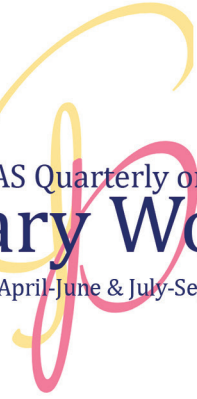


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Special Focus

The Global Protest Movements



From the desk

The NIAS Quarterly on Contemporary World Affairs (CWA) brings together research by scholars of the Global Politics course at the School of Conflict and Security Studies in National Institute of Advanced Studies. This special issue focuses on the global protest movements from Latin America to Asia which has been the defining moments in 2020. The individual essays bring out the historical developments leading to the current protests and aim to forecast the course of the protests.

The essays in this volume are an outcome of the young scholars' workshop organised by the International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI) at NIAS on 17 February, 2020 in collaboration with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), India. IPRI, in support with the KAS, critically studies state institutions and governance in democracies, global peace processes, and the young scholars' workshop was conceived as part of the NIAS-KAS efforts at understanding protests and discontents in democracies. The young scholars' workshop is also a part of the capacity building initiative of the NIAS and KAS.

The Global Politics course aims to enhance the understanding of the contemporary global developments with an attempt to comprehend the larger picture while identifying trends on the world politics.

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Students as agents of change: Protest movements in Zimbabwe

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Introduction

A protest which was highly unlikely occurred in January 2020, by school students from Njube Secondary School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The main cause of the protest was the hiking of school fees and the strikes accompanied by the teachers which brought into light the quality of their education system. There were few more protests that followed this. The right to education is compulsory according to the constitutions of the country but the problem lies when realistically looking at their education systems. It is of absolute necessity that the government provides a helping hand to students who are specially beginners, as they are the forerunners of the revolutionary world.

The 21st century learners should be the change agents of their region. In order to bring meaningful changes, they have to bring forth the essential skills that are required this century, such as communication and collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving skills, creativity and imagination, digital literacy and soft skills. This could be only achieved by catering quality and proper education to them. The Njube school students are voicing up for this quality that has been drifted away from them. Quality education would impact on the socio-cultural, economic movements of the country. Moreover, it would flourish job opportunities where unemployment is one of the crying evils of the time. In fact, they have the dimensions in identifying the capacity of being the next change.

Background

Student protests are rampant worldwide and it has begun to define our contemporary times. These protests led by students especially in South Africa have led to extremely violent crashes among universities and finally claimed the closure of their educational institutions within the nation (Rao & Wasserman, 2017). Zimbabwe has been a country of having an extended history of student activism and recently a protest originated by some school students in Bulawayo. These young students were protesting for a more quality education system to be implemented in their education system. Njube Secondary School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe began a protest about the hiking of school fees by their authorities. According to the news recorded by the Chronicle news reporter it is said that there was an unusual protest by the school students from of Njube High School which took place with a number more than hundred and fifty. The reason for the protest was the hiking of school fees which was initially \$92 but has been increased up to \$440. The protest is said to have been led by one of their school teachers. “The science teacher, Mr Brian Mutsiba, who incited the students to protest that their teachers had abandoned lessons due to poor salaries, is now on the run”.

Mazuba in his news article provides further details about the protest. He describes how

the students held posters which read ‘Where is UNICEF?’; ‘SOS Save Our Souls’ and ‘This Is For Every Zimbabwean Child’. According to him the Njube police were in search of the biology teacher as he is supposed to be apprehended by charging him for attempting to promote public violence amidst the general crowd, for breaching the peace and for “insulting the flag” which violates the Flag of Zimbabwe Act. Chief Inspector Ramaphosa of Njube police signed the memo by stating that “The school pupils were merely following their teacher’s orders,” and that the “Parents did not know why their children were protesting”. First of all the students calling for UNICEF emphasizes the fact that they want international attention to the matter, secondly the police is blaming the teacher for leading the protest. What the government needs to understand is that this not the voice of a single teacher but the voice of the students who are demanding for fair rights. Thirdly, news reporters mentioned that the parents did not know that their children were protesting. It is gibberish to report that parents are unaware of it while they are raising fees from \$92 to \$440 and parents not understanding why their children protest.

