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk, 2020, p. 103). This is a signal showing the increasing cost of authoritarian rule in Russia. As Stepan underlines, most of the power of an authoritarian regime comes from its passive supporters who believe that the regime successfully controls the whole political system, thusly, an opposition could make these people think that the regime's control mechanism does not work well anymore if encouraging activities were organized such as "such as strikes, slowdowns, widespread protests, *samizdat*-style publications, "flying" university classes, and noncooperation generally" (Stepan, 1990, p. 46). Related to this, the conclusion of Nadskakula-Kaczmarczyk is worth quoting:

> However, the protests had a positive influence on many factors, which determine the level of his political capital and they contributed to the realisation of several of his specific aims. Firstly, they turned into the events that challenged the ruling elite, which had focussed, above all, on finding new ideas for deprecating Navalny, thereby forcing it to react to his actions. Navalny's protests, that took place in many places in Russia, resulted in Navalny becoming a more dangerous politician from the point of view of the Kremlin's interests. The protests brought him an 8% rise in recognisability and had a positive effect on society's support for him. An important consequence of Navalny's street actions was also the change in society's perception of political protest, which has become an acceptable form of expressing one's opposition to the actions of those in power. (Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk, 2020, p. 105)

Therefore, in the national level, what Navalny had succeeded in completing the Stepan's tasks is to create a group of opponents, despite the fact that they are not directly represented in the electoral system, who could challenge the regime by raising its authoritarian cost. The emergence of political awareness and coalescing under the charismatic leadership of Alexei Navalny rather than his ideology are the main indicators that these dissidents fulfilled the fourth task.

3.4.2. Internationalization

Raising the cost of an authoritarian regime, apart from grabbing the attention of Russians, requires internationalization of the opposition. Stepan points out "In addition, since the international climate can be a support or an obstacle to an authoritarian regime, the active opposition should appeal

to world opinion by documenting and publicizing the regime's most flagrant violations of civilized standards of conduct." (Stepan, 1990, p. 45). Although it is risky to be a part of an international network in Russian politics since it opens a gate for the regime's criticisms in which an opponent can be accused of causing a foreign intervention to the country, international pressure on the regime could be more powerful than a domestic opposition including some sanctions and legal enforcements.

Starting with a significant international network for Alexei Navalny, he participated Yale University's World Fellows Program in 2010. He took part of a traineeship program with the courses on leadership, democracy, and politics (Yale University, 2010). This organization provided him to talk about his corruption campaign and the political struggles within Russian political system to international audiences. In a special news of Deutsche Welle (DW) reported in 2013, the director of that program, Michael Cappello, says that despite Navalny's little international experience and a conservative political position, he was good at analytical thinking and this program contributed to him the ability to think globally (Goncharenko, 2013). The impression that Navalny gave to the non-Russian audiences increased his fame, therefore, Putin's authoritarianism was proposed for the international agenda. For instance, in the case of the poisoning of Navalny, World Fellows published a memorandum supporting him:

> We are members of the Yale World Fellows family. We are shocked, saddened and angered at the apparent attack on Alexey Navalny, a 2010 Yale World Fellow. We are thankful that Alexey is now in Germany, receiving the specialized care he needs, and hope he makes a full recovery. We admire Alexey for his courage to speak out against corruption; his persistent campaign for human rights; and his belief in the future of Russia. We call on the Russian Government to allow and support an independent, transparent and credible investigation to bring the perpetrators of this horrific crime to justice. In every society, all citizens – including opposition leaders such as Alexey Navalny – should be protected by the law. (World Fellows, 2020)

In the last part of this memorandum, it could be seen that an international network raises the costs of the authoritarian decisions that Russian regime takes against Navalny.

Navalny also gave a speech to the European Parliament on 27th November 2020 which is an important effort to grab the international audiences' attention. After thanking European Parliament for the support it provides for him and his family, he mentions about the political struggles that he and his friends have to face in Russian politics such as electoral restrictions on Ilia Yashin, thusly, he claims that the sanctions against Russian oligarchs will be welcomed by 99% of Russian population (EUDebates, 2020). Based on this speech, it can be said that Navalny represents non-systemic opposition not only in national political arena but also in international politics by declaring that there is a serious amount of Russian population that Putin's regime prevents them to manifest themselves in the political system. He clearly calls for European sanctions against Russian oligarchs that fund Putin's rule. To the contrary, in BBC interview held in 2017, he was against the sanctions targeting Russian economy that were implemented after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 (Navalny, 2017a).

