Protest, Policy and Politics

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Abstract

Protests are essential to democratic expression because they can spark change, influence laws, and alter political environments. Using well-established theoretical frameworks like Social Movement Theory and Policy Process Theory, this study explores the complex relationship between demonstrations, policy, and politics. Through an analysis of historical viewpoints, case studies of significant protests, and current instances, the paper sheds light on the complex role that protesters play in shaping political dynamics and policy change. It explains the obstacles and constraints faced by protest movements, such as co-optation by political players and repression from authorities, and investigates how protests impact policy decisions. It also identifies success factors for bringing about policy change through protests. The study also examines how foreign countries have shaped India's political landscape and demonstrations, illuminating the challenges of managing outside influences in domestic affairs. In the end, this research offers insights that guide conversations on democratic governance, social activism, and political mobilization in modern cultures, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between demonstrations, policy, and politics.

Introduction

Modern societies are fundamentally shaped by the interconnected aspects of protest, policy, and politics, which influence public discourse, governance, and social transformation. Protests have always been an essential means of voicing disagreement, defending rights, and challenging established hierarchies of power. Protests have played a crucial role in furthering democratic principles and enacting legislative changes, from environmental activism to civil rights campaigns. Protest and policy, however, have a complex relationship that is frequently characterized by conflicts and discussions between activists, decision-makers, and political institutions. It is critical to understand the dynamics of protest, policy, and politics in light of the rise in social mobilization and political polarization. Globally, there has been a rise of large-scale protests in recent years, driven by complaints over everything from environmental degradation to economic inequality. These actions sparked considering the ability of protests to influence significant policy changes and how political elites and governments react to public demands. Likewise, the dynamics of protest movements have changed as a result of the rapidly mobilizing nature of digital communication and social media, which has highlighted voices that were previously marginalized. Policymakers are struggling to respond to the demands of various protest movements in this climate while preserving political legitimacy and stability.

To provide a thorough understanding of the complex relationships that exist between protest, policy, and politics, as well as their implications for social movements and governance, this paper aims to analyze these relationships. This research attempts to clarify the processes by which protests impact policy outcomes and shape policy through an examination of theoretical frameworks, empirical case studies, and policy implications and the setting of politics. It examines political institutions' reactions to protests critically, taking into account elements like pressure, repression, and concession as well as their consequences for democratic governance and social transformation.

Literature Review

The literature has focused on the nexus of politics, policy, and protest, which reflects the dynamic interaction between social movements and governing bodies. Scholars have studied many aspects of protest movements, their impact on legislative outcomes, and the larger political implications of citizen involvement within this diverse discipline. The literature investigates how protest movements impact political agendas and decision-making procedures. The notion of resource mobilization has played a crucial role in understanding how social movements utilize resources, including finance, media attention, and organizational ability, to raise their voices and create influence over politicians. Research has indicated that to mobilize support for policy change, collective action framing and strategic mobilization methods are necessary. Protest movements can be enabled or restricted by institutional settings and political alignments. The shifts in public opinion, electoral cycles, and political institutions can provide windows of opportunity for social movements to push their policy objectives. The literature explores how protest movements impact the formulation of public policy. Research has shown how important it is for protests to raise public awareness and media attention to put issues on the political agenda and force decision-makers to act. It has also highlighted how disruptive strategies like strikes, protests, and civil disobedience can exert pressure on decision-makers to make significant policy changes. The rise of social media has changed the protest political setting by opening up new channels for advocacy and mobilization. The research also recognizes the difficulties and constraints that protest-based campaigning has in bringing about permanent policy change. Looking it up, a wide range of theoretical approaches, empirical research, and critical analyses of the dynamics of citizen activism and governance are provided by the literature on protest, policy, and politics. Through the examination of the complex connections among social movements, policy procedures, and political establishments, researchers made progress in recognizing how group efforts mold the features of democratic administration and promote changes in society.

Theoretical framework

Understanding the structure of politics, protest, and policy is crucial for assessing and resolving social issues in public policy research. Citizens can express their dissatisfaction and advocate for change through protest, which frequently sparks policy debates and has a significant impact on decision-makers. On the other hand, policies are the planned solutions and strategies that people, groups, and governments use to solve problems ranging from equity in society to economic development. The direction and results of governance are determined by a combination of conflicting interests, views, and relationships of power that constitute the larger political environment in which these policies are developed and debated. Through analyzing the relationship between protest, policy, and politics, scholars can acquire a better understanding of how social change happens, find challenges to the efficient implementation of policies, and look into ways to promote more responsive and inclusive decision-making processes.