The chairperson of the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Coalition, states that the struggle towards unjust treatments and inequality has been prevalent throughout the generations and these protests led the civil society depicts the values of human rights are thriving. He witnessed this protest to be a game changer for the history of Zimbabwe because these protests by students have marked milestones since then. The student activism in the past led by the Zimbabwe students changed the history of the country by creating a better hope for the people. So, he saw the Njube student protest as one such movement, “1976, students became the hope for a better South Africa; 20-21 January 2020 a significant addition to the history of the role of students in carrying out their generational mandate to fight for the rights and dignity of all people.” Even though the relevant authorities have been oppressive and resisting towards the society, it is much appreciated that the youngsters have stepped out for their rights and values.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

Student activism in Rhodesia throughout the 1960s and 1970s against political agenda. Student activism has been taking place in Zimbabwe in the past years where they have made it to be the only ground to express their grievances regarding the education system. The education system has failed in many circumstances to cater the needs of the students. Omari and Mihiyo implies the fact how university students urge some kind of caring and attention, when this fails students tend to feel that “the only way to get things done and attract attention to their plight is to protest, demonstrate, boycott classes, and attack significant figures”. Successful student activism has played a crucial role in the past that has eventually influenced the contemporary students including the school students to protest within the country.

Yet these grievances have always met with constant violence which has been declared as the only language that is understood. Chikwanha comments on University of Zimbabwe affirming that “The nature of political socialization and the political culture in Zimbabwe are such that violence is perceived and accepted as the only language understood by authorities and opponents alike.” The gravity and severity of violence has become a sound that is unheard and further embedding violence in to their culture of politics

determines the ground rules of a state. This has always been the crying evil of the time and the darkening future to come. If violence is the only language then for what is the purpose of education and why do we thrive for humanity?

1960's and 1970's during the Rhodesian movement led by the African students in University of Rhodesia portrayed one of the devastating protests that ever happened in the pre-independence history of the university. The reaction towards the movement from the government was extremely harsh where more than 150 were sentenced to prison from three to nine months, and the students were banned to enter university premises within twenty kilometers. There have been many protests in the past but never had been a movement as such as they destroyed the properties of the university that worth up to rupees seven thousand primarily due to the racist polarization within the country.

The polarization occurred as a result of the minority of white students that enjoyed more privileges than the majority black. 7th August 1973 was a date that has marked a milestone in the history of the African students because this was a period where the Rhodesian Government was very firm and strict towards any student uprising as they were facing all pressures that threatened them politically, economically and militarily. The government was cautious in actions and they would wreak vengeance upon any African that crossed the line opposing the continuation of the legal proceedings and further prolonging their existence. This is why Chimukwembe demonstration became more of a national struggle accompanied and led by student activists during the pre-independence era. The writer himself was a part of the anti-white movement.

Lack of quality education

Educational capacity of a person cannot be tested by conducting exams and calculating the results of it; at least it is not the best way. But it will assist us mostly when competing with the out bound world and gaining international accomplishments according to particular educational systems. The students fight for a quality education system for a reason, which is the literacy rate reflecting upon the quality of education that is given to them. What is in effect to be known is that Zimbabwe reached the highest literacy rate among the South African nations according to the results of United Nations Development Program, the male literacy rated as 94.2 per cent, female literacy rated as 87.2 per cent and the overall literacy rate of the country was rated as 90.7 per cent marking an outstanding achievement to Zimbabwe among the African countries. Even though Zimbabwe had a tertiary education system this has to be a great achievement for the country and the continent itself.

The literacy rate to a country has a significant importance, it will reduce ignorance and educational negligence among the people, the International Labor review has highlighted the fact that access to educational agendas and proper literacy is an absolute necessary to have increase public awareness regarding the most trending environmental and health concerns plus the reduction of family planning. Having a progressive literacy rate means the learners are keen to step into a more standardized way of learning which is clearly shown by the student protest. They are complaining about receiving a quality education system where there interests about their standardized version of quality are not met.

The standardized quality of education requires the core skills where the young people are given the 21st century essential skills which make them fully prepared for the competitive

life and work that is crucial to face global economy. It will provide the platform for them to develop the right skills which includes novel ways of working, thinking and living in the global world. The British council introduced a new module for the youngsters to help them grow into creative and critical thinking citizens that will one day make them productive individuals to their country. The module includes critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and imagination, digital literacy, citizenship, student leadership and personal development. By catering these skills, the students will be fed with the proper edification to shape their own future by themselves.

Technological Advancement

Technological advancement is irresistible in the modern world. The industrial job market is frequently very specialized and they demand additional knowledge regarding technology. As a result of this, the students who pass out from school face utmost difficulty when entering the firms. This has been caused due to scarce and obsolete equipment and a general mismatch between technologies used in institutions of learning and in industry.