Therefore, it can be commentated that internationalization of Navalny has turned him to be more threatening to the regime. This change in Navalny's discourse explains what Stepan notes about the contribution of a political opposition to challenging an authoritarian regime: "Although authoritarian regimes may buckle because of external setbacks like military defeat, foreign occupation, or international economic reversals, they are more likely to collapse under the strain of conflicts and contradictions that are purely internal." (Stepan, 1990, p. 44). Depending on the opposition performance of fulfilling Stepan's tasks, a regime could be replaced by the more democratic one. Navalny's speech to European Parliament and his World Fellowship in Yale University are two examples of how he appeals the world opinion in favor of his oppositional activities.

Navalny's international attempts are confronted by the regime's denials and allegations. To illustrate the regime's response, in the news of Deutsche Welle (DW) made on 20th January 2021, it was reported that Kremlin has accused Navalny of being "an instrument of foreign secret services" many times (DWNews, 2021). On the contrary, Smyth and Soboleva, based on their study including the interviews with the supporters of Navalny, state "Faced with state claims of foreign interference aimed at affecting regime change the Navalny team took steps to limit transnational organizational influence and contact. None of our respondents mentioned contacts with democracy assistance organizations or activist movements from other countries." (Smyth & Soboleva, 2016, p. 352). Needless to say, this is not enough to demonstrate that Navalny is completely independent from the foreign aids. Yet, through tracing his political journey, it can be realized that he is careful while choosing his words in international arena not to fall into the trap of regime by losing nationalistic audiences. In his speeches, he emphasizes the corruption and the electoral restrictions that can be a common ground for his followers nationally and internationally. To sum up, he has already fulfilled the steps that Stepan proposes for raising the cost of an authoritarian rule.

3.5.Failure of a Credible Democratic Alternative

The last task of Stepan's framework is to create a credible democratic alternative to the existing authoritarian regime. Stepan writes as "redemocratization of an authoritarian regime" while describing his last task for the political opposition (Stepan, 1990, p. 47). Although it is difficult to say that Russia has experienced a complete democracy in post-Soviet period, it is explained in the second chapter of this study that the extent of authoritarianism enlarged in Putin Era. Lessening tolerance towards media criticisms, narrowing independent zone of the local politics through the implementation of "power vertical", and overcentralizing the political position of the oligarchs are the major factors that strengthened the authoritarian rule in Russia starting from the beginning of 2000s. Therefore, "redemocratization" can be used for Russia to refer to the Yeltsin Era which was relatively more democratic.

Stepan puts emphasis on the enlargement of opposing groups by noting "A crucial task of the active opposition is to integrate as many antiauthoritarian movements as possible into the institutions of the emerging democratic majority." (Stepan, 1990, p. 47). He regards the first step as the empowerment of civil society. However, Chebankova portrays the regime-lead impediments on the development of civil society as follows:

> This strategy worked very well, fuelling the ongoing consumer race and distracting people from political activity. Indeed, we have seen that modern Russians, in particular those belonging to richer sectors, are focused on the improvement of their material welfare and elevation of their socio-economic status. Such a situation weakens the bonds of social solidarity and leads to the individuation of society. Many people feel indifferent towards political events, rely on a close circle of friends and family, and abstain from taking responsibility for the future of their country. Despite harbouring reformist hopes and expectations, they shift the burden on the President and his administration. (Chebankova, 2013, p. 167)

This is to say that Russian civil society has been damaged by the authoritarian rule, therefore, is not capable of producing the necessary conditions of the unification of the opposition. The groups are too weak to support political activism. The circles are too narrow to involve another group of opposition.

Despite the unfavorable conditions for "re-democratization", the opposition's commitment to democratic principles can be still examined. Alexei Navalny's interactions with other opposition groups and their reactions to him can give a clue about whether the opposition group he leads could contribute to the democratization process in Stepan's framework.

