

FAKE OBSERVERS



**FAKE INTERNATIONAL
OBSERVERS AND EXPERTS AT
RUSSIA'S FRAUDULENT 2024
"PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION"**

**ANTON SHEKHOVTSOV,
OLENA SANDUL**

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Stefanie Schiffer, Thomas Vogel

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- During the “presidential elections” held in Russia from 15-17 March 2024, Vladislav Davankov (“New People” party), Nikolay Kharitonov (Communist Party), Vladimir Putin, and Leonid Slutsky (Liberal-Democratic Party) competed for the presidency. Enabled to run yet again by controversial constitutional amendments effective 4 July 2020, Putin dominated the “elections” together with his controlled “opposition,” excluding genuine opposition figures. Described by the civic election observation organization “Golos” as an imitation, these “elections” occurred under Putin’s regime control, both within Russia and illegally in occupied Ukrainian territories, including Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, ARC, and Sevastopol.
- In 2024, Russia decided not to invite any OSCE (the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) observers to monitor the “elections”, in violation of the Istanbul Document 1999, according to which OSCE participating states committed themselves to inviting observers from the ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) and OSCE PA, in addition to other OSCE participating states.
- In an attempt to provide a degree of international legitimacy to the “presidential election”, Moscow invited 1115 “international observers and experts” from 129 countries. The CEC decided not to publish lists of any foreign individuals invited to “monitor” the “presidential election”.
- Our analysis of Russian and other media reports, as well as social networks such as Facebook, X/Twitter and Telegram, allowed us to identify 182 foreign “observers” and “experts” invited by the Russian authorities to give international legitimacy to the 2024 “presidential elections” both in Russia and on Russia-occupied Ukrainian territories.

- In contrast to the previous Russian presidential and parliamentary “elections”, Russian authorities failed, in 2024, to engage prominent EU politicians, including active members of the European Parliament or the parliaments of EU Member States. Such a development seems to be an effect of the increasingly toxic nature of the Putin regime and a result of the introduction of a stricter code of conduct in the European Parliament.
- Moscow succeeded in attracting sizable European delegations of “observers” and “experts” from France, Italy and Serbia, as well as numerous individuals from Africa, Asia and Latin America, which reflects the Kremlin’s strategy of building networks of influence not only in the West, but also across the so-called “Global South”.
- The overwhelming majority of invited European and American “observers” and “experts” have a record of previous involvement in various pro-Kremlin efforts that involve, but are not limited to, the following activities: (1) previous participation in politically biased and/or illegitimate electoral monitoring missions in Russia and elsewhere; (2) legitimisation and justification of the actions of the Russian Federation directed at undermining Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity (illegal visits to Russia-annexed Crimea and occupied territories of Eastern Ukraine); (3) cooperation with the Russian state-controlled instruments of disinformation and propaganda (RT, Sputnik, etc.); (4) membership in Western and Russian pro-Kremlin organisations, movements and groups.
- “International observers” and “experts” suggests that they were invited to Russia for three main reasons: (1) Russian media needed favourable comments from foreign “observers” and “experts” to demonstrate that the “voting” proceeded in a calm and orderly manner; (2) Russian media needed Kremlin-friendly foreign “observers” to relativise any criticism of the “presidential election” from mainstream Western media, politicians and officials; (3) Russian media and Russian official sources used comments from “international observers” and “experts” to disinform the Russian audience about the international perception of the “electoral process” in Russia.

- When commenting on the “presidential election” to the Russian media, “international observers” and “experts” pushed ten major propaganda/disinformation narratives: (1) the “presidential election” was characterised by a high turnout; (2) voters could freely express their will, while Russian authorities exerted no pressure on the voters; (3) there was a celebratory mood at the “polling stations”; (4) the “electoral process” was calm and orderly; (5) the voting proceeded in a transparent manner; (6) countries of the world should learn from Russia how to organise elections; (7) Western media and politicians are lying about the “elections” in Russia; (8) Russia is using advanced technologies to conduct elections; (9) voting in Russia is made easy for disabled and vulnerable people; (10) conducting elections for three days is a good practice.

- The EU needs to consider imposing sanctions and visa restrictions on non-EU citizens involved in illegal activities in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, as well as imposing sanctions against all Russian officials involved in the organisation of “voting” in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Institutions and national and regional parliaments in Europe should introduce laws and codes of conduct that would prevent their members from participating in politically biased election observation.

INTRODUCTION

On 15-17 March 2024, Russia held “presidential elections”, in which four people allegedly competed for the Russian presidential post: Vladislav Davankov (New People party), Nikolay Kharitonov (Communist Party of the Russian Federation), Vladimir Putin, and Leonid Slutsky (Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia).

This election, considered as deeply undemocratic and illegitimate for reasons we discuss, was given a sense of “legitimacy” for the Russian media by inviting “observers” and “experts”. This report provides a background on the election, the considerable issues of democratic accountability and legitimacy of the elections, before providing a list of identified “observers” and “experts” with common statements, clearly designed by the Kremlin, explained. We close with a call for action to help remedy this situation.

Putin was able to run in the “elections” due to the controversial amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which he proposed during his address to the Federal Assembly on 15 January 2020. According to the original Russian Constitution of 1993, one and the same person could not be elected Russian president for more than two terms in a row. The suggested amendments to the Constitution would nullify the number of presidential terms served by Putin and former President Dmitry Medvedev, therefore allowing Putin to run in the 2024 “elections”. The amendments took effect on 4 July 2020 following the “all-Russian voting”, a procedure created specifically for the “public endorsement” of Putin’s proposal to amend the Constitution.

All Putin’s official competitors at the 2024 “presidential elections” were, in fact, part of the Kremlin regime as they represent the controlled “opposition” that never challenged Putin’s rule. No representative of the genuine Russian opposition was allowed to run in the “elections”¹.

1 “Putin Wins Election with No Effective Opposition”, *VOA News*, 18 March (2024), <https://www.voanews.com/a/putin-wins-election-with-no-effective-opposition/7531874.html>

Alexei Navalny, arguably the most popular representative of the Russian opposition forces, had been barred from running in Russian “presidential elections” by the Central Election Commission (CEC) as early as the end of 2017,² because of the past criminal conviction, which the European Court of Human Rights ruled to have been “arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable”.³ Moreover, Navalny was poisoned with a Novichok nerve by the operatives of the Putin regime in August 2020,⁴ was arrested by the regime in January 2021, and later sent to an Arctic Circle penal colony, where the conditions are believed to have led to his death on 16 February 2024⁵, just one month prior to the 2024 “presidential elections”.

In addition, minor Russian politicians Yekaterina Duntsova and Boris Nadezhdin, who criticised the Russian full-scale invasion against Ukraine and submitted their presidential bids to the CEC, were eventually barred from running in the “elections” too.⁶ Presidential manipulations with the Russian Constitution and the total control of the Putin regime over official bodies such as CEC, and taking into consideration the reports of the renowned Russian civic election observation organisation “Golos” on the fraudulent nature of the “Presidential elections”,⁷ it is viable to conclude that they were just an imitation of the electoral process. In its resolution adopted on 13 October 2023, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) stated that “the overwhelming power of the [Russian] president resulting from the extremely long term in office combined with

- 2 “Putin Critic Navalny Barred from Russian Presidential Election”, *Reuters*, 25 December (2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSR4N1OL00Z/>.
- 3 “Navalny Judgment Contravenes Russia’s International Human Rights Obligations”, *Council of Europe*, 2 February (2021), <https://www.coe.int/tr/web/commissioner/-/navalny-judgment-contravenes-russia-s-international-human-rights-obligations>.
- 4 “FSB Team of Chemical Weapon Experts Implicated in Alexey Navalny Novichok Poisoning”, *Bellingcat*, 14 December (2020), <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2020/12/14/fsb-team-of-chemical-weapon-experts-implicated-in-alexey-navalny-novichok-poisoning/>.
- 5 “Torture routine in the prison where Alexei Navalny died”, *Le Monde*, 27 February (2024), https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/02/27/torture-routine-in-the-prison-where-alexei-navalny-died_6563127_4.html
- 6 Mark Trevelyan, “Yekaterina Duntsova Barred from Running against Putin in Election”, *Reuters*, 23 December (2023), <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/would-be-putin-challenger-duntsova-barred-running-election-campaign-team-2023-12-23/>; Guy Faulconbridge, Andrew Osborn, “Russian Anti-War Putin Rival Nadezhdin Plans Court Appeal after Election Ban”, *Reuters*, 8 February (2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-anti-war-putin-rival-nadezhdin-says-he-has-been-barred-election-2024-02-08/>.
- 7 “The Statement Following the Observation of the March 17, 2024 Presidential Election in the Russian Federation”, *Golos*, 19 March (2024), <http://golosinfo.org/en/articles/146797>.

the lack of any checks and balances such as a strong parliament, an independent judiciary, free media and a vibrant civil society ha[d] turned the Russian Federation into a *de facto* dictatorship".⁸ The same resolution called "on the member States of the Council of Europe to recognise Vladimir Putin as illegitimate after the end of his current presidential term and to cease all contact with him, except for humanitarian contact and in the pursuit of peace".⁹

Several prominent Russian opposition figures such as Alexei Navalny's widow Yulia Navalnaya¹⁰ and jailed activist Vladimir Kara-Murza also called on the international community to deny recognition of Putin as the legitimate president of Russia following the 2024 "elections".

Another development that undermined international legitimacy of the Russian "elections" even further was the fact that they took place not only within Russia's internationally recognised borders (as well as in diplomatic offices outside of Russia), but also, illegally, on the Ukrainian territories occupied by the Russian military in the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, as well as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) and Sevastopol.¹¹ The European Union (EU) strongly condemned "the illegal holding of so-called 'elections' in the territories of Ukraine" that Russia had temporarily occupied, and stated that the "elections" in those territories represented "yet another manifest violation by Russia of international law, including the UN Charter, and of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity".¹²

8 "Examining the Legitimacy and Legality of the Ad Hominem Term-Limit Waiver for the Incumbent President of the Russian Federation", *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, 13 October (2023), <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/33150/html>.