Moore brings forth the fact that around 700000 in Africa (about 0.1 per cent of the population) use simple internet facility like the use of email. Technology absolutely plays a crucial role in the present world order and it has been constantly involved in the education system as well, Zimbabwe too has no much difference. Yet the progression of infrastructure to promote digital literacy is thriving down due to lack of financial backing. The main issue arises here, when the rest of the world have easy access to internet where the school students and teachers extensively engage in learning new literacy skills, the tertiary developing countries are left out. Particularly the rural schools have no computers even though it has been introduced to the education system long time back. Computers are only used by a limited amount of private schools and the high funded schools. Yet there are areas where even electricity has not been reached out. How will such families fund children to learn? The problem is that majority of the schools has no access to computer technology and only a minority does.

Shrinking of economic due to globalization and due to policies by leaders has made it a tertiary economy. The next challenge the Zimbabweans had to face with end of the Rhodesian movement was the economic shrinking of the country. The latter stage of the movement marked a transition to the ideologies that the government adopted at that time, it was a quite palpable fact that the sociological ideology that the government exercised was no longer relevant to the world which was yet to come. The world was thrown upon a constant flux where the economic affliction overwhelmed the government. Communism tends to shrink down and the world was moving towards capitalism enhancing liberal democracy.

In this journey the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) played an active role in strategizing the economy of the country. But the economy faced a fatal blow since the introduction of it in 1990. Zimbabwe entering the global market was unstoppable with globalization and it created an enormous competition for all countries in the world.

Cerny describes that the relationship will consist of one state that will receive a gain out of the process in which it will create a possibility to make one's local business international

and on the other hand the one that loses from globalization which will finally have an end result of very less incomes and unemployment. It is where Zimbabwe had its failure by entering the global market, the country was not in the acquisition side, but rather in the losing side. In fact, Cerny depicts globalization as a matter that will not be just a container that enthalls politics, economics, and society, but as strainers, in which each area is filtered into the multifaceted policies of a globalizing world.

Globalization paved the path for the new countries to improve their countries both economically, socially and culturally. Best examples for these countries are India and China which entered the open market and became one of the greatest benefactors of the world through globalization. Even though Zimbabwe was supposed to be benefitting from globalization it did not happen. Introduction of the liberal reforms for the market economy proved fatal because it was a threat to the local sellers and largescale marketing led to the closing down of local industry as they could not compete with the global market. As a result, the government had to take precautions to reduce expenses that included education of the students and social services. Poverty became the enemy of the mob that it occurred extensively in Zimbabwe throwing many families to difficulties in sending their children to school and paying school fees. The economic performance of the country was shrinking down and the young population was the largest victims of it. Hence the government had no adequate measures to provide the necessary training and education to the students of the country which is why student protests were frequently evident.

Youth unemployment

Another reason for students to demand quality education is unemployment. The economic breakdown of the country however had a severe impact on the livelihood of the people creating a new passage of darkness to its youth, resulting in unemployment and underemployment. Fajana defines unemployment as a position where people are eager and enthusiastic in work but they fail to find definite jobs that provides a suitable payment according to the capability of work. Youth unemployment would become an even more wretched crisis in the developing countries especially in South Africa, because it will not just affect the downtrodden economy but would have a strong psychological influence over the mindset of its people.

The youth is of utmost importance to the progression of a state. The active involvement of them would help the country to nourish and the freshness of them should not be exploited. Proper education would make them become more innovative, mentally independent and promote cooperation amongst them for the welfare of the people. Hearn suggests that the youth undergoes frustration, humiliation, and rejection due to this and even if they wanted to become financially stable, the lack of resources would leave them empty handed obstructing themselves from being self-independent.

Majority of the Zimbabwe youth engage themselves in the musical field where they end up either accused for drug addiction, robbery, and many other crimes. There is no positivity in being unemployed, it would rather create a generation that is full of idleness and negligence. How can a country be handed over to a batch of neglected class that has no idea how the system runs? O'Higgins brings forth the negative roles that play in youth unemployment. The youth is flung upon violence, social rejection, vulnerability towards poverty, and

psychological corrupted minds. When these issues are being unaddressed it paves way for the educated youth to eagerly wait for some kind of a miracle to happen to them finally making them revolutionists and engage in constant protests to make their dreams come true.

It is necessary that Zimbabwe should take the successful and failed indications from the programs as well as different projects that have been initiated by other countries. Comprehending positive aspects of them by evading the negative outcomes would assist the country in implementing new reforms to the government curriculum. What is more important is the executing of the most crucial aspects in the right circumstance. For instance, by closely examining a case study of Somalia, it is evident that 75per cent of the youth in the country are residing without any job opportunities and there is a heavy migration of the learned scholars to developed countries for better vacancies to their qualifications.