Stepan considers the coalescence under the democratic principles as the core of the task, creating a credible democratic alternative. He proposes to establish a "shadow government" in which the unified opposition groups generate solutions to contentious issues in order to increase the "credibility" of the alternative. But he also admits that the authoritarian rule caused numerous contentious issues on which it is almost impossible to create a consensus (Stepan, 1990, p. 47). Furthermore, the opposition groups are under attack that the regime tries to block any unification attempts. As Stepan illustrates, "If, for instance, the authoritarian regime were to be so tactically astute as to take up a relatively centrist stance, part of the democratic opposition could well find itself to the right of the government on policy while another part stood to the left." (Stepan, 1990, p. 48). Last but not least, convincing active supporters of the regime and the coercive apparatus is a crucial part of creating an alternative. According to Stepan, "The active supporters of the authoritarian regime and the members of the coercive elite themselves are often the major agents of this change; except in very rare cases of successful democratic revolution, crucial decisions favoring democratization are usually made by those who had previously been counted among the pillars of the authoritarian regime." (Stepan, 1990, p. 48). To evaluate Alexei Navalny in the context of democratization, his political life should be analyzed in the light of these peculiarities of Stepan's theoretical approach. To do that, this

section will draw attention to the "Failure of Coalescence" and "Personification" in Navalny's political career.

3.5.1. Failure of Coalescence

Alexei Navalny's prominence among opposition leaders provided him a fame that appealed the other opposing groups to coalesce. After the efforts of Coordination Council of Opposition, the establishment of Democratic Coalition in April 2015 was the first attempt that some opponents tried to unify their groups. RPR-PARNAS, Democratic Choice[41], 5th December Party[42], Libertarian Party[43], and Navalny's Progress Party with the support of Open Russia which was funded by oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Solidarity formed a coalition for regional elections. These parties were representing the non-systemic opposition since some of them were not allowed to participate the elections and some of them were not even registered. However, this coalition lasted approximately one year. Firstly, the principles gathering these parties will be given in order to test the coalition whether it is based on democratic demands. Secondly, Navalny's position and political actions during the coalition will be underlined for understanding his role in creating a democratic alternative.

In his blog, Navalny tells about the aims and the strategy of Democratic Coalition, that is, to challenge Kremlin-based political parties in 2015 regional elections and 2016 Duma elections by nominating a candidate list prepared by the coalition through using PARNAS' legal opportunities (Navalny, 2015). This is not only a democratic union but also a pragmatic and practical organization that provide non-systemic opposition to be involved in the political system. Therefore, it fits Stepan's framework in the sense that it includes "as many antiauthoritarian movements as possible". Since the regime has already pacificated parliamentary opposition after Moscow protests of 2011-13 as explained in the second chapter of this study, it can be said that the components of non-systemic opposition are the sole antiauthoritarian movements. Hence, a democratic opposition should challenge Putin's regime.

The major principle that unified the parties is to overcome the obstacles that the regime creates against the opposition. In his blog, Navalny highlights four key points of the coalition as follows:

> 1. This is not a union of Parnas and the Progress Party - this is the creation of a common structure that will enable all the best representatives of the opposition to go to the polls, regardless of party affiliation. Lists will be formed not according to the principle of party nomenclature, but according to the principle of competition (primaries, analysis of sociology and other similar procedures).
> 2. This is not a "new liberal party", but a broad democratic association where social democrats, liberals, and European-type conservatives can comfortably exist. Again, the best get on the lists, those who bring him votes, and not those who are pointed out

[41] Founded on 28th February 2010 by Vladimir Milov, officially registered on 20th September 2012.
[42] Unregistered party founded in 2011 by Roman Dobrokhotov, Konstantin Yankauskas, Denis Bilunov, Sergey Davidis, and Natalia Pelevine.
[43] Unregistered party formed in 2008, led by the co-chairmanship Boris Fedyukin and Yaroslav Konvey, splitted in 2020.