Social Movement Theory

A social movement is a chaotic, long-term campaign that aims to achieve a social goal, usually the implementation of a change in society's structure or values, or its prevention. Social movements vary in scale, but they are all fundamentally group efforts. That is to say, they are the outcome of people who have a shared outlook on society but whose interactions are not characterized by rules and procedures coming together more or less organically. Crowds, panics, and basic forms of collective behavior (milling, etc.) are characterized by short-lived or periodic behavior that is mainly caused by emotions. A social movement arises when temporary motivations give way to long-term goals and when sustained connections replace temporary social groupings. A movement balances randomness and structure. The movement generally gets identification, coordination, and leadership from one or more organizations; yet, the organizations' borders never coincide with the movement's. For example, everyone who works for the cause and collaborates with other workers for this goal is a part of the conservationist movement, even though groups like the Sierra Club in California have an important role in the movement to protect the environment. It is impossible to assess social movements' outcomes simply in terms of their success or failure as groups aiming to change the social order. Failure could happen from the movement being brutally crushed or from general disinterest. If too few people take a movement seriously and it doesn't get enough support to enforce its agenda on society, it may eventually go away. Sometimes, remaining members may survive for a very long time as a cult, focused on their own benefits from membership and not making a real attempt to change the social order.

The most reliable sign of a movement's success is when its influence is accepted as an official authority. When a revolution is successful, the social movement takes on a new role as a source of legitimacy and authority, and anyone who disagrees with its principles is seen as counterrevolutionary. In other cases, separation is how the movement gains control. When their ideals are not accepted by the greater group or society, the members disappear into an alternative social system where they can try to live out their beliefs apart from a violent or disinterested society.

Policy process theory

Political process theory, also referred to as "political opportunity theory," explains the events, state of mind, and behaviors that lead a social movement to succeed in accomplishing its objectives. The idea asserts that a movement cannot succeed in its goals unless there are political prospects for change. And finally, the movement tries to use the current political system and procedures to bring about change. The fundamental theory of social movements and their mobilization is known as Political Process Theory. A social movement's likelihood of success or failure is based on five main factors, according to political process theory: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, framing processes, protest cycles, and contentious repertoires.

Political opportunities are the most important aspect of PPT since, in the idea, social movements cannot succeed without them. Vulnerabilities in the current political system give rise to political possibilities, or chances for intervention and change within it. A crisis of legitimacy, in which the public no longer accepts the social and economic conditions that the system promotes or upholds, is the primary cause of vulnerabilities in the system. The expansion of political empowerment to previously marginalized groups, leadership splits, growing diversity in political organizations and the electorate, and the relaxation of oppressive laws that prevented people from calling for change could all be contributing factors to opportunities. The term "mobilizing structures" refers to the political or non-political groups that are already established within the society and that are actively seeking change. By offering membership, leadership, communication, and social networks to the emerging movement, these organizations function as mobilizing frameworks for social movements. To just a few, examples include schools, student organizations, churches, and nonprofit and community organizations.

An organization's leaders use framing techniques to help the group or movement explain the current issues, why change is required, what changes are wanted, and how to attain them. A social movement cannot take advantage of political possibilities and effect change unless it can gain the ideological support of the public, members of the political establishment, and movement participants. Framing processes facilitate this kind of support. Framing is defined as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to

construct shared understandings of the world and of themselves that validate and motivate collective action" by McAdam and colleagues.[1]

According to PPT, protest cycles are a crucial component of social movement success. A protest cycle is an extended period during which there is a high level of resistance to the political system and protest activity. According to this theoretical viewpoint, protests serve as crucial platforms for expressing the opinions and demands of the movement's organizing structures as well as the intellectual frameworks that underpin the framing process. Protests therefore help to fortify the movement's unity, increase public knowledge of the problems the movement is fighting, and aid in the recruitment of new members. The last component of PPT is disputed collections or the collection of strategies used by the movement to advance its objectives. Protests, petitions, and strikes are common examples of this.

