Rethinking demobilisation: concepts, causal logic, and the case of Russia's For Fair Elections movement

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Abstract

The study of social movement organisations (SMOs) has tended to converge on the initial, upward trajectory and most intense activity of SMOs, that is, mobilisation and campaigning. Comparatively little attention has focused on the downward slope: how do movements falter and fail; how do SMOs demobilise? Recent work has sought to fill this lacuna. Davenport's (2015) theorisation is the latest, most useful addition to the topic. Yet existing theories still omit facets of demobilisation and bear the mark of over-reliance on case inference. This article addresses these persistent conceptual problems. First, it argues for a reformulation of Davenport's theorisation of SMO demobilisation, re-aggregating demobilising factors internal to SMOs and broadening the scope of external factors to include the repressive activities of non-state agents. Next, the article asserts that the causal logic of demobilising factors is complex: the concurrence of factors is what produces demobilisation (this is 'conjunctural causation') and multiple combinations of factors can cause demobilisation (this is 'equifinality'). Finally, the article demonstrates the analytical utility of the proposed conceptual framework and concomitant causal logic by briefly analysing the case of the For Fair Elections (FFE) movement organisation in Russia in 2011-2012. This case exhibits the multiplicity of internal strains and external pressures that converge to produce demobilisation. Taken together, the article's conceptual framework and empirical example provide a guide for identifying, analysing, and characterising SMO demobilisation.

The study of social movements has long concentrated on *mobilising* and *campaigning*, that is, how movements *get* moving and then *move*. Yet this concentration on the initial upward slope and plateau of the life of movements deprived the latter, downward trajectory of much scholarly focus. How do movements falter and fail? What takes them from the apex of their strength and brings them low? At one level, demobilisation is simply the partner process of mobilisation. What goes up must come down. But at closer inspection the processes of demobilisation that social movement organisations (SMOs) undergo is composed of different elements; not the mere failure to continue mobilising, but resulting from different conjunctions of demobilising pressures.

Some recent research—for instance, Lapegna (2013), Davenport (2015) and Demirel-Pegg (2017)—has gone some way toward building understanding and explanation of demobilisation. Yet existing theorisation is sometimes vague or else excessively particular, distorted by induction from case studies. While case studies can provide rich empirical depth, they cannot be representative; as such, deriving generalizable theory from single or small numbers of case studies is a shaky proposition. Further study is needed to create a more durable theory of social movement demobilisation.

This article contributes to that research agenda by addressing the question: *what demobilising factors are omitted or obscured by existing theorisation*? In answering this question, the article advances a 'descriptive argument' (Gerring 2012), that is, an answer to two 'what' questions: (1) what causal factors produce SMO demobilisation and (2) in what manner do those factors have a causal effect? Davenport (2015) provides the best existing theorisation of SMO demobilisation,[1] but inference from a single-case study produces a few significant omissions and misapprehensions. I provide a revision of Davenport's theorisation, most notably by incorporating Earl's (2003, 2004) concept of 'social control,' which yields a typology (Gerring 2012, 727) of demobilising factors, and by specifying important causal features of demobilisation processes. To underscore the advantages of this revision—particularly in regards to the demobilising pressure imposed by non-state agents and the causal complexity of demobilisation—the article illustrates the conceptual framework with the case of Russia's For Fair Elections SMO, source of the largest demonstrations in the country since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In Davenport's theorisation, this would be (to some extent) a deviant case (Gerring 2007), but revising Davenport fits it within a fuller coherent framework. The article thereby contributes a more comprehensive theorisation of SMO demobilising factors and the manner in which those factors have a causal effect.

I begin by reviewing the existent research on demobilisation, synthesising research from a few fields of study that address the issue but between which there has been little communication. Secondly, I formulate a conception of demobilisation and its causes. This involves discussing demobilising pressures *inside* a SMO, pressures *outside* a SMO, as well as the causal nature of these pressures in demobilisation processes. Thirdly, I apply the paper's conceptualisation to the case of the Russian For Fair Elections SMO that emerged in 2011 and began to demobilise after the presidential inauguration of Vladimir Putin in May 2012. Interpreting this case with the revised conceptualisation of demobilisation reveals omissions and shortcomings within Davenport's conception. Lastly, I identify some areas in which study of demobilisation can progress and contribute to better understanding of social movements.

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[1] That is, demobilisation at the meso- or organisational-level of analysis.

Demobilisation research

At first glance, demobilisation[2] is a simple concept, the complement of mobilisation. Tilly's (1978: 54) definition typifies this: "Mobilisation: the extent of resources under the collective control of the contender; as a process, an increase in the resources or in the degree of collective control (we can call a decline in either one demobilisation)." Yet this (parenthetical) inverse formulation obscures the peculiarities of demobilisation, its distinct conditions and causal mechanisms, and may encourage the notion that it is the mere condition of a failure to maintain mobilisation. This false impression is perhaps compounded by the paucity of demobilisation research. Scholars have noted the relatively sparse exploration of demobilisation phenomena (Fillieule 2015), a sizeable gap in the field. This is not to say that scholarship has altogether ignored demobilising phenomena; on the contrary, there is rich case study data on several forms of demobilisation. But these studies are scattered across several research silos and frequently marked by descriptive specificity at the expense of theory building. Demobilisation research should be positioned within broader conceptual frameworks, facilitating *generalizable theorisation*.

In studies of terrorism, demobilisation—mostly in its literal military sense—has been a regular focus. Case studies examine instances of internal division (Morrison 2013), loss of critical public support (Murua 2017), ceasefire and negotiation processes (Bláhová and Hladká 2019), and several other demobilising processes. To date, Cronin (2009) offers the best theoretical synthesis of demobilising terrorist campaigns. She identifies six patterns of terrorist demobilisation: "(1) capture or killing the group's leader, (2) entry of the group into a legitimate political process, (3) achievement of the group's aims, (4) implosion or loss of the group's public support, (5) defeat and elimination by brute force, and (6) transition from terrorism into other forms of violence" (Cronin 2009: 8). Together, these patterns encompass the various forms of terrorist group demobilisation.

There is some overlap between the demobilisation of terrorists and that of less violent mobilisations. Achievement of objectives, successful outcomes, 'positive demobilisation' are potential outcomes across mobilisation forms. Entry into established political processes, too, is an alternative available to many contentious organisations: 'institutionalisation,' as it is commonly termed. Yet the distinctive features of (wholly) militarised antagonism against the state, inherent in half of Cronin's typology (i.e., capture or killing of the leader, military defeat, and transition to other forms of violence), generally and rightly sequesters analysis of terrorist demobilisation from other forms.

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[2] The concept of demobilisation is troubled by the use of many different labels. Decline, decay, decapitation, termination, discontinuation, disbandment—just a few of the terms that have been applied. I favour 'demobilisation' largely because in the existing theorisation and empirical study it encompasses many previously examined phenomena, it connotatively balances between the inadvertence of terms like 'decline' and the intentionality of words like 'termination.'

In a related vein of inquiry, research on 'anti-regime campaigns' or 'regime change campaigns,' encompassing violent and militarised action as well as non-violence[3], occasionally considers demobilisation, alongside the more common interest in outcomes (i.e., success and regime change or failure and regime continuity). Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) supplement their large cross-case analysis of regime challenges with in-depth examination of the failed Burmese uprising in 1988-1990. Internal division and insufficient mobilisation made the campaign vulnerable to repression, which ultimately effected movement demobilisation and the reassertion of regime control. Similarly, Davies (2014) identifies pathways in which non-violent campaigns fail to change the regime and, concomitantly, demobilise. There is a tendency in this research area to treat as one the (failed) end of a campaign and the end of a movement or a movement organisation—a common, but not inevitable concurrence, which requires greater scrutiny in focused study of demobilisation (see below). Nevertheless, in highlighting the importance of mobilising supporters, securing elite defections, dealing with repression, and other elements, analysis of regime challenges speaks to the demobilising impact of certain factors.

