Guide to Blogs Related to Russian Current Events

Introduction: Welcome to the Guide to Blogs for Current Events in the Russian Federation, created and maintained by staff at the Russian, East European and Eurasian Center at the University of Illinois. This guide was created to introduce blogs as useful resources for students, scholars, and the public at large.

English-language Resources

Ambassador Michael McFaul’s Live Journal: Dr. McFaul’s blog is available in either Russian or English. To access the English language posts directly from the Russian posts, simply click on the button “This Post in English” at the bottom of the screen. Dr. McFaul has encouraged diplomatic dialogue via social media in a way previously unprecedented by an American Ambassador to Russia. The specific topics of his posts vary but generally coincide with the themes of diplomacy and Russian-American relations, civil society, and cultural exchanges. The blog is available at http://m-mcfaul.livejournal.com/14307.html

Most useful for: Russians interested in understanding the United States; Russian or English speakers with no (or limited) background in U.S. – Russia relations; middle school, high school, community college and university teachers wishing to introduce U.S.-Russia relations or professional social media to their students; citizens interested in understanding the United States’ official reaction to events impacting the U.S.-Russia relationship; citizens interested in careers in diplomacy, international relations, social media, or business relations between the U.S. and Russia

Carl Schreck, Journalist: A former journalist with The Moscow Times maintains this site from Washington, D.C. It is a space where Schreck publishes his own independent work, including interviews, as well as re-publishing electronic versions of his works that have appeared in various sources, including The Moscow Times, Russian Life, and RIA Novosti. Content is written for an American audience and focuses on both current events and human interest stories. Recent posts have included a story on a Russian-born girl adopted by American parents who is now a competitive Paralympic swimmer, the experience of Black Soviet citizens, and an interview with Russian New Jersey Nets owner Mikhail Prokhorov. The blog is available at http://carlschreck.com/

Most useful for: Middle school and high school teachers of journalism or area studies; community college instructors wishing to include accessible information on current, popular, or human-interest stories from the former Soviet space.

Close to Distinct: This blog is written by the editors of Russia Beyond the Headlines. Its content is focused on popular events around all of Russia, particularly outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg, travel, and Russian and American private citizens’ views and opinions of each other. It is geared towards an American audience. The blog can be accessed at http://rbth.ru/blogs/close
Most useful for: Middle school, high school, and community college teachers interested in introducing their students to unexplored regions of Russia or Russian and American citizens’ views of each other; travelers or those involved in the tourism industry.

Foreign Policy Association: The Foreign Policy Association was founded in 1918 by journalists and private citizens. The blog project it hosts is a space for journalists, academics, business and non-profit professionals to express their opinions about foreign policy issues around the world. The Russia blog is authored by Harvard-educated Russian journalist Vadim Nikitin who has a unique comparative perspective after spending much of his life in the United States. His posts focus on analyzing Russian politics and social issues, media and foreign relations. His analysis is short and presumes that the reader already has a basic understanding of contemporary Russian political issues. Topics are often addressed in a comparative framework. Recent posts assess the role of Edward Snowden in the U.S.-Russian relationship, Russia’s passage of a “homosexual propaganda” law, the resignation of Vladislav Surkov, and an analysis of the American asylum system in the wake of the Boston bombings in April 2013. The blog is available at [http://foreignpolicyblogs.com/category/russia/](http://foreignpolicyblogs.com/category/russia/)

Most useful for: University students and academics already familiar with Russian politics who are looking for an introductory analysis to political and social events in Russia; university instructors looking to introduce students to political analysis and comparative politics.

Global Public Square: Published by CNN and updated daily, the Global Public Square offers blog posts about worldwide events categorized by country. The “Russia” section offers insights into domestic Russian current events, Russia’s role in global relations, and updates on U.S.-Russian relations. Contributors are leaders in academia, the non-profit sector, business, and journalism. The writers presume the (American) audience is educated but has little to no prior knowledge on the political situation in Russia. Recent posts have focused on the trial of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, U.S. – Russia relations, and Russia’s support of Syria’s Bashar al-Assad. The address for the website is [http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/category/russia/](http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/category/russia/)

Most useful for: Those without prior knowledge in Russian politics looking to understand Russian domestic and international politics in contemporary and historical context with some analysis; high school, community college and university instructors wishing to introduce their students to American media on Russian politics and U.S. – Russia relations.