9 Ibid.

10 Guy Faulconbridge, Andrew Osborn, "Yulia Navalnaya Tells West to Refuse to Recognise Russia's March Election", *Reuters*, 20 February (2024), <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-has-not-watched-yulia-navalnayas-video-statement-says-kremlin-2024-02-20/>.

11 "Opora Calls Nnot to Recognize the Results of 'Elections of the President of Russia' and the Powers of the Self-Proclaimed Head of State", *Opora*, 15 March (2024), <https://www.oporaua.org/en/viyna/opora-calls-not-to-recognize-the-results-of-elections-of-the-president-of-russia-and-the-powers-of-the-self-proclaimed-head-of-state-25136>.

12 "Russia/Ukraine: Statement by the High Representative on Behalf of the EU on Russian Presidential Elections and Their Non-Applicability on Ukrainian Territory", *European Council*, 18 March (2024), <https://web.archive.org/web/20240320144905/https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/03/18/russia-ukraine-statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-russian-presidential-elections-and-their-non-applicability-on-ukrainian-territory/>.

INTERNATIONAL “OBSERVATION” AND “EXPERTISE” AT THE “PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS”

Despite Russia’s membership in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the country’s relationship with its reputable election monitoring institution, namely the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), had long been deteriorating.

In 2021, using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext, Russia imposed limitations on the OSCE ODIHR election observation mission that was planning to monitor the Russian 2021 parliamentary elections. In May-June 2021, the OSCE assessed that the ODIHR would need to deploy 80 long-term and 420 short-term observers in Russia,¹³ but Moscow invited only 50 observers from the ODIHR and 10 observers from the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE (OSCE PA). In result, the OSCE was compelled not to send any observers to Russia because a limited mission would not be able to carry out a comprehensive, accurate and credible observation of the Russian elections.¹⁴

13 “Russian Federation State Duma Elections, 19 September 2021. ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report”, *OSCE ODIHR*, 25 June (2021), https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/f/491066_0.pdf.

14 “No OSCE Observers for Russian Parliamentary Elections Following Major Limitations”, *OSCE*, 2 August (2021), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia/494488>.

In 2024, following the trend set by the authoritarian regime of self-proclaimed president of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko,¹⁵ Russia decided not to invite any OSCE observers at all in violation of the Istanbul Document 1999, according to which OSCE participating states committed themselves to inviting observers from the ODIHR and OSCE PA, in addition to other OSCE participating states.¹⁶ The ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci said that his office was disappointed at Russia's decision "not to invite the OSCE to observe the Russian presidential election", while the OSCE PA President Pia Kauma noted that "democratic backsliding [in Russia] ha[d] reached such a critical point" that the OSCE would not be able to "deploy observers for the presidential election".¹⁷

In response to the OSCE's decision, Russia's Foreign Ministry declared that the ODIHR did not "hold exclusive rights to observe or certify elections", and did not "have the authority to pass judgment".¹⁸ The Foreign Ministry also accused the ODIHR of is "violating the principles of objectivity, impartiality, and professionalism", and concluded that "the ODIHR election observation mission ha[d] no place at the upcoming presidential election in the Russian Federation".¹⁹

Moreover, Russia's CEC that would normally invite representatives of election commissions of other countries to observe elections in Russia, stated that it would not send invitations to the commissions based in "unfriendly states".²⁰ A list of "unfriendly countries and territories" was originally published in May 2021, and, since then, has expanded to 49 states that largely

15 "Decision Not to Invite OSCE Observers to Parliamentary Elections Contrary to Belarus' International Commitments", *OSCE*, 8 January (2024), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/561463>.

16 "Istanbul Document 1999", *OSCE*, 19 November (1999), <https://www.osce.org/mc/39569>.

17 "Russian Federation Flouts International Commitments Once again with Decision Not to Invite OSCE Observers to Presidential Election", *OSCE*, 29 January (2024), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia/562065>.

18 "Press Release on Why the OSCE ODIHR Will Not Be Present among International Election Observers during the 2024 Presidential Election in Russia", *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, 30 January (2024), https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1928501/?lang=en.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Ivan Kapustin, "Ne zovem, ne plachem: 'nedruzhestvennykh' nablyudateley ne priglasyat na vybory", *Izvestiya*, 13 January (2024), <https://iz.ru/1633566/ivan-kapustin/ne-zovem-ne-plachem-nedruzhestvennykh-nablyudatelei-ne-priglasiat-na-vybory>.

belong to the Western international community. At the same time, the CEC claimed that representatives of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Venezuela, Cambodia, Namibia, Cameroon, Myanmar, Thailand, Serbia, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh received invitations to monitor Russian "elections" issued by the CEC.²¹

In total, in an attempt to provide a degree of international legitimacy to the "presidential elections", Moscow invited – according to the chair of Russia's CEC Ella Pamfilova – 1115 "international observers and experts" from 129 countries.²² Out of those 1115, 706 people were reportedly accredited as "international observers" – more than 50% less than during the 2018 "presidential elections";²³ 224 people were international participants of the "World Youth Festival" held in Russia on 1-7 March 2024 who allegedly decided to prolong their stay and "get to know how elections are organised in Russia"; and 185 "experts" were invited by the state-controlled Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation (CCRF).²⁴

The concept of "international experts" was introduced into Russian tactics of socio-political manipulation not later than 2018,²⁵ in order to solve the following dilemma: the Kremlin wanted to boost international legitimacy of regional and local elections with the help of international monitors, but international observation is mentioned and defined only in Russian federal laws on parliamentary and presidential elections, while regulations on regional or local elections do not mention that form of observation. At the same time, no Russian law forbids international observation of elections

21 Ibid.

22 "Na vyborah v Rossii rabotayut 1115 mezhdunarodnykh nablyudateley i ekspertov", *Vedomosti*, 17 March (2024), <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/2024/03/17/1025704-na-prezidentskih-viborah>.

23 According to Nikolay Levichev, a CEC's member, 1513 foreign observers from 115 countries monitored the Russian presidential election in 2018, see Valentina Egorova, "Svoimi glazami", *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 18 March (2018), <https://rg.ru/2018/03/18/za-vyborami-v-rf-sledilo-rekord-noe-chislo-mezhdunarodnyh-nablyudatelej.html>.

24 "Na vyborah v Rossii rabotayut".

25 *Politically Biased Election Observation – A Threat to the Integrity of International Institutions* (Berlin: European Platform for Democratic Elections, 2019), <https://www.epde.org/en/documents/details/politically-biased-election-observation-a-threat-to-the-integrity-of-international-institutions.html>.

below the federal level, but Russian institutions adhere to a rigid interpretation of the legislation: everything that is not explicitly authorised is, therefore, forbidden. Nevertheless, to give the appearance of international legitimisation of Russian elections below the federal level, Moscow would invite foreigners to "observe" elections as "international experts".

The status of "international experts" is officially lower than that of "international observers": they are not accredited by Russia's CEC but are simply invited by the CCRF as private individuals as "experts". In practical terms, however, "international experts" are involved in the same activities in Russia as "international observers": they visit polling stations, make comments on the conduct of elections to the media, participate in press conferences related to elections, etc. Moreover, distinction between official "observers" and "experts" is often ignored by the Russian state-controlled or pro-regime media whose task or objective is to portray various aspects of Russian elections in the light most favourable to the Kremlin.

The involvement of the participants of the "World Youth Festival" as "experts" at the 2024 "presidential elections" was not a new practice either. On 13-16 March 2018, Moscow hosted the international youth forum "Russia – a Country of Opportunities" that was organised by the Russian Presidential Administration. When the forum ended, right on the day of the 2018 "presidential elections", Russian coordinators took some of the participants of the forum to Russia-annexed Crimea and Sevastopol where they visited "polling stations" and made favourable election-related comments for the Russian media.²⁶ The Putin regime regularly uses events such as youth forums as recruitment sites, so it is not surprising that Russian operatives attempt to build closer ties with young foreigners through different activities, including those outside of forums.

According to Konstantin Kosachev, Deputy Chair of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, the CCRF was not the only organisation that invited "international experts" to the Russian "elections". So did the Federal Assembly, Russia's national legislature comprising of the State Duma (lower house) and the Federation Council (upper house): it invited dozens

26 Anton Shekhovtsov, "Foreign Observation of the Illegitimate Presidential Election in Crimea in March 2018", *European Platform for Democratic Elections*, 3 April (2018), <https://www.epde.org/en/news/details/foreign-observation-of-the-illegitimate-presidential-election-in-crimea-in-march-2018-1375.html>.

of “international experts”, in addition to more than two hundred “observers” from national parliaments, predominantly from Latin America, Asia and Africa, as well as organisations such as the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly, Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and Central American Parliament.²⁷

Particular Russian pro-regime “civil society” organisations coordinated contacts between the Russian state structures that officially issued individual invitations to monitor the “elections” and the actual “international observers” and “experts”. One of those organisations was the “Independent Social Monitoring” (ISM)²⁸ chaired by Alexander Brod who had been involved in coordinating “international observation” since, at least, 2014: first as the head of the “Civic Control” Association (until 2021), and, since then, as the head of the ISM.

The CEC used to publish lists of observers from international organisations, although it would not release names of observers invited on the individual basis, but, in 2024, the CEC decided not to publish any lists at all. A State Duma source of the Russian pro-regime media platform RTVI said that “the unwillingness of the Federal Assembly and CEC to disclose lists of observers or even countries where they came from” could be explained by “security issues against the background of unprecedented pressure that individual observers experience – they already receive threats in their own countries”.²⁹

27 Yevgeniya Chukalina, Olga Zenkovich, Andrey Fedotov, “Bez OBSE, no s Iranom: kto priekhal nablyudat’ za vyborami v Rossii”, RTVI, 15 March (2024), <https://rtvi.com/stories/bez-obse-no-s-iranom-kto-priekhal-nablyudat-za-vyborami-v-rossii/>.