Examination of repression, one category of demobilising factors, has garnered extensive inquiry all its own. Findings are vexingly inconsistent, though. Classically, repression can have its intended effect, raising the costs of participation enough to deter many or most would-be participants (Tarrow 2011). The resultant loss of participants (through deterrence or detention or some other means) and shrinking opportunity for mobilisation and action drives demobilisation. Yet repression can also backfire. Gurr's (1970) landmark study identified the inciting anger, rather than suffocating despondency, that repression can trigger. Some subsequent research corroborates this claim (see Ayanian & Tausch 2016; Chenoweth & Stephan 2013), noting that repression can compound instigating grievances or earn challengers sympathy from third parties. What emerges from these antithetical findings is the synthesis that repression is one condition within the causally complex phenomenon of demobilisation. It is not necessary for demobilisation; after all, countless movements demobilise without the faintest whiff of repression. Neither is it sufficient for demobilisation. Demobilisation may occur because of repression, but only in conjunction with other conditions or, at most, as the initiating condition in a causal chain.

Finally, social movement scholarship has occasionally, if often only secondarily, scrutinised forms and levels of demobilisation. The 'contentious politics' literature typically addresses macro-level phenomena: the demobilisation (in the sense of declining levels of activism overall) of social movement industries and of broad, coalitional campaigns (Lasnier 2017; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2004; Tarrow 2011) or even of whole societies (Beissinger 2002; Tilly 1978, 2008). At lower levels of analysis, theorisation is spread across many sub-fields. Some scholarship focuses on biographical outcomes or 'impact' (McAdam

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[3] Indeed, one of the liveliest subjects of debate is the effect of 'radical flanks' on otherwise moderate and non-violent campaigns. See Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) and Haines (1988).

1999), declining participation (Klandermans 1997), exhaustion and burnout (P. C. Gorski and Chen 2015; P. Gorski, Lopresti-Goodman, and Rising 2018; Nepstad 2004), and other micro-processes of demobilisation. Other scholarship addresses meso-level, organisational facets of demobilisation: factionalisation (Tarrow 2011, 104, 206–9), recruitment and retention of members (Hirsch 1990), bottom-up and top-down pressures (Lapegna 2013), organisational capacity (Ganz 2010). Within their sub-fields, such studies provide illuminating findings about forms of demobilisation. However, these close examinations have generally done a poor job of positioning themselves within broader conceptual frameworks, failing to integrate these pieces in an overarching theory of movement demobilisation.

Christian Davenport's (2015) study is a rare exception to this trend: it puts the diffuse, un-systematised strains of demobilisation literature into conversation with one another, formulating a general theory of the demobilisation of SMOs. The resultant theorisation in places bears the marks of over-reliance on Davenport's case study, the black separatist 'Republic of New Africa' movement in the United States. The theory provides solid theoretical foundations, but it omits private (i.e., non-state) agents as sources of demobilising pressure and mischaracterises the causal nature of demobilisation. The next section describes and revises Davenport's theorisation.

Conceptualising demobilisation and its causes

This section unpacks Davenport's (2015) theory of SMO demobilisation. It identifies conceptual gaps within this framework and provides a corrective revision by incorporating Earl's (2003, 2004) typology of social control. Taken together, the regrouped internal factors and added external factors yield an inclusive typology of demobilising factors (Table 1), which offers enhanced analytical leverage for cases of SMO demobilisation.

An important starting point in forming a fuller conceptualisation of demobilisation is uncoupling it from mobilisation. To be sure, at one level it is the partner concept of mobilisation, but at closer inspection it is comprised of different elements. Davenport (2015: 21) achieves this with his definition, identifying four forms of demobilisation:

> "(1) official termination and/or significant alteration of the formal *institution* engaged in challenging authorities;
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> (2) departure of *individuals* (members) from relevant organisations – especially the founding and/or core members that participate most frequently;
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> (3) termination of or significant reduction in dissident *interventions* (behaviours); and
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> (4) a fundamental shift in the *ideas* of the challenger (particularities of the claim) away from what was earlier established."

Davenport focuses the definition at the meso-level, that of organisations. Hence, the first form refers to 'the formal institution' that may exhibit demobilisation. Note also that this definition accounts for demobilisation *in kind*—i.e., the qualitative change between states of 'being mobilised' to 'being un-mobilised,' most clearly in the first and third forms—and *in degree*—i.e., becoming less mobilised.

Moving from *what* demobilisation is to *how* demobilisation occurs, we can say that prods to demobilise occur *internally*, from within SMOs, or *externally*, from outside movement organisations.

Internal sources of demobilisation

Davenport (2015: 32–37) identifies five internal sources of demobilisation, which can be meaningfully aggregated into two categories. First is demobilisation by *lost participation*.[4] This category includes burnout/exhaustion and lost commitment. 'Burnout' or 'exhaustion' describes "not just a state of temporary fatigue or exasperation, but an ongoing and debilitating condition that threatens its victims'" participatory persistence (P. C. Gorski and Chen 2015: 385).[5] 'Lost commitment' refers to fraying ideological or emotional connection to a movement organisation.[6] Whereas burnout denotes an *inability* to participate in SMO activities, lost commitment signifies an *unwillingness* to participate. For example, when activists in Russia's For Fair Elections (FFE) movement no longer have the stamina or resources (such as funds to pay higher fines for protest activity) to participate, their exhaustion becomes a demobilising factor; when activists grow sceptical of the efficacy[7] of protesting against the Putin regime, their lost commitment is demobilising. Taken together, these sources of lost participation refer to deterioration at the micro-level: not necessarily a product of deficient organising, rather of social psychological processes among individual activists. These processes result in less participation, depriving SMOs of their lifeblood, members.

The second category of internal demobilisation can be termed *organisational failure*. This category encompasses membership loss, factionalisation, and rigidity. Similar to the fundamental logic of lost participation—that is, a SMO requires a sufficiency of members—'membership loss' refers to the demobilising effect that results from a failure to recruit and/or retain members (Hirsch 1990). Yet here it represents an organisational deficiency: not drawing on

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[4] On what causes individuals to end their participation in movement activities, see Klandermans (1997).

[5] See also Klandermans (1997: 103–104); Nepstad (2004); Gorski, Lopresti-Goodman, and Rising (2018).

[6] See Edwards and Marullo (1995), Klandermans (1997), and Nepstad (2004).

[7] Cf. Klandermans (1997) on the expectancy-value theory of collective action.

available mobilising structures[8]; not involving members enough to retain their participation[9]; not recruiting new members to commence new actions.

Next, 'factionalisation' denotes the internal splitting of a SMO. Objectives, strategies, and tactics are sources of tension within SMOs, most basically between 'moderates' and 'radicals' (Tarrow 2011: 104, 206–9). Whereas moderates prefer more modest goals and restrained means, radicals favour further-reaching goals and more extreme means. Although 'radical flanks' can be an asset for movements,[10] coexisting comfortably or tolerably with moderate wings, the tension between moderates and radicals is at least as disadvantageous, threatening the cohesion of the movement overall.[11] The FFE movement conspicuously involved political actors across a wide ideological spectrum: from committed communists like Sergei Udaltsov to liberal democrats like Boris Nemtsov and Garry Kasparov to nationalists like Alexei Navalny. Such diverse ideological representation may serve the goal of mass mobilisation, but it leaves SMOs more vulnerable to factionalisation.

Last, 'rigidity' principally refers to an inability to adapt to change; more specifically, to modify objectives and strategies according to new circumstances (Davenport 2015: 36). This failure can manifest directly in the manner of SMO campaigns—as when a campaign of demonstrations is banned, and the SMO fails to adjust—or indirectly in the facilitating structures of a SMO—as when financial resources are blocked or disrupted, and the SMO fails to find alternatives. Many scholars have noted the importance of innovation and adaptability to SMO effectiveness (Bogad 2016; Ganz 2010; Mayer 1995; McAdam 1983; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996, 2008); inversely, failure to adapt produces demobilisation by obsolescence, if nothing else. Collectively, these three sources of demobilisation represent facets of organising failure, that is, failure to manage and deploy resources.

External sources of demobilisation

Lost participation and organisational failure, however, only account for the internal sources of demobilisation. A realistic conception of demobilisation must recognise that it typically occurs as a consequence of intersecting internal and external factors. Davenport (2015: 23–32) distils the sources of externally induced demobilisation to three types: (1) resource deprivation, (2) problem

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[8] See Boudreau (1996) and McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) on *mobilising structures*.