In Moscow’s Shadows: Dr. Mark Galeotti, currently Clinical Professor of Global Affairs at New York University’s Center for Global Affairs and an author of several books on Russian politics and organized crime, is the author of this blog. The blog posts focus on Russian domestic politics and crime in the former Soviet states as well as Eastern Europe more broadly. Recent posts addressed the role of Mikhail Khodorkovsky in the current political opposition, a comparison of corruption in the Czech Republic and the Russian Federation. It can be accessed at [http://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/](http://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/)
Most useful for: Those already familiar with contemporary Russian and Eastern European corruption and political happenings looking for a unique interpretation of events with an entertaining writing style.

All the Russias: Hosted by New York University’s Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia. Recent posts includes interviews with leading experts on Russian history and current events, an analysis of the performance art of Petr Pavlensky, and a proposed summer reading list for Edward Snowden, as well as updates on the activities of the Jordan Center itself. Blog available at http://jordanrussiacenter.org/all-the-russias/

Most useful for: Specialists already familiar with major events in the Russian Federation, and historical and literary contexts, who are looking for concise but credible analysis of current events written from an academic, and often humorous, point of view.

RuNet Echo: Interpreting the Russian Internet: Part of the larger “Global Voices Online” project, RuNet Echo uniquely attempts to interpret Russian language internet movements, sites, figures, and peculiarities for an English language audience. It is funded by the Open Society Institute. The goal of the project is “…to become a leading source of objective, comprehensive and valuable information on the Russian internet.” Major topics include analysis of political opposition figures, censorship, and the relationship between Russia and the United States. While covering major political issues, contributors also make a point to report on “less traditional” internet activities in the Russian-speaking community, including activities of Russian nationalists. Contributors include American Kevin Rothrock, cohost of “New Books in Russian and Eurasian Studies” (with Sean Guillory). New posts are added regularly. Content is available at http://globalvoicesonline.org/-/special/runet-echo/ Posts are also often translated into other languages, usually Spanish and French.

Most useful for: University students and professionals looking for deeper, well-researched analysis on current events written in a non-academic style. A basic understanding of Russian politics, geography, and culture would be helpful in fully understanding the posts. For researchers the site can provide a good introduction to what is available on the Russian language web.

A Piece of America in Russia: Made up of contributions by several authors this blog examines the work done by (or in coordination with) the American centers and corners in Russia at the grassroots level. Available at http://rbth.ru/blogs/a_piece_of_america_in_russia

Most useful for: High school, community college and university students and instructors interested in understanding how American diplomacy works at a citizen level.

The Power Vertical: Written by Brian Whitmore and published on the website of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, this blog focuses on current political events in Russia. A unique feature of the blog is the prolific use of podcasts in addition to short written content. Podcasts are approximately one hour long and can be streamed, downloaded or subscribed to on iTunes. http://www.rferl.org/archive/The_Power_Vertical/latest/884/884.html Updated weekly.
**Most useful for:** The general public and students at the collegiate level looking for more in-depth analysis of current events in an audio format. Some prior understanding of Russian demographics, geography and politics is useful to understanding the content.

**Russia Blog:** This blog was created and is managed by Yuri Mamchur who is the current director of the Discovery Institute’s “Real Russia Project” and the director of the World Russia Forum. It discusses current political and social events within Russia and the other former Soviet Republics and also Russia’s role in international relations. The blog deals with Russian domestic issues but also with Russian foreign policy. Other blogs focus on U.S.-Russia relations while Mamchur’s work incorporates in a more thorough way Russia’s role in the rest of the world, including the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. Unfortunately the blog is not updated very often, approximately once a month. It is accessible at [http://www.russiablog.org/](http://www.russiablog.org/)

**Most useful for:** University level students, educators and researchers already generally knowledgeable about affairs within Russia interested in learning more about human rights issues within Russia and Russia’s role in global affairs.