28 “Predstaviteli obshchestvennogo kontrolya i mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli otmetili prozrachnost’ vyborov Prezidenta”, *Nezavisimyy obshchestvenny monitoring*, 18 March (2024), <https://nom24.ru/info/events/predstaviteli-obshchestvennogo-kontrolya-i-mezhdunarodnye-nablyudateli-otmetili-prozrachnost-vyborov/>.

29 Chukalina, Zenkovich, Fedotov, “Bez OBSE, no s Iranom”.

This argument, at least partially, makes sense: many of those who, especially coming from Western countries, regularly participate in Russian “international observation”, are seen in their societies and internationally as instruments of Russian propaganda and often criticised in mainstream media. However, this argument cannot explain why Russian state-controlled and pro-regime media so eagerly give publicity and identify by name different “observers” and “experts” during their visits to Russia and to occupied parts of Ukraine.

LIST OF “OBSERVERS” AND “EXPERTS” AT THE RUSSIAN “PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION”

Our analysis of Russian and other media reports, as well as social networks such as Facebook, X/Twitter and Telegram, allowed us to identify 182 foreign “observers” and “experts” invited by the Russian authorities to give international legitimacy to the 2024 “presidential elections” both in Russia and on Russia-occupied Ukrainian territories, see Table 1 (Russia-occupied Ukrainian territories are marked with *).

Table 1. Identified “international observers” and “experts” at the Russian “presidential election” present in Russia and Russia-occupied Ukrainian territories on 15-17 March 2024*

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of “observation”
Algeria	Ismail Mujahid	n/a	Samara
	Laeed Zaghlami	University of Algiers	Kherson Oblast*
	Elena Corregido	Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista)	Nizhny Novgorod
Argentina	Lucas Adrian Garcia	n/a	Prymorye, Moscow
	Fernando Riva Zucchelli	Noticias Urbanas (media)	[unknown]
Argentina/Spain	Lois Pérez Leira	Galician Unions Confederacy (Confederación Intersindical Galega)	Volgograd
Australia	Adrian Mcrae	Member of the Port Hedland council	[unknown]
Austria	Josef Kaltenegger	CENAVIT GmbH, Josef Kaltenegger ITC Agrar GmbH	Perm

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of "observation"
Bangladesh	Mahfuz Ahmed	n/a	Kazan
	Mustafa Maqsood Un Nabi	n/a	Chelyabinsk
Benin	Micheline Gbèha	Advisor to the Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Benin	Ural
	Raji Lassi	n/a	Ural
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Srđan Mazalica	MP, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata)	Nizhny Novgorod
	Miroslav Vujičić	MP, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata)	Nizhny Novgorod
Brazil	Henrique Domingues	BRICS Forum	[unknown]
	Carolina Bernardes Machado Oliveira Silva Enham	Honorary Consul of Russia in Belo Horizonte	Saint Petersburg
	Fabiano Melnichuk	n/a	[unknown]
Bulgaria	Boyan Chukov	n/a	Bashkortstan
	Elisaveta Kamburova	Efir.info (media)	Samara
	Plamen Taskov Miletkov	"Assembly of Nations of Bulgaria" (NGO)	Perm
Burundi	Gélase Daniel Ndabirabe	President of the National Assembly, "National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy"	[unknown]
	Chhit Kimyeat	MP, Cambodian People's Party	Moscow
Cambodia	Pai Sambo	n/a	Nizhny Novgorod
	Vaddhana Setha	Council of Ministers	Nizhny Novgorod
Came- roon	Fus Ndedi Elise Linda	n/a	Krasnoyarsk
	Nathalie Taka	n/a	Luhansk Oblast*
Central African Republic	Mathias Barthelemy Morouba	President of the National Election Commission	[unknown]
Chad Chile	Eric Mocnga Topona	Deutsche Welle (media)	Chelyabinsk
	Javier Pineda	n/a	Kherson Oblast*
China	Zhao Zhongyuan	Director of the China Technology Transfer Centre of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation	Novosibirsk

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of “observation”
Columbia	María Consuelo Ahumada Beltrán	Universidad Externado de Colombia, Historic Pact for Colombia (Pacto Histórico) political bloc	Chelyabinsk
	Pablo Julio Cruz Ocampo	“Voices of Peace and Reconciliation” (Voces de Paz y Reconciliación)	Moscow
Costa Rica	Randolph Coto Echeverría	Minister Plenipotentiary, Counselor and Consul General of the Embassy of the Republic of Costa Rica in the Russian Federation	[unknown]
Democratic Republic of Congo	Patrick Mandzela	Consul of the Republic of Congo in St. Petersburg	Nizhniy Tagil
	Cornelia Muizi	n/a	Luhansk Oblast*
	Toto Kalenga Kabengele	n/a	[unknown]
Dominican Republic	Joel Irisaris Paulino Castellanos	Advisor to the Vice Ministry of Housing and Building Policies and Planning	Kazan
Ecuador	Nicanor Moscoso	President of the Council of Electoral Experts of Latin America	[unknown]
Egypt	Ahmed Bandari	Director of the Executive Body of the National Elections Authority	[unknown]
Ethiopia	Petros Woldegiorgis	President of Bonga University	Moscow

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of "observation"
France	Yvan Benedetti	The Nationalists (Les Nationalistes)	Novosibirsk
	Loup Bommier	Mayor of Gurgy-le-Château, "Reconquest!" (Reconquête!)	[unknown]
	Lucien Cerise	n/a	Zaporizhzhia Oblast*
	Dominique Delawarde	n/a	[unknown]
	Cyril Gaucher	Deputy mayor of Talant, The Republicans (Les Républicains)	Moscow
	Jean-Marc de Lacoste-Lareymondie	National Rally (Rassemblement National)	[unknown]
	Alesya Miloradovich	n/a	[unknown]
	Aymeri de Montesquiou-Fezensac d'Artagnan	n/a	Donetsk Oblast*
	Zang Nézouné Mahamat	President of the Pan-African Friendship (Amicale Panafricaine)	Chelyabinsk
	Franck Pengam	Géopolitique Profonde (media)	Saint Petersburg
	Christian Arsène Robert-Noël Roe	n/a	Kherson Oblast*
	Yannick Urrien	Dans Bourse (media), Kernews (media)	Moscow
Michel Voisin	The Republicans (Les Républicains)	ARC*	
Germany	Wilhelm Domke-Schulz	domke-schulz-film (production company)	Kherson Oblast*
	Andreas Jurca	Member of the Bavarian State Parliament, Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)	Vladivostok
	Elena Roon	Member of the Bavarian State Parliament, Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)	Vladivostok
	Thomas Röper	Anti-Spiegel (media)	Donetsk Oblast*
	Ulrich Singer	Member of the Bavarian State Parliament, Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)	Vladivostok

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of "observation"
Ghana	Ahmed Bening	Secretary-General of Pan African Youth Union	ARC*, Sevastopol*
	Dimitris Kazakis	Secretary General of the United Popular Front	Pskov Oblast
	Panagiotis Lafazanis	Democratic Movement of National Liberation	Perm
Greece	Ioannis Paidas	President of the Economic and Social Council of Greece	Nizhny Novgorod
	Dimitrios Patelis	Technical University of Crete	Luhansk Oblast*
	Apostolos Xyraphis	Secretary General of the Economic and Social Council of Greece	Nizhny Novgorod
Guatemala	Victor Hugo Cifuentes Delgado	MP, National Unity of Hope (Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza)	Tatarstan
Honduras	Rafael Edgardo Barahona Osorio	President Commissioner at the Honduran Institute of Land Transportation	Saint Petersburg
	Fernando Paz Velasquez	"Young Pan Globalist" (organisation)	[unknown]
Iceland	Erna Ýr Öldudóttir	Fréttin (media)	Nizhniy Tagil
India	Purnima Anand	President of the BRICS International Forum	ARC*
	Rajesh Bagha	Bharatiya Janata Party	Moscow
	Fauzan Al-Rasyid	n/a	Volgograd
	Mochamad Alvin Dwiana Qobulsyah	KBS World Radio (media), Binus University	Luhansk Oblast*
	Yeyen Rostiani	Republika (media)	ARC*
	Devie Rahmawati	University of Indonesia	Tatarstan
Indonesia	Fathan Asadudin Sembiring	n/a	Krasnoyarsk
	Adri Arlan Sinaga	Pelita Harapan University	ARC*
	Kartika Sari	Rakyat Merdeka Daily (media)	[unknown]
	Fadli Zon	MP, Deputy Chairman of the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra)	[unknown]
Iran	Mohamed Said Bahmani	Charkhan (media)	Chelyabinsk
Iraq	Bavar Muhammad Rasul	n/a	ARC*

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of "observation"
Italy	Pino Oddone Adone	Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia)	Zaporizhzhia Oblast*
	Amedeo Avondet	Founder of the "United Italy" (Italia Unita) group	Ural
	Pino Cabras	Leader of the "Alternative" (Alternativa) party	Moscow
	David Cacchione	Banda Bassotti (music band)	Luhansk Oblast*
	Giorgio Descovich Deschi	"Liberation of Trieste" (Liberazione Triestina)	Luhansk Oblast*
	Stefano Ferluga	n/a	Luhansk Oblast*
	Donato Lorenzo Tilli	n/a	Luhansk Oblast*
	Andrea Lucidi	n/a	Luhansk Oblast*
	Ivan Marino	University of Naples "L'Orientale"	Pskov Oblast
	Andrea Palmeri	n/a	Zaporizhzhia Oblast*
	Rosario Rocco Del Priore	"Italexit" (political party)	Donetsk Oblast*, Rostov Oblast
	Pasquale Salatino	Osservatore Calabrese (media)	Zaporizhzhia Oblast*
	Stefano Valdegamberi	Member of the Regional Council of Veneto	Moscow
Kenya	Ezekiel Kanagi Muthee	n/a	[unknown]
	Alex Njuguna	Founder of the Ale Brands Media Group	Perm
Kyr-gyzstan	Azamat Kabaev	Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation in the city of Krasnoyarsk	Krasnoyarsk
	Mirlan Parkhanov	Department of Culture, Sport, Tourism and Youth at the Bishkek City Council	Pskov Oblast
Laos	Sanya Praseuth	MP, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly	Moscow
Latvia	Sofia Vasilyevskaya	n/a	Zaporizhzhia Oblast*

