



# ABOUT ALEXEI NAVALNY

*Posted on March 1, 2024 by Jacques Baud*



Reports of Alexei Navalny's death in a Russian prison on February 16, 2024 quickly spread around the world, accompanied by unanimous condemnation of the Russian government, accused of suppressing an opponent. But in reality, no one knows what happened or the cause of his death. As with all current crises, our governments judge not by the facts, but by a narrative.

## **Was Navalny Vladimir Putin's Main Challenger?**

First of all, we need to understand who Alexei Navalny was. Our media [present him](#) as the "head," or "leader" of [the opposition](#) in Russia. Yet, as the French newspaper *Libération* acknowledged, he was simply the most visible opposition figure [in the West](#). He was part of the so-called "off-system" alternative opposition, made up of small groups often located at the extreme left and right of the political spectrum, too small to be able to form parties.

Navalny began his business career in the 2000s. In a common practice during the Yeltsin period, he would buy state-owned enterprises, liquidate the unprofitable parts and privatize the profits of the more profitable elements. This illegal practice is at the root of Vladimir Putin's fight against certain oligarchs, who ended up taking refuge in Great Britain or Israel. Navalny was given a five-year suspended prison sentence in a first case ([Kirovles](#)).

But the most high-profile case was that involving the [Yves Rocher](#) cosmetics group. This is a relatively complex case, beyond the scope of this article, which is best described in the Yves Rocher press release and on the Russian version of [Wikipedia](#). In a nutshell, it is a case of personal enrichment through abuse of an official position by Oleg Navalny, Alexei's brother. In 2008, Oleg was a manager at the Russian Post Office's automated sorting center in Podolsk. To streamline the delivery of Yves Rocher products to the sorting center, he encouraged the French company to use the services of a private logistics company, Glavpodpiska (GPA). But as GPA was owned by the Navalny family, there was a clear conflict of interest, leading to an investigation for unlawful enrichment and abuse of an official position. In addition to this corruption-like affair, there were accusations of overbilling. In this case, Oleg Navalny was the main defendant, while Alexei Navalny was "only" an accomplice. [This is why](#) Oleg was sentenced to three and a half years in prison, and Alexei to three and a half years suspended. It is this suspended sentence which, on appeal after appeal, was postponed—prohibiting him from leaving Russian territory—before being applied in 2021.

On February 4, 2019, French-speaking Swiss radio [claimed](#) that "Russian authorities, who were already investigating the Navalny brothers, allegedly pressured Yves Rocher in 2012 to file a complaint against them." This was a lie. In fact, Navalny was not convicted for the damage caused to Yves Rocher, but for the abuse of an official position. Just the day before, Yves Rocher declared in a [press release](#):

*Yves Rocher Vostok never filed a complaint against the Navalny brothers, nor did it make any legal claim against them at any time.*

Oleg and Alexei Navalny took this ruling to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), arguing that it was politically motivated. However, contrary to [the claims](#) of the Western media, and the [Yale Jackson School of Global Affairs](#), the ECHR did not invalidate this judgment, as it did not judge the substance of the case, but its form. On October 17, 2017, the ECHR delivered its verdict, partially upholding the two brothers on certain points of law and concluding that the Russian justice system should pay them compensation. On the other hand, it rejected the allegation that their conviction was politically motivated ([paragraph 89](#)).

In 2018, Alexei was not allowed to run in the presidential election. Our [media claim](#) that the reasons are political, but this is not true. The reason is that—as in other Western countries—you cannot run for president if you have been convicted. Furthermore, as we have seen, his conviction was not political in nature.

Politically, Alexei Navalny's background was more that of an activist than a politician. In the early 2000s, he was an advisor to Nikita Belykh, Governor of Kirov. At that time, he was a complete unknown whose activism had no national or international visibility to justify harassment by the Russian government. In 2005, he [co-founded](#) the Democratic Alternative (DA) movement. This is an alternative opposition movement [funded by the US](#) National Endowment for Democracy (NED). In June 2007, he co-founded the unsuccessful nationalist group Narod ("People"), which merged in June 2008 with two other Russian nationalist far-right movements: the Movement Against Illegal Immigration ([MAII](#)) and Great Russia, to form a new coalition: the Russian National Movement.