[9] As discussed below, Russia's FFE was robust in this respect, incorporating members' input through the Workshop of Protest Actions

[10] On the ambiguous effect of radical flanks in anti-regime movements, see Chenoweth and Stephan (2013) and Haines (1988).

[11]Tarrow (2011: 207–208) discusses the paired mechanisms of *institutionalisation* and *radicalisation* that mirror the centrifugal pressures within a movement, between moderates and radicals. In Tarrow's theorisation, these intra-movement mechanisms can be compounded by external mechanisms of facilitation and repression.

depletion, and (3) repression.[12] Resource deprivation describes the restriction of vital movement resources. Problem depletion refers to "removing (1) the perceived need for the movement and/or (2) the perceived relevance of the claims-making effort within the relevant population" (Davenport 2015: 26). Repression, according to Davenport (2015: 29), denotes "coercive actions undertaken by political authorities directed against someone challenging their beliefs, institutions, and actions or the context or conditions within which the government exists." Insofar as this tripartite formulation attempts to account for *all* external sources of demobilisation, it errs. Implicitly in the conceptualisation of resource deprivation and problem depletion, explicitly in the conception of repression, Davenport identifies the state as the sole agent of external demobilisation.

Repression is the most relevant area of research to theorisation of external sources of demobilisation. Tilly's (1978: 100) definition makes this plain: repression is "any action by another group which raises the contender's cost of collective action."[13] Reviewing the literature on repression, one may note the tendency to focus on the coercive apparatus of the state and omit other sources: systematic state-based repression (della Porta 1995), institutional versus situational repression (Koopmans 1997), policing of protest (della Porta and Reiter 1998), legal constraint of movement activity (Barkan 1984), covert repression (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1988; Davenport, 2015[14]). Yet a misconception of repression as the sole province of the state does some discredit to this body of research. 'Raising the costs of collective action' for another group can result from any number of actors and actions. Some case study research explores various forms of non-state repressive activity: countermovement activity (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017; McMillen 1971; McVeigh 2001), mercenary disruption (O'Hara 2016), hired or incited hooliganism (Kuo 2019).[15] Therefore,

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[12] Cf. Piven and Cloward's (1979) fourfold typology of state responses to challenges: ignore, conciliate, reform, or repress.

[13] It is worth contrasting Tilly's definition with others; for example, Davenport (2007: 2, emphasis added) limits repression to "actual or threatened use of *physical* sanctions... within the territorial jurisdiction of the state." But this excludes legalistic repression, as well as repressive action beyond the state's territory (assassinating dissidents in exile, for instance).

[14] Davenport's theorisation of demobilisation derives largely from a case study of the 'Republic of New Africa' movement, a separatist black-nationalist movement in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

[15] A brief digression: at time of writing, we are witnessing a complex, deliberate attempt to demobilise a movement in Hong Kong. Kuo reports the *overt, coercive* action of apparently *private* individuals (possibly connected to Chinese crime syndicates operating in Hong Kong) on protesters. Other sources report the *overt, coercive* action of *state agents distantly connected to national political elites* (i.e., police), as well as of *state agents closely connected to national political elites* (i.e., the Chinese army units amassing on the Hong Kong border) (Chor 2019b). We also see the attempt through *covert channelling* by *state* and *private agents* both to promote *factionalisation* within the movement (i.e., between ethnically non-Chinese residents of Hong Kong and Chinese Hong Kongers) and to inflict *membership loss* by persuading bystanders that its is a seditious foreign plot (Chor 2019a). In other words, the 2019 Hong Kong

we need a model that retains the forms described in Davenport's theorisation, but also includes the whole range of external agents of demobilisation.

Earl (2003, 2004) generates a typology of 'social control'[16] that circumscribes the universe of external sources of demobilisation. Integrating this typology into Davenport's theorisation provides a fuller conceptual framework for SMO demobilisation, accounting for the demobilising pressure that non-state agents can impose.

'Social control' explicitly stems from a Tillyan conception of repression (Earl 2003: 46) and thereby allows for any actor that might raise costs of collective action.[17] Earl's typology consists of three dimensions. First, what is the *identity of the repressive agent*? This dimension consists of three categories: (1) state agents *closely* connected to national political elites (e.g., the military or national law enforcement bureaus), (2) state agents *distantly* connected to national political elites (e.g., local police and administrative units), and (3) private agents.[18] The first two categories are most commonly associated with repression, but the third should not be overlooked. By 'private agents' Earl refers to other actors in the social sphere that can 'impose a cost' on SMOs. This may involve the use of physical force (e.g., some of the actions of the Pinkerton security and detective agency during labour uprisings in the United States in the nineteenth century [O'Hara, 2016]), or the threat of force (e.g., 'Antifa' activists partially rely on their violent reputation to deter participation in far-right protests). However, it also includes softer means of repression. Ferree (2004) describes how non-state actors typically employ non-violent repressive tools: ridiculing, stigmatising, and silencing opponents. Even counter-demonstrating, at first blush a merely expressive[19] form of opposition, is oftentimes an attempt

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protest movement is facing intense external demobilising pressure. So far, its adaptation to this pressure has included adopting new 'creative approaches' (Chor 2019b).

[16] The typology relates to 'repression,' but Earl (2004: 58) favours the term 'social control,' arguing that repression is a term overloaded with connotations that skew research toward the violent, coercive action of the state.

[17] NB: 'social control' can be understood as attempts to change a SMO's *opportunity structure*, whether 'political' or 'discursive.' Following Tarrow (2011: 32), 'Political opportunities' denote "consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national—sets of clues that encourage people to engage in contentious politics." Following Koopmans and Statham (1998: 228), 'discursive opportunities' refer to "which ideas are considered 'sensible,' which constructions of reality are seen as 'realistic,' and which claims are held as 'legitimate' within a certain polity at a specific time."

[18] Regarding the difference between state agents *closely* and *distantly* connected to national political elites, compare with Koopmans's (1997: 154) distinction between institutional repression ("formal, more general, less direct, and usually legally sanctioned repressive measures taken by higher-level state authorities, such as government or the judiciary") and situational repression ("informal actions of lower-level state agents, most importantly the police, who in direct contact with protesters apply repression in a relatively spontaneous, ad-hoc manner"). In these two terms, Koopmans bundles together the identity of the repressive agent and the character of repressive action.

[19] See Rucht (1988) on the 'expressive' and 'instrumental' logics of social movement action.

to impose costs on an initiating demonstration, organisation, or movement (Reynolds-Stenson and Earl 2018). The creation of Nashi, a pro-Putin youth group, was motivated by a desire to mobilise a counter-demonstration force against any 'colour revolution movements' (Atwal and Bacon 2012; Horvath 2013); unsurprisingly then, Nashi demonstrations were organised at the same time as Russia's FFE movement. The advantage of Earl's typology is most evident in this agent dimension, accounting for the full range of actors in the social sphere.

The various forms of action available to these agents introduces Earl's second dimension: *what is the character of the repressive action*? Broadly, repression is 'coercive' or 'channelling.' Coercion accounts for the threat and use of force (Earl 2003: 48; Oberschall 1973). This concept accounts for Davenport's formulation of repression, but strips away the aspects restricting it to state activity. Channelling "involves more indirect repression, which is meant to affect the forms of protest available, the timing of protests, and/or flows of resources to movements" (Earl 2003: 48).[20] It accounts for low- and high-level state actions, such as withholding permits for public protests or passing a law proscribing an SMO's activity. It also accounts for private actions, such as donors withdrawing financial support to SMOs.

