

Roots of Courage: Persistence of Past Repression and Anti-War Dissent*

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Abstract

Many autocratic regimes have a history of mass repression. We ask whether their political legacies backfire when an autocrat starts a war of aggression. We study Russia's 2022–2025 invasion of Ukraine and exploit spatial variation in exposure to one of the twentieth century's largest systems of repression: the Soviet Gulag. Combining the historical geography of 474 Gulag administrative centers with granular modern data on (i) anti-war detentions and (ii) 23 waves of geo-located public opinion surveys, we document systematically stronger anti-war dissent in municipalities closer to former camps. These municipalities experience more anti-war detentions, and their residents are more likely to express explicit opposition to the war in surveys. All effects are concentrated among younger cohorts, who never experienced Soviet repression directly but learned about Stalinist crimes in their formative years. To probe this memory channel, we use novel data on online searches and show that people living in the immediate vicinity of Gulag sites more often search for terms associated with Stalinist repression around 30 October, the official Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Political Repression. This pattern indicates sustained interest in the dark side of Soviet history in locations where the physical traces of the camps remain visible, partially via memorials. Our findings contribute to the literature on the persistence of political violence by showing that historical mass repression can constrain an autocrat's ability to generate a wartime "rally-around-the-flag" effect and that public commemoration of past injustices is associated with greater resistance to contemporary unlawful military interventions.

Keywords: Gulag, Soviet repression, Russia-Ukraine war, protest, anti-war dissent, information channel

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Courage is found in unlikely places
J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory
against forgetting
Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

1 Introduction

Authoritarian wars of aggression may trigger a massive surge in the political support for incumbents—the so-called “rally-around-the-flag” effect, which is so beneficial for the incumbents that it is hypothesized to be the central purpose of these wars for effectively diverting the societal grievances regarding economic slowdowns or other sources of political distress (Tir 2010; Jung 2022). Yet there is often a brave minority who opposes the military aggression launched by their rulers, potentially on the grounds of its lawlessness, injustice, and cruelty. Until now, while most of the literature has focused on the “rally-around-the-flag” effect, anti-war dissent in non-democratic settings has been rarely studied despite possible strong repercussions for the stability of the regime.¹ We attempt to address this gap in the literature by utilizing the unique case study of Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, which sparked widespread protests within Russia itself despite a major “rally-around-the-flag” trend (Gomza 2022; Kizilova and Norris 2024; Polianskii 2024).

Existing theories of authoritarian politics offer important insights into propaganda, repression, and strategic signaling, but they provide limited guidance on why communities under similar institutional constraints respond so differently during wartime. A complementary perspective arises from historical political economy, which shows that citizens’ interpretations of contemporary state actions are deeply conditioned by earlier experiences with the state. Episodes of mass violence, forced labor, and political persecution leave long-lasting imprints on political trust, civic engagement, and beliefs about state legitimacy (Blattman 2009;

¹For example, the Soviet war in Afghanistan was often seen as a major factor contributing to the collapse of the USSR (Borer 1994; Reuveny and Prakash 1999).

Rozenas et al. 2017; Rozenas and Zhukov 2019). These effects persist through intergenerational channels, transmitted via family narratives, local socialization, and community-level memory (Acharya et al. 2024; Giuliano and Nunn 2021). Such legacies do not always operate continuously: recent work by Ochsner and Roesel (2024) demonstrates that they may remain dormant for extended periods and become politically salient only when activated by specific contemporary shocks. Wartime repression, mass mobilization, and the reassertion of state force provide exactly the kind of context in which historical memories are likely to be reactivated.

Building on this insight, we argue that the societal foundations of wartime dissent in autocracies partly depend on local historical exposure to state violence. When an authoritarian regime initiates a war and suppresses opposition, citizens evaluate these actions through the prism of their community’s historical relationship with the state. In places where the memory of the repression is alive, contemporary actions of autocratic regime are more likely to be interpreted as unjust or illegitimate. As a result, those places may exhibit greater opposition toward wartime narratives and a higher propensity for dissent.

To examine this mechanism, we study Russia’s 2022–2025 invasion of Ukraine, which sparked widespread protests within Russia itself alongside a major “rally-around-the-flag” trend (Gomza 2022; Kizilova and Norris 2024; Polianskii 2024). Russia provides an empirical setting with unusually rich data and substantial historical variation in exposure to one of the twentieth century’s largest systems of mass repression: the Soviet Gulag. Between 1919 and 1953, approximately 14 million people passed through this network of forced labor camps (Viola 2007). Existing research shows that historical exposure to the Gulag shaped long-run mistrust of institutions (Nikolova et al. 2022), altered political preferences (Rozenas et al. 2017; Zhukov and Talibova 2018), and affected local human capital formation (Toews and Vézina 2025). These findings suggest that the legacy of state terror remains embedded in local collective memory and may structure political responses to new episodes of coercion.

We assemble a new dataset linking the historical geography of 474 Gulag administrative centers (414 in present-day Russia) to detailed measures of wartime dissent during 2022–2025. These measures include (i) geo-located records of more than 19,500 anti-war detentions from OVD-Info, distinguishing early anti-invasion protests from later anti-mobilization actions; (ii) 23 waves of geo-located, nationally representative public opinion surveys; and (iii)

municipality-level online search data capturing attention to political repression from 2018 to 2025. Exploiting variation in municipal proximity to Gulag sites and incorporating rich covariates and region fixed effects, we estimate the relationship between historical repression and contemporary wartime dissent.

Three main findings emerge. First, municipalities located closer to historical Gulag sites exhibit substantially higher levels of wartime protest activity. Proximity to a former Gulag is strongly associated with more anti-war and anti-mobilization detentions, even after conditioning on demographic, geographic, and pre-war protest characteristics. Second, individuals living near Gulag sites consistently express stronger anti-war sentiments in surveys. These differences remain robust across survey waves and specifications and are most pronounced among younger cohorts, consistent with the notion of intergenerational transmission of historical memory rather than direct personal experience. Third, these communities display greater demand for information related to state violence, as reflected in significantly higher online search intensity for terms associated with political repression, and rely more heavily on uncensored information channels. This pattern aligns with a mechanism in which historical memories influence not only attitudes but also information-seeking behavior under wartime conditions.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that historical episodes of mass repression continue to shape political behavior not only in routine peacetime settings but also during major wartime crises. Communities exposed to past state violence respond differently when confronted with new coercive demands: they are more likely to resist, to question official narratives, and to seek independent information.

Our study makes three contributions to the literature. First, it advances the political economy of authoritarian governance by showing that wartime mobilization depends on historically rooted variation in state–society relations, not solely on current propaganda or repression (Guriev and Treisman 2019). Second, it adds to the literature on the persistence of mass repression by demonstrating that its consequences extend to wartime dissent and information demand, complementing existing evidence on trust, turnout, and long-run political attitudes (Blattman 2009; Rozenas et al. 2017; Giuliano and Nunn 2021; Henn and Huff 2024; Tur-Prats and Valencia Caicedo 2025). Third, it provides rare micro-level evidence on public opinion and protest under conditions of censorship and fear (Tkachenko and Vyrskaiia

2025; Fomichev and Zabolotskiy 2024).

More broadly, our results show that autocracies entering international conflicts are confronted not only with external military pressures but also with historically conditioned societal reactions rooted in earlier episodes of state violence. Understanding these legacies is essential for assessing the resilience and vulnerability of authoritarian regimes under wartime stress.

2 Literature review

A large and growing literature in economics and political science demonstrates that episodes of historical repression generate enduring political legacies. This research, rooted in the historical political economy tradition, shows that mass violence, forced displacement, and authoritarian coercion leave imprints on political behavior, trust, and mobilization that persist for decades. Across diverse contexts, repression alters beliefs about the state, reshapes local political opportunity structures, and is transmitted intergenerationally through families, institutions, and collective memory.

A first strand examines the long-run effects of repression on political participation and voting. In the post-Soviet region, Zhukov and Talibova (2018) document that areas more exposed to Stalinist terror exhibit persistently lower voter turnout in post-Soviet elections, consistent with long-run demobilization and mistrust. In related work, Rozenas et al. (2017) show that communities in Ukraine targeted by Soviet deportations later display distinct voting patterns and weaker support for pro-Russian parties, reflecting intergenerational learning about the perpetrator state. Rozenas and Zhukov (2019) highlight the conditional nature of these effects: repression-exposed communities behave more loyally when contemporary coercive capacity is high, but become more oppositional once the threat environment changes. Evidence from other regions aligns with these findings. Bühler and Madestam (2024) document that the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia produced a dual legacy: greater long-run support for political pluralism (“voice”) alongside deeper withdrawal from civic life (“exit”). Their results show how repression simultaneously elevates the perceived cost of dissent and increases preferences for constraining authoritarian power. For Germany, Peisakhin and Queralt (2024) study selective repression of Catholic priests in Nazi-era Bavaria and find that municipalities where clergy were repressed exhibit higher and persistently stronger post-war

support for Christian Democrats, and trace this effect to a communal backlash in defense of threatened religious identity.

A second strand focuses on the consequences of repression for trust and beliefs. [Nikolova et al. \(2022\)](#) show that contemporary differences in social and institutional trust across the former Soviet Union can be traced to the geography of forced labor under Stalin, with individuals from historically repressed areas reporting significantly lower trust. Recent contributions broaden this perspective beyond the former Soviet region: [Cannella et al. \(2024\)](#) exploit a spatial discontinuity in Nazi annexation in Italy and show that even temporary foreign repression has durable consequences: formerly annexed areas today display systematically higher support for radical opposition, lower trust in political institutions, and more skepticism about state capacity. [Osorio et al. \(2018\)](#) examine the Mexican case and show that historical exposure to state repression lowers political trust, while at the same time being associated with higher fiscal, territorial, and bureaucratic state capacity.

Across contexts, research identifies several channels through which repression legacies endure. First, family socialization and intergenerational transmission play a critical role: children and grandchildren of victims inherit narratives, identities, and attitudes that influence political behavior ([Lupu and Peisakhin 2017](#); [Gharibyan 2024](#)). Second, collective memory and local commemorative practices reinforce these narratives, especially where memory entrepreneurs—activists, educators, cultural institutions—preserve accounts of state violence ([Cremaschi and Masullo 2024](#)). Third, institutional persistence matters: when successor regimes inherit or maintain repressive apparatuses, victimized communities may behave strategically, either withdrawing from politics or expressing loyalty to avoid renewed punishment ([Rozenas and Zhukov 2019](#); [Wang 2024](#)). Fourth, repression erodes social and institutional trust, reducing civic engagement and reshaping beliefs about the state’s legitimacy ([Nikolova et al. 2022](#); [Tur-Prats and Valencia Caicedo 2025](#)). Finally, repression may create culturally transmitted repertoires of contention, in which communities develop local norms of resistance or withdrawal that persist across generations ([Henn and Huff 2024](#); [Surdea-Hernea and Plopeanu 2024](#)).

Within this broader literature, several studies focus specifically on the long-run effects of the Gulag and Stalinist repression. [Kapelko and Markevich \(2014\)](#) find that proximity to Gulag camps predicts stronger anti-communist voting in the immediate post-Soviet period.

Nikolova et al. (2022) show that localities closer to former camps display significantly lower levels of generalized trust. Other studies examine famine and deportations in adjacent Soviet contexts, again showing long-lasting effects on political attitudes toward the state and toward Russia. Together, this work establishes the Gulag as a major source of persistent variation in political and social outcomes across the post-Soviet space.

Despite substantial progress, the existing literature focuses primarily on political behavior in peacetime or routine electoral settings rather than on political responses under the extraordinary conditions of an ongoing war initiated by an autocracy. While repression is known to depress political engagement in ordinary contexts, little is known about how it shapes *anti-war dissent* when the state demands heightened loyalty. Our study addresses this gap by examining how the historical geography of the Soviet Gulag shapes variation in anti-war dissent in Russia during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

3 Background and Context

3.1 Short History of Gulags

The Soviet Gulag (from *Glavnoe upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei*, Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps) was a vast system of forced labor camps, penal colonies, and “special settlements” that operated from the early years of Bolshevik rule until the late 1950s.² Emerging out of ad hoc revolutionary prisons and concentration camps after 1917, the Gulag was institutionalized as a centralized network of camps in the 1920s and expanded rapidly under Stalin during collectivization and the first Five-Year Plans. By the late 1930s and early 1950s, it had become a core instrument of Soviet rule, combining political terror with a system of coerced labor that underpinned ambitious projects of industrialization and colonization of remote territories (Viola 2007; Wheatcroft 2013).