In 2010, on the recommendation of Garry Kasparov, Navalny was invited to the United States to [take part in](#) the Yale World Fellows Program. This is a fifteen-week, non-degree-granting training program offered by Yale University to foreigners, identified as potential relays of American policy in their respective countries.

Back in Russia, Navalny campaigned for the rights of small shareholders in large corporations and denounced abuses in corporate practices. His Anti-Corruption Fund (FBK) attracted sympathy, but also a great deal of distrust and antipathy. His accusations were often spurious, as in 2016 against [Artyom Chaika](#), son of Russia's Prosecutor General; in 2017, [against](#) Russian billionaire [Alisher Usmanov](#), or in 2018, against businessman [Mikhail Prokhorov](#).

As for his ideas, the picture is hardly any brighter. In 2007, he was expelled from the center-right Yabloko party for his regular participation in the ultra-nationalist "Russian March" and his racist "[nationalist activities](#)." At the time, in a now-famous video for the liberalization of handguns, [he mimed](#) shooting Chechen migrants in Russia. In October 2013, he [supported](#) and [stirred up](#), the Biryulyovo riots, castigating the "hordes of legal and illegal immigrants." In 2017, the American media outlet *Salon* [claimed that](#) "if he were American, liberals would hate Navalny far more than they hate Trump or Steve Bannon." In 2017, the American media outlet *Jacobin*, even referred to him as "Russia's Trump." In fact, as Princeton University's *American Foreign Policy Magazine* noted in December 2018, he emerged through far-right groups, and his ideas were more akin to what is described as "populist" [in the West](#). *The Grayzone* did a [remarkable interview](#) with two activists on the "anti-Putin" left, which shows how much our mainstream media have distorted our image of Navalny.

On Radio-Télévision Suisse (RTS)'s "Géopolitis" program on Navalny, broadcast on February 21, 2021, a presenter [asserted](#) that "nothing remains of Navalny's ultra-nationalist beginnings and anti-migrant declarations." This is not true: in April 2017 in *The Guardian*, then in October 2020 in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, Navalny confirmed that he had not changed his opinion.

In order to attract the votes of the extremes on the right and left—which are not sufficiently numerous separately to field candidates in elections—Navalny applied the concept of smart voting, inspired by American strategic or tactical voting. Whereas in France, the "useful vote" consists in giving one's vote to the candidate who is closest to one's opinions, Navalny's "smart voting" principle was to give one's vote to anyone except a member of United Russia (Vladimir Putin's party). "Smart voting" is not based on preference, but on detestation. Very symbolic!

The advantage of this process is that it enables the votes of extremists to be pooled. This explains Navalny's "success" in the Moscow municipal elections of 2013, when "he" won 27 percent of [the vote](#). But it was a deceptive success: it did not express a preference for Navalny, but a rejection of the then incumbent mayor of Moscow, Sobyenin.

This election showed that Navalny's supporters are a very disparate and unholy mixture of left-wing and right-wing extremists, where internal rivalries are very strong. But it also showed that his supporters were not rallying around a project for Russia, but around a determination against "power." This is yet another example of the Western approach, which does not seek to promote an improvement for Russia, but, on the contrary, its weakening. It is also symptomatic that none of our media report on Navalny's political project. For a good and simple reason—it does not exist.

In 2019, on the occasion of the Moscow Duma elections, 20,000-50,000 demonstrators calling for "free elections" attracted the attention of the Western media. Headlines such as "27 candidates have been excluded" (*Le Figaro*) or "Authorities exclude opposition candidates" (*Le Monde*) suggest that the validation of candidacies was [discretionary](#). The [BBC](#) claimed that the candidates were "ignored" and "treated as if they were insignificant." Not true. In fact, as in France for the presidential election, candidates must have a certain number of signatures in order to take part. In France, candidates must have the signatures of 500 elected representatives.

In Russia, a non-party candidate needs the signatures of 5,000 ordinary citizens, which does not seem too much in a city of 12 million inhabitants. Naturally, these signatures are checked by an electoral commission to prevent fraud, and despite a 10 percent tolerance, some candidates fail to reach the required number. This is what happened to these small groups, whose tendencies ranged from the extreme right to the extreme left, who have no popular base, and some of whom did not even try to collect the signatures.