**Russia Direct:** The staff at Russia Direct and guest writers interpret current events within Russia for an English-speaking audience. Common themes are the current political situation within Russia, opposition figures, and Russian foreign policy. It also deals more heavily than other blogs on the issues of post-Soviet Central Asian states. A unique feature is the “Debates” section within which controversial topics are debated by experts. The blog is updated several times per week. Available at [http://russia-direct.org/](http://russia-direct.org/)

**Most useful for:** University students and instructors with an already solid understanding of post-Soviet politics, Russian foreign relations, and global affairs looking for multiple perspectives and interpretations of current events involving the post-Soviet space.

**The Russian Front:** This blog is “…a group web blog/site dedicated to the military and diplomatic history of Russia and the Soviet Union. In addition to promoting discussion among scholars and students, The Russian Front is a repository for research and teaching materials including bibliographies, syllabi, and translated documents. The site aims to raise the profile of Russian military and diplomatic history among the broader public and to publicize the work being done by professional historians.” It can be accessed at [russian-front.com](http://russian-front.com)

**Most useful for:** Advanced university students, graduate students, researchers and instructors of Russian history looking for in-depth interpretation and criticism of historical issues and media coverage of Russia and the former Soviet states.

**Russian History Blog:** [http://russianhistoryblog.org/about/](http://russianhistoryblog.org/about/) This online project is a joint effort by several well-known Russian historians to provide an online space for discussions of Russian history and teaching methods. Contributors also often write about current political events, newly published book, and hot topics in pedagogy such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Anyone can comment on blog posts and react to the conversations.
Most useful for: Graduate students and academics interested in joining conversions on Russian history and current political events. Questions about interpreting historical information could also be posted by researchers looking for feedback from colleagues around the world; teachers of humanities courses interested in following discussions on pedagogical methods.

Russia Watch: Written by James Brooke for Voice of America’s Moscow bureau, this blog analyzes current internal Russian domestic political, economic and social issues as well as Russia’s global role and U.S. – Russia relations. Content is added approximately once a week. It can be accessed at blogs.voanews.com/russia-watch/

Most useful for: Community college and university students and instructors looking for current critical news sources on domestic Russian issues and Russia’s role in global affairs. Previous general knowledge of history and politics in the post-Soviet space would be helpful to the reader.

Sean’s Russia Blog: This blog is written by a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pittsburgh who also maintains the podcast “New Books in Russian and Eurasian Studies”. It takes a critical perspective on current political and social issues and Russian and Soviet history. Recent entries examined the trial of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and the status of activist-artists Pussy Riot, family values in Russia, migrants and Russian nationalism. Available at seansrussiablog.org

Most useful for: University and graduate students and instructors with a basic understanding of current events in Russia and post-Soviet economic and political issues looking for deeper analysis on such topics than mainstream American news sources usually provide.

Siberian Light: This blog was founded in 2004 by current lead contributor Andy Young who holds degrees in Third World Politics and International Security. Its bloggers discusses political events in Russia and the former Soviet republic with a focus on domestic Russian politics and relationships between the former Soviet Republics. Unfortunately new posts are added quite infrequently. Available at siberianlight.net

Most useful for: University students interested in brief explanations about current political events in the former Soviet space. As references are often made to the English language and Russia language media it may prove to be a good site to gain a summary overview of a topic which can then lead to further, deeper investigation.