In terms of scale, the Gulag was unprecedented in twentieth-century Europe. Archival estimates suggest that between 1929 and Stalin’s death in 1953, more than 11 million prisoners passed through the camp system, with the cumulative number of camp and colony inmates over the entire Soviet period reaching roughly 14 million (Harris 2013; Khlevniuk 2004). At its peak, the Gulag held more than two million prisoners at any given time. Conditions were

²The acronym Gulag came into use in the early 1930s and also indicated a special division of the secret police and the Soviet Ministry of the Interior overseeing the use of the physical labor of prisoners.

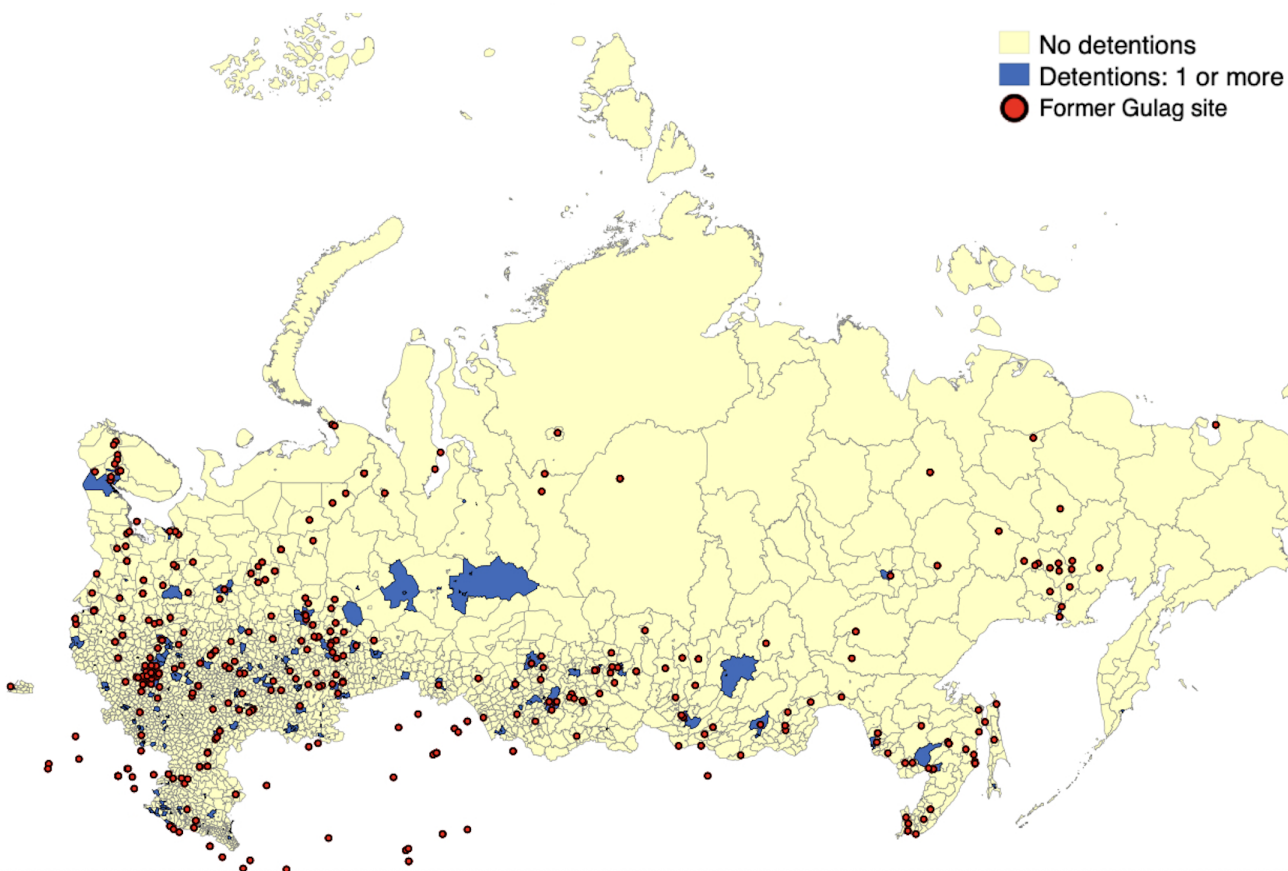
brutal even by the standards of the period: overcrowded barracks, inadequate food rations, arbitrary punishment, and very high mortality, especially during the famine years and the Second World War.

The Gulag was not only an economic institution but also a political one. Its growth was intimately tied to the logic of Stalinist dictatorship. Periodic waves of mass arrests during collectivization and the Great Terror, and of returning prisoners of war and political dissidents after 1945, fed the camps with those labeled “enemies of the people”. Repression targeted both actual and imagined opponents: party members, intellectuals, religious leaders, and ordinary peasants and workers swept up by quota-driven policing. The Gulag thus served as an instrument of preventive terror and social engineering, aimed at eliminating perceived threats and disciplining the population.

Geographically, the Gulag formed a dispersed archipelago of camp complexes across the Soviet Union. A map in Figure 1 based on [Lonsky \(2025\)](#) data illustrates their distribution in the borders of post-Soviet Russia. Many large camp complexes were deliberately located in resource-rich and climatically harsh regions of the Far North, Siberia, the Urals, and the Far East, where coerced labor could be used for mining, logging, and large infrastructure projects ([Toews and Vézina 2025](#)). However, Gulag facilities were by no means confined to remote peripheries. Smaller camps, transit prisons, and associated “special settlements” existed throughout the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, including in relatively densely populated and industrialized areas close to major cities and transport hubs ([Mikhailova 2012](#)). As a result, the physical presence of the Gulag was not a distant or exotic phenomenon: buildings, camp perimeters, and associated infrastructure could be found in many ordinary towns and districts across Russia, making exposure to the institution, directly or indirectly, a widespread feature of Soviet life.³

³[Kapelko and Markevich \(2014\)](#) assume the locations of Gulags to be exogenous.

Figure 1: Map of Gulag Camp Locations



Note: Blue areas are municipalities with at least one anti-war detention reported to OVD-Info, yellow areas are municipalities without detentions. The red dots are the locations of Gulag camps' administrative centers, taken from <https://gulag.online/>.

After Stalin's death in 1953, the Gulag system was gradually dismantled. Amnesties and revisions of sentences reduced the camp population sharply. Many facilities were closed, while some were reclassified as ordinary prisons or labor colonies. Nevertheless, former camp sites continue to affect local communities in at least two ways central to our analysis. First, a substantial number of former prisoners settled near the places of their incarceration, either because they were formally banned from returning to their home regions or because they lacked the means to move. This contributed to a distinctive local social composition and to the intergenerational transmission of experiences of repression (Toews and Vézina 2025; Lonsky 2025). Second, despite periods of official silence and historical revisionism, many communities developed and preserved local commemorative practices, including memorial plaques, informal cemeteries, stories within families and social networks, that kept memories

of the Gulag alive even when public discussion was constrained.

Beyond these local practices, post-Soviet Russia has also institutionalized a nationwide calendar of remembrance for victims of Soviet terror. In 1991, just before the collapse of the USSR, the Supreme Soviet Court of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic established 30 October as the official Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repressions, marked annually across the country by ceremonies at memorial sites, readings of victims' names, and events that often involve local officials, clergy, civil-society organizations, and schoolchildren.⁴ The day has been incorporated into school curricula and local educational activities, giving newer generations a structured occasion to learn about Stalinist crimes and the scale of the Gulag system. Remarkably, on October 30 of 2009, then-president Dmitry Medvedev dedicated his address to proclaim the Stalinist repressions as a "crime" and a "shameful legacy" for Russia, explicitly rejecting attempts to justify them as a necessary stage of modernization. Taken together, these formal commemorative institutions and educational practices help explain why the Gulag's political legacy is particularly pronounced among younger cohorts in our data: those who went to school after the collapse of the USSR were exposed to a more explicit and critical narrative of repression. In our empirical analysis, we find that the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repressions triggers a pronounced spike in online searches for terms related to political repression, but only in locations in close proximity to former Gulag sites, indicating a particularly vivid interest in the dark Soviet past in communities situated near these historical sites.

3.2 Russian Invasion

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Kremlin publicly described the operation as a limited "special military operation", but in practice it entailed a multi-front attack on a neighboring state with the declared aim of regime change in Kyiv. The invasion came after weeks of official denials and culminated in a sudden escalation that surprised much of the Russian public. Independent polling and qualitative accounts indicate that many citizens experienced the start of the war as a shock, especially in regions with family and economic ties to Ukraine, and among those for whom the scale of the violence clashed with prior expectations shaped by official propaganda.

⁴See, for example, [Zhuravskaya et al. \(2024\)](#) for a discussion of post-Soviet memory politics.

Despite years of tightened control over opposition and public assembly, the first days and weeks of the invasion were marked by large anti-war protests across Russia. Demonstrations took place in dozens of cities, including Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, and regional centers throughout the country. Human rights monitors report that thousands of people were detained in the first weeks alone, with more than 14 000 detentions recorded between 24 February and mid-March 2022, and over 18 900 detentions at anti-war rallies over the course of 2022.⁵ By early 2025, the cumulative number of detentions for anti-war views exceeded 20 000 ([OVD-Info 2025](#)). These events are reflected in our protest data, which capture both the initial wave of anti-invasion demonstrations and later protests against the September 2022 “partial mobilisation” and subsequent conscription campaigns.

The authorities responded to this dissent with a rapid and comprehensive expansion of the legal and coercive toolkit. New administrative and criminal provisions were introduced against “discrediting the armed forces” and spreading “fake news” about the military, carrying heavy fines and multi-year prison sentences. Independent media outlets were blocked or forced to close; references to the war were censored, with only the official term “special military operation” permitted in public discourse.⁶ Law enforcement agencies received wide discretion to disperse unsanctioned gatherings, monitor online speech, and initiate criminal cases against critics. International observers and UN special rapporteurs document a sharp rise in politically motivated prosecutions, long prison terms for opposition figures, and routine use of intimidation and ill-treatment against those speaking out against the war.

In this environment, any public expression of disagreement with the invasion or mobilization became a high-risk activity. Street protests, individual pickets, critical posts on social media, and artistic or religious statements could all trigger detention or prosecution. At the same time, significant segments of the population continued to oppose the war or question official narratives, as evidenced by independent survey data, petitions, and the persistence of smaller-scale protests even after the initial mass mobilizations were suppressed. Our empirical analysis exploits this variation in anti-war behavior to study how communities with different historical exposure to Gulag repression respond when the contemporary state once

⁵See OVD-Info, “Persecution of the anti-war movement: Three years of invasion” and related monitoring reports.

⁶See, for example, Human Rights Watch (2022) and OVD-Info submissions to the UN Human Rights Council.

again embarks on a coercive military venture and intensifies domestic repression.

4 Data

The paper uses several data sources. First, we have collected information about all former Gulag camps along with their geocoordinates. Then, we merged this data with other datasets on modern Russia: (i) protest activity, (ii) public opinion surveys, (iii) online search behavior. To merge the datasets, we first used Google API to add geocoordinates to all units of observation (municipality-level and respondent-level) and calculated its distance from every Gulag camp in our dataset, thereby finding the closest Gulag camp for every observation. In the following parts, we describe each data source in detail.

4.1 Location of Gulags

Following [Lonsky \(2025\)](#), we have collected the location of administration of Gulags, including their coordinates, from <https://gulag.online/>. Out of 474 Gulag, 414 are located in the present day in Russia (see Figure 1).