This is the same phenomenon that affected Alexei Navalny's Progress Party in 2015—it simply did not have enough supporters to have branches in at least 85 entities of the Russian Federation. It was therefore struck off the electoral rolls, not by arbitrary decision, but because it did not meet the criteria [defined by law](#).

In reality, Navalny's popularity was very low. A poll carried out between August 20 and August 26, 2020 (just after his "poisoning") by the [Levada Center](#) (funded [by the USA](#) and considered in Russia as a "[foreign agent](#)," so not really "regime-friendly") showed the difference in popularity between Vladimir Putin and Alexei Navalny (Table 1).

	Apr. 2014	Jan. 2016	Apr. 2017	Jan. 2018	Mars 2019	July 2019	Dec. 2019	Aug. 2020	Nov. 2020
Vladimir Putin	60	66	62	70	55	54	53	56	55
Vladimir Zhirinovskiy	5	3	4	5	6	4	6	5	9
Gennady Zyuganov	5	5	3	1	2	1	3	2	2
Alexei Navalny	< 1	1	1	< 1	1	1	2	2	2
Mikhail Mishustin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Pavel Grudinin	-	-	-	6	5	4	4	2	1
Sergei Shoigu	1	2	1	<1	1	1	1	1	1
Nikolai Platoshkin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Other	3	2	3	2	4	2	3	3	4
I don't know	26	21	25	15	25	31	27	27	23

Table 1: Voting intentions in November 2020 (among voters who intended to vote). August 2020 figures come from a poll conducted in the week of August 20-26, 2020, after the Navalny "poisoning attempt." [Source: [Levada Center](#)]

Alongside these institutional problems, the reason why the non-systemic opposition—i.e., that which is not structured into parties with sufficient popular representation to be elected—is sidelined is that it is funded from abroad. In part by oligarchs guilty of illegal enrichment who have fled the country to [Britain or Israel](#), and by foreign powers, notably the United States and Great Britain. By financing political parties in Russia, our countries are, quite logically, turning them into "foreign agents."

The US uses the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to fund "non-systemic" opposition in Russia. According to the [New York Times](#), the NED was created in the early 1980s to alleviate the [workload of the CIA](#). In 2021, it supported no fewer than 109 political and influence activities in Russia, for a total of [\\$14 million](#). As for the UK, it participates in this effort by funding anti-Russia media in the countries surrounding Russia. According to investigative journalist [Matt Kennard](#), the UK spent around €96 million between 2017 and 2021 on "counter-information" in 20 countries.

In response to a situation that has only worsened since the early 2000s, Russia passed a law in 2012 similar to the one in force in the USA since 1938, allowing the banning of foreign-funded political organizations.

In November 2017, following the United States' decision to classify the Russian media outlet *RT* as a

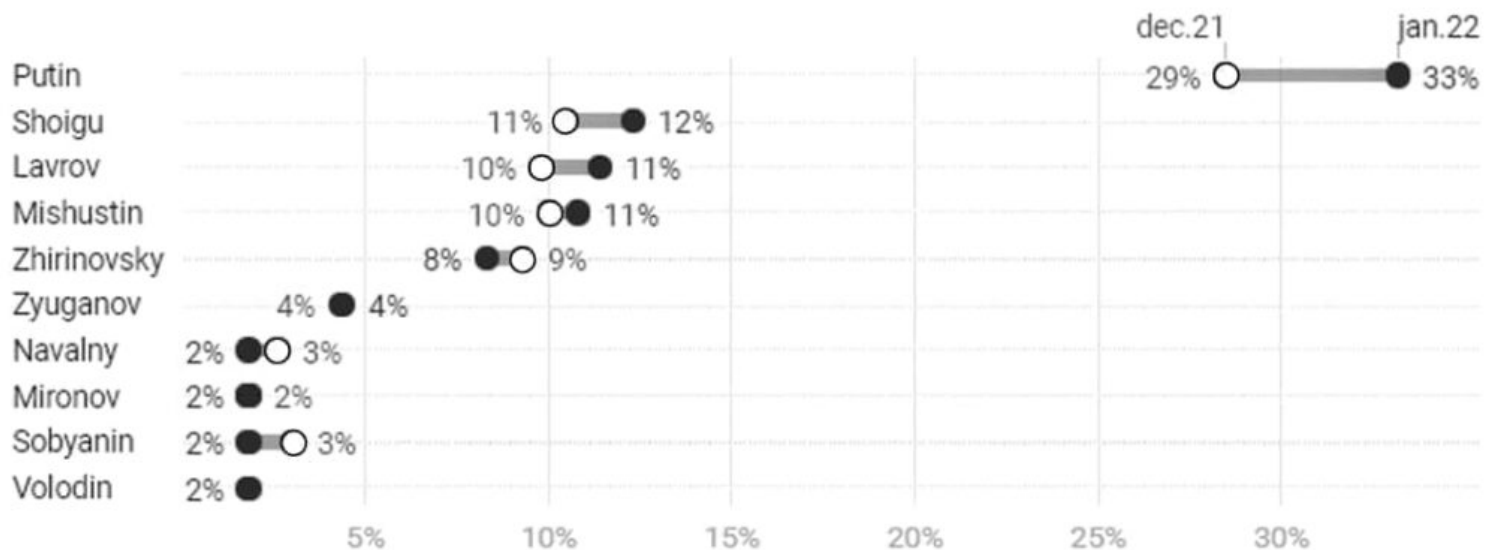
"foreign agent," Russia tightened its policy and passed a law allowing foreign journalists and media outlets to be classified as "foreign agents." In 2018, this law was extended to individuals and NGOs funded by foreign countries.