> by party bosses. Some quotas may exist to guarantee the unification process, but they are limited.
> 3. Already at the next regional elections, which will be held in September 2015, we will nominate joint lists in a number of regions and will do everything so that they are people's, that is, the most authoritative and popular local politicians/activists who can get support are included in them voters. We will take these elections seriously and will not let them take their course. Specific regions will be announced soon.
> 4. I am absolutely convinced that our new structure can become that long-awaited mechanism that will help us, millions of normal citizens, who are now looking in horror at that madhouse called the "Russian legislature", filled with crooks, freaks and clowns, to get political representation. , representing no one at all, except for their Kremlin bosses. (Navalny, 2015)

It can be seen that the coalition mainly aims to cover various political groups. Navalny even stresses that the Democratic Coalition will negotiate with Communists which he regards them as a serious opposition group (Taiga.info, 2015). Therefore, this coalition's structure was designed as broadscale. In the coalition document which Navalny and Kasyanov signed, the principles are clearly stated as "We are confident that a free society based on the values of democracy, human rights, honest free labor and entrepreneurship, social justice, and the rule of law can and will be built in Russia. We are ready to offer the citizens of Russia a new development program based on pragmatic ideas of economic and social development based on openness, respect for the individual and his rights." (Navalny, 2015). Thus, the principles are appropriate to meet Stepan's conditions for a democratic alternative.

The coalition could not stand long. In April 2006, in a news reported by Meduza in 1st June 2016, due to a film about an intimate nature of Kasyanov and another PARNAS member Natalia Pelevina published in NTV which is close to the Kremlin (Meduza, 2016). The release of that film collapsed the alliance as Navalny and his friend Ilia Yashin wanted Kasyanov to remove himself from the coalition. The regime also attacked the campaigns in some places (Meduza, 2016). This rupture prevented the coalition to develop and challenge the systemic parties. Moreover, Navalny's reaction should be underlined in the context of protecting a coalition with other non-systemic parties. Progress Party, and Navalny himself "harshly" criticized PARNAS and Kasyanov about the release of film and their preparations for 2016 elections (Meduza, 2016). It is not to say that Navalny did not battle to protect the alliance with other parties. Yet, PARNAS had a key role in the political system of Russia as they were partially systemic which provides non-systemic opposition with a bridge to enter the elections. Regardless of Navalny's efforts, the opposition parties could not overcome the conflicts among themselves that resulted in a failure of coalescence.

3.5.2. Personification

Navalny's charismatic leadership brings about a mass of supporters beyond the ideological differences, however, it is an obstacle to coalescing other parties in order to create a credible

democratic alternative. Grigory Yavlinsky, who was a former colleague of Navalny from Yabloko Party, criticizes Navalny, as he is only a populist that does not mean an alternative to the existing authoritarian regime, by noting "As sole leader, Navalny only focuses on himself and clamps down hard on even hints at any coalitions." (Yavlinsky, 2021). Accusing Navalny of acting selfishly, Yavlinsky also adds that Navalny's exposures of corruptions in the government are not original ideas in Russian politics: "Therefore the key publicly significant impact inherent in the style of Navalny's 'investigative' films is to incite primitive social hatred. And this is also nothing new. It was practised by the regime itself when grabbing Yukos from Khodorkovsky in 2003." (Yavlinsky, 2021). Yavlinsky's claims are significant to understand Navalny's political position in respect to Stepan's framework. For a political opposition which is not relied upon democratic values, Stepan stresses "If the opposition attends only to the task of erosion, as opposed to that of construction, then the odds are that any future change will merely be a shift from one authoritarian government to another, rather than a change from authoritarianism to democracy." (Stepan, 1990, p. 47). Therefore, Yavlinsky's claims are useful to state whether Navalny can be named as a democratic alternative or another type of authoritarian. In his speech, he underlines the democratic values but in practice, he is not a part of an opposing group which is based on a pro-democratic ideology. Considering the nationalistic elements in his political views, the scenario in which he rules the country could seem dubious.

When it comes to the practical results of Navalny's exposures about the corruption in Putin's ruling team, Yavlinsky underlines "Unfortunately, Navalny's investigations did not yield and cannot yield practical results for society. All the "exposed" individuals remain entrenched in their positions and have kept all their money." (Yavlinsky, 2021). It is obvious that one should not expect from a blogger to end the corruption if he is not even in the government, but in prison. Yet, it also touches upon a fact that Navalny's political actions only serve one function that is to highlight what everyone knows. However, an opposition should serve as a "shadow government" that brings solutions to contentious political issues. As the corruption is not the sole factor that makes Russian citizens poor, Yavlinsky points out:

> Our citizens are losing incommensurably more owing to the wars in Syria and the Donbass, owing to the arms race and the completely unlimited, opaque and uncontrollable expenses on the military industrial complex, owing to international sanctions that Russia is constantly asking for, but above all owing to the inefficient high-cost economics of state capitalism (when the incomes are private, while the losses are assumed by the state). (Yavlinsky, 2021)

To illustrate the unclear approach of Navalny to this issue, Laurelle writes that there are inaccuracies in the discourse of Navalny's when he speaks about the migration issues related to Russian foreign policy towards post-Soviet countries (Laruelle, 2014, p. 283). Hence, due to Navalny's ambiguous political goals, it is difficult to name him as a democratic opposition in Stepan's terminology.