Channelling encompasses Davenport's concept of resource deprivation. While channelling action against a SMO's resources is commonly associated with financial or human resources, external forces could also attempt to deny any of the 'moral,' 'material,' 'informational,' or 'human' resources on which a SMO relies (Cress and Snow 1996). When Nashi activists held pro-Putin rallies (often at the same time as demonstrations by the For Fair Elections movement), they attempted to disrupt media and public attention directed at oppositional events. Pro-government protests thus have a channelling effect. Furthermore, susceptibility to channelling depends on the extent to which a SMO relies on external support. Hence, a strain of scholarship concentrates on the potentially co-opting or controlling effect of sponsorship. Some find it a de-radicalising, limiting force (e.g., McAdam 1982; Piven and Cloward 1979) while others find it a facilitating element (Jenkins and Eckert 1986).[21]

Similarly, channelling includes the concept of problem depletion. This manifestation of channelling is perhaps most relevant when SMO moderates are supported and successful—in other terms, being 'accommodated' (Gamson 1990) or winning 'concessions' (Denardo 1985)—thereby decreasing the support and potency of a movement's radicals. Equally, a crowded field of SMOs working on the same issue may crowd out some SMOs: unable to garner enough support for their activities on the basis that others already are (likely with more

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[20] See also Oberschall (1973).

[21] Here, again, the study of radical flanks is relevant. Haines (1988) finds that the presence of a radical flank drives up support for more moderate groups, without imposing any tangible cost on the radical flank.

demonstrable success) (Soule and King 2008). In both instances, channelling action deprives SMOs of relevance.

Finally, Earl's third dimension asks, *is the repressive action visible*? This dimension distinguishes between 'covert and overt' coercion, and 'latent and manifest' channelling (Earl 2003: 48). Coercive actions taken to counter SMOs can be *overt* state violence against demonstrations, for example, or *covert* infiltration of opposition organisations. "Covert repression occurs when the agents of repression, their actions, and the purpose of their actions are intended to be unknown to the general public. In contrast, overt, coercive repression is intended to be obvious to both protesters and wider publics" (Earl 2003: 48). More ambiguously, channelling could be *manifest*, such as laws banning symbols particular to a movement or SMO, or could be *latent*, such as alterations to tax code that affects the opposition's funding. The latter is marked by nuance and a certain plausible deniability of any targeting of a group, whereas the former is a blatant attack against a particular group. This distinction is fuzzy, moveable, but essentially refers to the extent to which repression is *visible* to the general public.

Table 1. A typology of demobilising factors of social movement organisations

<u>Internal</u>		<u>External</u>		
Lost Participation (individual-level)	**Organisational Failure** (group-level)	**Social Control** (Three dimensions)		
Burnout/ exhaustion (inability to continue participating)	*Membership loss* (failure to recruit/retain members)	(1) Identity of repressive agent		
		State agents *closely* connected to national political elites	State agents *distantly* connected to national political elites	Private agents
Lost commitment (unwillingness to continue participating)	*Factionalisation* (internal splitting of movement organisations)	(2) Character of repressive action		
		Coercion – direct repression; the threat or use of force	Channelling – indirect repression (e.g., resource deprivation, problem depletion)	
	Rigidity (failure to adapt to change, to modify objectives and strategies according to new circumstances)	(3) Visibility		
		Overt / Manifest – observable, explicit, obvious repressive actions	Covert / Latent – unobserved, concealed, veiled repressive actions	

Collectively, the foregoing discussion yields a typology of demobilising factors, graphically presented in Table 1. Five internal factors, organised in two categories (lost participation and organisational failure) are matched by as many as twelve forms of social control (state agents *closely* connected to national political elites, applying coercive action, which is overt; private agents, applying channelling action, which is latent; etc.).[22] And the presence of one form of social control from one actor does not necessarily preclude it from simultaneously exerting another form, as when a regime makes concessions to moderate opposition while attempting to repress radicals (Tarrow 2011).

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[22] Cf. Davenport's (2015: 39) table of "Intersections of external and internal sources of demobilisation."

The causal nature of demobilisation

Different factors, both internal and external, combine in different permutations to produce SMO demobilisation. Davenport (2015: 38–42) suggests that sources of demobilisation occur in internal-external pairs, that state agents identify and attempt to compound internal pressures. But, in addition to omitting private agents as sources of demobilising pressure, this is the other major flaw in Davenport's theorisation. External agents are not always (or perhaps even 'often') shrewd, rational actors discerning and incisively targeting movement weaknesses. More importantly, demobilising factors occur in more complex combinations, unfolding in unique demobilisation processes.

SMO demobilisation displays several distinct causal features. Most fundamentally, it is *conjuncturally caused*: multiple demobilising factors concur to produce demobilisation. (It is unlikely that one form of demobilising pressure could occur in isolation and generate SMO demobilisation—such a case would be quite peculiar and potentially very instructive.) So it is not just, for instance, overt state coercive social control—as when the Putin regime arrests numerous oppositional demonstrators—that engenders demobilisation, but also resultant lost participation (both from exhaustion and lost commitment) and organisational rigidity that combine in a demobilisation process. Davenport's (2015: 39) theorisation would conceive of such a process as attributable only to one external factor (repression) and one internal factor (presumably *either* 'exhaustion,' 'lost commitment,' 'departing members,' or 'rigidity'). Closer inspection of cases reveals that the causal combinations of demobilisation are more variegated.

Speaking of demobilisation plurally, demobilisation process*es*, denotes that it can occur in multiple ways. In other words, SMO demobilisation is *equifinal*: there are many pathways of demobilisation. Different combinations of demobilising factors represent different ideal-typical patterns of demobilisation.

What causes demobilisation, moreover, is not the mere inverse of what is causally relevant for non-demobilisation (or continued mobilisation)—and certainly not the opposite of mobilisation. This is *causal asymmetry*. Examining demobilisation concerns different process and, in all likelihood, different causal factors than non-demobilisation and mobilisation. Similarly, some causal factors are causally relevant for both demobilisation and non-demobilisation. This is *multifinality*. Repression, by turns deterring (e.g., McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2004) and inciting (Gurr 1970), exemplifies multifinality.

Taken together, these causal attributes are consistent with a set-theoretic view of causation. That is, rather than conceiving causal factors as having linear additive effects, set-theoretic[23] approaches attend to the characteristics of conjunctural causation, equifinality, asymmetry, and multifinality. Demobilisation research should align its methodological choices with these

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[23] For an explanation of set-theoretic causation, and of the wider subject of set theory and set-theoretic methods, see Schneider and Wagemann (2012).

ontological expectations (Hall 2003): this means utilising case study methods and cross-case techniques, such as qualitative comparative analysis and coincidence analysis.

The next section presents a case study of Russia's For Fair Elections (FFE) SMO, which was mobilised in late 2011 and, by the middle of 2012, had begun a process of demobilisation. Whereas Davenport's theorisation offers some analytical leverage in examining this case, it would omit the demobilising pressure of non-state agents, like Nashi, and obscure the causal complexity of the demobilisation process. The revised theorisation facilitates a fuller analysis of FFE's demobilisation.

Russia's For Fair Elections movement

On 4 December 2011 Russia went to the polls for elections to the Russian parliament (i.e., *Duma*). Despite a sizeable drop in the overall vote share—from nearly two-thirds of all votes in 2007 to just over half in 2011—United Russia, the ruling party associated with Vladimir Putin, retained a majority of parliamentary seats. These results, however, were marred by widespread accusations of electoral manipulation and malfeasance. The substance of these accusations came from a variety of sources—the fact that Russia's primary news channel, 'Rossia-24,' broadcast results that totalled well over 100 per cent in several regions deserves note (Volchek 2019)[24]—most notably an extensive network of volunteer election observers from the *Golos* organisation, which works for free and fair elections. The nearly 8000 electoral violations (Голос [Golos] 2011) recorded in 2011 remains by far the highest total observed by the organisation in any one electoral event. Thus, there were solid grounds to question the legitimacy of the election results, as well as a directly involved cohort of citizens already mobilised around the event. The day after the election, 5 December, approximately 5,000 'whistle-blowers' (many protesters blew red whistles) marched down *Chistiye Prudy* Boulevard to protest electoral falsification. Unsurprisingly, a central rallying cry was a longstanding slogan of the Golos organisation: *Za Chestnye Vybory!*, 'For Fair Elections!'

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[24] Reportedly at the insistence of government officials (Volchek 2019), the television station broadcast inflated numbers for the United Russia party—without manipulating the results of any other parties, so that tallies exceeded 100 per cent. The most egregious case came from the Rostov region, for which Rossia-24 reported results totalling 146 per cent (58.99 for United Russia). But this was not an anomaly as other regions were reported with evidently manipulated results: for example, the Sverdlov region with 115 per cent (39.61 for United Russia) and Voronezh region with 128 per cent (62.32 for United Russia).