4.2 Protest activity in Russia

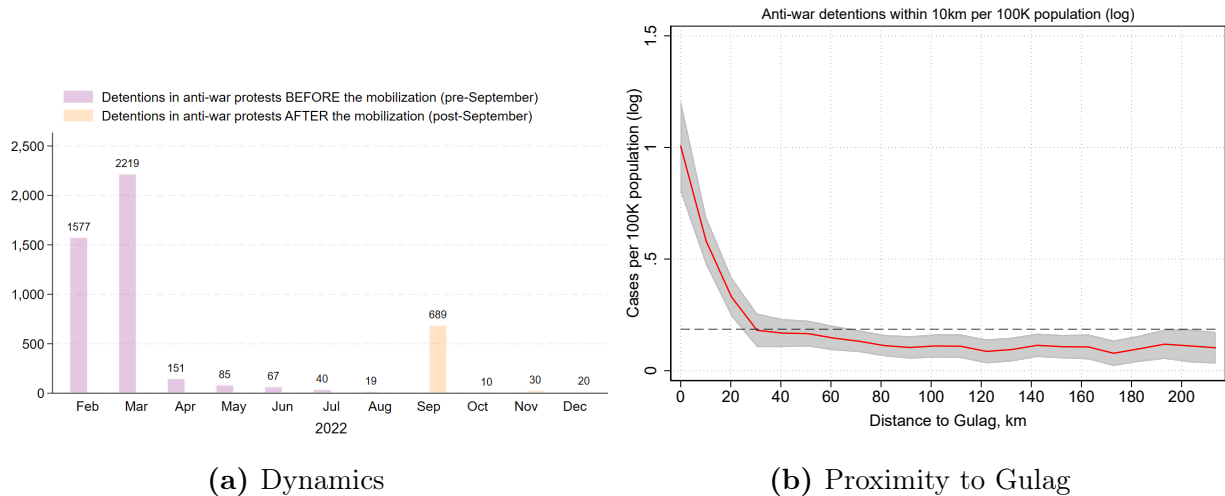
We use two measures of protest activity at the regional level. The first measure is based on the list of 19,500 people detained for anti-war protests compiled by OVD-Info.⁷ Figure A1 in the Online Appendix A shows the regional distribution of detentions per 100,000 regional population. Following ([Enikolopov et al. 2020](#)), we excluded Moscow and Saint Petersburg from the analysis because these municipalities are too large and their protest activity differs substantially from the rest of the country.⁸ The left graph of Figure 2 shows that the majority of detentions occurred immediately after the full-scale invasion in February and March 2022, and again after the announcement of military mobilization in September 2022. Detainees before September 2022 had a clear anti-war stance, so we call them “*anti-war detentions*”. However, most of the detainees after September 2022 were protesting against the mobilization and may not have expressed an anti-war position per se, so we call them “*anti-mobilization detentions*”. In the right graph of Figure 2, we show nonparametric estimation of the logarithm of anti-war detentions (normalized per 100,000 of municipal population)

⁷Persecution for anti-war views. OVD-Info, July 2025.

⁸From the rest of the analysis, we also exclude Crimea.

before September 2022, as a function of proximity to the closest Gulag. There is a clear geographical pattern showing higher protest activity in the immediate proximity of Gulags.

Figure 2: Anti-war Detentions in 2022



Note. Panel A shows the dynamics of anti-war detentions reported to OVD-Info. Panel B shows a nonparametric estimate of the logarithm of detentions, normalized to 100,000 municipal population (+1), by distance to the closest Gulag camp, with 95% confidence intervals. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded from both graphs.

The second measure is the *pre-war protest potential* measured as the number of people registered on the Free Navalny website⁹ to obtain information about the protests against Navalny's imprisonment, including their schedule and venues, in April 2021. The number of registered individuals totaled 431 thousand, and the website displayed the numbers for each venue.¹⁰ Figure A3 in the Online Appendix A shows a similar pattern related to the distance to Gulags, i.e., there is a notable spike of registrations and detentions in protests (per 100,000 municipal population) in April 2021 in municipalities in the immediate proximity of Gulags.

4.3 Wartime Public Opinion

As a second data source we use 23 waves of public opinion surveys related to the war in Ukraine, conducted from February 2022 to February 2025 by two state-independent projects: 13 waves by Chronicles, 10 waves by Extreme Scan. The reliability of this data was previously verified by Tkachenko and Vyrskaia (2025). All surveys are conducted by dial-

⁹<https://free.navalny.com>

¹⁰Figure A2 in the Online Appendix A shows the regional distribution of the registrations

ing randomly generated mobile phone numbers (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews), sampling 1000–1700 respondents per wave. In all waves, respondents were asked about their municipality of residence. To align the data with the protest participation, we excluded respondents residing in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea, leaving us with 23,824 responses.

In all surveys waves the main question we use is about attitude to the war in Ukraine: “Tell me, please, do you support or do not support the military operation of Russia on the territory of Ukraine, find it difficult to answer, or do not want to answer this question?”.¹¹ Panel A of Figure 3 shows the dynamics for the question by months for February 2022 - February 2025. There is a decreasing trend in war support, starting at a point significantly above 50% and reaching around 50% by 2025. Notably, the explicit anti-war dissent is relatively low, varying from 8% to 15% among respondents. However, the no-answer option, including “difficult to answer” and “do not want to answer” reaches up to 40%. Due to the sensitivity of the question in wartime state repression, we consider explicit anti-war dissent (answer “do not support”) as a strong revealed anti-war stance. Panel B of Figure 3 shows nonparametric estimation of the anti-war dissent as a function of proximity to the closest Gulag. It can be seen that there is a growing anti-war dissent in the immediate proximity of Gulags.

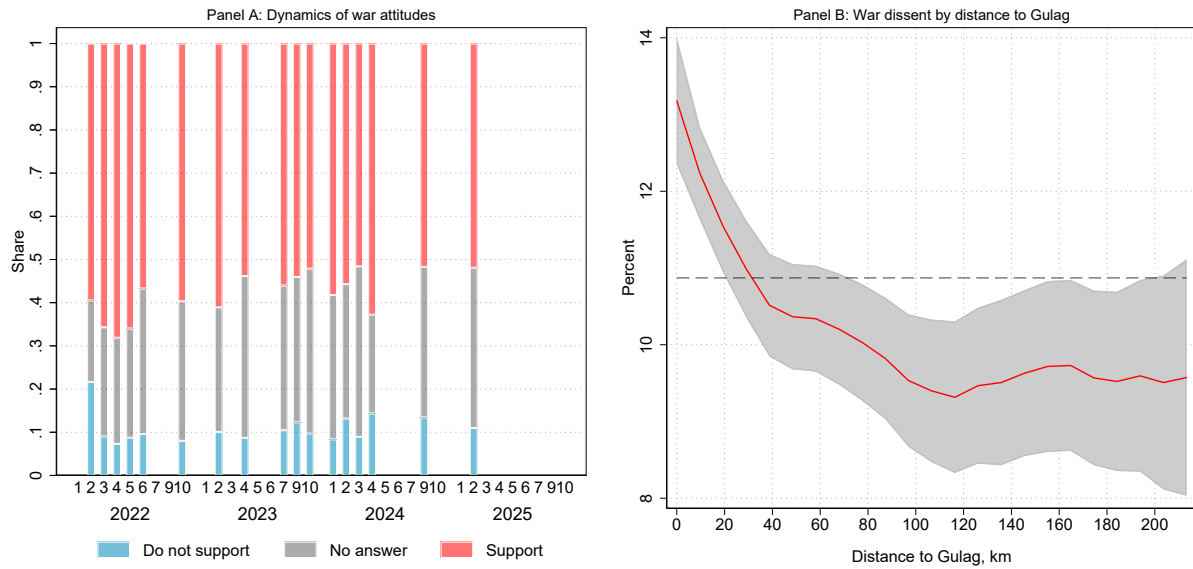
4.4 Online search

To shed light on the mechanisms, we have also collected the online search statistics via Yandex from 2018 to March 2025 for 439 municipalities indexed by Yandex search.¹² For each municipality-month, we get the total number and share of searches (out of all searches in the municipality-month) for the phrases related to repressions: “*victims of repressions*”, “*political repressions*”, and “*repressions*”. Figure 4 shows the dynamics of search “victims repressions” in Russia. There is an apparent surge of interest in this topic in October of each year, coinciding with October 30 - the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repressions in Russia. The similar pattern of surge of interest is related to the phrase

¹¹The first wave of Chronicles had this question without the part “find it difficult to answer, or do not want to answer this question”

¹²The share of the Yandex search engine is around 70% in Russia in 2024.

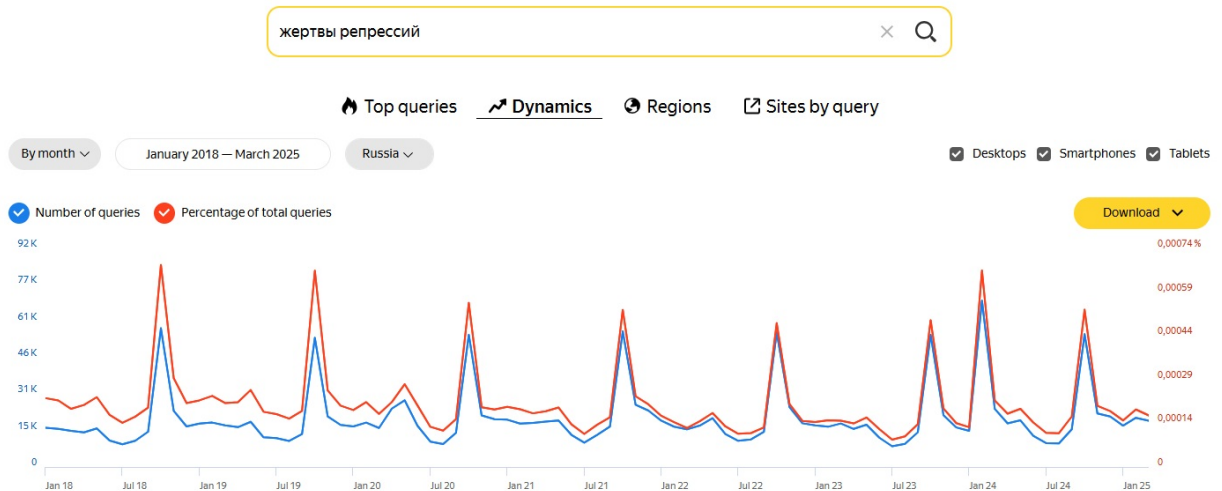
Figure 3: War attitudes in 2022-2025



Note. Panel A shows the dynamics of war attitudes as expressed in public opinion surveys from February 2022 to February 2025. Panel B shows a nonparametric estimate of a binary variable indicating the answer “Do not support” to the question about war attitude, by distance to the closest Gulag camp, with 95% confidence intervals. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded from both graphs.

“political repressions” as shown in Figure A4 of the Online Appendix A.

Figure 4: Yandex search for “victims of repressions”



Note. The figure shows the number of searches (blue) and the percentage of searches (red) for the phrase “victims of repressions” from January 2018 to March 2025 for Russia. Source: <https://wordstat.yandex.com/>

5 Gulags and protest activity

We start by analyzing the effect of the Gulags' proximity on the protest activity. Figure 2b suggests that anti-war protest activity was substantially higher in municipalities located in the immediate proximity to Gulags. In what follows, we want to study the association in more detail, controlling for other municipal characteristics. Following Nikolova et al. (2022) we consider the following specification

$$\ln(Y_{mr} + 1) = \alpha_1 \text{Gulag}(0 - 10)_m + [\alpha_2 \text{Gulag}(10 - 30)_m + \alpha_3 \text{Gulag}(30 - 50)_m + \alpha_4 \text{Gulag}(50 - 100)_m] + \mathbf{M}_m \gamma + \lambda_r + \epsilon_{mr} \quad (1)$$

Here, Y_{mr} is the protest activity within 10km distance of the municipality m in region r . In the main specification, as a measure of protest activity, we consider the number of anti-war detentions before mobilization in September 2022. As an alternative specification, we consider Y_{mr} , the pre-war protest potential in 2021, measured as the number of people registered for the Free Navalny protest in a municipality. The binary variable $\text{Gulag}(a-b)_m = 1$ if there is a Gulag in the interval $[a, b)$ km from the municipal center m . The vector of municipal controls $\mathbf{M}_m$ contains: logarithm of population and women share in 2021, binary indicator of rural area, latitude, longitude, mean elevation, presence of a nowadays prison within 10km of the municipality, the logarithm (+1) of distance to the nearest rail station in km in 1945 (Zhukov and Talibova 2018), and some municipal characteristics from the census of 2010 including the shares of people with higher education, below 40 age, of Russian ethnicity, possessing internet access. We include region-specific fixed effects, λ_r , to control for unobserved regional heterogeneity. Errors ϵ_{mr} are clustered at the regional level. We first consider the full set of municipalities and then split them by the median share of those below 40 years old from the 2010 census.