Historical Perspectives on Protest and Policy
  Case Studies of Significant Protests and Their Policy Impacts

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s where Black Americans fought for social justice and equal legal protection under the US Constitution. Although slavery was formally banned during the Civil War, Black people continued to face discrimination and its terrible effects, particularly in the South. Black Americans and many other Americans mobilized at the middle of the 20th century to start a two-decade-long, historic campaign for equality. This is a classic example of how major policy change can be sparked by grassroots agitation. American society's inherent racial prejudice and segregation were challenged by civil rights activists using a combination of planned marches, sit-ins, and boycotts. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited racial discrimination and segregation and protected African Americans' ability to vote, were two of the historic laws that resulted from these efforts. These legislative achievements had a significant impact on policy, transforming American culture and bringing in a new era of civil rights protections and legal equality.

Comparably, the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s provide an example of how public disagreement can change the direction of government policy. Protesters, drawn by the general public's disapproval of the Vietnam War, expressed their disapproval of the war through large-scale gatherings, civil disobedience, and draft refusal. The protests were crucial in influencing public opinion and ultimately forcing decision-makers to reconsider how they were handling the war. The fact that US

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[1] *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing* [1996]

soldiers left Vietnam and that US foreign policy was significantly reviewed shows how much these protests have influenced how the government makes decisions. While US Democrats were able to mobilize public opinion in the US and its allies against the war that the US government was forced to enter, this was not an issue for authoritarian communist regimes. Second, a greater understanding emerged that the deliberative process can only be effective in situations where there are adequate grounds for both parties to offer and receive benefits. In other words, it cannot function in situations where one party perceives itself to be in a position of dominance and, as a result, to dictate the terms of the settlement.

In the realm of women's rights, the Women's Suffrage Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries provides a compelling case study of how sustained activism can lead to the expansion of political rights. Suffragettes employed a variety of tactics, including marches, hunger strikes, and public advocacy campaigns, to demand the right to vote for women. The conclusion of their diligent efforts was the British government's 1918 decision to offer the right to vote to women who owned property and were over thirty. Women of all ages were placed on an equal basis when they were awarded the same voting rights as men in 1928. Women's suffrage was officially granted in 1920 when the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified. This was a major turning point in the struggle for gender equality. In the 1920s, a few British Indian provinces granted women limited suffrage. Women were given reserved seats in the federal and provincial legislatures by the Government of India Act 1935, which increased their voting rights. With the ratification of the Indian Constitution in 1950, full adult suffrage was established, allowing full voting rights. This movement had a significant legislative impact that extended beyond electoral politics, acting as a spur for more general improvements in women's representation and rights.

The Arab Spring uprisings were a series of demonstrations and changes that spread through several Arab nations, including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and others(2010–2012). The movement sought to address socio-economic problems, corruption, and authoritarian government. Even though the results differed from nation to nation, the area saw substantial political upheavals and changes as the outcome. Driven by grievances ranging from political repression to economic inequality, protesters utilized social media and grassroots organizing to coordinate mass demonstrations and calls for change. While the outcomes of the Arab Spring varied across countries, with some governments being overthrown and others implementing reforms like in Tunisia the new charter seeks to take the country back to the presidential system where the president will have the ultimate authority and undercut the powers of Parliament.

The Role of Protest in Policy Change

Mechanisms of Influence: How Protests Impact Policy Decisions

Protest's involvement in changing policy is a complicated and multidimensional phenomenon that functions through a wide range of influencing methods, all of which have an impact on how policies are decided. Fundamentally, protest is an effective means of bringing attention to and influencing public opinion on certain policy issues.

- **Lobbying:** To directly address legislators and promote their interests, pressure groups use lobbying strategies. To influence the course of policy, they hold in-person meetings, conversations, and negotiations with legislators, government representatives, and policymakers. A recent instance of lobbying in India involves a number of industry associations, including the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), directly interacting with government representatives and legislators to support policy changes or reforms that will benefit their respective industries. To encourage economic growth and the creation of jobs in respective industries, these groups could, for example, advocate for tax breaks, regulatory changes, or investment incentives.