To conclude, Navalny leads a non-systemic opposition group, which can be regarded as the "real" opposition in hybrid regimes, and he fulfilled the first four tasks of Stepan's framework that describes the path for political oppositions living in authoritarian regimes. After Bolotnaya Protests of 2011-13, he increased his fame that provided him a popular support against Putin. He contributed new strategies and tactics to the existing opposition in Russian politics that created autonomous zones in which it is possible to dispute the regime's legitimacy. So far, he successfully raised the cost of the authoritarian rule in Russia thanks to his national and international supporters. Given the regime's attacks on him -if true, the poisoning case demonstrates how rough they are-, he challenged and became a serious threat to Putin's team. Nevertheless, Stepan's last task requires a consolidation among opposing groups in order to create a credible democratic alternative but the attempts of coalescing including Navalny as in the case of the establishment of "Democratic Coalition". In defiance of his personal mistakes, it can be said that non-systemic opposition could not unify themselves under the democratic values. The parliamentary opposition has already been pacificated by the regime, therefore, political opposition in general could not create a credible alternative. Additionally, Navalny's personality that can be considered as a "cult", is one of the obstacles to a coalescence among the opposition group. Under these circumstances, even though Navalny can be called as an opposition figure against Putin, his political aims are not clear in terms of democratization of Russian authoritarian regime.

CONCLUSION

This study has applied Alfred Stepan's theoretical approach to the political opposition in authoritarian regimes to the case of Alexei Navalny. Given the criticisms to the existing literature for the political opposition and the authoritarian regimes, it was stressed that there are gaps in the traditional perspectives that should be revised in order to explain the contemporary politics. The findings demonstrated that there are two main reasons for the necessity of reviewing the present literature. First, the political opposition has changed throughout the development of extra-parliamentary activities which requires new concepts. Dahlian understanding of the political opposition is not broad enough to classify the new-born opposition models such as non-systemic opposition. Despite the contribution of Russian political scientist Ivan Bol'shakov defining this type of opposition, more research has been needed since the unexplored features of this subject are far beyond his explanations. Secondly, there is an inflation of the concepts on the hybrid regimes. This situation shows that a pattern of such political systems has not been yet founded. Therefore, the dynamics of the contemporary authoritarian regimes should be clarified in order to understand the actors living in them.

Apart from the value of obtaining knowledge about hybrid regimes, the goals and the strategies of the new types of political opposition are important to study. As Stepan's theoretical framework brought about an analytical tool for the examination of the opposition, his approach can be used for other cases. Therefore, this thesis has reached out that Stepan's approach is convenient to implement in non-systemic opposition figures in authoritarian regimes. As of the analytical tool that Stepan contributed, he suggested that a political opposition living in an authoritarian regime functions five tasks in favor of democratization. First, the opposition needs to resist the integration into the regime. The second one is to guard the autonomous zones as a playground for oppositional activities. Thirdly, the opposition is required to dispute the legitimacy of the regime. Completed these tasks, the cost of the authoritarian rule increases as the fourth task of a political opposition. Finally, the dissidents must represent a democratic alternative guaranteeing that the opposition does not repeat the authoritarian control when it comes to the power. Therefore, Alexei Navalny's political activities have been subject to these tasks in this thesis. His path to oppose against the regime has evaluated under Stepan's five tasks whether Navalny hitherto displayed a democratic alternative.

Alexei Navalny is only an example, which means, there are many similar figures in other authoritarian regimes. What makes these cases significant is that they provide a basis for considerable empirical research on the non-systemic opposition and the hybrid regimes. The state repression that

the hybrid regimes use over the opposition can be observed. This observation can lead to a pattern that will be useful to explain what traditional literature cannot.