Figure 1 - Timeline of the For Fair Elections movement
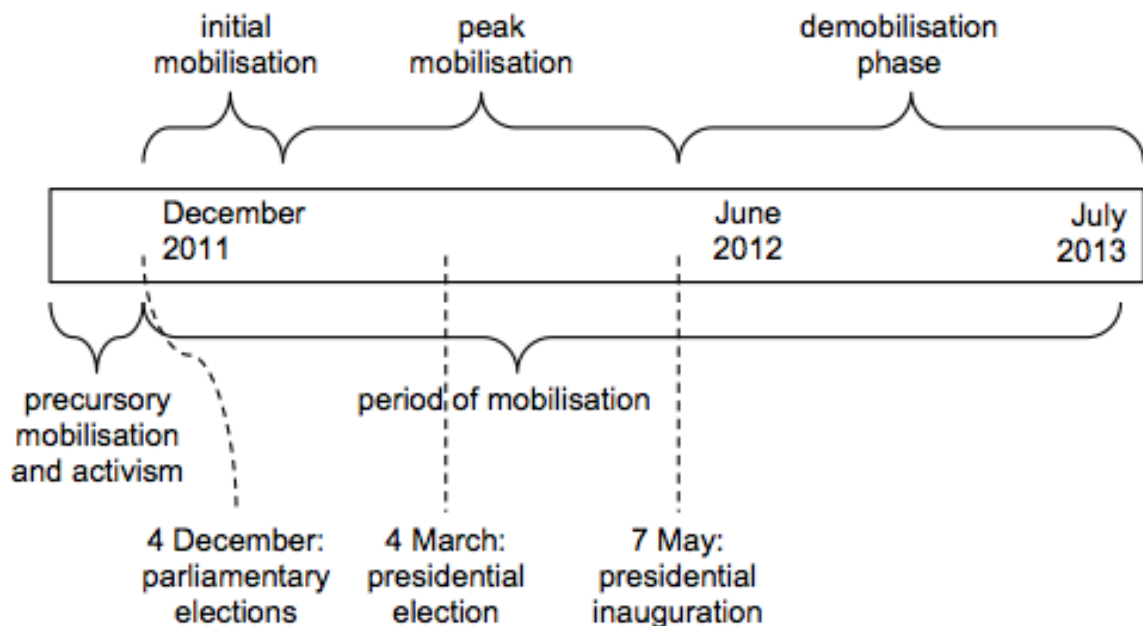
Fraud in the parliamentary elections offered a conspicuous discursive opportunity and, at least superficially, a slight political opportunity.[25] Activists and groups that were already active before the vote, such as 'Strategy 31'[26] and 'Ecological Defence of the Moscow Region,'[27] joined individuals involved in election monitoring to form the For Fair Elections (FFE) movement organisation. As illustrated in Figure 1, for roughly a year and a half after the December elections, FFE was mobilised and campaigning. The organisational structure of FFE mostly took shape during the initial phase of mobilisation, in December, and more or less persisted through the phase of peak mobilisation. Following the presidential inauguration on 7 May 2012, which coincided with combative protests in central Moscow, FFE entered a phase of demobilisation that significantly diminished it by the end of 2012 and culminated, at the latest, by the middle of 2013.

The following sections present a concise analysis of the demobilisation of FFE. Of course, this noteworthy SMO, its campaign and leading figures, displays many characteristics worthy of scholarly consideration. Indeed, several articles

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[25] Appeals for the head of the election commission, Vladimir Churov, not to certify the results were repeatedly voiced at the first protests, in early December 2011.

[26] This is a campaign group that formed to protest restrictions to the constitutionally-enshrined (in article 31, hence the group's name) freedom of assembly.

[27] This group, which included leaders like Yevgenia Chirikova that would feature prominently in For Fair Election rallies, campaigned against government-supported plans to clear parts of the Khimki Forest in order to build a highway.

have directed attention to it.[28] But as yet there is no study of the demobilisation of FFE itself. This is rather surprising since FFE organised the largest demonstrations since the disintegration of the Soviet Union; that no study has examined this case of SMO demobilisation speaks to the general neglect of organisational demobilisation. At the same time, the case of FFE is crucial (Gerring 2007): an adequate conceptual framework should be able to identify the causal factors of FFE's demobilisation. Yet Davenport's framework falls short. FFE deviates in some parts from the causes accounted for by Davenport. To correct this and to indicate the enhanced analytical leverage of the preceding theorisation of demobilisation, firstly, I detail the organisational structure of FFE; then, I identify internal and external demobilising pressures that manifest in the case of FFE; lastly, I review the sequence in which these factors impacted FFE and highlight the conjunctural nature of the resultant demobilisation.

Before proceeding along these lines, it would be prudent to take note of two key contextualising events[29] that were actuating for FFE and for the regime it challenged. First, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2005, as well as the other colour revolutions in several post-Soviet states in the 2000s, undoubtedly left an impression on the Russian regime. In several countries, SMOs, supported to some limited extent by Western governments, toppled authoritarian regimes and (at least for a time) inaugurated more liberal democratic ones.[30] Incumbent authoritarians took notice—none more so than the one in Russia. By the time FFE emerged in 2011, the Kremlin had developed several defences against 'colour movements,' including mechanisms for managing divisions among the elite (March 2009) and purpose-built youth movements, like Nashi, that were made to counteract movement-based opposition to the regime (Atwal and Bacon 2012; Horvath 2013).[31] Second, at the United Russia party conference in September 2011 it was announced that Vladimir Putin would stand as a candidate for the presidency in 2012, and that then-President Dmitri Medvedev would lead the party list in the parliamentary elections. This executive switcheroo laid bare the regime's power dynamic: despite vacating the presidency in 2008, Putin had remained in charge; and re-assuming the

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[28]Koltsova and Selivanova (2019) plumb the connection between online connections and offline participation; Semenov, Lobanova, and Zavadskaya (2016) assess the participation of opposition political parties in FFE's campaign; and Lasnier (2017, 2018), and Litvinenko and Toepfl (2019) have presented illuminating analysis of the *consequences* of FFE failure and demobilisation.

[29] Here, too, one might well include the sustained tightening of constraints on Russian civil society and activism that opposed the Putin regime or its vested interests, as well as swells of protest activity, such as the campaigns by 'Strategy-31' for free assembly and the 'Ecological Defence of the Moscow Region' for the preservation of the Khimki Forest, that fed into the eventual mobilisation of the For Fair Elections movement (i.e., 'precursory mobilisation and activism').

[30] The indicators compiled by the 'Varieties of Democracy' (V-Dem) project (https://www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/CountryGraph/), for example, attest to the liberal democratic gains made by Ukraine and Georgia after their colour revolutions in the mid-2000s.

[31] It is not a coincidence that Nashi was formed in 2005, in the immediate aftermath of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.

Presidency signalled his intent to remain in charge for a long time to come. Though not remotely surprising, the move certainly exacerbated the grievances of those who were ultimately stirred enough to go out onto the streets during the election cycle.[32]

The organisational structure of FFE

Though comprised of leaders and members from a variety of groups and organisations, the formal organisation of FFE was itself exceedingly spare. It consisted of three principal units: the Organisation Committee, the Workshop of Protest Actions, and the League of Voters.

The Organisation Committee performed the overarching managerial functions of FFE: organising protest events (including format, speakers, venue, time, etc.), fundraising to support FFE, promoting the movement and its events. Despite these vital duties, the Organisation Committee was "an unsophisticated mechanism, which did not have a clear-cut hierarchy, an organisation, a structure or a leader" (Volkov 2015: 13). Such haphazardness was the result of a lack of planning: the December elections were much anticipated, and the prospect of at least some electoral fraud rarely in doubt. Yet there are no indications that the major election monitoring initiatives—Golos, RosVybory,[33] and 'Citizen Observer'[34]—had any plans to mobilise around this imminently foreseeable grievance. The Organisation Committee therefore formed only after the first protest (on 5 December 2011), and was immediately preoccupied with the arrangements for demonstrations in mid- and late-December.