- **Advocacy and Public Campaigns:** In order to bring attention to their problems and concerns, pressure groups frequently launch advocacy campaigns. Through public protests, social media, media platforms, and other public campaigning techniques, they mobilize public support and exert pressure on decision-makers to take action on their demands. A case in point of advocacy and public campaigns in India currently would be the farmer protests of 2020–2021. Farmers from many states, but especially Punjab and Haryana, organized a protest against the new regulations the Indian government had enacted regarding agriculture. Using social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, they planned large-scale demonstrations both physically and online in an effort to gain support and bring attention to their issues. Public demonstrations, sit-ins, and marches were all part of these protests, which attracted a lot of media and public attention. The farmers raised concerns about agricultural changes, farmer rights, and the influence of corporations on farming techniques in an effort to put pressure on the government to repeal the laws.

- **Public Debates and Consultations:** Pressure groups provide their justifications, supporting documentation, and alternative policy recommendations during public debates, consultations, and committee hearings. They actively participate in conversations with legislators and use their

knowledge and experience to further the policy-making process. Discussions about bitcoin regulation in India feature participants analyzing the advantages and disadvantages. In a recent parliamentary committee hearing on cryptocurrencies, for instance, participants stressed the necessity of regulation that strikes a balance. [2]Industry estimates place the number of cryptocurrency investors in India at around 10 crore, with an estimated $6 billion in market value. Stakeholders, however, are calling for more nuanced policies to promote innovation while defending consumer interests due to ongoing worries about investor protection and regulatory clarity.

- **Legal Techniques:** Pressure organizations may use legal techniques, such as bringing court cases known as public interest litigations(PILs), to oppose or affirm particular laws or rulings. These court cases may significantly affect how laws are interpreted by judges and how public policies are shaped. There have been many significant judgments related to Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India over the years and one of the notable ones the case of Vishaka and Others versus State of Rajasthan and Others (1997) to stop working women from being sexually harassed, the Court established rules and conventions that must be followed and as a result of the ruling The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 was passed.

- **Impact on Political Parties:** Pressure organizations have a variety of ways to impact political parties, such as by donating money, encouraging voter turnout, and influencing party platforms. Through a calculated strategic alliance with politically aligned parties, pressure organizations can indirectly influence policy decisions. In India, political parties are influenced by pressure groups—trade unions in particular—through tactical partnerships during election cycles. Various trade unions, along with various political parties, aggressively campaigned to mobilize workers and impact voter turnout in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections of 2021. For example, trade unions affiliated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) were crucial in mobilizing labor communities and workers to support their respective parties. Through their influence on party platforms and agendas concerning labor rights and welfare measures, these partnerships indirectly impact policy decisions.

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[2]https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/technology/investors-count-on-blockbuster-2024-ahead-of-bitcoin-halving/articleshow/107638444.cms?from=mdr

Success Factors for Protests in Achieving Policy Change

- **Prioritize dialogue above all else:** The emphasis on building and enabling channels of communication between the people and their administration. Using aggressive and violent tactics to effect long-term, tangible change is frequently ineffective. Instead, demonstrators must use peaceful methods to engage with both the ruling class and questioning citizens. There are numerous channels for discourse, such as organizing citizens' assemblies, holding referendums, and increasing civil society involvement in the formulation of public policy. In October 2019, demonstrations against increased public transportation costs broke out in Chile, but at first they were unplanned and uncoordinated. When numerous organizations took to the streets to air their frustrations, the administration reacted violently. After that, significant political parties and civil society organizations intervened and quickly came to an agreement on a single list of requests that would be pursued through a referendum procedure. With a resounding majority of voters supporting a constitutional process, the referendum allowed all Chileans to measure their support for actual change.

- **Incorporate online platforms for participating in protests:** Social media plays a vital role in enabling involvement in digital protests. Both traditional and digital channels have made significant contributions to movements such as the Arab Revolution and the #MeToo movement by spreading news, presenting events visually, and expanding the possibility of active participation beyond geographical boundaries. Mass gatherings posed a health risk to the general public as well as to individuals during the pandemic. Still, campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter have managed to get international attention and backing. Through the use of hashtags, citizen journalism, live streaming, and instant messaging, global participation has been made possible, the possibility of story suppression and manipulation has decreased, and the significance of digital protest involvement has been demonstrated. The benefits of digital engagement extend beyond individual action; it can also serve to attract the interest of global players. This may put pressure on governments to address the issues.

