

Kremlin Foes Seek to Band Together

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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Mikhail Prokhorov is one of several figures in talks to form a 'megaparty.' **Denis Sinyakov**

Liberal opposition leaders are planning to create a broad coalition or party uniting prominent public and political activists in the hope that it could win up to 30 percent of the vote in the next parliamentary elections in 2017.

But political analysts are skeptical about the possible success of the project — noting that similar previous attempts have failed — calling it a publicity stunt.

Leaders of the unregistered Parnas party, Boris Nemtsov, Mikhail Kasyanov and Vladimir Ryzhkov, say they are in talks with the liberal Yabloko party, former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin, billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov and anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny to create a so-called "megaparty," Kommersant [reported](#) Tuesday.

"Putin will try to shatter the democratic camp by founding a whole series of parties that will fight among themselves," Nemtsov said. "If five or six centers of attraction appear on the democratic front, ... everyone will receive 2 percent of the vote."

The leaders of Parnas see two scenarios for uniting the parties. In one, Parnas and Yabloko would abandon their respective brands and create a new overall structure with the participation of all their members. ☒☒In the second scenario, a coalition of equal partners would be created. All questions regarding the creation of a party list would be decided by determining which would produce the maximum electoral effect.

Yabloko leader Sergei Mitrokhin called the idea of merging parties "nonviable" because the groups "have nothing in common," but said a coalition was "a different thing," Kommersant reported.

Prokhorov aide Yuliana Slashyova told Kommersant that her boss had been in talks with Kudrin to create a party, but that they "have worked out no certain decisions."

Kudrin [wrote](#) on his Twitter feed Tuesday that he has consulted with Parnas leaders, Yabloko founder Grigory Yavlinsky and "other politicians" about the possible "consolidation of democratic forces," but that "no agreements have been reached yet."

"There are contradictions, which we need to discuss and overcome," Kudrin wrote.

Repeated calls to Navalny's cell phone went unanswered Tuesday.

Anna Lunyova, deputy head of the Center for Political Information, told The Moscow Times that the idea of such a coalition was not new.

"We have already been there," she said, referring to the failed 2006 coalition The Other Russia and to the current Solidarity movement and the unregistered Party of People's Freedom, or Parnas.

"The composition of people who may join the coalition is motley, and those who support some of them may have a negative attitude toward the others," Lunyova said.

Such a union can "discredit" the opposition, she said, predicting that the "personal interests" of its leaders will "prevail over the ideological interests."

"For the majority [of the leaders], this is a chance to return to the media scene and the parapolitical scene," she said.

One alternative is to "place a bet not on certain people but on an idea" and find "new faces" to be leaders — for example in independent trade unions, which enjoy wide popular support, Lunyova said.

The union doesn't have to call itself liberal, either, and may be a social democratic one, she said.

Yelena Pozdnyakova, a leading expert with the Center for Political Technologies, said it was "unlikely" that such a coalition would be able to boost its support to 30 percent of the population in five years, given that currently their total ratings do not exceed 5 percent.

"There is demand for liberal views in society, but most probably it will be covered by a totally new party," Pozdnyakova said, adding that Prokhorov could create one given that he has

a "material and technical base" for it because he is campaigning for the presidential vote.

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