

Anti-Corruption Campaigns by the Opposition in an Autocracy: How Alexei Navalny's Investigations Affected the Subsequent Career Paths of Investigated Russian Elites

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November 24, 2024

Abstract

How do anti-corruption investigations by the political opposition affect the subsequent career prospects of pro-regime elites? Theoretically, the effect of an investigation could go either way: the investigated officials might experience a dent in their careers relative to their peers or be arrested, as the regime sees them as a risk to its legitimacy. Alternatively, an investigation by the political opposition might serve as a signal of loyalty to the autocrat, and result in a boost to the investigated official's career. To test this question, I coded all 101 investigative videos that the Anti-Corruption Foundation of Russian activist and opposition politician Alexei Navalny published between 2015 and 2020, identifying 241 investigated individuals. The subsequent career paths of investigated individuals will be compared to the career paths of officials in a synthetic control group holding similar positions in the Russian government at the point an investigation was initially published by Navalny. The study will permit to test if the investigations had a positive or negative effect on the subsequent career paths of investigated pro-Putin elites, relative to their peers who were not investigated by Navalny.

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