- **Listen to everyone's concerns:** To make a difference, protest will require the support of a wide coalition of individuals. Protests frequently happen when public policies don't align with citizen needs. This may give rise to urgent calls for change, and protests are one way to make this happen. Protest movements must, however, take care to avoid making the same mistakes as governments. The voices of the marginalized and oppressed must be given more weight. This entails being careful to incorporate a diverse range of viewpoints and not just pay attention to the issues and suggestions raised by the first protests. Only when a demonstration is carefully thought out, and

targeted, and its objectives are clear can it result in meaningful policy change. Demonstrators need to voice their discontent and offer their demands in a united and constructive manner. Proactive leaders need to converse with all demonstrators and come up with shared demands that address their needs. In this sense, a demonstration might reflect popular opinion about a particular issue.

- **School is the best place to begin citizen action:** It is important to make sure that youth participate in citizen action debates and receive education about political engagement, policy changes, and protests. People should be taught early on the value of their voice and how they may have a direct influence on politics and policy. The problem lies in the fact that schools fail to adequately teach kids about the workings of policy, leaving them without the knowledge and skills necessary to effect change in the world. Personal, Social, Health, and Economic (PSHE) lessons are taught in the United Kingdom; however, neither the required nor elective courses cover political engagement, policy reform, or citizen action. However, as civic and political involvement are fundamental to democracy, educating citizens on these topics is crucial to producing people who know how to critically participate in a democratic society. Therefore, mandatory civics education in secondary schools would give every student an equal opportunity to be heard. If this isn't possible, use every chance to inform the next generation of your community about the value of sticking to your convictions and the resources that can help you achieve.

- **Combine all of the peaceful protest techniques:** Nonviolent protest strategies have advantages in many ways; they send a crucial message to the public and elected authorities alike about how important human lives are. By learning from past non-violent strategies, you can protect everyone's life and employ calculated methods to bring about the change you want to see. The organizers of protests need to educate themselves on previous strategies that have been successful, why they might be applicable in your situation, and how to make sure the movement as a whole absorbs these lessons. Additionally, it will assist protest organizers in adopting a more calculated approach to their strategies, interactions with governments, and shaping public opinion into demands for public policy. [3]People lost their lives and valuables during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria because they turned out to voice their opposition to police brutality. This young movement also repeated past errors since there was a lack of clarity in both message and action. While keeping in mind that it is dangerous for your community if someone gets assassinated, hurt, or has their property destroyed during a protest, lessons from past protest movements must be learned to avoid such confusion.

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[3]https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/nigeria-three-years-after-endsars-at-least-15-protesters-languish-in-lagos-jail/

- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Protests that are successful show tenacity in the face of challenges, persecution, or exploitation. The pro-democracy demonstrations in Belarus, for instance, have endured in the face of numerous restrictions and arrests, demonstrating the movement's tenacity. Achieving long-lasting policy change requires a commitment to long-term advocacy goals and adaptability in methods and strategies. For instance, the American civil rights movement changed over time, adjusting its strategies to deal with shifting political and social landscapes and ultimately resulting in historic legislative successes such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Challenges and Limitations
Co-optation of Protests by Political Actors

Cooptation is the elite strategy of integrating change-seeking individuals through the use of supposedly cooperative behaviors, forcing them to collaborate with elites without providing them with new benefits. While co-optation is successful, individuals who want to reposition themselves while interacting with elites in the hopes of gaining fresh strategic advantages through concession; yet, the elites' viewpoint ends up winning out. When compared to violent suppression, cooptation may allow the elites to achieve their objectives at minimal political or financial expense. The ultimate consequence is that the challengers become politically irrelevant.

- **Undermining Authenticity**: Co-optation often dilutes the genuine grievances and intentions of grassroots movements. [4]For instance, during the Jallikattu protests in Tamil Nadu, India, in 2017, various political parties attempted to hijack the movement for their own agendas, overshadowing the original demand to preserve traditional cultural practices.

- **Fragmentation of Movements**: Political interference can lead to internal divisions within protest movements. [5]In the case of the Shaheen Bagh protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in India, competing political interests contributed to divisions among protesters, undermining the unity and effectiveness of the movement.

