

Karena Avedissian

Success and Failure of Social Movements in Authoritarian Contexts: the Cases of Krasnodar Krai and the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria

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The Russian collective action landscape is composed of a broad constellation of activist networks, organisations, and individuals. While each varies in size, scope, and objective, some groupings share certain qualitative characteristics that place them squarely within the domain of social movements. Examining their outcomes within an authoritarian context can provide valuable insights about the dynamics of civil society in non-democratic states. My research aims to capture these insights by examining the outcomes of social movements in post-soviet Russia's south since Putin's presidency in 2000.

Studying social movements in an increasingly authoritarian Russia, and especially in its southern regions is a difficult undertaking for many reasons. While there exists literature on Russian democratisation, and on social movements in former socialist eastern European states, studies of social movements in Russia, and particularly its North Caucasus region are lacking.

Given these facts, my research seeks to further social movement research by highlighting emerging trends, and providing insights by applying existing theory in new geopolitical contexts. Informed by the dominant social movement approaches to studying outcomes, the scope of my research are social movements engaged in social and political issues. In particular, my research examines and compares the cases of four social movements in two locations in southern Russia: The Cossack movement and the environmental movement in Krasnodar Krai; and the Balkar movements and human rights movement in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. I analyse through a social movement framework why two of the movements have failed, why one has been coopted by the state, and why one cannot get off the ground at all. I argue that the outcomes of these movements are caused by 1) structures in the political environment and 2) the interpretive and discursive processes occurring within the movement.

Profile

Since completing my Master's dissertation on consociationalism in Dagestan, my professional and academic interests have not strayed far from the North Caucasus or Russia. I've worked for an American development agency in Moscow; for non-government organizations that protect the rights of minorities and migrants in Russia; and on academic projects that facilitate the dissemination of scholarly works done by Muslim scholars around the world. I am invested in giving the unexamined and the voiceless an academic platform and filling in the gaps in traditional Western knowledge.

Qualifications

- BA (University of California, Riverside)
- MSc (University of Birmingham, CREES)

Research interests

- Nationalism and Identity
- Conflict Studies
- Iran, Turkey, and the South Caucasus
- New Social Media

Professional memberships

- American Political Science Association

Teaching responsibilities

- Guest lecturer, Master's Module – 'History, Culture, and Contemporary Politics in the Caucasus' (CREES, The University of Birmingham) 2010/11

Conference papers

Avedissian K., Ottman M., and Wolff S., 2011. Sudan: The Impact of Institutions on Violent Conflict. Antwerp, 27 May 2011. Unpublished.

Publications

Avedissian, K. (2012), Black Sea Protest Could Mean Jail for Activists. [online] Transitions Online. Available at: <http://www.tol.org/client/article/23182-black-sea-protest-could-mean-jail-for-activists.html> (<http://www.tol.org/client/article/23182-black-sea-protest-could-mean-jail-for-activists.html>)

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