To what extent the Russian opposition is free to express itself is certainly debatable, but the fact that we are funding it makes it *ipso facto* illegitimate and illegal. No country accepts foreign funding of its opposition. What is more, if the opposition were as strong and vibrant as they say it is in Russia, it would not need our financial support.

In fact, Western countries fund the Russian opposition not to improve the situation for Russians, but to put pressure on the government.

## Name several politicians, whom you trust the most

As %% of respondents, open survey



А. Навальный внесен в реестр организаций и физлиц, причастных к экстремистской деятельности или терроризму; Левада-центр, @levada\_center, принудительно признан иноагентом

Get the data • Created with Datawrapper



## The Poisoning

On Thursday August 20, 2020, on his flight from Tomsk to Moscow, Alexei Navalny was suddenly in severe pain. The flight was diverted to Omsk so that he could be rushed to hospital.

Although no analysis was ever carried out and no one knows the exact nature of Navalny's illness, his [spokeswoman](#) claimed that he was deliberately poisoned. The rumors circulating on social networks about alcohol consumption combined with medication were immediately described as "defamatory" and dismissed as "slandorous" by [our media](#), which [readily preferred](#), without any supporting evidence, a more [romanticized narrative](#)—Novitchok poisoning [on Putin's orders](#).

Assuming that the poisoning was deliberate (and therefore criminal), how it occurred remains a mystery, and explanations have varied. In the first version, his entourage claims that he was [poisoned](#) while [drinking tea](#) at [Tomsk airport](#). The problem was that the tea had been [brought to him](#) by Ilya Pakhomov, one of his colleagues. Later, [another video](#) shows a waitress placing cups on the table.

Navalny's entourage then presented a second version: [poisoning with water bottles](#) at the hotel, which Navalny's team (remaining in Tomsk) recovered on [August 20](#). The British media outlet *The Sun* published the video of the operation, which took place before the arrival of the police, thus altering the presumed [crime scene](#). Navalny's entourage claimed to have taken the bottles to Germany for analysis. But scans of the Navalny team's luggage at the boarding gate, published by the private Russian media *REN TV* [30 percent of is owned by the RTL Group], confirmed that there were no bottles (which would have been confiscated anyway), while surveillance cameras show one of Navalny's relatives buying water from a vending machine after the [luggage check](#). In September 2020, one of Navalny's associates himself confessed that the bottle of [water was not](#) the cause of the poisoning. In any case, [according to the BBC](#), Navalny had ingested nothing but his tea at the airport that morning.

Navalny's entourage then came up with a third story: the poisoning of Navalny's [underpants](#), "revealed" on December 21, 2020, with the video of a telephone conversation with what is presented to us as an "FSB [Federal Security Service] agent," named Konstantin Kudryavtsev. It was widely circulated [on Western media](#). Conspiracy theorists claimed that, after this conversation, "[there can be no doubt](#)." But there is absolutely no proof that a) this is the person in question, b) that he really is an FSB agent, and c) that he was actually involved in the poisoning attempt.