- **Distraction from Core Issues**: Co-optation often shifts the focus of protests away from the central issues. During the anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare in India in 2011, political parties attempted to steer the movement towards electoral politics, diverting attention from the root causes of corruption.

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[4] The Hindu, 2017
[5] The Wire, 2020

- **Diminished Impact:** When political actors co-opt protests, the original demands may be compromised or diluted. [6]In the case of the Lokpal Bill agitation in India, the involvement of political parties led to compromises in the legislation, diminishing the impact of the protest.

- **Loss of Grassroots Leadership:** Co-optation can marginalize grassroots leaders and activists.[7]During the Narmada Bachao Andolan protests in India, political parties attempted to co-opt the movement, ignoring the voices of local communities and activists fighting for their land and livelihoods.

- **Polarization and Divisiveness:** Political co-optation can exacerbate societal divisions. [8]In the case of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute in India, political parties exploited the issue for electoral gains, deepening religious and communal divides within society.

- **Negative Economic Impact:** Protests may cause financial difficulties for companies, discourage travel, and discourage investment. Businesses and individuals may be negatively impacted by the expenses incurred by security measures, property damage, and lost production, which can place a strain on local economies and taxpayers. For instance, when protests result in economic damage, governments may seek to recover the costs incurred especially state governments through special laws like The Uttar Pradesh's UP Control of Goondas Act of 1970 and Assam's Assam Preventive Detention Act (APDA) of 1980. The use of such special laws reflects state governments using various measures like taking evidence from CCTV footage, including imposing fines on individuals or organizations found responsible for the damage, seeking compensation through civil litigation, or utilizing public funds for repairs and restoration efforts, but there is no such central law.

Repression and Backlash Against Protest Movements

- **Suppression of Dissent:** Governments often employ repression to silence dissenting voices within protest movements. For instance, during the Tiananmen Square protests in China in 1989, the government deployed military force to violently suppress demonstrators, resulting in numerous casualties and arrests.

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[6] Hindustan Times, 2013

[7] The Guardian, 2017

[8]The Indian Express, 2019

- **Violence and Intimidation:** Repressive measures may involve violence and intimidation tactics aimed at instilling fear among protesters.[9] In the Arab Spring uprisings, security forces in countries like Syria and Bahrain used lethal force against demonstrators, leading to widespread human rights abuses and loss of life.

- **Media Manipulation:** Governments often manipulate media narratives to discredit protest movements and shape public opinion. During the protests against police brutality in Nigeria in 2020, authorities attempted to portray protesters as criminals through media propaganda, downplaying the severity of the crackdown.

- **Legal Restrictions and Harassment:** Repressive regimes may enact laws to restrict the rights of protesters and justify crackdowns on dissent. [10] In Russia, restrictive legislation has been used to harass and intimidate participants in anti-government protests, resulting in arrests and imprisonment of activists. [11] In 2022, new public order legislation was enacted, as part of a huge piece of legislation called the Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts Act, which covers many aspects of the criminal justice system. The new legislation gives unprecedented new powers to the police, courts, and government to restrict the right to protest in England and Wales.

- **Undermining Democratic Freedoms:** Repression against protest movements erodes democratic freedoms and the rule of law. When authorities suppress peaceful protests and dissenting voices, they violate principles of free speech and assembly enshrined in democratic constitutions and international human rights conventions.

Case Studies: Contemporary Examples
   Recent Protest Movements and Their Policy Impacts

Farmers' Protests Against Farm Bills in India:
The farmers' protests against the farm bills in India had emerged as a significant socio-political phenomenon, attracting widespread attention and debate both domestically and internationally. The farmer protests saw a huge mobilization of lakhs of farmers, an emotionally charged atmosphere, rampant

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[9] Human Rights Watch, 2011

[10] Amnesty International, 2020

[11] https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/protect-the-protest-using-our-rights-to-freedom-of-assembly-and-expression/0/steps/325881

violence, and massive economic loss to businesses and residents living in and around Delhi as well as disruption in the transport of goods.

Amidst the protests, there is evidence of involvement by communist protesters and leftist groups fueled by foreign funding, prompting concerns about external influences shaping the trajectory of the movement. Even though it was immediately clear that the protests were communal in origin, the demonstrators were successful in portraying them as "secular." The demonstrators were successful in framing it as a question of "Jat pride" versus "Sikh pride," and the government was unable to stop them. Although the demonstrations were staged to appear as a sincere outpouring of resentment toward the government, there were always underlying social undertones. Khalistani banners and shouts were heard during these protests on multiple occasions. Congressmen acknowledged that Khalistanis had also assumed control of the same. However, the administration was unable to refute the claim that the protest was "secular."