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of “observation”
Lebanon	Assem Chaya	n/a	Saint Petersburg
	Zeinab Kawsarani	n/a	[unknown]
	Elie Rizq	n/a	ARC*
Madagascar	Andrianirina Briand-Joseph	Advisor at the African Judo Union	Moscow
	Suhail Bin Wan Azhar	n/a	Chelyabinsk
Malaysia	Mohd Imran bin Tamrin	United Malays National Organisation	Chelyabinsk
Maldives	Mohamed Hoodh Ibrahim	Maldivian Red Crescent	ARC*
Mali	Mountaga Diakité	MP, National Transition Council of Mali, Pan-African Youth Union	Saint Petersburg
Mauritania	Mohamed Mahmoud Hadj Brahim	Inspector General at the Ministry of National Education, member of the Commission Nationale des Concours	Pskov Oblast
	Mohamed Ahmed Salem Bouna Moktar	MP, head of the Federation of Financial Institutions	Pskov Oblast
Mexico	Valería Flores	National Political Commissioner of the state of Coahuila, Labour Party Mexico (Partido del Trabajo)	Saint Petersburg
	Navor Alberto Rojas Mancera	Member of the Senate Chamber of the General Congress of the United Mexican States, National Regeneration Movement (Morena)	[unknown]
Moldova	Elena Beleacova	MP, Bloc of Communist and Socialists	Volgograd
	Ivanna Köksal	MP, Bloc of Communist and Socialists	[unknown]
Montenegro	Aleksandra Deletić	Secretary General of the “True Montenegro” (Prava Crna Gora) party	Saint Petersburg
	Boban Radović	Member of the Podgorica City Council, Secretary General of the Free Montenegro (Slobodna Crna Gora) party	[unknown]
Namibia	John Musialela Likando	MP, South West Africa People’s Organisation	[unknown]
	Nomen Maurice Manusep	n/a	Luhansk Oblast*

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of "observation"
Nepal	Ram Kumar Rai	MP, Communist Party of Nepal	Chelyabinsk
	Prakash Kumar Shrestha	Nepal Rastra Bank	Northern Osetia
New Zealand/ Sweden	Gregory Simons	n/a	Moscow
Nigeria	Adu Aba Ali	n/a	[unknown]
	Saadia Afzaal	Suno News HD (media)	Volgograd
Pakistan	Hamayun Khan	n/a	Moscow
	Rashid Khan	n/a	Chelyabinsk
	Humna Raza	n/a	Kazan
Papua New Guinea	Samsone Hone	Global Youth Parliament	Nizhny Novgorod
Paraguay	Victorio Román Cuyer Gómez	Saraki Foundation (NGO)	ARC*
	Magín Benítez Benítez	Mayor of Villarrica	Samara
	María Constanza Benítez De Benítez	MP, Authentic Radical Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico)	Samara
Portugal	Ivan Manoel de Oliveira Dias	n/a	Moscow
	Manuel Pires da Rocha	Member of the Municipal Assembly of the city of Coimbra, Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português)	[unknown]
Republic of South Africa	Zolani Mkiva	MP, Delegate to the South African National Council of Provinces	Saint Petersburg
Salvador	Jaime Dagoberto Guevara Argueta	MP, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional)	Saint Petersburg
	Rocío Yamileth Menjivar Tejada	Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador	Saint Petersburg
Senegal	Suleiman Anta Ndiaye	Vice Chairman of the "International Movement of Russophiles"	Tver Oblast

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of “observation”
Serbia	Miloš Bandur	MP, Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka)	Sevastopol*
	Dejan Djokić	Serbian People’s Party (Srpska narodna partija)	Pskov
	Jovan Janjic	MP, “We – Voice from The People” (Mi – Glas iz naroda)	[unknown]
	Lidija Makragic	Informer Televizija (media)	Moscow
	Dušan Petrović	Member of the Socio-Economic Council of the Republic of Serbia	Nizhny Novgorod
	Nenad Popović	Founder of the Serbian People’s Party (Srpska narodna partija)	[unknown]
	Vladimir Prebiračević	Member of the Executive Board (Vojvodina), Serbian People’s Party (Srpska narodna partija)	Volgograd
	Bojan Smiljanic	Secretary of the Economic and Social Council of the Republic of Srpska	Samara
	Nataša Trifunović	n/a	Vladivostok
	Jovan Vulović	n/a	Chelyabinsk
Slovakia	Matúš Alexa	“Brother for brother” (Brat za brata) bikers club	ARC*, Sevastopol*
	Ján Brnák	n/a	ARC*, Sevastopol*
	Michal Il’kanin	Head of the Svidník District Office, “Slovakia” (Slovensko) party	[unknown]
	Michal Radačovský	Slovak Patriot (Slovenský Patriot) party	Pskov Oblast
South Korea	Moon Jong-Il	n/a	Volgograd
	Yoon Jung Sik	n/a	Volgograd

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of "observation"
Spain	Enrique Javier Refoyo Acedo	n/a	Kherson Oblast*
	Juan Antonio Aguilar	Director of the "Spanish Institute of Geopolitics" (Instituto Español de Geopolítica)	Tatarstan
	José Manjón	n/a	Kazan
	Fernando Moragón	President of the Spanish-Russian Observatory of Eurasia, and the Spanish-Chinese Council "One Belt, One Road"	Donetsk Oblast*
	Pedro Mouriño	Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation in Galicia	Yekaterinburg
Sri Lanka	Kulatunga Arachchilage Buddhika Lakruwan Kulatunga	n/a	Pskov Oblast
	Weerasumana Weerasinghe	MP, Communist Party of Sri Lanka	Bashkorstan
Syria	Mais Elkrydee	Member of the Syrian Elections Committee	Luhansk Oblast*
Tanzania	Sharifu B. Dadi	Founder and CEO of the Brighten Dreams and Dignity Foundation	Yugra
	Joseph Mgamma	Party of the Revolution (Chama Cha Mapinduzi)	[unknown]
	Marco Charles Mtunga	Director General of the Tanzania Cotton Board	Tatarstan
	Francis A. Mwakabumbe	Director General of Tanzania Cashew Board	Tatarstan
Turkey	Düzcimen Cüneyt	n/a	Krasnoyarsk
	Ahmet Ekşi	Turkey Representative of the Red Army Choir	Pskov Oblast
	Yavuz Yilmaz	n/a	Perm
Uruguay	Julio Faravelli	National Commission of Social Organizations of Uruguay	Zaporizhzhia Oblast*

Country	Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Region/city of "observation"
USA	Donald de Berardinis	Rebel Alliance News (media), Green Party of the United States	Krasnoyarsk
	Steve Gill	n/a	Samara
	Patrick Henningsen	21st Century Wire (media)	[unknown]
	Daniel Martin Kovalik	n/a	Kherson Oblast*
	Caleb Todd Maupin	Center for Political Innovation (media)	Moscow
	Cynthia McKinney	n/a	[unknown]
	George Kline Preston IV	n/a	[unknown]
Uzbe- kistan	Abdullo Aslonov	MP, Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party	Pskov Oblast
	Denis Kim	n/a	Pskov Oblast
	Mayelin Raquel Arias	n/a	Samara
Vene- zuela	Simon Elias Arrechider Moreno	Director of BitRadio (media)	Samara
	Mario Antonio Castillo Perez	MP, United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela)	Saint Petersburg
	Imad Saab	Member of the Funding and Political Participation Commission, United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela)	[unknown]
	Janlisbert Velascois	n/a	Samara
Zim- babwe	Priscilla Makanyara Chigumba	Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission	[unknown]

It is worth noting that, in contrast to the previous Russian presidential and parliamentary "elections",³⁰ this time Russian authorities failed to engage prominent EU politicians, including active members of the European Parliament or the parliaments of EU Member States. It is viable to suggest that such a development is an effect of the increasingly undemocratic and authoritarian nature of the Putin regime and a result of the introduction of a stricter code of conduct in the European Parliament, initiated by the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group.

At the same time, Moscow succeeded in attracting sizable European delegations of "observers" and "experts" from France, Italy and Serbia, as well as numerous individuals from Africa, Asia and Latin America, which reflects the Kremlin's strategy of building networks of influence not only in the West, but also across the so-called Global South.

30 See, for example, Anton Shekhovtsov, "Politically Biased Foreign Electoral Observation at the Russian 2018 Presidential Election", *European Platform for Democratic Elections*, 16 April (2018), <https://www.epde.org/en/documents/details/politically-biased-foreign-electoral-observation-at-the-russian-2018-presidential-election-1423.html>; Anton Shekhovtsov, "Bogus International Monitors for the Bogus Russian Parliamentary Elections", *European Platform for Democratic Elections*, 30 September (2021), <https://www.epde.org/en/documents/details/bogus-international-monitors-for-the-bogus-russian-parliamentary-elections-4062.html>.