While the operation of the Organisation Committee was driven by party and civic group leaders, the Workshop of Protest Actions was more malleable; an open forum where members

Image 1 - Leaflet announcing the 'White Circle' protest, organised by FFE's Workshop on Protest Actions, on the Garden Ring Road

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[32] Polling from the Levada-Center (Volkov 2015) found that emotions like indignation and discontent were the most common motivations among protesters that participated in the initial mobilisation.

[33] Initiated by the *Fond Borby s Korruptsiyey* ('Anti-Corruption Foundation'), which was established by Alexei Navalny. RosVybory was also supported by several oppositional political parties, including the Communist Party, the Yabloko party, and businessman and 2012 presidential candidate (with his own embryonic political organization, 'Civic Platform') Mikhail Prokhorov.

[34] Or *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel*. It was the initiative of the Solidarnost organisation.

of any standing could propose various protest actions and initiate them. Attendees occasionally formed small 'steering committees,' but these were *ad hoc*, focused on realising and then assessing protest actions (Volkov 2015). Workshop initiatives often took the form of actions within the large demonstrations organised by the Organisation Committee, though included a few separate protests, most prominently the 'White Circle' protest[35] on 26 February, when activists formed a massive human chain along the ring road that encircles central Moscow.

The League of Voters essentially served as a propaganda or public relations arm of FFE, attracting attention to issues of electoral transparency, as well as organising election monitoring initiatives for the 4 March presidential elections.[36] It was composed of 'celebrity figures' active within the SMO: journalists, artists, poets, and personalities. Though the League operated somewhat autonomously from the overall managerial role played by the Organisation Committee, the overlap of members represented in the two units kept their actions in harmony.

This organisational triad presents a couple important issues worth noting for they relate to demobilising factors and potentialities of FFE. First, the degree of horizontality is remarkable. Both the Organisation Committee and the Workshop of Protest Actions were open to all FFE participants. (The League of Voters was only open to invited persons.) And while decisions of the Organisation Committee remained in the hands of an indefinite collection of leaders from other groups, the Workshop did not even have that minimum of differentiation; rather, it was an open forum composed of spontaneously forming, operating, then dissolving 'steering committees.' Research on strategic capacity stresses the utility of organisations and structures that encourage tactical input from regular members (Ganz 2010) or allow for constructive 'trust-building' and strategic 'reappraisal' (Davenport 2015: 43–47). In other words, some organisational horizontality can guard against several demobilising pressures. The FFE's horizontal, open units appear to be a by-product of its rapid formation, however, rather than a design feature. Nevertheless, FFE's loose structure insulated it from demobilising *rigidity* issues since its organisation was never irretrievably locked in to any one course of action.

Second, the benefits of flexible structure were minimised by the preservation of striking *factionalisation* issues. FFE included leaders and members from a wide

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[35] As many as 40,000 people (Radia 2012) lined Moscow's Garden Ring Road, festooned with white ribbons, holding white balloons, and waving white flags and flowers. Opposition leaders were interspersed along the ring; sympathetic motorists drove around the 10-mile loop, holding flags out their windows and honking in support (or else because the protest was causing several traffic jams). By way of counter-protest, groups of pro-government youth activists deployed at several points along the road and wore signs that said "Putin loves all" or "One week until Putin's victory."

[36] Organisation for election monitoring included systematising means of processing observer reports, issuing a 'black list' of individuals observed engaging in fraud in the parliamentary elections, and offering legal assistance to voters and monitors.

ideological spectrum: from liberal groups like Solidarnost and the Yabloko party, to the Communist Party and arms of its organisation, to avowed nationalists. Sharing the same dais, one could routinely see far-left activists, like Sergei Udaltsov, next to nationalist figures, like Alexei Navalny, and business figures, like Mikhail Porkhorov, next to environmentalists, like Yevgenia Chirikova.[37] Paradoxical ideological pairings abounded. On the one hand, it is a testament to the common interest in fair electoral institutions; yet on the other hand, it signals that FFE's structure, particularly the Organisation Committee, harboured significant factional divisions moored together only by a bare sufficiency of common interest.

The demobilisation of FFE

Intense activism by FFE lasted from mid-December through Putin's presidential inauguration on 7 May 2012. FFE activists seized on the opportunity of Putin's inauguration, organising several events (here, again, the influence of factions within FFE was evident), including the so-called 'March of Millions' (approximately 100,000 participated) on the day before, 6 May. Participants in these events were met with mass deployments of riot officers and eventually beaten and/or arrested for unpermitted protest action. This was overt coercive action by the state. The crescendo of activity was followed by a long, sustained diminuendo, where resolute external demobilising pressures exacerbated internal stresses and hastened the demobilisation of FFE.

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[37] NB: Ideological pluralism, and the frequently concomitant diversity of movement claims, is not necessarily a problem. Wang and Soule (2016) reveal how multiple claims and wide aims tend to be more advantageous than campaigns and movements with narrower purposes. Specifically, "multi-issue protest events are more likely to use novel re-combinations of tactics" (2016: 522) and "more peripheral claims, which you might find in large, coalitional SMOs, are more likely to introduce new protest tactics" (2016: 529).

Figure 2 - the demobilisation of For Fair Elections
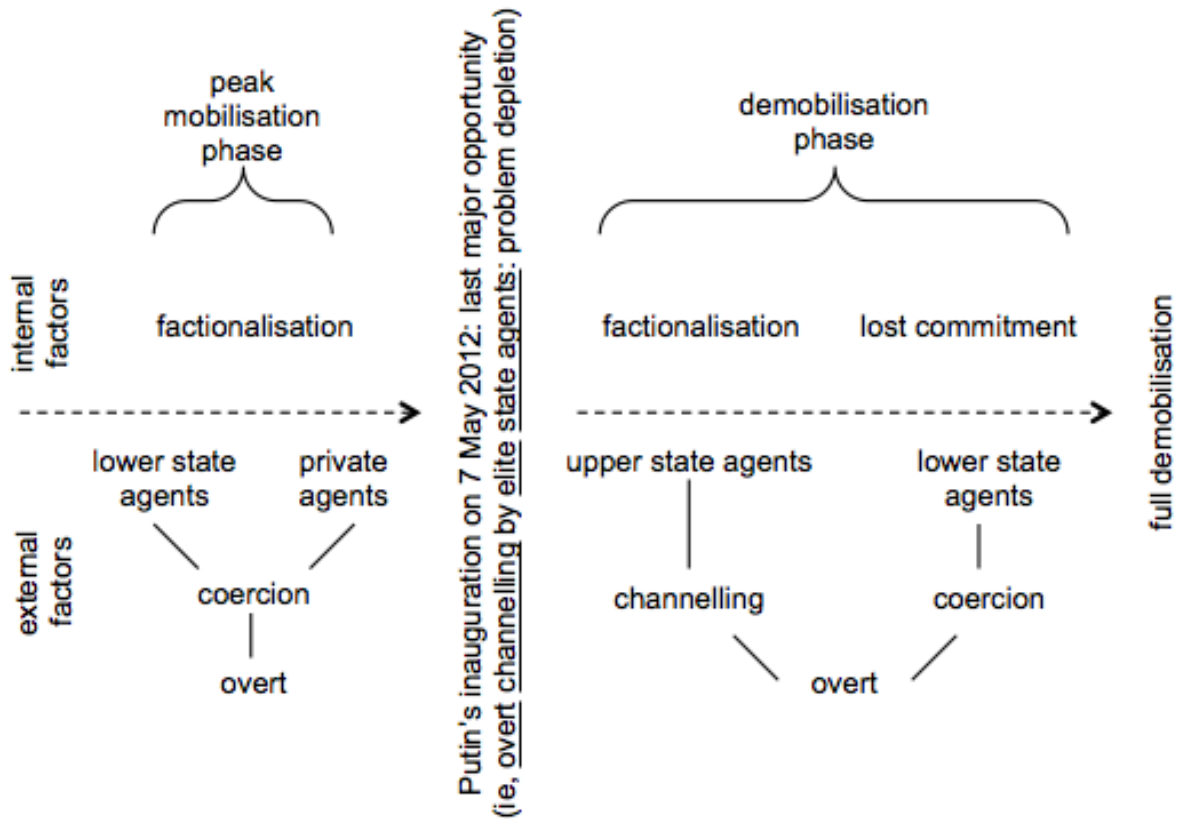
May 2012 marked the beginning of FFE's demobilisation. Putin's inauguration represented the last event directly related to the contested election cycle at the core of FFE's claims. Merely by executing the inauguration, the government effected a demobilising pressure: ending the succession of events directly related to grievances mobilised by FFE; in demobilisation terms, this is overt channelling by state agents closely connected to national elites.[38] At the same time as this opportunity was closing—likely reducing protesters' perception of the 'political efficacy' of their actions[39]—the risks of protest participation were purposely intensified. Following the arrest of protest participants on inauguration day, a series of legal steps were taken, by the federal government and by state agents more distantly connected to national elites, that restricted the mobilisation options for FFE: that is, instances of overt channelling. Three of these were of particular importance: new legal restrictions on protest activity, the so-called 'Foreign Agents' law, and frequent detention and criminal proceedings against opposition leaders. With the first of these measures, the