Table 1 shows the results of estimation for (1), where the logarithm of the number of anti-war detentions before mobilization in September 2022 is the dependent variable. Municipalities within 10km of Gulags had 36%-40% more anti-war detentions (columns 1-2). Moreover, this effect is exclusive to younger municipalities (column 3), where proximity

Table 1: The Effect of Gulag Proximity on Anti-War Detentions

VARIABLES	(1) Detentions	(2) within 10km	(3) before Sep. 2022	(4) (log)
Gulag within 10 km	0.40*** (0.15)	0.36** (0.15)	0.44** (0.21)	0.067 (0.069)
Gulag 10-30 km		-0.15** (0.066)	-0.15 (0.11)	-0.094* (0.049)
Gulag 30-50 km			-0.13 (0.083)	0.051 (0.068)
Gulag 50-100 km			-0.11* (0.059)	0.030 (0.029)
Prison within 10 km	0.34*** (0.053)	0.35*** (0.052)	0.48*** (0.087)	0.13** (0.060)
Higher educ.(share)	4.05*** (0.60)	4.12*** (0.60)	3.56*** (0.65)	2.11** (1.05)
Observations	2,334	2,334	1,165	1,169
R-squared	0.422	0.425	0.516	0.183
Region FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample	All	All	Young	Old

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (1), where Y_{mr} is the number of anti-war detentions before September 2022. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-2 include all remaining municipalities. Column 3 (4) includes municipalities with a younger (older) population, i.e., the share of people aged below 40 is below (above) the median among all municipalities according to the Census 2010. Standard errors are clustered on the regional level.

within 10km of Gulags increases anti-war detentions by 44%. Notably, for the older municipalities (column 4), Gulags do not affect the detentions. Table B1) of the Online Appendix B shows that the result of increased anti-war protest participation among the young municipalities is robust to the normalization of the anti-war detentions per 100,000 population.¹³ In Table B2 of the Online Appendix B, we exclude municipalities that are too distant from Gulags camps (more than 100 km), so comparing protest outcomes of municipalities located within 10 km of Gulags with the protest outcomes of municipalities located between 50 and 100 km of Gulags. The main result is robust to this sample selection.

From 1929 till Stalin's death in 1953, more than 11.3 million (Wheatcroft 2013) prisoners

¹³In fact, in the baseline specification, we control for the logarithm of municipal population, and the dependent variable is the logarithm of anti-war detentions, so the normalization of the dependent variable to the population does not substantially change the result.

passed through 474 camps. Nevertheless, these Gulag camps varied substantially in their functionality, capacity, and duration. By 1952, there were 88 camps (77 of which were on Russian territory), which were finally closed in 1953. In Table B3 of the Online Appendix B we consider the robustness of our results to the set of Gulags camps closed in 1953 (Toews and Vézina 2025). The effect of the Gulag camps’ proximity is larger in magnitude than in the baseline specification. Nevertheless, the share of the prisoners in 1952 imprisoned according to the article referred to as the “*Enemies of people*” is insignificant, suggesting that the human capital is not the main channel of the Gulag camps’ effect on the protest activity.

We further study whether the effect of the proximity of Gulag camps is specific to the anti-war protests or whether it has more general roots. Table 2 uses the number of people registered for the Free Navalny protest in 2021 as Y_{mr} in specification (1). A Gulag camp’s proximity within 10km of a municipality significantly increases protest potential, both in municipalities with younger and older populations. Nevertheless, the magnitudes of the coefficients differ substantially. In municipalities with a younger population, Gulag proximity increases registrations by 123% compared to the municipalities distant from Gulags (more than 100 km). In municipalities with an elderly population, Gulag proximity increases registrations by 69% compared to the municipalities distant from Gulags (more than 100 km). All in all, our results suggest that the proximity of Gulag camps significantly increases protest activity, and this effect is more pronounced among the younger population. The Online Appendix B shows that there is no effect of Gulag camps’ proximity on the number of anti-mobilization detentions (Table B4) or pro-regime votes in federal elections 2003-2012 (Table B5), suggesting that Gulags encourage to participate in protest for liberal part of the society, but do not affect the conservative or apolitical people. We will further clarify this hypothesis using public opinion polls.

6 Gulags and anti-war dissent

In this section, we analyze the effect of the Gulag camps’ proximity on war attitudes. Panel A of Figure 3 shows that from 8% to 15% of respondents had strong anti-war dissent and were ready to reveal it in public opinion surveys. We consider a specification similar to (Nikolova

Table 2: The Effect of Gulag Proximity on the Protest Potential in 2021

VARIABLES	(1) Free Navalny	(2) 2021 regist.	(3) in 10km	(4) (log)
Gulag within 10 km	1.15*** (0.29)	1.12*** (0.28)	1.23*** (0.37)	0.69** (0.33)
Gulag 10-30 km		-0.13 (0.22)	-0.013 (0.31)	-0.34* (0.17)
Gulag 30-50 km			-0.24 (0.17)	0.18 (0.18)
Gulag 50-100 km			-0.24* (0.13)	0.093 (0.084)
Prison within 10 km	1.53*** (0.17)	1.53*** (0.17)	1.83*** (0.25)	1.11*** (0.24)
Higher educ.(share)	9.75*** (1.29)	9.81*** (1.29)	8.65*** (1.53)	4.99* (2.75)
Observations	2,334	2,334	1,165	1,169
R-squared	0.506	0.506	0.581	0.285
Region FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample	All	All	Young	Old

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (1), where Y_{mr} is the number of registrations for the Free Navalny protest in 2021. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-2 include all remaining municipalities. Column 3 (4) includes municipalities with a younger (older) population, i.e., the share of people aged below 40 is below (above) the median among all municipalities according to the Census 2010. Standard errors are clustered on the regional level.

et al. 2022), extended to include additional individual and municipal controls from (1).

$$Y_{imrt} = \alpha_1 Gulag(0 - 10)_m + [\alpha_2 Gulag(10 - 30)_m + \alpha_3 Gulag(30 - 50)_m + \alpha_4 Gulag(50 - 100)_m] + \mathbf{X}_i \beta + \mathbf{M}_m \gamma + \lambda_{rt} + \epsilon_{imrt} \quad (2)$$

The binary variable $Y_{imrt} = 1$ if the anti-war dissent is expressed by respondent i , in survey wave t , from municipality m of region r . Gulag camps variables $Gulag(a - b)_m$ are similar to specification (1). The vector of respondents' demographics, $\mathbf{X}_i$, includes gender, four age categories, four categories of household welfare (perception), employment or study status, and completion of higher education. The vector $\mathbf{M}_m$ of municipal controls contains:

the logarithm of population in 2021, a binary indicator of rural area, latitude, longitude, mean elevation, presence of a nowadays prison within 10km of the municipality, and the logarithm (+1) of distance to the nearest rail station in km in 1945 (Zhukov and Talibova 2018). We include region-survey wave fixed effects, λ_{rt} , to control for unobserved regional heterogeneity in dynamics. Errors ϵ_{imrt} are clustered at the municipality level. We first consider all respondents and then split them into two groups based on the age threshold of 45 years.

Table 3: The effect of Gulag Proximity on Anti-War Dissent

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Anti-war dissent				
Gulag within 10 km	0.010*	0.012**	0.011*	0.028**	0.0032
	(0.0054)	(0.0059)	(0.0059)	(0.013)	(0.0098)
Gulag 10-30 km		0.0055	0.0049	0.0063	0.0075
		(0.0071)	(0.0071)	(0.014)	(0.011)
Gulag 30-50 km				0.014	-0.0017
				(0.015)	(0.011)
Gulag 50-100 km				0.011	-0.0047
				(0.012)	(0.0084)
Higher education			0.015***	0.0062	0.022***
			(0.0050)	(0.0079)	(0.0060)
Prison within 10 km	0.0030	0.0031	0.0025	-0.0060	0.0099
	(0.0056)	(0.0056)	(0.0056)	(0.0092)	(0.0076)
Observations	23,718	23,718	23,718	10,658	12,843
R-squared	0.082	0.082	0.083	0.147	0.115
Region-Wave FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Age	Any	Any	Any	18-44	45+

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (2), where the binary variable $Y_{imrt} = 1$ if a respondent answers “Do not support” about the attitude to the war. Respondents from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-3 include all respondents from the remaining municipalities. Column 4 (5) includes respondents aged 18-44 (45+). Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level.

Table 3 shows the results of estimation for specification (2). For the full sample (columns 1-3), the presence of a Gulag camp within 10km of the respondent’s municipality increases anti-war dissent by 1-1.2 p.p., corresponding to an increase of around 10% relative to the average (11 p.p.). Moreover, Column 4 shows that this effect is exclusive to younger respondents (age 18-44), where proximity within 10km of Gulag camps increases anti-war dissent

by 2.8 p.p. (25.4%). Notably, for the older respondents (age 45+), Gulag proximity does not affect the level of dissent (column 5). Table B6 of the Online Appendix B shows that this result is robust when considering only a subset of Gulag camps that were closed in 1953 (Toews and Vézina 2025), but the share of “*Enemies of people*” in these camps does not increase anti-war dissent. We also consider the attitudes of respondents that would reflect the regime loyalty, such as war support or willingness to vote for Putin.¹⁴ Table B7 and B8 show an insignificant effect of Gulag camp proximity on regime loyalty.

All in all, the results of the analysis of war attitude are in line with the findings at the municipality level, suggesting that the proximity of Gulag camps intensifies the willingness to explicitly express the anti-war dissent among young people, who are not justifying the regime. At the same time, the proximity of Gulag camps does not undermine the regime’s justification per se.

7 Information channel for the Gulags effect

The literature on the proximity of Gulag camps’ effect usually discusses two channels: information dissemination (Kapelko and Markevich 2014) and human capital accumulation (Nikolova et al. 2022; Toews and Vézina 2025). The information channel is also considered from two perspectives: (i) the general awareness of the local population about Soviet repressions, (ii) family memories of political repressions. While the effect of family commemoration of repressions on present-day political participation is extensively discussed in the literature (see, for a literature review, (Zhuravskaya et al. 2024; DeSisto 2025)), there is no evidence on the effect of Gulag proximity on general awareness of the repressions. In what follows, we consider all these channels using different data sources.

7.1 Demand for information about political repressions

First, we examine whether people residing near a Gulag use different sources of information about present-day politics and war. Using the same set of public opinion surveys and exploiting a question about sources of information about the war in Ukraine¹⁵, we use these

¹⁴Questions about readiness to participate in elections and willingness to vote for different candidates were asked from January to March 2024, before the presidential electoral campaign on March 15-17, 2024.

¹⁵Chronicles and Extreme Scan projects occasionally ask about all sources of information regarding the war respondents use, which include communication with relatives, traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers), internet websites, and various popular media platforms, such as YouTube, Telegram, and social media.

different sources of information as binary dependent variables in specification (2).

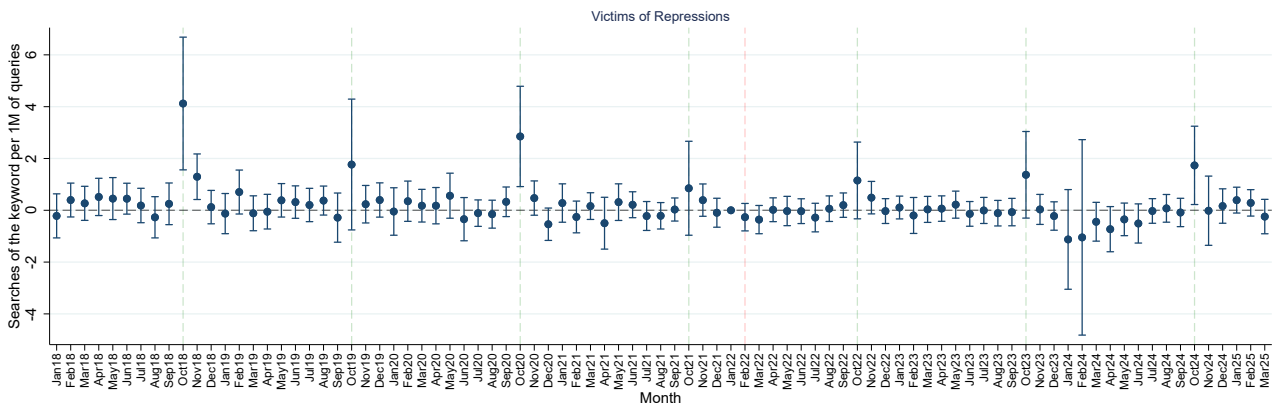
Table B9 of the Online Appendix B shows the results. Respondents in the immediate proximity of Gulag camps are more likely to communicate with relatives and friends about the war in Ukraine, and younger people are more likely to get information from Telegram channels. This result suggests that both internet sources and personal communication could be used to become familiar with the repressions. We study each of these channels in detail.