VIOLATION OF THE UKRAINIAN BORDER BY “INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS” AND “EXPERTS”

By taking part in “international observation” of the Russian “elections” in occupied parts of Ukraine, foreign “observers” and “experts” violated Ukraine’s Code on Administrative Offences. As seen from Table 1, we identified 37 foreign citizens who violated Ukraine’s border:

Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Country
Enrique Javier Refoyo Acedo	n/a	Spain
Pino Oddone Adone	Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d’Italia)	Italy
Matúš Alexa	“Brother for brother” (Brat za brata) bikers club	Slovakia
Purnima Anand	President of the BRICS International Forum	India
Miloš Bandur	MP, Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka)	Serbia
Ahmed Bening	Secretary-General of Pan African Youth Union	Ghana
Ján Brnák	n/a	Slovakia
David Cacchione	Banda Bassotti (music band)	Italy
Lucien Cerise	n/a	France
Giorgio Descovich Deschi	“Liberation of Trieste” (Liberazione Triestina)	Italy
Wilhelm Domke-Schulz	domke-schulz-film (production company)	Germany

Name	Political, academic, media or other affiliation(s)	Country
Mais Elkrydee	Member of the Syrian Elections Committee	Syria
Julio Faravelli	National Commission of Social Organizations of Uruguay	Uruguay
Stefano Ferluga	n/a	Italy
Victorio Román Cuyer Gómez	Saraki Foundation (NGO)	Paraguay
Mohamed Hoodh Ibrahim	Maldivian Red Crescent	Maldives
Daniel Martin Kovalik	n/a	USA
Andrea Lucidi	n/a	Italy
Nomen Maurice Manusep	n/a	Namibia
Aymeri de Montesquiou-Fezensac d'Artagnan	n/a	France
Fernando Moragón	President of the Spanish-Russian Observatory of Eurasia, and the Spanish-Chinese Council "One Belt, One Road"	Spain
Cornelia Muizi	n/a	Democratic Republic of Congo
Andrea Palmeri	n/a	Italy
Dimitrios Patelis	Technical University of Crete	Greece
Rosario Rocco Del Priore	"Italexit" (political party)	Italy
Mochamad Alvin Dwiana Qobulsyah	KBS World Radio (media), Binus University	Indonesia
Bavar Muhammad Rasul	n/a	Iraq
Elie Rizq	n/a	Lebanon
Christian Arsène Robert-Noël Roe	n/a	France
Thomas Röper	Anti-Spiegel (media)	Germany
Pasquale Salatino	Osservatore Calabrese (media)	Italy
Adri Arlan Sinaga	Pelita Harapan University	Indonesia
Nathalie Taka	n/a	Cameroon
Donato Lorenzo Tilli	n/a	Italy
Sofia Vasilyevskaya	n/a	Latvia
Michel Voisin	The Republicans (Les Républicains)	France
Laeed Zaghلامي	University of Algiers	Algeria

ESTABLISHED PRIOR INVOLVEMENT OF “INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS” AND “EXPERTS” IN PRO-KREMLIN EFFORTS

As in previous cases,³¹ the overwhelming majority of European and American “observers” and “experts” who were invited to the “presidential election” in Russia have a record of previous involvement in various pro-Kremlin efforts that involve, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- Previous participation in politically biased and/or illegitimate electoral monitoring missions in Russia and elsewhere;
- Legitimation and justification of the actions of the Russian Federation directed at undermining Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity (illegal visits to Russia-annexed Crimea and occupied territories of Eastern Ukraine);
- Cooperation with the Russian state-controlled instruments of disinformation and propaganda (RT, Sputnik, etc.);
- Membership in Western and Russian pro-Kremlin organisations, movements, and groups.

31. See reports on fake election observation by the European Platform for Democratic Elections: <https://www.epde.org/en/documents/category/russia.html>.

Srdan Mazalica and **Miroslav Vujičić** are members of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, a Serbian nationalist and pro-Russian party led by Milorad Dodik, President of Republika Srpska, an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dodik himself is known for his secessionist policies sabotaging Bosnia's rapprochement with the West and benefitting destabilising efforts of the Putin regime in the Balkans.

Boyan Chukov, a graduate of the KGB foreign intelligence school in Moscow and former intelligence officer of the Bulgarian foreign intelligence services,³² often provides anti-Western commentary to Russian pro-regime media.³³

Elisaveta Kamburova is a correspondent of the Bulgarian media platform *efir.info* that promotes anti-Ukrainian and pro-Kremlin narratives.

Bulgarian political activist **Plamen Taskov Miletkov** several times illegally visited Russia-annexed Crimea to take part in Russian propaganda activities.³⁴

Several French "observers" and "experts" represented the French far-right political and activist scene – a scene that Russia had been actively supporting for many years: **Yvan Benedetti, Loup Bommier, Lucien Cerise, Dominique Delawarde, Jean-Marc de Lacoste-Lareymondie**. In 2022, **Benedetti** "observed" the pseudo-referendum for the formal annexation of occupied territories of Donetsk (so-called "Donetsk People's Republic", DPR) to Russia.

32 Christo Grozev, "Dosieto na Bojan Čukov: Ot verbovčik po 'vázroditelnija proces' do sávetnik na premiera Orešarski", *Džržavna sigurnost*, 28 February (2014), <https://web.archive.org/web/20141025202544/http://desebg.com/2011-01-06-11-35-18/1725-2014-02-28-14-52-21>.

33 Aleksandr Gatsak, "Bolgarskiy politolog ob'yavil o vosstanovlenii v strane ideologii Tret'yego reykh'a", *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 17 December (2023), <https://rg.ru/2023/12/17/bolgarskiy-politolog-obiavil-o-vosstanovlenii-v-strane-ideologii-tretego-rejha.html>; "Ekspert schitaet, chto BRIKS razrushaet mirovoy 'poryadok, osnovanny na pravilakh SShA'", TASS, 14 August (2023), <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/18506961>.

34 Yuriy Bershidskiy, "Kremlevskie SMI otraportovali: 'glava parlamentskoy delegatsii Bolgarii priznal Krym rossiyskim'. Deputat okazalsya feykovym", *The Insider*, 25 June (2021), <https://theins.ru/antifake/243016>.

Franck Pengam is a geopolitical expert and Internet influencer who is known for his anti-Ukrainian comments and is close to the Neo-Eurasianist circles of Russian fascist ideologue Alexander Dugin.³⁵

Some other French visitors, namely **Alesya Miloradovich**, **Aymeri de Montesquiou-Fezensac d’Artagnan** and **Michel Voisin**, can be called “professional fake observers”, as they participated in several bogus election monitoring missions. In Azerbaijan, **Voisin**, a former member of the French National Assembly (1988-2017) representing the French centre right, performed a role of an “international observer” at the 2015 parliamentary elections and the 2016 referendum. He also illegally travelled to Russia-occupied parts of eastern Ukraine and Russia-annexed Crimea, where he “observed” the 2018 “general elections” (DPR) and the Russian 2021 “parliamentary elections” (Crimea). Together with **Miloradovich** and **de Montesquiou**, **Voisin** also “monitored” the 2017 regional and local elections in Russia. **Miloradovich** and **de Montesquiou** “observed” the Russian 2019 local and regional elections, and **Miloradovich** was also present as a “monitor” at the Russian 2018 Russian “presidential election”. Moreover, in August 2016, **Miloradovich** co-organised an illegal trip of 22 children from France to Russia-annexed Crimea³⁶ to whitewash the occupation of Ukrainian territories by the Russian Federation.

Members of the Bavarian State Parliament, **Andreas Jurca**, **Elena Roon** and **Ulrich Singer**, belong to the German far-right Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD), which is generally known for its pro-Kremlin foreign policy orientations.³⁷ **Singer** also “observed” the 2020 Azerbaijani parliamentary elections as part of a “monitoring mission” organised by a Polish agent of Russian malign influence Janusz Niedźwiecki (he was arrested by the Polish law enforcement in 2021), and the Russian 2021 parliamentary elections, along with five other members of the AfD.

35 Franck Pengam, “L’approche eurasiennne de la multipolarité (Alexandre Douguine)”, *Geopolitika.ru*, 14 March (2019), <https://www.geopolitika.ru/fr/article/lapporte-eurasiennne-de-la-multipolarite-alexandre-douguine>.

36 “French Authorities Denied Help to Kids Travelling to Crimea’s Artek Camp”, *Sputnik*, 27 August (2016), <https://sputniknews.com/russia/201608261044676473-france-kids-crimea/>.

37 Marcus Bensmann, “Alternative for Russia: How the AfD Is Systematically Turning towards Russia”, *Correctiv*, 19 October (2023), <https://correctiv.org/en/latest-stories/2023/10/19/alternative-for-russia-how-the-afd-is-systematically-turning-towards-russia/>.

Thomas Röper is a German blogger based in Russia. He is a regular commentator for the Russian state-controlled and pro-regime media, promoting and amplifying Kremlin propaganda. Since, 2023, he has been hosting the weekly show "Anti-Spiegel" in collaboration with the German edition of the Russian international RT network. Furthermore, **Röper** "observed" the 2022 pseudo-referendum for the formal annexation of occupied territories of the Ukrainian Kherson Oblast to Russia, and "monitored" the 2023 "regional and local elections" in the Russia-occupied Ukrainian territories.

Wilhelm Domke-Schulz is an independent filmmaker who produced the film *Remember Odessa* (2020) that became a success in Russia due to its anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian messaging, as well as assistance from the networks of the now late Russian businessman and mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin.³⁸

Panagiotis Lafazanis is a former Minister of Productive Reconstruction, Environment and Energy of Greece (2015) and the founder of the far-left pro-Russian party Democratic Movement for National Liberation. The inaugural banner of the party supported the Russian invasion of Ukraine and featured the letter "Z" that, since 2022, became a symbol of the Russian war against Ukraine.³⁹

Similar to the French case, several Italian "observers" and "experts" represented the far-right scene, ranging from right-wing populist forces (**Pino Oddone Adone, Pino Cabras, Rosario Rocco Del Priore**) through secessionists (**Giorgio Descovich Deschi**) to right-wing extremists (**Andrea Palmeri**). **Deschi** already had "election monitoring" experience when he "observed" "local elections" in the occupied parts of the Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast in 2023.⁴⁰ **Palmeri** was involved, since 2014, in recruiting

38 Alexej Hock, "Das Wagner-Netzwerk", *ARTE*, June (2023), <https://www.arte-magazin.de/wagner-netzwerk-jewgeni-prigoschin/>.