Following the enactment of the farm laws by the Parliament, the Government went into overdrive with its communications. Perhaps it would have been wiser to start a large-scale awareness campaign before the measures were presented to Parliament. In this manner, the legislative struggle may have taken place before the legislation was passed. Additionally, it would have spared the government the humiliation of having to revoke the legislation. Additionally, the repeal creates an unsafe pattern by giving rabble-rousers the impression that illegal activity may subdue Parliament and that street power is supreme.

Now, the Government is believed to have repealed the laws keeping in mind the threat to national security. Hindu and Sikh communal ties had become increasingly strained, and there was reason to fear that Khalistani terrorism may make a comeback of sorts. Consequently, it seems that the Government made the tactical retreat decision after determining that the cost was too great. Although the farmers and their supporters have won a major success with the Indian government's decision to revoke the three controversial farm acts in response to the prolonged protests, it also creates a precedent that may make future attempts at agricultural reform more difficult. The protesters' tremendous pressure on the government highlights how difficult it is to enact legislative reforms in a deeply ingrained industry like agriculture. Furthermore, current occurrences underscore the wider consequences of social mobilization in molding governmental policies, such as the modifications made to the SC/ST Act due to demonstrations within the SC/ST community. The Supreme Court's decision to reverse its order on the SC/ST Act modification serves as an example of how popular protest can affect legislative decisions. Therefore, even while the recent protests were successful in their immediate goal of repealing the farm bills, they also serve as a reminder of the difficulties and complexities that come with creating public policy, especially when it comes to delicate subjects like social justice and agricultural reform. Moving

forward, it will be crucial for decision-makers to have meaningful conversations with all parties involved to overcome these obstacles and guarantee that any new reforms are inclusive and successful.

Shaheen Bagh Protest and Its Policy Impacts:
The Shaheen Bagh protest, which took place in New Delhi from December 2019 to March 2020, emerged as a significant demonstration against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) in India. The protest, predominantly led by women from the Shaheen Bagh neighborhood, quickly gained nationwide attention and solidarity, with thousands joining in support across the country. The protest sparked widespread public discourse and debates on citizenship rights and democratic values. There were several legal challenges against the CAA and NRC, leading to judicial scrutiny of the legislation. The Supreme Court of India received multiple petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the CAA and issued notices to the government seeking responses, reflecting the legal ramifications of the protest movement. The protest also had significant political implications, like with more than a 4-year delay, the Ministry of Home Affairs has notified the Citizenship Amendment Rules, 2024 that would enable the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019.

Old Pension Scheme Protests in Maharashtra and Rajasthan:
The difficulties encountered by public servants and the financial limitations of state governments have been brought to light by recent demonstrations in Rajasthan and Maharashtra that call for a revival of the previous pension plan. Leading the charge in these demonstrations, several labor unions and associations have called for a return to the previous pension plan, claiming discontent with the current one and its alleged shortcomings in offering retirees financial stability.

The sustained protests have exerted significant pressure on the state governments of Maharashtra and Rajasthan to address the demands of the protesting employees. The Maharashtra government has let the employees down by refusing to grant the OPS, which offers a stable and guaranteed source of income after retirement, also they have been calling for the filling of all open positions and the revocation of the indirect privatization of the education system. However, the governments are constrained by fiscal limitations, as bringing back the old pension scheme would require substantial financial resources that may not be readily available. The primary issue with OPS was that the pension liabilities were still unfunded, meaning there was no corpus set aside for pensions that could be drawn from and grow over time to cover benefits. Every year, the Indian government budgeted for pensions; however, there was no explicit strategy for how these benefits would be funded in the future, this also applied to the OPS. First of all, because pensioners' benefits—such as current employees' salary, indexation benefits, and "dearness relief"—increased each year, pension liabilities would continue to rise. Furthermore, improved healthcare

facilities would lead to longer life expectancies, which would result in higher benefits. The Union and state governments now face a huge pension burden as a result of this.