To estimate the effect of Gulag proximity on the demand for information about repressions, we use monthly Yandex search patterns from January 2018 to March 2025 in 439 cities in Russia for phrases “*victims of repressions*”, “*political repressions*”, and “*repressions*” (see Figure 4). We consider the following two-way fixed effect event-study design specification.

$$Y_{mt} = \sum_{t=Jan18}^{Mar25} \alpha_t \times \lambda_t \times Gulag(0-10)_m + \mu_m + \lambda_t + \epsilon_{mt} \quad (3)$$

Here Y_{mt} is the number of searches for a keyword per 1M of all queries in municipality m and year-month t . As before, $Gulag(a-b)_m = 1$ if there is a Gulag in the interval $[a, b)$ km from the municipality m . Here μ_m are municipality fixed effects and λ_t are year-month fixed effects. Therefore, the identification is based on within-city variation over time. Errors ϵ_{mt} are clustered at the city. The sample is restricted to cities within 30km of a Gulag camp.

Figure 5: Event-study coefficients for Yandex queries of “*Victims of repressions*”



Note. The figure shows estimates of α_t from specification (3) with 95% confidence intervals. The dependent variable is the number of searches for “Victims of repressions” per 1 M queries. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Vertical dashed lines are in October of each year and in February 2022. Standard errors are clustered on the city level.

Figure 5 shows the results of estimation for specification (3) for the search “*Victims of*

repressions”. Each October, the number of searches in cities located within 10km distance from Gulags is higher by 1.7 – 4 searches per 1M of queries compared to the cities located within 20-30 km from Gulags. The average effect of Gulag proximity in October is 1.95 (see Table B10 of the Online Appendix B), which implies 31% higher search for this phrase when compared to the average searches across all cities in October (6.27 searches per 1 M), and it is significant at the 5% level. The similar size and the pattern can be observed for the phrase “*Political repressions*” (Figure B1), the sum of searches of these phrases (Figure B2), or just the search for the word “Repression” (Figure B3). All in all, these results suggest that the general awareness of repression is higher in the immediate proximity of Gulag camps, and increased general commemoration is directly related to the special day devoted to the memory of repressions.

7.2 Family memories of political repressions

While the general memory of the repression seems to be the primary driver of anti-war dissent in the immediate proximity of Gulag camps, this does not preclude the family memories of political repressions as an alternative channel. In a survey wave, conducted in February 2025, Chronicles project had the following question, which replicates the one from EBRD Life in Transition survey of 2017: “*In Soviet period, has someone in your family members: (i) been injured or died during the Great Patriotic War, (ii) received military awards, (iii) been a part of the Communist Party, (iv) served in security agencies (NKVD, KGB, militia, etc.), (v) been imprisoned or repressed in any form for political activity, (vi) been dispossessed (dekulakized) or forcibly relocated*”. We created binary variables for each item, then calculated the *Experience of Soviet honor* as the sum of the first four binary items, and the *Experience of Soviet repressions* as the sum of the binary items (v) and (vi). We then consider the following linear specification

$$Y_{imr} = \alpha_1 \text{Exp.Honor}_i + \alpha_2 \text{Exp.Repress}_i + \mathbf{X}_i \beta + \mathbf{M}_m \gamma + \lambda_r + \epsilon_{imr} \quad (4)$$

Here, the dependent variable $Y_{imr} = 1$ if the anti-war dissent is expressed by respondent i , from municipality m of region r . The alternative binary dependent variables include expressions of war support, war participation among relatives, and voting for Putin in March 2024.

The vectors of control variables $\mathbf{X}_i$ and $\mathbf{M}_m$ are identical to specification (2). *Exp.Honor* is the *Experience of Soviet honor* and *Exp.Repress* is the *Experience of Soviet repressions*.

Table 4: Effect of Experiences of Soviet Honor and Repression

VARIABLES	(1) War support	(2) Anti-war dissent	(3) War participation	(4) Vote for Putin
Experience of Soviet honor	0.052*** (0.012)	-0.015* (0.0091)	0.042*** (0.012)	0.033** (0.013)
Experience of Soviet repression	-0.0090 (0.022)	0.025* (0.015)	0.022 (0.020)	-0.0038 (0.022)
Observations	1,311	1,311	1,311	1,311
R-squared	0.147	0.030	0.049	0.074

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates of specification (4). The table shows estimates for specification (4), where $Y_{imr} = 1$ for different binary variables: “War support” (Column 1), “Do not support war” (Column 2), “Some relatives participate in the war” (Column 3), “Vote for Putin” (Column 4). Respondents from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level. Table B11 of the Online Appendix B shows the full output.

Table 4 shows the result. While the *Experience of Soviet honor* is positively associated with war support and voting for Putin, the *Experience of Soviet repression* is not related to these measures. Moreover, the *Experience of Soviet repression* is negatively associated with the anti-war dissent at a 10% significance level, and the magnitude of the coefficient is substantial – any experience of Soviet repression increases anti-war dissent by 2.5 p.p., which is equivalent to 25% when compared to the share of anti-war dissenters in the survey sample. This result suggests that family memory serves as a channel of anti-war dissent.

8 Human capital as a channel for the Gulags effect

The literature on Gulags argues that human capital accumulation around camps is an essential factor associated with the behavior observed today (Nikolova et al. 2022; Toews and Vézina 2025; Lonsky 2025). In all our specifications, where we analyzed protests at the municipal level (1) and anti-war dissent at the individual level (2) and (4), we controlled for education, and the proximity to Gulag camps was significant. Nevertheless, we also need to determine whether it could be an additional channel for the effect of the Gulag camps.

Table B12 of Online Appendix B estimates the specification 1, where the dependent variable is the share of people with higher education in a municipality, based on the Census

2010. While the Gulag camps proximity in 10km is indeed positively associated with the higher share of people with higher education, this association is not specific to this distance, as e.g., 10-30 km Gulag distance also has a positive association with education, especially among younger municipalities (columns 3 and 5). Table B13 of the Online Appendix B estimates the specification 2, where the binary dependent variable equals one if a respondent has higher education. There is a similar pattern. Gulag proximity is positively associated with higher education. Still, a 10 km Gulag distance is not exclusive to younger respondents, as a 10-30 km Gulag distance is also positively associated with higher education.

9 Conclusion

This paper has examined how historical exposure to state repression shapes anti-war dissent in a contemporary autocracy. Focusing on Russia’s 2022–2025 invasion of Ukraine, we linked the historical geography of the Soviet Gulag to granular data on protest activity, wartime public opinion, and online search behavior. Across all three domains, we documented a robust association between proximity to former Gulag sites and stronger opposition to the war: municipalities closer to historical camps experience more anti-war detentions and higher pre-war protest potential, individuals living in these areas are more likely to express explicit anti-war attitudes in surveys, and local communities display greater interest in information about political repression. These relationships are particularly pronounced among younger cohorts, who have no direct experience with Soviet repression, and thus point to intergenerational and community-level transmission of historical memory rather than mere cohort replacement.

Our results also speak to the mechanisms through which these legacies operate. First, the analysis of information sources and Yandex search patterns suggests an important role for general awareness and public commemoration of past state violence. Municipalities in the immediate vicinity of Gulag sites show systematically higher search intensity for terms related to “victims of repressions” and “political repressions,” especially around the annual Day of Remembrance. This pattern is consistent with a mechanism in which local memory, public rituals, and informal discussion keep the history of repression salient and provide a cognitive frame for interpreting contemporary coercion. Second, survey evidence on family histories indicates that descendants of those who experienced Soviet repression are more likely to express anti-war dissent. At the same time, the analysis of educational attainment

shows that human capital around former Gulag sites is higher but not uniquely concentrated within the closest distance bands, and controlling for it does not reduce the effect of Gulags, thus suggesting that human capital is not the primary channel for our results.

Viewed in light of the broader literature on the persistence of political violence, our findings revisit the common view that repression primarily demobilizes and depoliticizes citizens. Existing work has shown that the long-run effects of repression can be heterogeneous and context-dependent, producing either withdrawal, loyalty, or backlash depending on the subsequent institutional environment. We extend this insight to high-stakes wartime behavior in a modern autocracy. In Russia, communities historically exposed to Gulag repression are more willing to protest and to report opposition to the war in surveys.

These results also carry broader normative and policy implications. Our evidence indicates that societies in which the history of state violence is remembered in a sober, humbling way may be more resistant to unlawful military adventures and attempts to re-legitimise coercion through patriotic rhetoric. Public recognition of past injustices, support for independent historical research, and protection of civil-society actors engaged in commemoration can strengthen the social foundations of aversion to aggressive war. By contrast, policies that suppress or even glorify episodes of repression may weaken this constraint, making it easier for leaders to portray new uses of force as necessary or defensive. While our analysis is descriptive rather than prescriptive, it points to historical memory policy in the various forms of school curricula, museums, memorial days, and access to archives as an important but often overlooked dimension of conflict prevention and democratic resilience.

At the same time, we acknowledge limitations of our analysis, such as potentially endogenous location of Gulags or inability of our outcome measures to reflect the private dissent, such as private forms of resistance (e.g., donations to the Ukrainian military, help to refugees, ect.). Moreover, the Russian case is in some respects distinctive, which limits its external validity to countries that have already undergone episodes of mass repression, even though the list of such countries is long.

Despite these caveats, the evidence presented here underscores a central lesson of historical political economy: the societal reaction to present-day coercion is conditioned by long memories of past abuses. Autocratic leaders who inherit histories of mass repression do not start from a blank slate; they confront publics whose beliefs about state violence have been

formed over generations. Our findings show that these legacies matter precisely when the stakes are highest—when an autocracy initiates a war of aggression and seeks to mobilize its population behind it. In this sense, the Gulag continues to cast a shadow over Russia’s politics not only as a symbol of past terror but also as a source of contemporary courage to resist new injustices.

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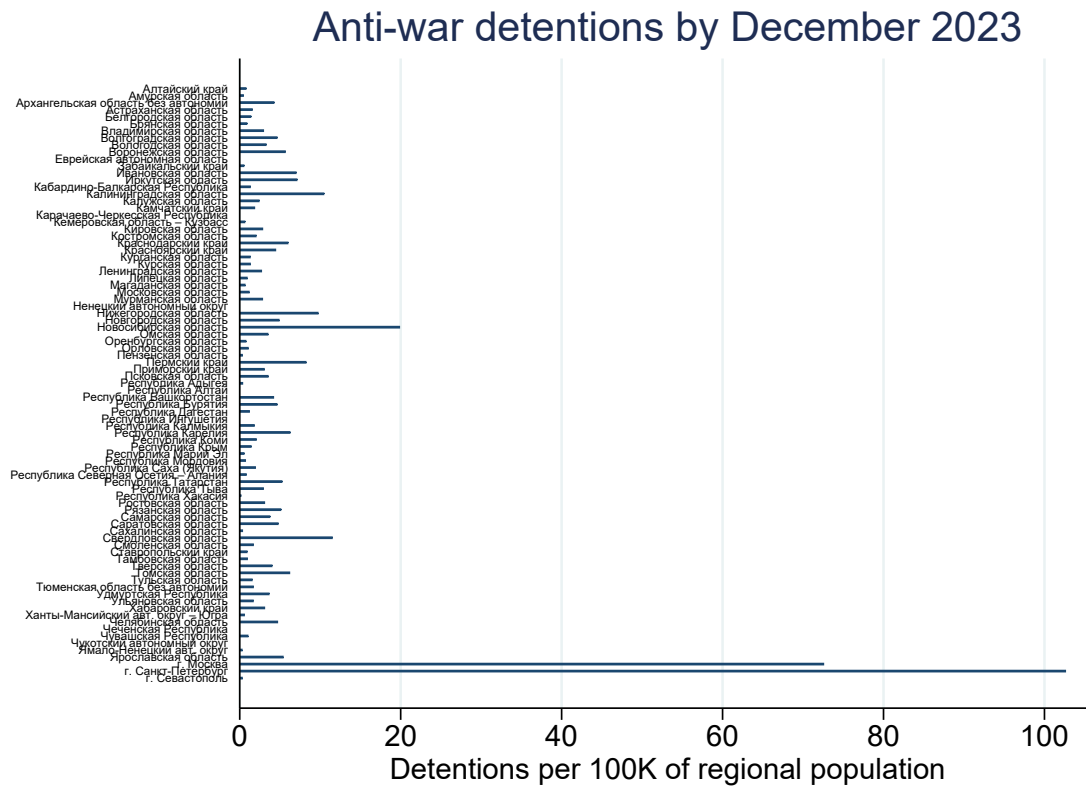
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A Appendix