39 "Leader of New Greek Party Says 'Russia Is Right', Accuses US & NATO of 'Raising Hell' in Ukraine", *Sputnik*, 24 July (2022), <https://sputnikglobe.com/20220724/leader-of-new-greek-party-says-russia-is-right-accuses-us-nato-of-raising-hell-in-ukraine-1097748264.html>.

40 Riccardo Amati, "Chi sono e cosa dicono i 3 italiani 'osservatori elettorali' nei territori occupati dalla Russia", *Fanpage*, 17 September (2023), <https://www.fanpage.it/esteri/chi-sono-e-cosa-dicono-i-3-italiani-osservatori-elettorali-nei-territori-occupati-dalla-russia/>.

and instructing people to fight against Ukrainian forces in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine, in addition to participating in the fighting himself.⁴¹ For these activities he is wanted by the Italian law enforcement, but he currently seems to live in the occupied parts of the Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast, i.e. beyond the reach on international law.

Amedeo Avondet is an ardent pro-Kremlin activist who organised pro-Russian events in Italy and regularly provided commentary to the Russian pro-regime media.⁴²

Pasquale Salatino participated in pro-Russian events in Italy⁴³ and was involved – along with **Giorgio Descovich Deschi** – in “election monitoring” activities in 2023: he “observed” “local elections” in the occupied parts of the Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast.⁴⁴

A member of the Regional Council of Veneto and former member of the far-right Northern League (Lega Nord) party, **Stefano Valdegamberi** is yet another professional fake election observer. In particular, he “observed” the Russian 2017 regional elections, as well as the 2021 parliamentary elections. In April 2016, **Valdegamberi** illegally visited Russia-annexed Crimea, and, after upon his return, was reported to have initiated a vote on recognising Crimea as part of Russia in the Veneto parliament. In October 2016, together with several other Italian politicians and businessmen, he

41 Vincenzo Brunelli, “Foreign fighters, confermata anche in appello la condanna a cinque anni per Andrea Palmeri”, *Lucca in Diretta*, 20 April (2023), <https://www.luccaindiretta.it/cronaca/2023/04/20/foreign-fighters-confermata-anche-in-appello-la-condanna-a-cinque-anni-per-andrea-palmeri/345608/>.

42 Massimo Massenzio, “Chi è Amedeo Avondet, il torinese fan di Putin che alcuni credono una spia russa: ‘Ma io non sono pagato da Mosca’”, *Correra Torino*, 3 March (2023), https://torino.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/24_marzo_03/chi-e-amedeo-avondet-il-torinese-fan-di-putin-che-alcuni-credono-una-spia-russa-0f4726e9-b268-4cde-abe2-52bf23baaxlk.shtml; Simone Fontana, “Chi è il militante di Fratelli d’Italia nell’orbita della propaganda russa”, *Pagella Politica*, 20 May (2022), <https://pagellapolitica.it/articoli/amedeo-avondet-fratelli-italia-russia>.

43 Giorgio Curcio, “La propaganda filo-russa arriva a Lamezia, montano le proteste: lettera aperta al sindaco Mascaro”, *Corriere della Calabria*, 18 January (2024), <https://www.corrieredellacalabria.it/2024/01/18/la-propaganda-filo-russa-invade-lamezia-montano-le-proteste-lettera-aperta-al-sindaco-mascaro/>.

44 Amati, “Chi sono e cosa dicono”.

again made an illegal visit to Crimea. Also in Crimea, **Valdegamberi** “observed” the Russian 2018 “presidential election”. In addition to his “election monitoring” efforts, he has been actively involved in other pro-Russian propaganda activities covertly collaborating with a Russian lobbying group with a direct link to the Kremlin.⁴⁵

Not all Italian “observers” and “experts” at the Russian “presidential election” were of right-wing political convictions. One of those few exceptions was **David Cacchione**, the leader of the far-left music band Banda Bassotti that backed the Russian occupation of parts of eastern Ukraine,⁴⁶ played gigs there, and, in 2022, supported the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.⁴⁷

Members of the Moldovan parliament **Elena Beleacova** and **Ivanna Kõksal** represent the “Bloc of Communist and Socialists” that is known for its anti-NATO and pro-Russian positions.

Aleksandra Deletić is a Secretary General of the right-wing populist “True Montenegro” (Prava Crna Gora) party that opposes Montenegro’s membership in NATO and supports stronger relations with Russia.

45 Martin Laine, Cecilia Anesi, Lorenzo Bagnoli, Tatiana Tkachenko, “Kremlin-Linked Group Arranged Payments to European Politicians to Support Russia’s Annexation of Crimea”, *OCCRP*, 3 February (2023), <https://www.occrp.org/en/investigations/kremlin-linked-group-arranged-payments-to-european-politicians-to-support-russias-annexation-of-crimea>.

46 Monica Rubino, “Ucraina, Forenza e ‘Banda Bassotti’ in Donbass con la Carovana antifascista. Kiev li vuole processare per terrorismo”, *La Repubblica*, 8 May (2017), <https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2017/05/08/news/forenza-e-banda-bassotti-in-donbass-con-la-carovana-antifascista-kirov-li-vuole-processare-per-terrorismo-164918963/>.

47 Lorena Cacace, “Ucraina, il gruppo ska Banda Bassotti è in Donbass: ‘E’ Russia, il popolo da anni aspetta la liberazione”, *LaPresse*, 5 April (2022), <https://www.lapresse.it/esteri/2022/04/05/ucraina-banda-bassotti-dal-donbass-e-russia-popolo-da-anni-aspetta-liberazione/>.

Gregory Simons is a Swedish academic (originally coming from New Zealand), known for his activism in support of the authoritarian regimes in Putin’s Russia and Bashar al-Assad’s Syria. While he keeps mentioning, for the Russian media and elsewhere, his alleged affiliation as “Associate Professor at the Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Uppsala University”, **Simons** was, in fact, dismissed from Uppsala University for his pro-Kremlin activities. Some of those activities concerned his “monitoring” and praising the Russian 2019 regional elections and 2021 “parliamentary elections”.⁴⁸

Manuel Pires da Rocha is a member of the far-left Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português), the only party represented in the Portuguese parliament in February 2022 that refused to condemn the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.⁴⁹ In September 2023, he illegally travelled to Russia-occupied parts of the Ukrainian Donetsk Oblast to “monitor” the “regional elections” there.

Nenad Popović, Dejan Djokić and **Vladimir Prebiračević** represent the right-wing populist Serbian People’s Party (Srpska narodna partija, SNP) that promotes pro-Russian narratives in Serbia. **Popović**, the co-founder of the SNP, “observed” the illegitimate “referendum” in Crimea in 2014 – a “referendum” that was followed by the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea. **Popović** is also a recipient of several Russian awards for his contributions to various efforts aimed at advancing Russian foreign policy interests in Serbia and elsewhere.

A member of the Serbian parliament and a member of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka), **Miloš Bandur** is known for his anti-Ukrainian statements and pro-Russian positions, as well as justifying the Russian aggression against Ukraine.⁵⁰

48 “Inostrannye eksperty posetili Pechorskiy rayon”, *PAI*, 18 September (2021), <https://informpsk-ov.ru/news/365831.html>.

49 Gustavo Sampaio, “Guerra na Ucrânia. O PCP foi “o único partido” que não condenou a invasão militar ordenada por Putin?”, *SAPO*, 25 February (2022), <https://poligrafo.sapo.pt/fact-check/guerra-na-ucrania-o-pcp-foi-o-unico-partido-que-nao-condenou-a-invasao-militar-ordenada-por-putin/>.

50 Alina Arsenyeva, “Milozh Bandzhur: Serby znayut, chto russkie vseгда na pravil’noy storone istorii”, *Balkanist*, 12 September (2023), <https://balkanist.ru/milosh-bandzhur-serby-znayut-chto-russkie-vseгда-na-pravilnoj-storone-istorii/>.

Michal Radačovský is a speaker of the right-wing pro-Russian Slovak Patriot (Slovenský Patriot) party chaired by his father Miroslav Radačovský, one of the most pro-Putin Members of the European parliament⁵¹ and an "observer" the bogus Russian parliamentary elections in 2021.

Slovak activist **Matúš Alexa** was a member of the Slovak chapter of the pro-Kremlin "Night Wolves" bikers' gang. However, a group of his followers separated from the "Night Wolves" when their activities decreased in Europe due to the anti-Kremlin counter-measures of the European authorities and started their own club, "Brother for Brother", that has been active in spreading Russian propaganda and disinformation in Slovakia.⁵²

Spanish former politician from the centre-right People's Party (Partido Popular) **Pedro Mouriño** is a professional fake observer as he has participated in "international observation" of virtually all "plebiscites" organised by the Russian authorities, including the illegal "referendum" in Russia-occupied Ukraine's Crimea in March 2014. For his multiple activities advancing Russia's foreign policy interests, **Mouriño** was appointed an honorary consul of the Russian Federation in Galicia.

Mouriño's compatriots **Enrique Javier Refoyo Acedo** and **Fernando Moragón** do not have the same long history of fake politically biased election observation, but they do have experience of participating in sham "monitoring" activities. **Moragón** "observed" the illegitimate "referendum" in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Oblast in 2022, and both "monitored" "local elections" on Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia in 2023. **Moragón** is also the president of the pro-Kremlin association "Hispano-Russian Observatory of Eurasia", while **Enrique Refoyo** was close to the Neo-Eurasianist circles of Russian fascist ideologue Alexander Dugin.

51 Olesya Avilova, Andrey Zayakin, Mikhail Komin, "Putin's 'Henchmen'", *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, 27 February (2023), <https://novyagazeta.eu/articles/2023/02/27/putins-sidekicks-en>.