The video was shot with the help of Bellingcat, a British government-funded outfit. The problem is that its methodology for identifying Kudryavtsev is technically questionable. In fact, instead of starting with the crime and working backwards to its perpetrator (as a Sherlock Holmes would do), Bellingcat looks for the individuals who best fit the hypothetical course of the crime. It builds a profile of culprits based on an assumed scenario, and then looks for the individuals who are most likely to match it. This is the principle of artificial intelligence. In this way, we arrive at the result through a succession of approximations—we have the probability of the probability of the probability of the probability that what we find is true. To put it simply: facts are selected on the basis of conclusions—whereas facts should lead to conclusions. This is a method that police forces try to avoid, as it leads to miscarriages of justice.

Such a methodology could be used if all the details of the crime were known in advance. The problem is that, in this particular case, numerous facts show that Bellingcat knew neither the functioning nor the structure of the Russian security services, nor even how the crime was committed and under what circumstances. The probability that Bellingcat arrived at the right result is therefore extremely low. What is more, the American channel *CNN*—which investigated the case on site—admitted that it has "not been able" to confirm Navalny's [accusations](#).

Furthermore, assuming that Navalny's contact was indeed a member of a team of "poisoners," would he speak freely with a stranger, on an unencrypted phone, and give details of an operation that would presumably be highly classified? Assuming that this "agent" had been involved in Navalny's surveillance for four years, would he not have recognized his voice on the phone? With so many contradictions and errors about the way the services work, we have every right to believe that Navalny's contact person was not the one we have been led to believe.

Russian opposition media outlet [Meduza](#) asked four lawyers whether Navalny's video constituted proof that the FSB tried to poison him. All agreed that, even if it were legally possible to present the video at a trial, its content was highly open to manipulation and insufficient to prove anything.

As to Bellingcat—regularly referred to by far-right conspiracists, *Conspiracy Watch* and many Western media outlets—an internal UK Integrity Initiative [document](#) from June 2018 on countering Russian disinformation judged it as follows:

*Other concerns were that the CPDA and ISD had analytical shortcomings, and that Bellingcat was somewhat discredited, both by spreading disinformation itself, and by being willing to*

*produce reports for anyone willing to pay.*

This telephone conversation was therefore not credible in its form. But neither was its substance. Assuming that it was Novitchok poisoning, and even that the poison was of Russian origin, there was nothing at that stage—not even Navalny's conversation—to link the Russian authorities to this attempt. Moreover, as we shall see, the various reports on this poisoning, published by the Charité hospital, the OPCW, Germany, Sweden or France, were based on biomedical samples (blood and urine samples), and none confirmed the mode of poisoning, nor referred to bottles or underwear. This was confirmed by the German government in its [answers to parliamentarians](#).

I was trained in the Swiss Nuclear Biological and Chemical (NBC) Defense School, based in Spiez, which is a center of excellence for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). So, the alleged assassination attempts on Sergei Skripal in Britain (2018) and then Alexei Navalny (2020) caught my interest. In both cases, Russia allegedly [used a poison](#) "a single gram of which could kill a thousand people in seconds." However, not only none of the "victims" died, but their symptoms were totally different from each other's, and moreover, these symptoms did not correspond to those of nerve agents.

In fact, the symptoms of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulya (and the testimony of a British National Health Service (NHS) emergency doctor [in Salisbury](#)) suggest that they were probably victims of food poisoning by a toxin related to saxitoxins, as were other customers of the same restaurant [a few months later](#). As for Navalny, the military laboratories never published the results of their analyses.

Assuming that Novitchok had been put on Navalny's underwear, he would have died when he picked it up and would not even have had time to put it on! In reality, the facts are poorly known. Our governments and the mainstream media exploit this ignorance to create a narrative that justifies their policies towards Russia. In this respect, our governments are behaving in a way that meets the definition of conspiracy theorists. The stories reported to us without nuance in the media are artificial constructs, which must "play" with the facts to appear credible.

Let's remember a few facts. First of all, Novitchok was not listed in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) until 2018, simply because the USSR (then Russia) never adopted it: it was merely a research product.