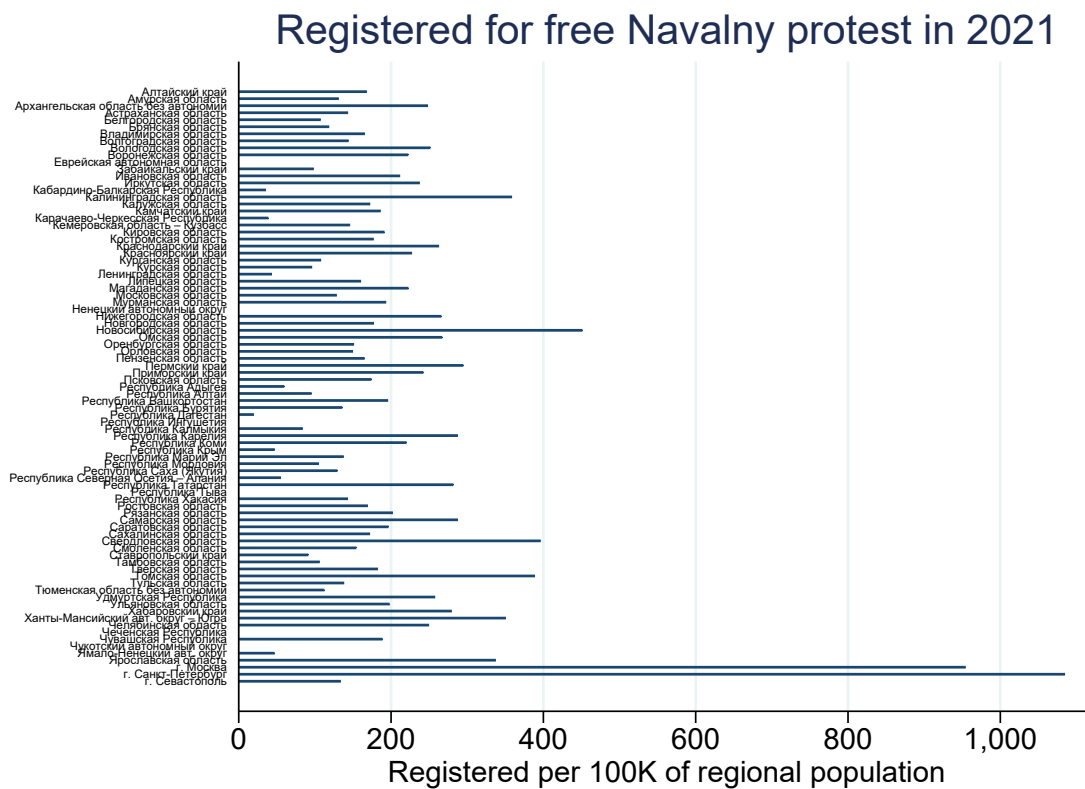
A.1 Figures of Appendix A

Figure A1: Anti-war detentions by regions



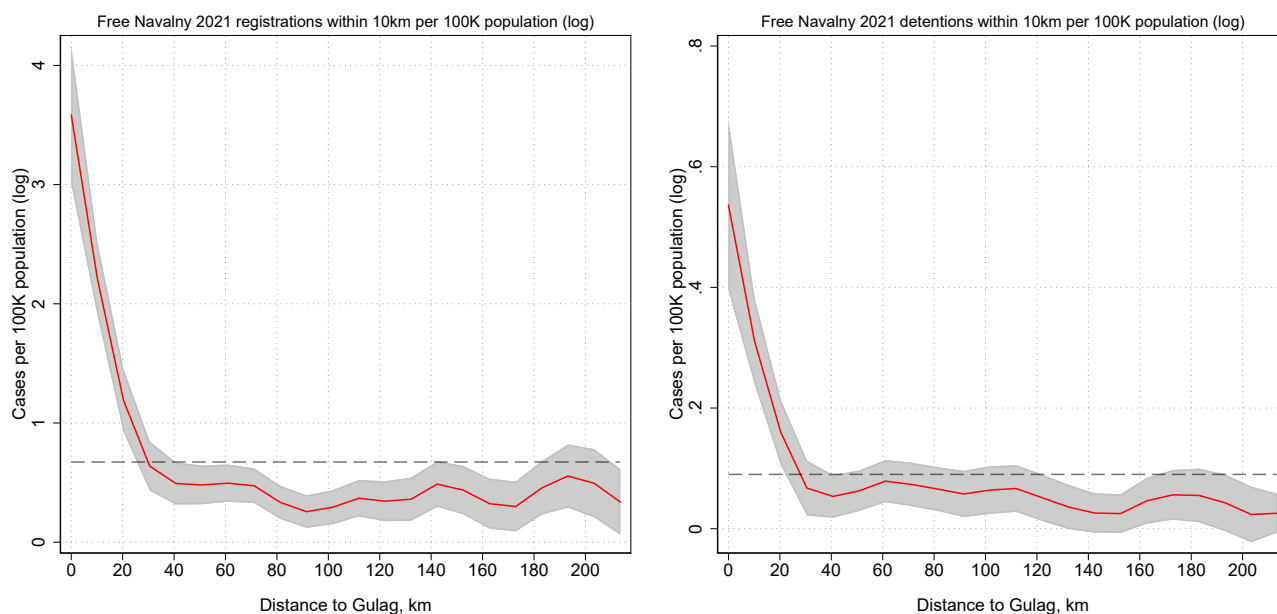
Note: The figure shows the number of anti-war detentions registered by OVD-Info from February 2022 to December 2023 per 100,000 of regional population (with a split by regions).

Figure A2: Free Navalny 2021 registrations by regions



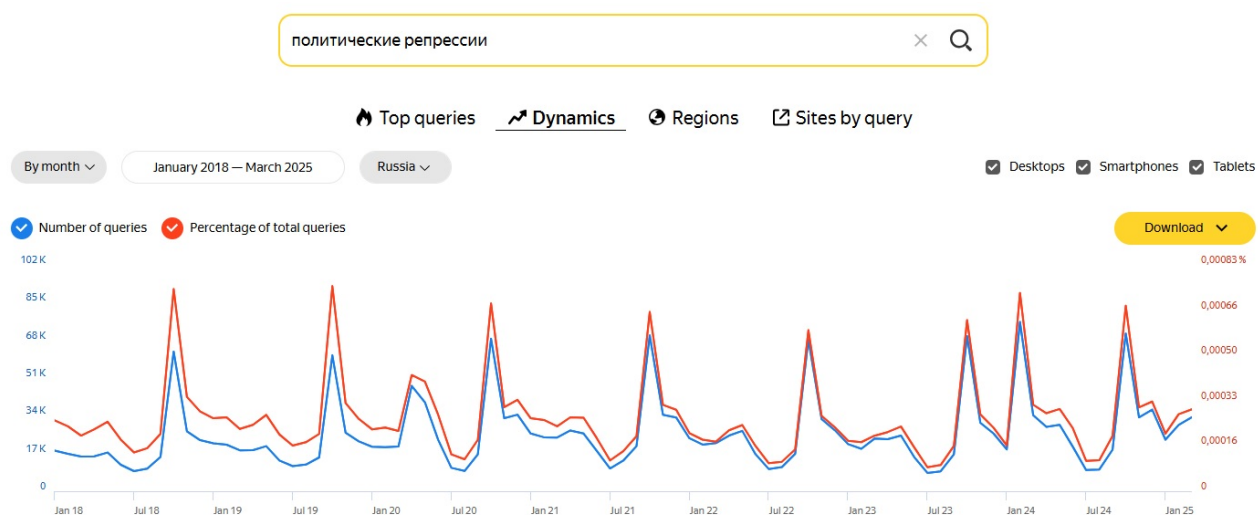
Note: The figure shows the number of registrations for the Free Navalny 2021 protest per 100,000 of regional population (with a split by regions).

Figure A3: Free Navalny 2021 registrations and detentions and distance to Gulag



Note: the left panel shows a nonparametric estimate of the logarithm of registrations for the Free Navalny 2021 protest, normalized to 100,000 municipal population (+1), by distance to the closest Gulag camp, with 95% confidence intervals. The right panel shows a nonparametric estimate of the logarithm of registrations, normalized to 100,000 municipal population (+1), by distance to the closest Gulag camp, with 95% confidence intervals. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded from both graphs.

Figure A4: Yandex search for “political repressions”



Note. The figure shows the number of searches (blue) and the percentage of searches (red) for the phrase “political repressions” from January 2018 to March 2025 for Russia. Source: <https://wordstat.yandex.com/>

B Appendix

B.1 Tables of Appendix B

Table B1: Anti-war detentions per 100,000 of population

VARIABLES	(1) Detentions in 10km before Sep. 2022	(2) Detentions in 10km before Sep. 2022	(3) Detentions in 10km before Sep. 2022 per 100K (log)	(4) Detentions in 10km before Sep. 2022 per 100K (log)
Gulag within 10 km	0.40** (0.16)	0.38** (0.16)	0.52** (0.23)	0.14 (0.097)
Gulag 10-30 km		-0.072 (0.066)	0.019 (0.10)	-0.13* (0.065)
Gulag 30-50 km			-0.051 (0.070)	0.091 (0.11)
Gulag 50-100 km			-0.068 (0.063)	0.047 (0.040)
Prison within 10 km	0.37*** (0.070)	0.37*** (0.069)	0.49*** (0.10)	0.16* (0.091)
Higher educ.(share)	2.82*** (0.53)	2.85*** (0.52)	2.41*** (0.58)	2.72 (1.67)
Observations	2,334	2,334	1,165	1,169
R-squared	0.274	0.275	0.382	0.144
Region FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample	All	All	Young	Old

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (1), where Y_{mr} is the number of anti-war detentions before September 2022 per 100,000 of population. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-2 include all remaining municipalities. Column 3 (4) includes municipalities with a younger (older) population, i.e., the share of people aged below 40 is below (above) the median among all municipalities according to the Census 2010. Standard errors are clustered on the regional level.

Table B2: Anti-war detentions within 100km from Gulags

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Detentions within 10km before Sep. 2022 (log)			
Gulag within 10 km	0.38*** (0.14)	0.34** (0.14)	0.49** (0.21)	0.048 (0.086)
Gulag 10-30 km		-0.13* (0.073)	-0.035 (0.11)	-0.12** (0.056)
Gulag 30-50 km			-0.064 (0.080)	0.020 (0.069)
Prison within 10 km	0.37*** (0.082)	0.37*** (0.081)	0.44*** (0.13)	0.12 (0.079)
Higher educ.(share)	5.47*** (0.68)	5.51*** (0.67)	5.12*** (0.86)	3.00* (1.61)
Observations	1,342	1,342	670	672
R-squared	0.449	0.452	0.532	0.318
Region FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample	100km	100km	Young-100km	Old-100km

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (1), where Y_{mr} is the number of anti-war detentions before September 2022. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Crimea, and all municipalities that do not have a Gulag camp within 100km are excluded. Columns 1-2 include all remaining municipalities. Column 3 (4) includes municipalities with a younger (older) population, i.e., the share of people aged below 40 is below (above) the median among all municipalities according to the Census 2010. Standard errors are clustered on the regional level.

