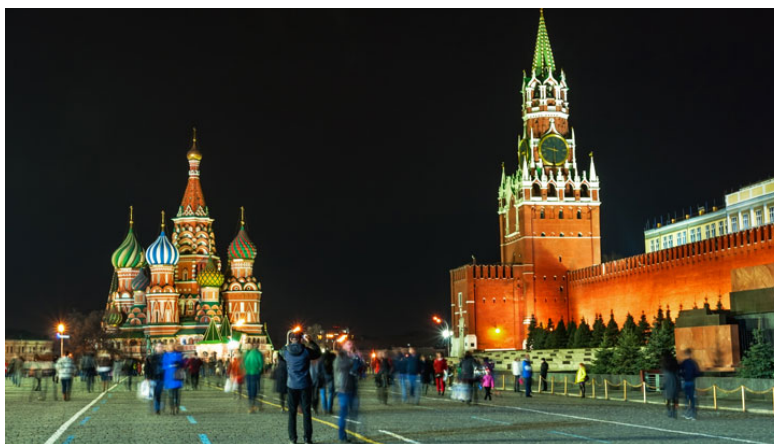


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The Dynamics of Russia's Nationalist-Patriotic Opposition (1990-2012)



Sofia Tipaldou's PhD dissertation deals with the factors that influence the emergence of contemporary far right organizations in Russia and underlines the key role of leadership in those organizations. The research addresses two questions: to what extent does the Russian radical right movement vary over time? and what accounts for the internal transformation (the emergence and further evolution) of radical right organizations in Russia?

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The central outcome variable of my study are the emergence and organizational change of the Russian radical right movement that has to do with the why, when, and how mobilizing structures arise and how they change their form, strategy, discourse, and model. The population of my study is the broader radical right movement in Russia, which I will call "nationalist-patriotic opposition" and define as: the wide spectrum of extra-parliamentarian nationalist organizations (parties, movements, and milieus), as well as their allies within the Duma. I used a number of data-gathering methods that include participant observation, semi-structured interviewing (key informant interviews), the use of indigenously generated documents by social movement organizations, newspaper articles, and archival research.

My study uses an interdisciplinary approach that combines different disciplines (political science,

sociology, and area studies) and different methods based on extensive fieldwork (key-informant semi-structured interviewing, participant observation, and archival research) and aims to forge a bridge between political science and sociology literature on this topic. It addresses the analytical challenge of identifying circumstances that include both structural and cultural processes and combine them with an agent-based approach in order to understand movement emergence and development. It is based on the ongoing effort of merging nationalism and social movement theories in order to contribute to the construction of a more solid theory of radical right protest.

My argument is that Russia's contemporary radical right organizations have changed their form, strategy, discourse, and model through an adaptation process under the influence of new socioeconomic cleavages (along the lines of nation-state / nationless confederacy, civic / blood citizenship, and parliamentarian / extra-parliamentarian political organizations), the government's response towards these cleavages (particularly through migration policy), and opportunities the regime or other external factors (e.g. technology) opens or closes to them. Opportunities are shaped by the structural context which includes cultural, social, and political elements. The mobilization and outcomes of the nationalist-patriotic movement may feed back into both movement structures and context structures. During this process, the role of leadership is crucial, for capitalizing on the existing opportunities, for constructing a message attractive to the public, and for transforming their organizational forms and structures in a way that will enable them to survive and to accomplish their goals.

Evidence from interviews with leaders of nationalist-patriotic movements shows that their agency is fundamental for the movements' creation and survival. My study makes a series of conceptual contributions, including the introduction of a broader definition of the radical right that accounts for the complex relations that exist within and among the organizations that comprise it and their interaction with opposing organizations; the introduction of the term "technological opportunity structures"; and the disentanglement of the existent form of the National-Bolshevik Party -The Other Russia- from the nationalist-patriotic front.

The present research contributes to obtaining more insight into the patterns and dynamics of right-wing radicalism in transitional settings, especially non-democratic ones. The case study of Russia seeks to contribute to the debate in social science on the emergence and development of radical right wing movements about a broader category of similar cases that undergo rapid systemic change. It has further implications for our understanding of the role of nationalist organizations in democratic transition; on the understanding of similar movements in other transitional settings, e.g. Ukraine, or in Western non-transitional settings with similar characteristics, e.g. Southern European economic crisis environments; and for the better understanding of pressures in domestic policy that may impact governmental decision-making in a series of issues, e.g. foreign policy.

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