Surprised by Russia: Written by Russian journalist Svetlana Smetanina, this blog examines current popular events in Russia including music, health and wellness, politics, travel, and fashion. The author makes a point of examining issues largely ignored by major media outlets and writes in a very accessible style. The blog, however, is updated infrequently. Available at rbth.ru/blogs/surprised

Most useful for: Middle school, high school, and community college students and instructors looking for an interpretation of cultural events and peculiarities related to Russia.
**Russian-language Resources**

Блог Константина Рубахина: This Live Journal blog is written by Russian environmental activist Konstantin Rubahin, the man behind the "Save Khoper" campaign, a grassroots environmental movement working to prevent copper-nickel mining in Russia's Voronezh region ("Khoper" is the name of a local river and national park). Available at [http://mnog.livejournal.com/tag/savekhoper](http://mnog.livejournal.com/tag/savekhoper)

*Most useful for:* Advanced speakers of Russian interested in Russian civil society, environmental rights or grassroots activism; teachers of advanced Russian who want to introduce their students to the modern, living language through the themes of civic activism or environmentalism.

Блог Проекта Нужнапомощь.ру: This blog publishes entries on political and social issues, particularly as they pertain to the lives of underprivileged groups in Russian society including the disabled and orphans. Contributors to the blog include journalists and social activists. The purpose of the blog is to identify problems in Russia and to propose and discuss solutions to those problems. It can be accessed at [http://tvrain.ru/blog/blog_proekta_nuzhnapomoschru/](http://tvrain.ru/blog/blog_proekta_nuzhnapomoschru/)

*Most useful for:* Researchers interested in outlining the scope of problems that underprivileged people face in Russia. Advanced language learners and teachers may find it useful as most of the contributors are professional journalists.

Видеоблог Дмитрия Медведева: The official activities of Russia’s former president and current prime minister Dmitry Medvedev are logged in this videoblog. It can be accessed at [http://blog.da-medvedev.ru/](http://blog.da-medvedev.ru/)

*Most useful for:* Intermediate and advanced speakers of Russian interested in understanding the Kremlin’s official perspective of many domestic and international political, social, and economic issues; teachers of intermediate and advanced Russian looking to introduce students to clear, spoken Russian.

Dirty.ru: This “collective blog” is a platform for discussions on all sorts of current events including politics, new scientific discoveries, and pop culture. Nearly all blog posts are followed by extensive online discussions. The web address is [http://d3.ru/popular](http://d3.ru/popular)

*Most useful for:* Advanced learners and teachers of Russian who are interested in current Russian net-speak, slang, and colloquialisms. May be also interesting for researchers trying to outline the scope of current issues in Russian / East European politics and Russian Internet public’s attitude to them.

Live Journal Алексея Навального: The blog is kept by one of Russia’s leading political and social activists Aleksei Navalny, a former corporate lawyer with a degree in finance. His blog discusses political and current events and through it he organizes grassroots political actions. It can be accessed at [http://navalny.livejournal.com/](http://navalny.livejournal.com/)

*Most useful for:* Advanced Russian speakers who already have a grasp on major political, social and economic issues within Russia but who are looking for an alternate
perspectives; researchers working on political activism, political personalities, social media, corruption or democracy in contemporary Russia

Видеоблог Кавказского Узла: This videoblog project is part of a larger website, Кавказского Узел. The site was founded in 2001 by the civil society organization “Memorial.” The short videoblogs cover topics related to general news, culture in the Caucasus, human rights issues, local government, among other topics. The blogs are aimed at a Russian audience. The blog is accessible at http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/blog_posts A particularly interesting sub-blog Северный Кавказ глазами блогеров is a joint project between Kavkazskii uzel and the BBC. It was started after the hostage situation occurred at the Beslan school with the intent to provide a platform for discussions about the problems in the North Caucasus. It can be directly accessed via http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/blogs/1198

Most useful for: Advanced learners of Russian interested in the Caucasus; academics following events in the Caucasus or human rights issues in the former Soviet space.

Полит Разбор: http://politrazbor.ru/ An independent site which allows public discussions on Russian current events. The blog managers pride themselves on allowing open discussions with no editing of the opinions and viewpoints of contributors and discussants. New blog posts are added sporadically.

Most useful for: Advanced learners and teachers of Russian interested in Russian current events and seeking multiple viewpoints about the most popular currents events. Academics following internet activities and alternative news sources in the Russia.