Table B3: Anti-war detentions and Gulags, closed in 1953 Gulags

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Detentions within 10km before Sep. 2022 (log)					
Gulag(1952) within 10 km	0.75** (0.35)	0.11 (0.18)	0.68* (0.35)	0.15 (0.20)		
Gulag(1952) 10-30 km	-0.18 (0.15)	-0.085 (0.059)	-0.22 (0.16)	-0.047 (0.047)		
Gulag(1952) 30-50 km	-0.070 (0.15)	-0.061** (0.030)	-0.11 (0.13)	-0.022 (0.024)		
Gulag Enemies Share (1952)					0.30 (0.34)	0.064 (0.075)
Prison within 10 km	0.50*** (0.089)	0.13** (0.059)	0.66*** (0.21)	0.086 (0.10)	0.92*** (0.23)	0.089 (0.11)
Higher education	3.79*** (0.68)	2.20** (1.09)	5.78*** (1.22)	0.28 (0.48)	5.99*** (1.33)	0.50 (0.44)
Observations	1,165	1,169	347	245	347	245
R-squared	0.515	0.178	0.577	0.823	0.543	0.815
Region FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample	Young	Old	Young	Old	Young	Old
Gulag dist.	Any	Any	<100 km	<100 km	<100 km	<100 km

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (1), where Y_{mr} is the number of anti-war detentions before September 2022. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. In Columns 3-6, all municipalities that do not have a Gulag camp within 100km are also excluded. Odd (even) columns include municipalities with a younger (older) population, i.e., the share of people aged below 40 is below (above) the median among all municipalities according to the Census 2010. Only the Gulag camps that were present in 1952 and were closed in 1953 are used (Toews and Vézina 2025). Standard errors are clustered on the regional level.

Table B4: The Effect of Gulag Proximity on Anti-Mobilization Detentions

VARIABLES	(1) Detentions within 10km after Sep. 2022 (log)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Gulag within 10 km	0.12 (0.093)	0.092 (0.092)	0.098 (0.13)	-0.019 (0.039)
Gulag 10-30 km		-0.091* (0.048)	-0.091 (0.079)	-0.045 (0.036)
Gulag 30-50 km			-0.036 (0.063)	0.0029 (0.013)
Gulag 50-100 km			-0.065* (0.039)	0.011 (0.018)
Prison within 10 km	0.16*** (0.028)	0.16*** (0.028)	0.22*** (0.046)	0.100** (0.044)
Higher educ.(share)	2.31*** (0.40)	2.35*** (0.40)	2.20*** (0.43)	1.01 (0.86)
Observations	2,334	2,334	1,165	1,169
R-squared	0.298	0.301	0.385	0.169
Region FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample	All	All	Young	Old

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (1), where Y_{mr} is the number of anti-mobilization detentions after September 2022. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-2 include all remaining municipalities. Column 3 (4) includes municipalities with a younger (older) population, i.e., the share of people aged below 40 is below (above) the median among all municipalities according to the Census 2010. Standard errors are clustered on the regional level.

Table B5: Gulag Proximity and Pro-Regime Voting

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Pro-Regime votes in federal elections					
VARIABLES	2003	2004	2007	2008	2011	2012
Gulag within 10 km	-2.05*	-0.030	-1.45	-0.62	0.34	-0.26
	(1.19)	(0.80)	(0.88)	(0.93)	(1.33)	(0.94)
Gulag 10-30 km	-0.67	0.31	0.33	-0.46	0.87	-1.39*
	(0.99)	(0.64)	(0.84)	(0.72)	(1.09)	(0.70)
Gulag 30-50 km	0.21	0.94	0.94	0.88	0.98	0.069
	(1.09)	(0.75)	(0.81)	(0.74)	(1.05)	(0.64)
Gulag 50-100 km	-1.00	0.27	0.42	0.17	0.92	-0.34
	(0.76)	(0.43)	(0.55)	(0.52)	(0.67)	(0.46)
Prison within 10 km	0.11	0.53	0.061	0.63	-0.12	-0.83
	(0.74)	(0.52)	(0.56)	(0.52)	(0.85)	(0.54)
Higher educ.(share)	5.40	-3.41	11.0**	4.34	13.2*	-12.9***
	(5.45)	(3.56)	(5.00)	(3.62)	(6.91)	(4.05)
Observations	1,975	1,977	2,072	1,983	2,090	2,091
R-squared	0.589	0.611	0.609	0.589	0.640	0.767
Region FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample	All	All	All	All	All	All

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (1), where the dependent variable is the share of pro-regime votes in a municipality in 2003-2012 federal elections, taken from (Zhukov and Talibova 2018). Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Standard errors are clustered on the regional level.

Table B6: The effect of Proximity of Gulag closed in 1953 on Anti-War Dissent

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Anti-war dissent					
Gulag(1952) within 10 km	0.037*** (0.014)	0.0084 (0.0088)	0.034* (0.020)	0.0080 (0.011)		
Gulag(1952) 10-30 km	0.0075 (0.015)	0.019* (0.011)	0.0032 (0.019)	0.035*** (0.012)		
Gulag(1952) 30-50 km	0.017 (0.016)	0.015 (0.012)	0.018 (0.020)	0.021* (0.013)		
Gulag Enemies Share (1952)					-0.12 (0.085)	-0.10** (0.052)
Higher education	0.0064 (0.0079)	0.022*** (0.0060)	0.010 (0.014)	0.033*** (0.0098)	0.010 (0.014)	0.033*** (0.0098)
Prison within 10 km	-0.0041 (0.0093)	0.012 (0.0075)	-0.010 (0.018)	0.038*** (0.013)	-0.0063 (0.016)	0.027** (0.012)
Observations	10,658	12,843	4,261	4,987	4,261	4,987
R-squared	0.147	0.115	0.153	0.131	0.153	0.130
Region-Wave FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Age	18-44	45+	18-44	45+	18-44	45+
Gulag dist.	Any	Any	<100 km	<100 km	<100 km	<100 km

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (2), where the binary variable $Y_{imrt} = 1$ if a respondent answers “Do not support” about the attitude to the war. Respondents from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. In Columns 3-6, all respondents from municipalities that do not have a Gulag camp within 100km are also excluded. Odd (even) columns include respondents aged 18-44 (45+). Only the Gulag camps that were present in 1952 and were closed in 1953 are used (Toews and Vézina 2025). Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level.

Table B7: The effect of Gulag Proximity on War Support

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	War support				
Gulag within 10 km	0.0028 (0.0084)	-0.00031 (0.0090)	0.000023 (0.0091)	0.00069 (0.021)	0.0026 (0.017)
Gulag 10-30 km		-0.011 (0.012)	-0.011 (0.012)	-0.0067 (0.024)	-0.015 (0.018)
Gulag 30-50 km				0.0054 (0.024)	0.020 (0.018)
Gulag 50-100 km				-0.016 (0.020)	-0.00024 (0.016)
Higher education			-0.0065 (0.0071)	-0.032*** (0.011)	0.011 (0.0099)
Prison within 10 km	0.0087 (0.0087)	0.0085 (0.0087)	0.0088 (0.0087)	0.012 (0.014)	0.0052 (0.012)
Observations	23,718	23,718	23,718	10,658	12,843
R-squared	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.176	0.161
Region-Wave FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Age	Any	Any	Any	18-44	45+

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (2), where the binary variable $Y_{imrt} = 1$ if a respondent answers “Support” about the attitude to the war. Respondents from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-3 include all respondents from the remaining municipalities. Column 4 (5) includes respondents aged 18-44 (45+). Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level.

Table B8: Gulag Proximity and Willingness to Vote for Putin

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Vote for Putin				
Gulag within 10 km	-0.019 (0.014)	-0.020 (0.014)	-0.0097 (0.016)	-0.0027 (0.037)	-0.0078 (0.030)
Gulag 10-30 km		-0.0042 (0.020)	-0.0015 (0.022)	-0.050 (0.043)	0.040 (0.034)
Gulag 30-50 km				-0.029 (0.042)	-0.0027 (0.031)
Gulag 50-100 km				-0.0043 (0.033)	0.0098 (0.027)
Higher education			-0.049*** (0.011)	-0.049*** (0.019)	-0.047*** (0.015)
Prison within 10 km	0.011 (0.014)	0.011 (0.014)	0.0049 (0.016)	-0.0050 (0.027)	-0.0020 (0.021)
Observations	10,925	10,925	8,152	3,532	4,536
R-squared	0.127	0.127	0.125	0.158	0.164
Region-Wave FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Age	Any	Any	Any	18-44	45+

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (2), where the binary variable $Y_{imrt} = 1$ if a respondent answers “Vote for Putin” in the question about voting preferences in February-March 2024. Respondents from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-3 include all respondents from the remaining municipalities. Column 4 (5) includes respondents aged 18-44 (45+). Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level.

Table B9: Gulag Proximity and War Information Sources

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
		Relatives			TV			YouTube			Telegram			Social media			Websites	
Gulag within 10 km	0.037** (0.016)	0.041* (0.024)	0.024 (0.021)	-0.023 (0.015)	-0.039 (0.029)	-0.0056 (0.017)	0.034** (0.016)	0.070*** (0.025)	0.021 (0.020)	0.021 (0.014)	0.055** (0.025)	0.0053 (0.017)	0.014 (0.016)	0.035 (0.025)	0.0055 (0.020)	0.014 (0.014)	0.024 (0.023)	0.017 (0.020)
Gulag 10-30 km	0.019 (0.018)	0.038 (0.028)	0.0022 (0.024)	-0.028* (0.017)	-0.040 (0.033)	-0.028 (0.019)	0.020 (0.017)	0.063** (0.029)	-0.0043 (0.021)	0.0076 (0.016)	0.026 (0.027)	0.0021 (0.019)	-0.0022 (0.018)	0.0089 (0.026)	-0.0036 (0.023)	0.012 (0.016)	0.017 (0.027)	0.012 (0.022)
Gulag 30-50 km	0.016 (0.019)	0.011 (0.030)	0.012 (0.024)	-0.015 (0.016)	-0.052 (0.032)	0.0022 (0.019)	0.018 (0.017)	0.059** (0.027)	0.0028 (0.022)	0.011 (0.016)	0.028 (0.028)	0.014 (0.019)	-0.0042 (0.018)	0.027 (0.028)	-0.019 (0.022)	0.0096 (0.017)	0.0054 (0.027)	0.012 (0.022)
Gulag 50-100 km	-0.016 (0.015)	-0.0039 (0.025)	-0.030 (0.020)	-0.0080 (0.014)	-0.050* (0.027)	0.014 (0.016)	0.034** (0.016)	0.075*** (0.025)	0.019 (0.019)	0.014 (0.014)	0.033 (0.025)	0.0028 (0.015)	0.014 (0.015)	0.040* (0.024)	0.0084 (0.019)	0.021 (0.014)	0.039* (0.024)	0.0059 (0.019)
Higher education	0.024*** (0.0090)	0.015 (0.013)	0.026** (0.012)	-0.069*** (0.0096)	-0.082*** (0.014)	-0.058*** (0.012)	0.045*** (0.0080)	0.028** (0.014)	0.061*** (0.011)	0.098*** (0.0093)	0.10*** (0.016)	0.089*** (0.011)	0.014* (0.0080)	-0.024* (0.014)	0.048*** (0.011)	0.075*** (0.0086)	0.051*** (0.015)	0.094*** (0.012)
Prison within 10 km	0.0031 (0.011)	0.021 (0.018)	-0.017 (0.015)	-0.018* (0.010)	-0.0011 (0.018)	-0.027** (0.013)	0.0092 (0.011)	0.0036 (0.018)	0.0063 (0.015)	0.012 (0.010)	-0.0076 (0.017)	0.021* (0.012)	-0.0021 (0.011)	-0.0074 (0.018)	-0.0016 (0.014)	0.030*** (0.011)	0.034* (0.018)	0.025* (0.015)
Observations	14,020	6,292	7,618	14,020	6,292	7,618	14,020	6,292	7,618	14,020	6,292	7,618	14,192	6,480	7,608	14,020	6,292	7,618
R-squared	0.165	0.210	0.213	0.212	0.178	0.167	0.121	0.170	0.163	0.216	0.219	0.230	0.209	0.260	0.212	0.157	0.193	0.203
Region-Wave FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Age	Any	18-44	45+	Any	18-44	45+	Any	18-44	45+	Any	18-44	45+	Any	18-44	45+	Any	18-44	45+

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (2), where the binary variable $Y_{imrt} = 1$ if a respondent consumes a source of information about the war events, indicated in the column name. Respondents from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level.

Table B10: Yandex search for repressions. TWFE DID estimates.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Dep.var: Number of searches for a keyword per 1M queries			
	Victims of Repressions	Political Repressions	Political or Victims of Repressions	Repressions
Gulag within 10 km x October	1.949** (0.780)	2.359** (0.941)	4.309** (1.713)	3.328** (1.303)
Observations	16,182	16,182	16,182	16,182
R-squared	0.288	0.295	0.303	0.354
City FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Month-Year	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gulag distance	<=30 km	<=30 km	<=30 km	<=30 km

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows TWFE DID estimates, with cities within 10 km of a Gulag camp as the treatment group and the treatment period being October of each year (see (3) as an event study for the DID). The dependent variables are searches for “*Victims of repressions*” (column 1), “*Political repressions*” (column 2), their sum (column 3), or “*Repressions*” (column 4) per 1 M queries. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Standard errors are clustered on the city level.

