

Секция «Психологические аспекты политических процессов в России и мире»

**Факторы протестной мобилизации в регионах РФ в 2017-2019 гг.:
сравнительный анализ (Protest Mobilization Factors in Russian Regions in
2017-2019: Comparative Analysis)**

Научный руководитель – Юрий Андреевич Кабанов

Скуматова Полина Витальевна

Выпускник (бакалавр)

Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики» -

Санкт-Петербург, Санкт-Петербург, Россия

E-mail: side.12@yandex.ru

“Why do people protest”? Why are individuals ready to join the collective action, risking their safety and well-being? Over the decades, numerous scholars have scrutinized this question, yet still, there is not a unified answer. Protests are often seen as the instruments for social change [Lukyanova 2017: 1], as they can highlight the grievances, which are present in the society. Whether it is a ‘one-issue’ protest of dissatisfied citizens, who are opposing the construction of a church on the popular town square, or a ‘national’ one against the corruption among the high-class officials, the protests allow people to voice their grievances and dissatisfaction, to express themselves and to be heard. However, in an authoritarian regime, one may find it hard to engage in political action, due to the fact that such participation is quite costly, and the perceived efficacy, as some might state, is low. So is the case with Russia, but still, people all over the country take to the streets to join popular protests, despite the common perception of them as the apolitical ones [Clement et al. 2014]. The main question is: why is that so? In this paper, we aim to understand how such large-scale protest mobilization was enabled in case of Russian protests in 2017-2019 and explain the motivation underlying the political action, both theoretically, using resource mobilization theory and social psychology, and empirically. For practical reasons, we only focus our research on four Russian regions, namely St. Petersburg, Moscow, Shiyes (Arkhangelsk region) and Yekaterinburg, where some of the biggest actions took place.

Political protests are largely associated with democratic regimes, but it would be wrong to assume they are not present in autocracies as well. Protests are often seen as a threat to the authoritarian regime [Reuter, Robertson 2015: 23] and predecessors of the regime transformation [Lorentzen 2013: 128], hence they are undesirable for the autocrats and thus need to be curbed. In order to do so, the government may tailor the media agenda to prevent public discontent [Gabdulhakov 2020: 5] and use propaganda to mute the voices of opposition. It may as well threaten, persecute, arrest, fine, and even imprison the leaders of opposition and participants of the protest [Escribà-Folch 2013: 554], which makes participation in one rather dangerous and costly.

There is a large number of possible explanations as to what mobilizes protests, especially in an authoritarian setting. Both Arab Spring and “Bolotnaya” gave some valuable insights into how mobilization occurs. One of such is the role of the Internet and social networks. The emergence of new media, free of propaganda and censorship, and social networks has created a powerful resource for mobilizing people for collective action. It became a platform for forming communities, thus increasing citizens’ connectivity [Tufekci and Wilson 2012: 367], establishing group ties [Reuter and Szakonyi 2015: 4] and forming networks of likeminded people [Tufekci and Wilson 2012: 366]. Most significantly, the Internet lowered the costs of protest participation, as it made it easier to “acquire independent information, reduces barriers to collective action, and, thereby, undermines authoritarianism” [Reuter and Szakonyi 2015: 32].

Eventually, we assume that in order to take part in a protest, people should be motivated - by the feelings of relative deprivation and injustice, by particular identification, by shared grievances (i.e., feelings of injustice and inequality, dissatisfaction and disappointment with the regime, political and socio-economic conditions [Lukyanova 2017: 34]) and emotions, such as anger and despair [Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans 2013: 887].

Our findings allow us to see the different ways in which the individual's identity, justice, grievances, deprivation, emotions, and perception of efficacy shape the desire to partake in collective political action. Additionally, we are able to learn about the role of mass media, new media, and social networks in protest mobilization. Finally, the research was able to highlight some valuable outcomes on the factors, constraining mobilization.

Источники и литература

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