Traced the political activities of Navalny, this study has concluded that he does not represent a credible democratic alternative to Putin's regime for two main reasons. First, despite the conditions under which different opposition parties were about to coalesce in Russian politics, these chances were missed by Navalny. For instance, after the establishment of Democratic Coalition by various non-systemic opposition groups in April 2015, it could not stand against the regime's pressure and the disagreements among the parties within this union. Specifically, Navalny himself could not afford to hold on a coalition relied upon democratic principles. Instead, it was observed that he sought to follow his own path of opposition such as the use of social media to expose the corruptions in Russian government.

Navalny's personification is the other reason why he failed to fulfill the fifth task in Stepan's framework, which is, *creating a credible democratic alternative*. Although the Western media perceive Navalny as "the last man standing" against an authoritarian regime as it can be seen in 60 Minutes interview of CNN with Navalny in 2017, he could not be regarded as a defender of democratic values (CNN, 2020a). This study has exhibited reasonable evidences indicating that Navalny prioritizes to replace Putin's government rather than democratizing Russia. Furthermore, his ideational background has demonstrated that he is contradictory while shifting between nationalism and liberalism. Navalny's nationalistic views are another obstacle to the democratic alternative that he was expected to lead. Thus, the leader of non-systemic opposition in Russia carries the risk, that Stepan underlines in his famous article, which is not to contribute the democratization of an authoritarian regime but only to replace it with another authoritarian control. Consequently, this study has revealed that Alexei Navalny is closer to a populist opposition rather than a democratic alternative.

The examination of Navalny's political journey showed that he can be seen a non-systemic opposition starting with the Moscow Bolotnaya protests of 2011-13. Before that, he was not pushed out of the political system entirely. His membership of a liberal opposition party named Yabloko and the early oppositional activities can be counted as in-system opposition. Moreover, the emergence of non-systemic opposition in Russian politics also started in Bolotnaya protests. As Sakwa argues Putin's third term, that Richard Sakwa who is the doyen of Russian studies calls as "a cultural turn", should be considered the beginning of direct state repression over the existing opposition. Priorly, even though the regime had been displayed authoritarian rule, it was not as excluding the dissidents as it causes the birth of non-systemic opposition. Hence, Alexei Navalny, as a leader of this sort of opposition, came to the front along with the changes in Russian political atmosphere.

The increasing fame of Navalny in both national and international political arenas, brought about a tough response by the regime. Although he has not been able to create a democratic alternative yet, he fulfilled Stepan's first four tasks up until now. As of the first task, Navalny successfully resisted the integration of the regime by remaining non-systemic. Secondly, he guarded the zones of autonomy by using the relatively independent sites such as social media and international political entities. The use of these zones is also his contribution to Russian political opposition as an innovation. More to the third task, Navalny has disputed the legitimacy of the regime in almost every chance he obtained. His fame even relies upon the anti-corruption activities which targets the regime's illegitimate use of state resources. By completing these three tasks along with his increased fame, Navalny has already raised the cost of authoritarian rule since he carried out the task of appealing the world opinion and Russian citizens. In this regard, Stepan notes that the more a political opposition fulfills the tasks, the more an authoritarian regime erodes on behalf of its democratization. In conclusion, what Navalny has achieved by his oppositional activities is that he increased the price of Putin's authoritarian rule. Although this achievement covers the first four tasks of Stepan, Navalny could not end up being a democratic alternative that was the final task for a political opposition. Therefore, unless Navalny constructs an opposition based on the democratic principles rather than his personal charisma, he should not be considered as a step towards the democratization of Russian politics.

The Russian example, despite its unique aspects, represents the so-called hybrid regime based on its high level of authoritarianism. The examination of political opposition is difficult in Russian politics since there are many obstacles for the growth of an institutionalized opposition that can be observed in the parliamentary politics of Western democracies. However, the existence of contentious politics illustrates that there are various oppositional activities to analyze. With the development of new sites in which the opposition figures can manifest such as social media and international organizations despite the pressures of an authoritarian regime, the new types of political opposition should be the subject of further research.

Lastly, this study has covered the period between 1991 and 2021. However, since February 2022, Russia has waged a large-scale war against Ukraine. This unexpected situation can cause serious changes in domestic politics of Russia. Besides, Navalny was arrested in January 2021 and sentenced to nine years in prison in March 2022. His network was also divided up by the regime. But these developments do not make this thesis invalid, however, the war between Russia and Ukraine should be certainly taken into consideration as an independent variable in further research.

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