Electoral Issues of Russia
Putin’s Rise To Power

• Started off as a KGB agent turned FSB head
• Appointed Prime Minister by Boris Yeltsin in 1999
  • With understanding that when Yeltsin stepped down Putin would take over
    • Yeltsin wanted to avoid jail so made sure favorable successor was in his place
    • Dimitry Medvedev highly influential in Putin’s government from the beginning
Power Switching – 2008 Presidential Election

• Constitutional two consecutive term limit restricted Putin from seeking a third term
  • Dimitry Medvedev ran in his place, with the promise to retain Putin as Prime Minister

• In polls few Russians believed Medvedev actually held more power than Putin
  • Most believed they shared power
Power Switching – The 2012 Presidential Election

• Presiding President Dimitri Medvedev agreed to step out of presidential race and allow Putin to run instead
  • Putin in return promised to make Medvedev the Prime Minister

• Led to large amounts of protest within Russia, and from outsiders who favored more liberal Medvedev
  • Putin won controversial election and has maintain authoritarian like control
The Removal of Political Opponents

• Opponents of Putin’s policies have been brutally murdered or imprisoned
  • Whistle-blowers also targeted
  • Many high level officials who speak out against him die under suspicious circumstances shortly after

• Opponents in elections sometimes charged with crime to remove them
  • Ex. Alexi Navalny who wants to oppose Putin in 2018
Putin’s Current Popularity

• Vladimir Putin retains high popularity in Russia
  • Never been below a 60% approval rating since 1999
  • Russian actions in Syria, Crimea, and showing strength has bolstered his numbers

• Little opportunity for opposition
  • Media not allowed to report unfavorably of government
    • Scored 83/100 on press freedom
      • (100 is the Worst, US got a 21)
    • Examples of journalists being imprisoned or murdered
Growing Opposition

• Growing amount of support for opposition to Putin
  • Percent of votes for Putin slowly dropping
  • Criticism for dropping relations with west

• Protest to government policies being organized
  • Protest organizers sometime arrested and jailed