Table B11: Effect of Experiences of Soviet Honor and Repression (full output)

VARIABLES	(1) War support	(2) Anti-war dissent	(3) War participation	(4) Vote for Putin
Age: 30 - 44	0.14*** (0.042)	-0.088** (0.036)	-0.013 (0.045)	0.15*** (0.046)
Age: 45 - 59	0.23*** (0.045)	-0.076** (0.037)	-0.060 (0.048)	0.16*** (0.049)
Age: 60+	0.40*** (0.047)	-0.12*** (0.040)	-0.13** (0.051)	0.25*** (0.053)
Financial situation: lower than average	0.082* (0.043)	-0.066** (0.032)	0.044 (0.041)	0.062 (0.045)
Financial situation: average	0.10** (0.043)	-0.066** (0.031)	-0.0049 (0.041)	0.11*** (0.044)
Financial situation: higher than average	0.14*** (0.046)	-0.055* (0.033)	-0.011 (0.044)	0.15*** (0.046)
Financial situation: missing	0.072 (0.10)	-0.066 (0.067)	-0.0063 (0.087)	0.057 (0.100)
Female	-0.22*** (0.027)	0.033* (0.018)	-0.011 (0.026)	0.094*** (0.028)
Work	0.010 (0.034)	-0.015 (0.023)	-0.015 (0.033)	-0.055 (0.035)
Study	0.051 (0.069)	-0.074 (0.060)	-0.067 (0.077)	-0.042 (0.082)
Rural	-0.015 (0.041)	-0.0072 (0.030)	0.11*** (0.041)	0.025 (0.041)
Population (log)	-0.016 (0.012)	-0.00039 (0.0079)	-0.013 (0.011)	-0.029** (0.012)
Longitude	-0.00066 (0.00052)	0.00046 (0.00040)	0.0016*** (0.00055)	-0.00016 (0.00054)
Latitude	-0.00078 (0.0028)	0.0025 (0.0019)	-0.0059** (0.0029)	-0.0059** (0.0030)
Distance to closest prison (log)	0.0078 (0.012)	0.0087 (0.0082)	0.0050 (0.012)	-0.0037 (0.012)
Distance to closest railway station (log)	-0.0023 (0.0080)	0.00077 (0.0053)	-0.0029 (0.0075)	0.0022 (0.0080)
Mean elevation	-0.000020 (0.000057)	0.000041 (0.000037)	0.000053 (0.000052)	-6.7e-06 (0.000052)
Experience of Soviet honor	0.052*** (0.012)	-0.015* (0.0091)	0.042*** (0.012)	0.033** (0.013)
Experience of Soviet repression	-0.0090 (0.022)	0.025* (0.015)	0.022 (0.020)	-0.0038 (0.022)
Constant	0.48*** (0.23)	0.087 (0.16)	0.62*** (0.23)	0.91*** (0.24)
Observations	1,311	1,311	1,311	1,311
R-squared	0.147	0.030	0.049	0.074

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (4), where $Y_{imr} = 1$ for different binary variables: “War support” (Column 1), “Do not support war” (Column 2), “Some relatives participate in the war” (Column 3), “Vote for Putin” (Column 4). Respondents from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level.

Table B12: Share of people with higher education (Census 2010).

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Share with higher education in municipality (Census 2010)					
Gulag within 10 km	0.015*** (0.0052)	0.017*** (0.0061)	0.023** (0.0098)	0.0054 (0.0052)	0.015* (0.0090)	0.0040 (0.0057)
Gulag 10-30 km		0.0088* (0.0048)	0.016** (0.0071)	0.00063 (0.0055)	0.015** (0.0069)	0.0013 (0.0053)
Gulag 30-50 km			0.0044 (0.0057)	0.0085*** (0.0018)	0.0056 (0.0058)	0.0081*** (0.0017)
Gulag 50-100 km			-0.00011 (0.0036)	0.0014 (0.0019)	0.0013 (0.0034)	0.0012 (0.0019)
Protest potential					0.0058*** (0.0013)	0.0019* (0.0010)
Prison within 10 km	0.0075** (0.0035)	0.0074** (0.0035)	0.013** (0.0061)	-0.00025 (0.0035)	0.0020 (0.0066)	-0.0024 (0.0032)
Observations	2,334	2,334	1,165	1,169	1,165	1,169
R-squared	0.742	0.743	0.731	0.598	0.744	0.602
Region FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sample	All	All	Young	Old	Young	Old

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (1), where the share of people with higher education is a dependent variable. The vector of controls M_m excludes it from the regressors. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-2 include all remaining municipalities. Column 3,5 (4,6) includes municipalities with a younger (older) population, i.e., the share of people aged below 40 is below (above) the median among all municipalities according to the Census 2010. Standard errors are clustered on the regional level.

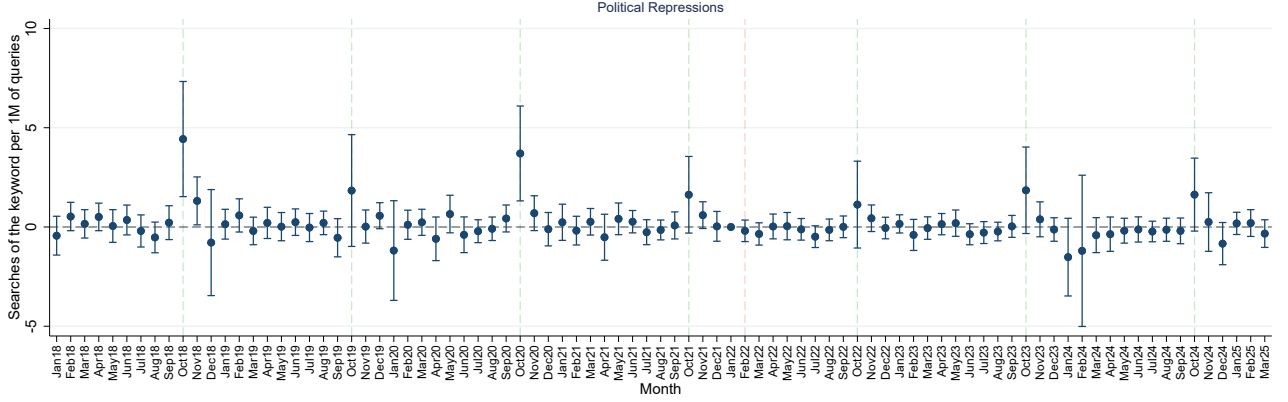
Table B13: A respondent has higher education indicated in public opinion surveys

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Has higher education (=1)			
Gulag within 10 km	0.041*** (0.012)	0.050*** (0.012)	0.047** (0.021)	0.052*** (0.018)
Gulag 10-30 km		0.032** (0.014)	0.056** (0.024)	0.024 (0.019)
Gulag 30-50 km			-0.0093 (0.023)	0.015 (0.019)
Gulag 50-100 km			0.027 (0.019)	-0.0077 (0.015)
Prison within 10 km	0.036*** (0.011)	0.037*** (0.011)	0.061*** (0.017)	0.019 (0.013)
Observations	24,532	24,532	10,983	13,322
R-squared	0.171	0.172	0.236	0.189
Region-Wave FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Age	Any	Any	18-44	45+

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The table shows estimates for specification (2), where the binary variable $Y_{imrt} = 1$ if a respondent has higher education. Higher education is removed as a control from X_i . Respondents from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Columns 1-2 include all respondents from the remaining municipalities. Column 3 (4) includes respondents aged 18-44 (45+). Standard errors are clustered on the municipality level.

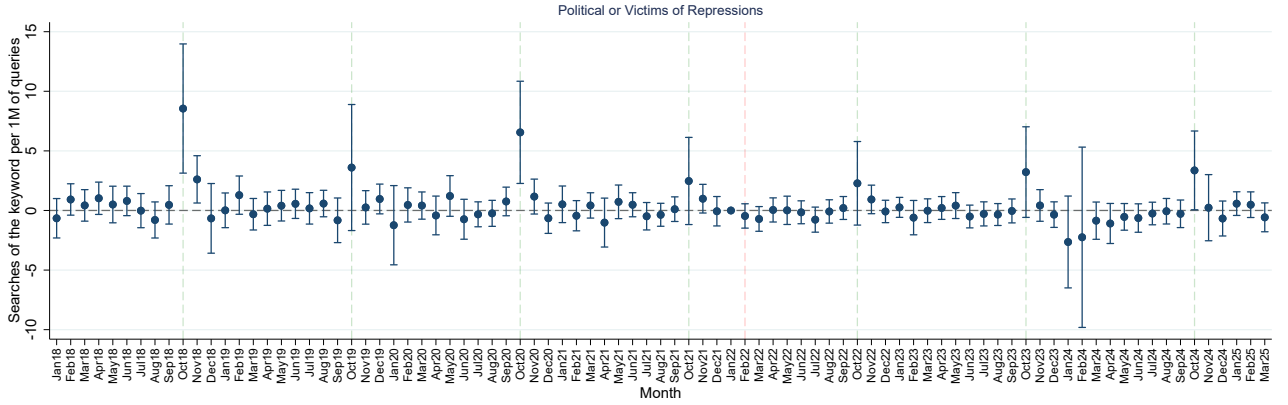
B.2 Figures of Appendix B

Figure B1: Event-study coefficients for Yandex queries of “*Political repressions*”



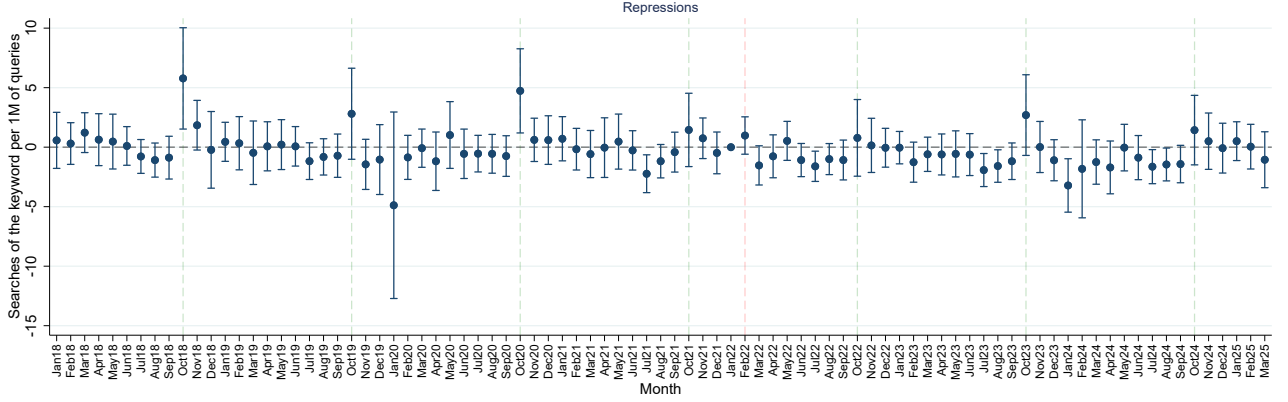
Note. The figure shows estimates of α_t from specification (3) with 95% confidence intervals. The dependent variable is the number of searches for “*Political repressions*” per 1 M queries. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Vertical dashed lines are in October of each year and in February 2022. Standard errors are clustered on the city level.

Figure B2: Event-study coefficients for Yandex queries of “*Political repressions*” or “*Victims of repressions*”



Note. The figure shows estimates of α_t from specification (3) with 95% confidence intervals. The dependent variable is the sum of searches for “*Political repressions*” and “*Victims of repressions*” per 1 M queries. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Vertical dashed lines are in October of each year and in February 2022. Standard errors are clustered on the city level.

Figure B3: Event-study coefficients for Yandex queries of “*Repressions*”



Note. The figure shows estimates of α_t from specification (3) with 95% confidence intervals. The dependent variable is the number of searches for “Repressions” per 1 M queries. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Crimea are excluded. Vertical dashed lines are in October of each year and in February 2022. Standard errors are clustered on the city level.