52 Karin Kóváry Sólymos, "Motorkári Brat za Brata využívajú silu na sociálnych sieťach na šírenie proputinovskej propagandy, najviac zdieľajú ruské veľvyslanectvo", *Investigatívne centrum Jána Kuciaka*, 5 April (2023), <https://www.icjk.sk/243/Motorkari-Brat-za-Brata-vyuzivaju-silu-na-socialnych-sietach-na-sirenje-proputinovskej-propagandy-najviac-zdielaju-ruske-velvyslanectvo>.

American lawyer **G. Kline Preston IV** has been doing business in Russia for several years and developed contacts with a prominent Russian politician Alexander Torshin who has close ties to President Vladimir Putin. In 2011, **Preston** introduced Torshin to David Keene, then president of the National Rifle Association. In early 2018, Torshin came under scrutiny for illegally channelling Russian funds to the National Rifle Association attempting to influence the 2016 US presidential election.⁵³ In Russia, **Preston** participated in the politically biased electoral observation missions at the 2011 parliamentary elections, 2017 regional elections, and 2018 presidential election. He also “observed” the illegal “local elections” in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine in 2023.

Caleb Maupin, Daniel Kovalik and **Patrick Henningsen** have regularly contributed to the Russian-state-controlled RT network and Sputnik media resource.

Political commentator **Steve Gill** “observed” the illegal “local elections” in Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine in 2023 and is a contributor to the Russian-state-controlled Sputnik media resource.

53 Anita Wadhvani, Joel Ebert, “Nashville Lawyer Who Introduced Russian Operative to the NRA Has Ties to Blackburn”, *The Tennessean*, 20 March (2018), <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2018/03/20/russia-nashville-lawyer-marsha-blackburn/431448002/>.

FOREIGN ELECTORAL OBSERVATION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PROPAGANDA AND DISINFORMATION

The analysis of Russian media reports on the 2024 “presidential elections” and profiles of the “international observers” and “experts” suggests that they were invited to Russia for three main reasons. First, Russian media needed favourable comments from foreign “observers” and “experts” to demonstrate that the “voting” proceeded in a calm and orderly manner. Second, Russian media needed Kremlin-friendly foreign “observers” to relativise any criticism of the “presidential election” from mainstream Western media, politicians and officials. Third, Russian media and Russian official sources used comments from “international observers” and “experts” to disinform the Russian audience about the international perception of the “electoral process” in Russia.

It is possible to identify ten major narratives that “international observers” and “experts” pushed when commenting on the “presidential election” to the Russian media:

1. The “presidential election” was characterised by a high turnout. Examples:

- **Miloš Bandur:** “Russia created a system where every citizen has the opportunity to vote. Given the high responsibility of Russians, given the high culture of Russians and patriotism, I believe that this election will have a very, very high turnout, the percentage of people who voted”.⁵⁴
- **Elena Beleacova:** “From the very beginning, from 8 am, we noticed that the turnout at the polling stations was very high. People were eager to vote just before work. As a result, there were even queues.”⁵⁵
- **Stefano Valdegamberi:** “I have seen that Russian voters are very active. In Western countries, including Italy, voter turnout is steadily declining – half the population does not vote at all.”⁵⁶

2. Voters could freely express their will, while Russian authorities exerted no pressure on the voters (especially on Russia-occupied Ukrainian territories). Examples:

- **Daniel Kovalik:** “I had the opportunity to talk to some people who came to vote, and I don’t have the feeling that they were forced to vote or that they were voting under compulsion, in contrast to what they say in our countries.”⁵⁷
- **Ahmed Bening:** “We noticed that everyone had a free right to express their opinion, to make their choice at the polls, there were representatives of the mass media at all the polling stations, there was no pressure.”⁵⁸

54 “Yavka na vyborakh prezidenta RF budet ochen’ vysokoy – nablyudatel’ iz Serbii”, *RIA Novosti*, 16 March (2024), <https://crimea.ria.ru/20240316/yavka-na-vyborakh-prezidenta-rf-budet-ochen-vysokoy--nablyudatel-iz-serbii-1135743476.html>.

55 Nataliya Gladkaya, “Inostrannye nablyudateli posetili izbiratel’ny uchastok v planetarii Volgograda”, *Gorodskie vesti*, 15 March (2024), <https://gorvesti.ru/politics/inostrannye-nablyudateli-posetili-izbiratelnyy-uchastok-v-planetarii-volgograda-161823.html>.

56 “Inostrannye nablyudateli: na vyborakh v Rossii vysokaya prozrachnost’”, *Regnum*, 15 March (2024), <https://regnum.ru/news/3874122>.

57 Gleb Ivanov, “Vse ne tak, kak govoryat’. Nablyudateli iz SShA i Frantsii rasskazali o vyborakh”, *Argumenty i fakty*, 15 March (2024), https://aif.ru/politics/russia/vse_ne_tak_kak_govoryat_nablyudateli_iz_ssha_i_frantsii_rasskazali_o_vyborah.

58 “Inostrannye nabluidateli: Evropa dolzhna učit’sya u Kryma provodit’ vybory”, *RIA Novosti*, 15 March (2024), <https://crimea.ria.ru/20240315/inostrannye-nablyudateli-evropa-dolzhna-uchit-sya-provodit-vybory-u-kryma-1135711999.html>.

- **Andrea Lucidi:** “We were able to communicate with a lot of people, talk to them and afterwards we came to the conclusion that these people were freely exercising their will and in general the process was well organised and well prepared.”⁵⁹
 - **Janlisbert Velascois:** “It is worth noting the free participation in the elections and the fact that there is no pressure, which shows that Russia is a democratic country.”⁶⁰
3. There was a celebratory mood at the “polling stations”. Examples:
- **Vladimir Prebiračević:** “We managed to visit three polling stations. It is like a big holiday: music playing, delicious food, everyone smiling. It is very pleasant.”⁶¹
 - **Purnima Anand:** “We managed to communicate with both young and old people, everywhere – in every polling station there was a very festive, celebratory atmosphere. People were all smiling, very friendly, you could feel the enthusiasm.”⁶²
 - **José Manjón:** “A very festive atmosphere. In Spain, elections are held in an atmosphere of obligation. Voting is an obligation. But here we see that people go and enjoy themselves.”⁶³
4. The “electoral process” was calm and orderly. Examples:
- **Mountaga Diakité:** “At the moment, preparations for the elections are going well, everything is quite transparent and calm.”⁶⁴

59 “Nablyudatel’ iz Italii zayavil, chto golosovanie v LNR proshlo po normam mezhdunarodnogo prava”, TASS, 15 March (2024), <https://tass.ru/politika/20248297>.

60 “Mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli smogli lichno ubedit’sya v prozrachnosti vyborov”, *Volga News*, 15 March (2024), <https://volga.news/article/700561.html>.

61 “Mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli rasskazali, kak prokhodyat vybory prezidenta v Rossii”, *24 mir*, 15 March (2024), <https://mir24.tv/news/16583741/nablyudateli-iz-drugih-stran-rasskazali-kak-prohodyat-vybory-prezidenta-v-rossii>.

62 “Nablyudatel’ iz Indii nazvala prazdnichnoy atmosferu na vyborakh prezidenta RF v Krymu”, TASS, 15 March (2024), <https://tass.ru/politika/20245271>.

63 Kirill Antonov, “Inostrannye nablyudateli uvideli prazdnik na uchastkakh v Tatarstane”, *Kommersant*, 17 March (2024), <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6578525>.

64 “Nablyudateli iz 106 stran sledyat za vyborami prezidenta v Rossii”, *24 mir*, 15 March (2024), <https://mir24.tv/news/16583685/nablyudateli-iz-106-stran-sledyat-za-vyborami-prezidenta-v-rossii>.

- **Raji Lassi:** “Our overall impression is that everything is well organised, people are coming, taking their ballot papers and voting. It is all happening in a calm environment.”⁶⁵
 - **Fernando Moragón:** “It is perfectly organised, people vote quietly. Everything is calm, transparent.”⁶⁶
5. The voting proceeded in a transparent manner. Examples:
- **Ivan Marino:** “We also learnt that there is video and audio recording in the polling stations, that media representatives are accredited and can visit the polling stations, which also plays a certain role. In addition, there are observers from the Public Chamber of the Pskov region at the polling stations, so there is mutual control and this ensures the transparency of the voting process.”⁶⁷
 - **George Kline Preston IV:** “I will go live on air directly from the polling station and let everyone see how transparent everything is here.”⁶⁸
 - **Nataša Trifunović:** “We have access to cameras and the opportunity to visit polling stations in person. The process is transparent, open and the rules are being followed impeccably.”⁶⁹
 - **Pino Oddone Adone:** “I am very pleased with the transparency of the election process. We can see an important democratic development, the fact that there are transparent elections is obvious.”⁷⁰

65 “Mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli otsenili, kak prokhodyat vybory prezidenta v Nizhnem Tagile”, *Vse novosti*, 16 March (2024), <https://vsenovostint.ru/2024/03/16/mezhdunarodnye-nablyudateli-ocenili-kak-prohodyat-vybory-prezidenta-v-nizhnem-tagile/>.

66 “Nablyudatel’ iz Ispanii rasskazal o golosovanii na vyborakh v Mariupole”, *RIA Novosti*, 15 March (2024), <https://ria.ru/20240315/mariupol-1933301926.html>.

67 “Ekspert iz Italii vysoko otsenil organizatsiyu nablyudeniya na vyborakh v Pskovskoy oblasti”, *PLN*, 15 March (2024), <https://pln-pskov.ru/politics/513793.html>.

68 “Inostrannye nablyudateli: na vyborakh v Rossii vysokaya prozrachnost”.

69 Sergey Agapov, “Pervye otzvyvy inostrannykh nablyudateley o vyborakh postupili v 36ON”, *36ON*, 15 March (2024), <https://36on.ru/news/politics/109951-pervye-otzvyvy-inostrannykh-nablyudateley-o-vyborakh-postupili-v-36on>.