Secondly, it was at Russia's request that several variants of Novichok were added to the CWC list in 2018. Why? Because the laboratory that had developed it had been dismantled by the US, and the Americans had supplied samples to several [NATO countries](#). The Americans themselves synthesized it for research purposes [back in 1998](#). This is why the British laboratory at Porton Down [refused to confirm](#) to Theresa May that the toxin analyzed in the Skripal affair was of Russian origin.

In short, scientific evidence tends to contradict the claims of politicians and other propagandists. So we cannot say for sure, even if the report from German doctors at Berlin's La Charité hospital indicates that Navalny's poisoning seemed to have been caused by a [wrong combination](#) of drugs.

## **The Results of the Analyses**

There is little available data to assess the reliability of the Western accusations made in 2018 and 2020. The analyses carried out by German, French and Swedish military laboratories in September 2020 remain classified and have neither been published nor communicated to Russia, despite its requests. On the other hand, we do have the medical reports of the doctors who treated Navalny in Omsk and Berlin, the declassified version of the OPCW report and—to a certain extent—the German government's answers of November 19, 2020 and February 15, 2021, to questions from Bundestag lawmakers.

Analyses by military laboratories tended to assert the presence of Novichok, but their content is unverifiable. Observations by civilian doctors tended to contradict their conclusions, while government responses seemed much less categorical than the media, and invoked military secrecy when facts appeared to contradict their statements.

On August 24, the Charité hospital issued a [press release](#) stating that clinical analyses "indicate intoxication with a substance from the cholinesterase inhibitor group." However, the Omsk doctors did not detect any. So, conspiracy? Not necessarily. As the opposition media outlet *Meduza* [explained](#), the German doctors were looking for evidence of poisoning, whereas the Russian doctors were looking for the cause of Navalny's illness. As they were not looking for the same thing, they obtained different results, but they were not inconsistent.

In Sweden, lawyer Mats Nilsson requested publication of [the results](#) of Navalny's blood analysis by the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI). FOI only published a text in which the name of the substance

had been redacted, stating that "the presence of XXXX has been confirmed in the patient's blood." A blackout which suggests that something other than Novitchok, which Westerners had expected, was found. What is more, elements of his medical file published by doctors at Berlin's Charité Hospital in the medical journal *The Lancet*, tended to show that he was probably the victim of a toxic combination of drugs.

The name of the substance was hidden and obviously covered by military secrecy. So we do not know anything about it, but we can imagine that if it had been Novitchok (which Western countries expected), there would have been no reason to hide it. On January 14, 2021, the Swedish government refused to declassify this result so as not to "harm relations between Sweden and a foreign power," without specifying whether this was Germany or the United States. So we do not know. But we do know that Sweden is a country whose honor is a fiction subordinated to political interest—in the Julian Assange affair, the Swedish government had already literally "[fabricated](#)" rape accusations, according to Nils Melzer, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture.

As it turns out, the "traces of toxin" which the German government found in Navalny's blood (but which the doctors at Berlin's La Charité hospital did not find) were not on [the CAC list](#). Apparently, this toxin was so dangerous that the German government [even refused](#) to put it on the CAC list! So, the Germans found an unnamed toxic substance so dangerous that they have decided not to ban it.

Only our journalists can understand such deranged logic.

The German doctors' report, published on December 22, 2020, in the medical journal *The Lancet*, clearly stated that they were unable to identify the presence of Novitchok when Navalny arrived, but only of "cholinesterase inhibitors." They stated that the identification of Novitchok required further analysis by the IPTB.

But the analyses carried out by the Charité hospital on Navalny's arrival spoke for themselves. They are the subject of an appendix to *The Lancet* article. An appendix that no mainstream media has published, reported or analyzed, because the German doctors' findings call into question the military version of events.

The presence of cholinesterase inhibitors could therefore simply be explained by the drugs ingested by

Navalny himself, likely in combination with alcohol. This would explain why his symptoms were totally different from those of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in 2018, who were claimed to have been victims of the same poison.

Furthermore, the German doctors' report reveals that when the French, Swedish and OPCW took their samples--a fortnight after Navalny's arrival in Germany—his cholinesterase levels were close to normal. At this stage, these laboratories were only able to detect "cholinesterase inhibitors," but not the substances found at the Charité a few days earlier, such as lithium or drugs, which would have favored their appearance. In the absence of published results, we do not know exactly what the military found, but it is likely that, having no other explanation for the presence of these inhibitors, they were led to conclude that it was Novichok.