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[38]What Davenport (2015: 26–28) terms 'problem depletion,' or might also be called a 'discursive opportunity' (Koopmans and Statham 1998).

[39]See Ayanian and Tausch (2016).

new law on protests[40] that President Putin signed into law on 8 June 2012, penalties for participation in unlawful protests were increased 150-fold (Amos 2012): minimum fines exceed the average *annual* salary in Russia. Succeeding years witnessed a fivefold increase in the number of fines imposed (Beilinson, Borovikova, and Smirnova 2019). The new penalties on protest represent *overt channelling by state agents closely connected to national political elites*; it was the federal government attempting to discourage a kind of protest participation ('unlawful protests,' i.e., protest that had not been given governmental authorisation) in a very visible manner. Unsurprisingly for a traditional conception of repression,[41] protest activity markedly declined in 2012, and has since largely remained below the levels of preceding years (see Appendix I, Figure 1).

In the next month, July 2012, the government introduced the 'Foreign Agents' law.[42] It instituted registration and reporting requirements on organisations that receive funding or other material support from outside the country, and required them to label informational materials as coming from 'foreign agents,' a term heavily laden with negative connotation in the post-Soviet context. In a similar vein, the government expelled the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in September 2012. USAID had supported organisations and networks that produced colour revolutions in neighbouring states. The decision to expel it was explicitly justified in terms of preventing meddling by foreign agents in Russian politics (Elder 2012b). These measures, too, were an instance of *overt channelling by state agents closely connected to national political elites*; the federal government compelling many organisations involved in FFE to divert resources from activism to comply with new legal requirements, as well as to undermine their legitimacy, and banishing a common source of funding for many. (Golos, for example, received many grants from USAID.) In this specific case, it was an attempt to constrain the sort of oppositional networks that had led colour revolution movements in neighbouring states.

The final instance of 'overt channelling' social control—this time by state agents *distantly* connected to national political elites—manifest in the persistent legal harassment of opposition figures. To start, Alexei Navalny, Sergei Udaltsov, and Boris Nemtsov, three luminaries of the FFE and wider opposition, along with

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[40] Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code (Violation of the established procedure for organizing or holding a meeting, rally, demonstration, procession or picketing). (Статья 20.2 КоАП [Нарушениеустановленногопорядкаорганизациилибопроведениясобрания, митинга, демонстрации, шествияилипикетирования].)

[41] Again, such a conception would hold that raising the costs of participation (literally, in this case) is enough to deter many or most would-be participants (Tarrow 2011).

[42] 121-FZ: Federal Law on Introducing Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Regarding the Regulation of Activities of Non-Commercial Organizations Performing the Function of Foreign Agents. (N 121- ФЗ: О внесенииизменений в отдельныезаконодательныеактыРоссийскойФедерации в частирегулированиядеятельностинекоммерческихорганизаций, выполняющихфункциииностранногоагента.)

hundreds of others, were arrested for their activities at the protest on Bolotnaya Square the day before the presidential inauguration. Subsequent to their 15-day detention, these leaders had their homes searched and were summoned to a police inquisition (Amos 2012). Later in the year Udaltsov was arrested again and then placed under house arrest with limited means of communicating with anyone besides his relatives and lawyers (BBC 2013). Navalny (and his brother) was tried for embezzlement (Elder 2012a); conviction on these charges would eventually justify invalidating his presidential candidacy in 2018. These and other legal attacks on the opposition severely limited the scope for activism by the FFE: depriving it of its most charismatic figures and their resources, tarring it with the appearance of petty law-breaking.

In conjunction with the other pressures brought to bear against it, including internal pressures, FFE stagnated. Turnout for demonstrations dropped. Its organisational structure became less active; an attempt to formalise the FFE organisation, replacing the Organisation Committee with the openly-elected Opposition Coordination Council (OCC), proved unsuccessful as the OCC dissolved in late 2013. By that time FFE was wholly demobilised.

What is illuminating about this case? Primarily, it exhibits the complex causation that the preceding theorisation of demobilisation emphasises. Davenport's (2015: 39) conception would omit the concurrence of multiple demobilising pressures, instead maintaining the simplistic model of paired demobilising factors. Similarly, while the role of the state was pivotal in effecting FFE's demobilisation, theories that omit private agents would miss much in cases like that of FFE: pro-Kremlin youth groups like Nashi and Young Guard regularly held parallel protests or menaced FFE participants; pro-regime news sources like NTV badgered opposition leaders and routinely portrayed FFE as orchestrated by U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul. Non-state agents were important sources of demobilising pressure, distracting attention from and undermining the legitimacy of FFE—but these sources of pressure would be missed under Davenport's framework.

During its period of peak mobilisation, FFE was to some degree beset by coercion from low-level state and private agents, as well as internal factionalisation issues. Nevertheless, it appeared largely unaffected, or at least not prohibitively hindered, by these pressures. Only when overt channelling by high-level state agents began, and pressure from low-level state agents persisted, did the movement begin its downward slide: factionalisation among leaders followed by lost commitment[43] among members, evinced by decreasing protest participation. Thus, overt channelling by high-level state agents comprised the pivotal causal condition in FFE's demobilisation process. Yet this effect occurred in conjunction with other causal factors, including social control from private agents. The revision of Davenport's conception of demobilisation accounts for these non-state sources of demobilising pressure.

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[43] Again, driven by increased risks combined with a decreased sense of political efficacy for engaging in protest action.

Despite its failure to bring about new elections and institute fairer democratic procedures, the experience of FFE shows that such cases of 'negative demobilisation' can still mobilise and train new cohorts of activists, establish social linkages that support future activism, and impart operational lessons. After demobilisation numerous FFE participants were elected to local government institutions. Anti-corruption protests in 2017-2018 drew on the networks of connection developed during FFE's mobilisation. And recent protests against the refusal to register independent (read: not regime loyalist) candidates for regional elections display the endurance of affective dimensions of FFE.

Organisational demobilisation is only one part of contentious cycles. Demobilisation may signal a start, as well as mark an end. Events (and their agents) that fail to transform nevertheless produce effects: on participants, on the area of activism, and on the wider environment. Yet the conceptual framework detailed in this article and the For Fair Elections case direct attention to the part of social movement activity that has received the least attention. Much about demobilisation remains unstudied and under-theorised.

Next steps in the study of demobilisation

Tracing the demobilisation of a movement or SMO or campaign, even just identifying their final, definitive ends, presents several challenges. In part, this is because the boundaries of these units are fuzzy: demobilisation can be a lengthy process and often ends in whispers, rather than a clearly identifiable bang.

Several aspects of demobilisation remain un- or under-examined. The theorisation and analysis presented in this article is directed at the organisational- or meso-level. It is configured around SMOs and dimensions of their operation; hence, the first element of Davenport's definition of demobilisation, which concerns alteration to the 'institution' of a SMO. Nevertheless, inquiry might also be directed toward broader or narrower elements. In broader terms, some scholarship examines the demobilisation of whole movements (typically composed of several SMOs). Orcutt and Fendrich (1980) gathered survey data about activists perception regarding the decline of the student protest movement in the United States during the 1970s. Franklin (2014) examined the demobilisation of several U.S. movements (civil rights, black power, New Left) that resulted from the demobilisation of several SMOs that constituted them. And Heaney and Rojas (2011) specified the factors that undermined the coalition of the anti-war movement in the U.S. in the late 2000s. Such studies speak to macro-level sociological phenomena and movement dynamics.