70 “Eksperty iz Italii otmetili pozitivny nastroy i prozrachnost’ golosovaniya v Melitopole”, *TASS*, 15 March (2024), <https://tass.ru/politika/20243287>.

6. Countries of the world should learn from Russia how to organise elections. Examples:

- **Matúš Alexa:** "In the end, we came to the conclusion that Europe should learn from Russia how to run elections. We have to say openly that, in the EU, elections are backward and undemocratic."⁷¹
- **Mahfuz Ahmed:** "I would like to say that, in principle, the presence of international experts at such an open and fair election shows the whole world how elections should be conducted. And in my opinion, elections in other countries, including ours, should look up to those in Russia."⁷²
- **Lidija Makragic:** "We see that Russia is setting standards for the whole world in this direction, because giving people the opportunity to vote remotely is very cool."⁷³

7. Western media and politicians are lying about the "elections" in Russia. Examples:

- **Juan Antonio Aguilar:** "The opinion of observers is important because we can say what really happened. It is difficult to influence the opinion of the Western public because it is already influenced by the controlled media. But where we have a voice, we can still be heard."⁷⁴
- **Devie Rahmawati:** "Western media show a different situation, but here I saw everything with my own eyes. It is very important that you invited people from all over the world to see how the elections are going on in Russia, because "to see" means "to believe".⁷⁵

71 "Inostrannykh nablyudateley v Krymu vpechatlila organizatsiya vyborov", *RIA Novosti*, 15 March (2024), <https://ria.ru/20240315/vybory-1933312895.html>.

72 Margarita Tregubenko, "Inostrannye nablyudateli podelilis' vpechatleniyami ot raboty na izbiratel'nykh uchastkakh v Almetievске", *Almetievsk*, 17 March (2024), <https://almetievsk-ru.ru/news/gorod/inostrannye-nablyudateli-podelilis-vpechatleniyami-ot-raboty-na-izbiratelnyx-uchastkax-v-almetevske>.

73 "Inostrannye nablyudateli prokomentirovali vybory prezidenta Rossii", *RIA Novosti*, 17 March (2024), <https://ria.ru/20240317/vybory-1933753623.html>.

74 Nikolay Korsakov, "Inostranny ekspert ob'yasnil svoe zhelanie prisutstvovat' na vyborah prezidenta RF", *Gazeta.ru*, 14 March (2024), <https://www.gazeta.ru/social/news/2024/03/14/22546141.shtml>.

75 Nadezhda Gordeeva, "'Vse podgotovleno': mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli posetili izbiratel'ny uchastok v Kazani", *Tatar-inform*, 15 March (2024), <https://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/vse-podgotovleno-mezhdunarodnye-nablyudateli-posetili-izbiratelnyi-uchastok-v-kazani-5939218>.

- **Steve Gill:** “In Europe, in the West, they can say as much as they want that these elections are staged, but it is not true.”⁷⁶
 - **Christian Arsène Robert-Noël Roe:** “We have already been to two polling stations. And it seems to me that everything is organised much more democratically here than in France. And above all, much of what I have seen here is very different from what our authorities are telling us.”⁷⁷
8. Russia is using advanced technologies to conduct elections. Examples:
- **John Musialela Likando:** “I’m very impressed with the setup and also the technologies that have been put in place. The systems [manual and electronic] are very efficient, they are very fast, and also the verification is just in a few seconds.”⁷⁸
 - **Dimitris Kazakis:** “The [Russian remote voting] system was presented to us as absolutely secure, but in my opinion the main problem is the involvement of people. Modern technology can help, but the main thing is to find out how to involve people in online voting.”⁷⁹
 - **Yoon Jung Sik:** “South Korea is one of the strongest countries, we have very developed information technology. But we don’t have online observers yet. I can definitely say that Russia has reached the latest technological level. Next year we will follow this example and use the same systems in the elections.”⁸⁰

76 Mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli smogli lichno ubedit’sya”.

77 Ivanov, “Vse ne tak, kak govoryat”.

78 Christina Glazkova, “‘Tremendous Job’ without ‘Violations’: Angolan and Namibian Observers Commend Russian Election”, *Sputnik*, 16 March (2024), <https://en.sputniknews.africa/20240316/tremendous-job-and-no-violations-angolan-and-namibian-observers-commend-russian-election-1065590069.html>.

79 “Ekspert iz Gretsii: Nuzhno rabotat’ nad vovlecheniem lyudey v DEG”, *PLN*, 15 March (2024), <https://pln-pskov.ru/politics/513784.html>.

80 Gladkaya, “Inostrannye nablyudateli posetili”.

- **Pedro Mouriño:** "Elections in Russia are quite digitalised, so this is a special part, unlike in Western countries, even in my country, Spain, there is no such thing. It's amazing that you can come, put in your ballot paper and it's already counted."⁸¹
9. Voting in Russia is made easy for disabled and vulnerable people. Examples:
- **Cyril Gaucher:** "In Russia, there are many ways to vote. And I am surprised that people can vote at home – there is no such thing in France. This is convenient for people who have mobility problems, such as the elderly."⁸²
 - **Imad Saab:** "We really liked the attitude of the authorities and the Central Electoral Commission towards their citizens, because, as we learned today, they go directly to people's homes and help them to vote."⁸³
 - **Donato Lorenzo Tilli:** "In Europe, and in particular in Italy, not much attention is paid to people with disabilities, especially those who are visually impaired or blind. I really appreciated the availability of regulations and ballot papers in Braille. This ensures that all citizens have the opportunity to participate in elections and express their civic position."⁸⁴
10. Conducting elections for three days is a good practice. Examples:
- **Cornelia Muizi:** "In our country, elections last only one day. I think it is good to have three days of voting to avoid irregularities and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to vote."⁸⁵

81 Arina Zelenskaya, "Eksperty iz 5 stran otsenili provedenie golosovaniya na Urale", *OTV*, 15 March (2024), <https://www.obltv.ru/news/society/eksperty-iz-5-stran-otsenili-provedenie-golosovaniya-na-urale/>.

82 Anna Voronina, "Inostrantsy udivleny sistemoy golosovaniya v Rossii", *Vesti*, 16 March (2024), <https://www.vesti.ru/article/3853719>.

83 "Nablyudatel' soobshchil, chto golosovanie na vyborakh prezidenta RF v Venesuele prokhodit chisto", *TASS*, 15 March (2024), <https://tass.ru/politika/20244615>.

84 "Ekspert iz Italii otmetil khoroshuyu organizatsiyu izbiratel'nogo protsesssa dlya invalidov v LNR", *Luganskiy informatsionny tsestr*, 16 March (2024), <https://lug-info.com/news/ekspert-iz-italii-otmetil-horoshuyu-organizatsiyu-izbiratel-nogo-processsa-dlya-invalidov-v-lnr>.

85 "Mezhdunarodnye eksperty vysoko otsenili uroven' podgotovki k vyboram v LNR", *Luganskiy informatsionny tsestr*, 12 March (2024), <https://lug-info.com/news/mezhdunarodnye-eksperty-vysoko-ocenili-uroven-podgotovki-k-vyboram-v-lnr>.

- **Nicanor Moscoso:** “We are very impressed how modern the electoral process. It is very convenient that the voting takes place over three days and that everyone has the opportunity to vote.”⁸⁶
- **Rafael Edgardo Barahona Osorio:** “I liked the three-day voting system. Being able to choose a convenient day and time allows you to keep your personal plans, work or studies on track.”⁸⁷

86 Darya Leonova, Dmitriy Zaychikov, “Mezhdunarodnye nablyudateli”, *Sergiev.ru*, 17 March (2024), <https://sergiev.ru/news/mezhdunarodnye-nablyudateli>.

87 “Press-konferentsiya mezhdunarodnykh nablyudateley v Mediatsentre ‘Vybory 2024’”, *Nevskiy 70*, 17 March (2024), https://nevsky70.ru/Press_konferenciya_mezhdunarodnih_nablyudatelej_v_Mediatsentre_Vibori_2024_.htm.

CALLS FOR ACTION

Overall, we can reasonably claim that these so-called “observers” and “experts”, not only have aided in whitewashing illegitimate elections, the Putin regime, and the Russian invasion and occupation of Ukraine, but have actively promoted lines of propaganda. The European Union should take a firm line against this behaviour, from both its own citizens and others, to combat this whitewashing and support for Russia at this time. This is why we suggest the following:

- **We call on the EU to consider imposing sanctions and visa restrictions on non-EU citizens involved in illegal activities in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.**
- **We also call on the EU to impose sanctions against all Russian officials involved in the organisation of “voting” in the occupied territories of Ukraine.**
- **We also call on institutions and national and regional parliaments in Europe to introduce laws and codes of conduct that would prevent their members from participating in politically biased election observation.**

INVITATION EXAMPLE



ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ ДУМА
ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОГО СОБРАНИЯ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ
ВОСЬМОГО СОЗЫВА

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ДУМЫ

ул. Охотный ряд, д. 1, Москва, 103265

21 февраля 2024 г.

№ 1.1-057

Уважаемый господин Банджур!

На 17 марта 2024 года назначены выборы Президента Российской Федерации. В соответствии с национальным законодательством голосование будет проводиться с 15 по 17 марта 2024 года.

От имени Государственной Думы Федерального Собрания Российской Федерации приглашаю Вас принять участие в наблюдении за выборами.

О принятом решении прошу Вас проинформировать Государственную Думу Федерального Собрания Российской Федерации до 4 марта 2024 года.

С уважением

Вячеслав ВОЛОДИН

ГОСПОДИНУ МИЛОШУ БАНДЖУРУ,
ДЕПУТАТУ ГОРОДСКОГО ПАРЛАМЕНТА
Г. НИША, РЕСПУБЛИКА СЕРБИЯ

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