Pro-Regime Youth: An Authoritarian Regime’s Solution to Democratic Youth Movements

Janet M. Lawler
The University of Iowa
janet-lawler@uiowa.edu

1. Youth associations as an authoritarian defense
- Pro-regime youth associations espouse the ideology of, receive a majority of their funding from, or were established by the regime.
  - Nashi, Russia
  - KelKel, Kyrgyzstan
  - Zhas Otan, Kazakhstan
- Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas, Cuba

2. Pro-regime youth relationship to pro-democracy
- Pro-regime youth associations deter pro-democracy movements
  - As a strong factor (Beachain, 2010; Hovrath, 2011; Kuzio, 2006a; Polese, 2011; Robertson, 2009)
  - As a weak factor (Freedome House, 2009; Khamidov, 2006; Wallace, 2005)

3. Successfully deterring pro-democracy youth
- Strong factors
  - Numbers
  - Funding
  - Visibility
  - Demonstrations, rallies, etc.
- Weak factors
  - Less Visible
  - Less Significant

4. Hypothetical Implications
- Displaying:
  - Preemptive Timing
  - Unique Opportunities
  - Significance
- Existence:
  - Significant or Not

5. Significance and visibility before and after
- Pro-Democracy Youth Movements Before Pro-Regime Youth Association Creation After Pro-Regime Youth Association Creation
  - Young Yabloko, Walking Without Putin, Oborona
  - Rising Visibility
  - Rising Significance
  - Falling Significance
  - Low Visibility
  - Youth Opinion Shift
  - KelKel, Birge
  - Rising Visibility
  - Moderate Significance
  - High Visibility
  - High Significance
  - Tulip Revolution
  - Society of Young Professionals (OMPK), Kahar, Social Resistance Movement
  - Low Visibility
  - Low Significance
  - Associations Disbanded
  - Opposition Participation
  - Banned
  - Youth attitudes toward democracy
  - Majority Supporting New Regime
  - Dissatisfaction with Regime
  - Youth Activists Repressed

6. Factors dependent on pro-regime youth success
- Pro-Regime Associations Opportunities for Members Significance and Visibility Timing Deterred Pro-democracy Youth Movement
  - Nashi
  - High
  - Unique
  - High
  - Preemptive
  - Yes
  - KelKel
  - Low
  - Unexceptional
  - Low Significance
  - Low Visibility
  - Concurrent
  - No
  - Zhas Otan
  - Moderate
  - Unique
  - High
  - Subsequent
  - Yes
  - Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas
  - High
  - Unique
  - High
  - Preemptive
  - Yes

7. Conclusions
- Though this study affirms no causal link ensuring a pro-regime youth movement’s success over a democratic youth movement, it does illuminate the processes which they use and their degree of success.

Pro-regime youth associations can deter pro-democracy youth movements if they have:
- Unique opportunities
  - Appealing to youth
  - Jobs, education, government promotion
  - Opportunities unable to be attained without membership
  - Significant presence
  - Large numbers
  - Removing possible members from democratic movement
  - Engendering popular regime support amongst non-youth
  - High visibility
  - Multiple publicized protests
  - Devoted media attention and promotion

Timing not as necessary for successful deterrence
- Zhas Otan
- The establishment of a pro-regime youth movement can work as a viable and successful authoritarian weapon in the face of an oncoming democratic youth movement.