Nearer to the opposite level of analysis one encounters the thorny issue of 'campaigns.' The term refers to the activism work of SMOs: their deliberate and

continuous application of tactics to further their objectives.[44] Campaigns might take the form of legal challenges mounted by an SMO, or of a series of demonstrations, or of strikes and boycotts, or of myriad other actions.[45] The end of a SMO's campaign is coterminous with a determination of the future of the SMO, wherein one of three outcomes is possible: (1) the campaign ends but the SMO endures, remaining active with other campaigns or activities; (2) the campaign ends and the SMO goes into 'abeyance' (Sawyers and Meyer 1999; Taylor 1989), that is, stops actively campaigning, but retains at least some of its organisational infrastructure; or (3) the campaign ends coincident with the demobilisation of the SMO. In other words, campaigns are often the stuff of life and death for SMOs: propelling them forward or signifying their end.

Future research can clarify the distinction between contention-based (i.e., movements challenging the state) cases of demobilisation from those resulting from social movement dynamics (e.g., movement-countermovement interaction). Examination of demobilisation can add to the burgeoning literature on social movement coalitions and their campaigns. Most importantly, theorisation of demobilisation will benefit from cross-case study. For demobilisation research, like other areas of social movement studies, must guard against the inclination to particularise, to rely on single case studies and to ignore or obscure the generalizable elements of demobilisation.

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[44] Cf. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011, 51).

[45] Sharp (1973) made an initial attempt (since revised and expanded) to list all methods of non-violent protest action, resulting in a catalogue of 198 actions.

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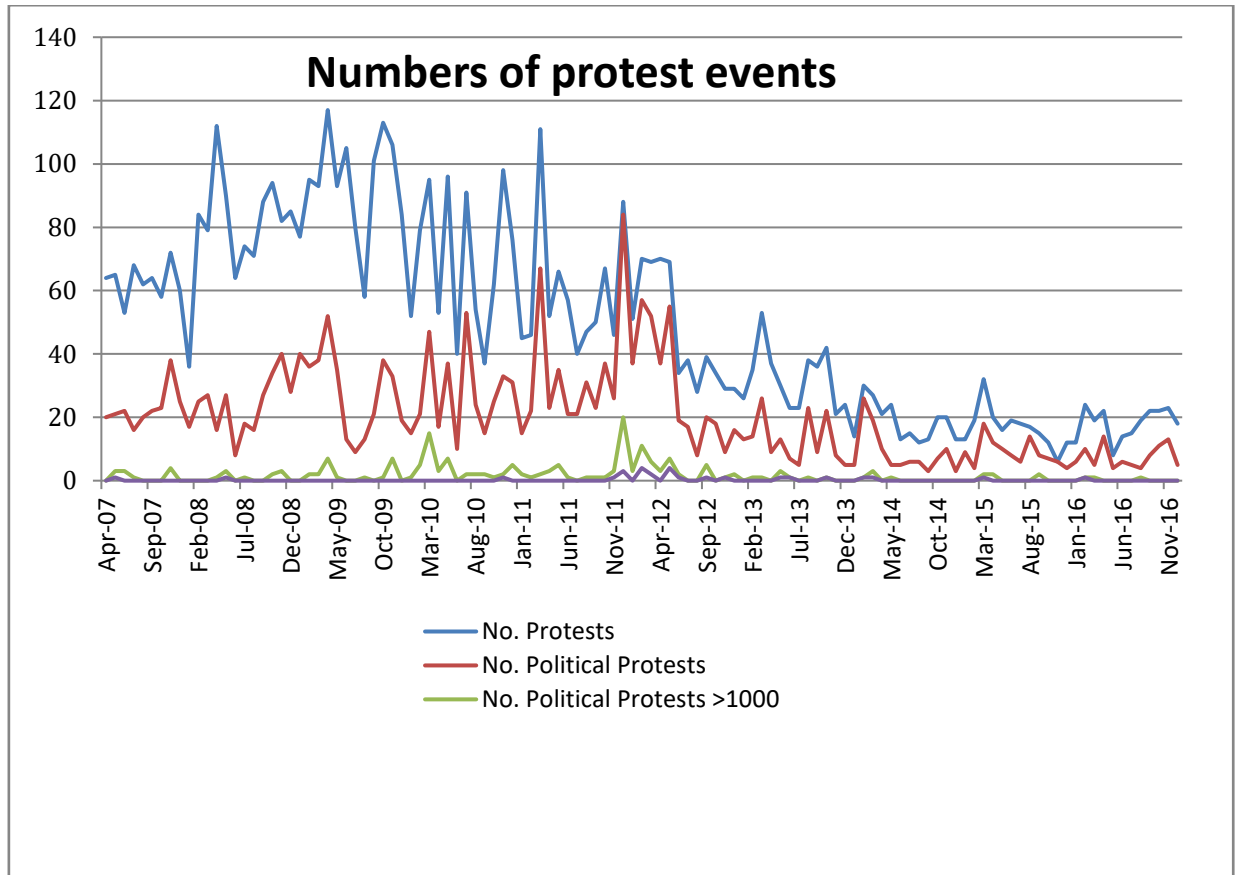
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Appendix I: Protest in Russia from Lankina dataset[46]

Figure 1.

Numbers of protest events

Legend:
— No. Protests
— No. Political Protests
— No. Political Protests >1000

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[46] The Russian Protest Event Dataset compiled by TomilaLankina(2018) relies on news reports from 'namarsh.ru,' a non-government information source that collects information regarding protest activity throughout Russia.

Graph 2.

Number of political protesters
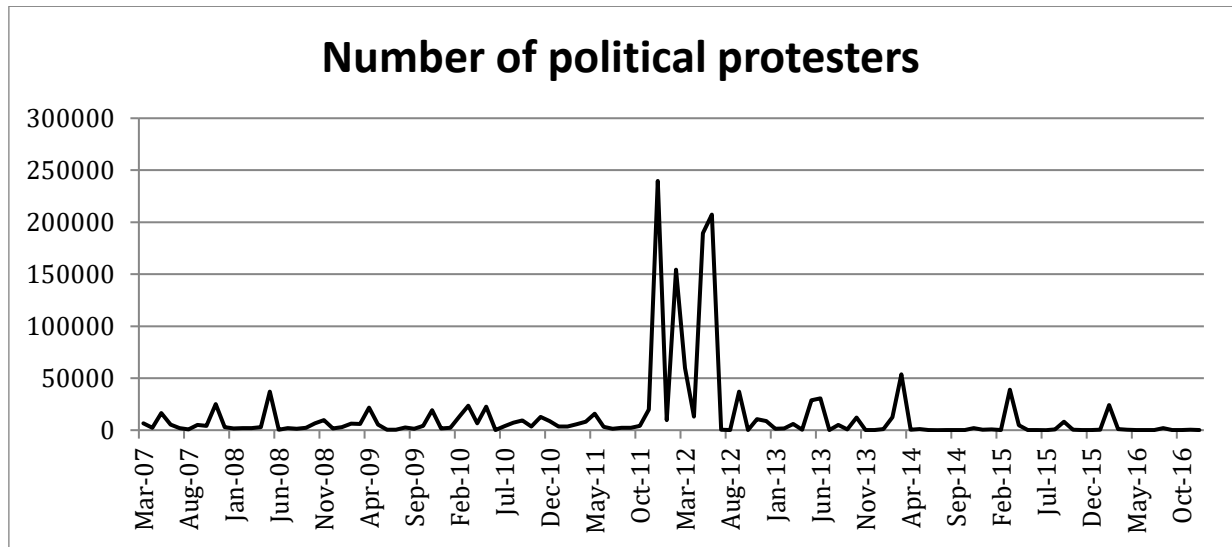
About the author

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