The conflict between the demonstrators' demands and the government's financial constraints has made it difficult to find a workable answer from a policy standpoint. Policymakers are reassessing the benefits and downsides of the new pension plan in comparison to the previous plan in response to the protests. Although the goal of the new program was to lessen the financial strain on state governments and encourage long-term sustainability, the demonstrations have raised questions about how well it will be able to guarantee sufficient retirement benefits for workers. This has sparked conversations and arguments about possible changes or substitutes in official circles over how to resolve the protestors' complaints while still being fiscally responsible. Public awareness of the difficulties government workers confront in guaranteeing their financial futures has increased as a result of the protests. Other societal groups' solidarity, such as that of political parties, trade unions, and civil society organizations, has strengthened the protestors' voices and increased pressure on the government to attend to their concerns. The demonstrations' overwhelming popularity highlights the need for pension changes and retirement security as public policy concerns.

Foreign Influence on India's Protests and Political Dynamics

Protest movement dynamics in India are not limited by national boundaries; rather, they are frequently shaped by the complex relationships between funding, geopolitical concerns, and foreign interests. Foreign countries frequently use the Indian subcontinent to further their strategic objectives, which might have consequences for India's internal affairs. The external context in which protest movements take place is shaped by regional alliances, rivalries, and geopolitical moves, which affect the movements' course and results. In the past few years, there has been a noticeable increase in tensions between India and China, especially near their disputed borders. The June 2020 conflict in the Galwan Valley, which claimed lives on both sides, damaged bilateral relationships and stoked nationalist feelings in India. In light of this, there have been claims that Chinese influence has fueled unrest or supported anti-government narratives in several Indian protest movements.

India has long charged Pakistan with harboring separatist movements and insurgent organizations inside its borders, especially in areas like Jammu and Kashmir. In the context of protest movements, there have purportedly been cases where individuals or groups based in Pakistan have given material and ideological support to anti-India protests, escalating tensions and making it more difficult to find a peaceful solution to internal issues. India is the birthplace of a sizable diaspora community in Canada, primarily Punjabi Sikhs. Beginning in late 2020, the ongoing demonstrations by Indian farmers have drawn attention from

throughout the world, especially from Canada. Tensions on the diplomatic front between Canada and India arose as a result of some Canadian politicians and activists endorsing the farmers' demonstrations in India, swayed by internal issues and lobbying efforts by specific diaspora groups. These recent examples show how foreign countries may be able to influence protest movements in India through a variety of avenues, such as diplomatic channels, media narratives, and diaspora populations. The level of foreign funding and support is still up for discussion and inquiry, but these incidents highlight the importance of exercising caution when defending India's democratic procedures and internal sovereignty.

Recommendation

It is suggested that similar laws to the Assam Preventive Detention Act (APDA) of 1980 and the Uttar Pradesh Control of Goondas Act of 1970 be enacted at the central level of India. These laws would give the federal government the authority to intervene appropriately when protests cause economic harm and local law enforcement agencies are unable to handle the situation. These central rules ought to have clauses that allow the central police force to step in and recoup costs resulting from protests, especially in situations where state police forces cannot act quickly enough. The government may ensure a more coordinated and effective reaction to protests that cause economic harm by enacting such central rules, and they can also hold people accountable who incite violence or vandalism. This will encourage more accountability in the nation's management of public protests and lessen the financial strain on impacted areas.

Conclusion

Social movements aim to bring about significant changes within the framework of existing political structures, and this dynamic and complicated terrain is represented by the junction of protest, policy, and politics. In this policy research study, we have examined the complex interrelationships among political players, policymaking procedures, and protest movements, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of this interaction. However, the effectiveness of protests in bringing about policy change depends on some factors, such as how well protest tactics are aligned with policy goals, how responsive policymakers are to grassroots demands, and how much support and solidarity protest movements receive from the general public. Furthermore, protests frequently face severe obstacles that might hinder their efficacy and call into question their legality, such as repression and co-optation by political players. We must keep investigating cutting-edge tactics to strengthen the influence of protests on legislation, expand opportunities for civic engagement and participation, and broaden our comprehension of the intricate dynamics influencing the relationships between politics, policy, and protest in the future. By doing this,

we can endeavor to create political structures that are more responsive, inclusive, and just and that represent the goals and worries of every member of society.

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