By keeping their results secret, these laboratories had probably not anticipated that the German doctors would publish the results of their analyses. Thanks to the latter, the hypothesis that Navalny was the victim of accidental poisoning appears more likely than deliberate poisoning.

Navalny must obviously have known this, just as he must have known that these results were going to be published; and it was probably to disqualify their conclusions that, the day before *The Lancet* article was published, Navalny posted online his telephone conversation with an "FSB agent."

## **Navalny's Death**

The official version given by the Russian authorities is that Alexei Navalny died from a form of cerebral embolism. Whether this is true or not, we do not know, and only an autopsy can tell us. In the absence of medical data, it is impossible to determine the cause of his death, let alone whether it was of criminal origin. However, it is now clear that Alexei Navalny's death is of no interest to the Russian government.

In Ukraine, Russia controls the military situation and is making gains along the entire front line. Ukrainian institutions are in crisis, and the threat of a cut in Western aid is contributing to mounting political tensions. Ukraine and the West expected a rapid collapse of Russia thanks to sanctions, and convinced themselves that Ukraine could only win. Two years after the start of the Russian operation, the opposite is true: the Russian economy is growing, while those of the West are tending towards recession. We were told that the Russian army had no more tanks, no more artillery, no more missiles, no more

fighters, that it was isolated from the world, that it had to find its micro-processes in washing machines; and today we are told that it is ready to invade Europe.

Faced with the failure of its strategy in Ukraine, the West is moving deeper into the war of narratives. As Josep Borrell, head of the European Union's foreign policy department, puts it: "It is clear that the wind is blowing against the West, it is blowing against us. And we have to win the battle of narratives."

But here too, Russia appears to be the winner. Tucker Carlson's interview with Vladimir Putin went round the world, showing a Kremlin leader more stable, coherent, rational, and intelligent than his White House counterpart.

Furthermore, the approaching presidential elections in Russia made the timing of Navalny's elimination unlikely. In fact, Alexei Navalny was transferred from his prison on the outskirts of Moscow to Penitentiary Colony No. 3 (IK-3). According to the opposition media *Novaya Gazeta*, when Navalny was transferred to IK-3, the Russian government gave instructions that he should be protected and not die before the elections. Did the Russian authorities have any information about possible threats against Navalny? We do not know.

What we also know from the [German](#) and [Ukrainian](#) media is that Russia was negotiating with the US government to exchange Navalny for Vadim Krasikov, a former Russian spy.

The problem here, as in all matters concerning Russia or Belarus, is that our leaders are reacting on the basis of their hatred of both these countries, not on the basis of the facts. Already during the alleged "hijacking" of flight FR4978 to Minsk in May 2021, European leaders had tweeted that President Lukashenko was responsible, even before the plane had landed in Minsk, and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya had [tweeted](#) that activist Roman Protasevich had been arrested, demanding his immediate release and calling for sanctions against Belarus, even before he had stepped off the plane.

With the Nord Stream affair in September 2022, on the French television channel *LCI*, French general Michel Yakovleff claimed that Russia had [sabotaged its own gas pipelines](#), before anyone knew what had actually happened.

The same thing happened with Navalny's death: within minutes after his death was announced, all

European leaders immediately accused Vladimir Putin of having had him assassinated. This shows that our leaders have no robust decision-making processes. They decide according to the mood of the moment, not according to decision-making processes documented by the work of the intelligence services. Here, too, our intelligence services show their weakness and their inability to integrate into decision-making processes. In Switzerland, the state of intelligence analysis is catastrophic, and this is reflected in the decisions of a political class which, like its European counterparts, is incapable of thinking things through. We have reached a point where, as a Belgian minister said in the 1990s: "things are too complex to be answered with the brain, so we answer with our guts."

By the way, what do Ukrainian intelligence services think? On February 25, Kirillo Budanov, head of Ukrainian military intelligence (GUR), [told journalists](#), "I may disappoint you, but he really had a blood clot come off."

---

Jacques Baud is a widely respected geopolitical expert whose publications include many articles and books. His latest works are [The Russian Art of War](#) He has researched Alexei Navalny in [The Navalny Case](#).

---