Somalia commenced preparations to instigate Guaranteed Employment Policy as a precaution to reduce unemployment for the learned youth. They attempted to hire the students who pass out from their Secondary school straight away to work as Public Service employees. The positive aspect of this bold initiative was that the government assured that the students will gain a job. Nevertheless, Somalia found it hard-hitting due to wars that were being carried out. As a result, they could not adjust with the yearly batch who came out of school in seeking the jobs that they were promised. The government was over pressurized due to the fact that the school leavers had to do engage in working in public firms by the age of eighteen, but they failed to accomplish it. They could not reach the expected level of economy making the initiative a failure. Even though they attempted to execute an exclusive step it did not work favorably. Hence the students began migrating. It is important that the students should be properly nurtured and trained to serve their nation with patriotism. These qualities could be easily drifted apart when the administration shows minus interest about the welfare of the students.

The lesson that Zimbabwe should enthrall is the very fact that youth is extremely vulnerable and they are more liable to immigrate to another country if their mother countries are not ready to absorb their knowledge to support the home economy. This is why many hardworking students from tertiary economies travel abroad in search of well-paid jobs but in return they are developing the economy of a foreign country. The students' interest should be valued and their issues should be settled so that they will refrain from leaving the country. Entrepreneurship should be introduced for the students and it is the best way that the children will overcome their grievances. It is a dire necessity that the quality education system be reprogrammed in order to make children more efficient in their lives. Enforcing school students to be productive entrepreneurs will serve the country positively in the long-run as they will be improving the economy of the state.

Major Trends

First, the protest would create would be a platform for the involvement of students/children to mark a new trend in protests which has a greater impact on the world. A solid example for one such movement would be Greta Thunberg, the young environmental activist from Stockholm, Sweden, created a new trend for protesting in the world for climate change including countries like Australia, Belgium, UK, US and Japan. She started her

campaign in August 2018 and currently there are more than 1 million children involved in the movement. (Thunberg, 2019) Starting from school just as the students of Njube High school in Zimbabwe and she brought many students from the international arena to one platform. Social media played a vital role in this mission because she brought forth hash tag movements where around 20,000 children joined the protest until she reached the UN climate conference where she took a zero carbon emission ship to New York to address the world in the year 2019. In the UN conference she said “How dare you? I shouldn’t be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean, yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you?”.

Her speech went viral in social media, news, radios and television where the whole world got to know about this young activist and what she is protesting against. Thus she carried the world attention to a lime light where even the neglected got know the climate change crisis and global warming. The fifteen year old child earned her success at the point in which she was nominated for the Nobel Prize. Her activities gave a flashing message to the global undertaking against climate crisis which marked a new trend to the world where students started to strike in order to safe guard the planet bringing all the governments to attention and forcing them to take actions. Therefore the notion that school students could definitely have a broader influence on the governments and authorities could be validated by the climate change activists who took a major role into their hands to make a rapid change across the world. Thus they could create a new trend in the global protests amongst any other movements that has taken place in the world.

The second trend is that the Njube High school protest was said to have been led by one of the school science teachers. What should be taken into consideration is that, the students only need one activist like Greta and the tables will change. It will create a revolution where it would generate another trend where the students themselves would act as agents of change to fight for educational rights. There would be no external influence provoking them but the children would extensively engage themselves in protests without going to school. Boycotting school for rights no longer is seen as an act of indiscipline but rather proven to be bold moves taken by the activists to change the system. They might fail in changing the system but that does not mean that they have failed to spread awareness by doing so. As a matter of fact, they will continue struggles to educate the masses by engaging themselves in it.

Thirdly as result of prolonged economic and political deprivation it would procreate a generation of youth that would constantly engage in protests. This would not be a positive impact on the students because imagine where the youth that should be flourishing the culture and society be protesting back and forth for what is deficient in the system. Their minds would be psychologically besmirched due to excessive protest and it will affect their entire lives. If they continuously protest about their field of interest then it will lose its effectiveness as a result of it. A protest should be done concerning a positive end result which will be only achieved by an effective movement. If people find it as an ordinary phenomenon exercised by a certain group of people, then it would not be productive.

Forecast in 2020

Violence: The protest as it appeared was a peaceful one carried out by the students. Yet there is no guarantee on how long the peaceful environment of this would last long if the

government does not take any positive action. If the protest be likely to continue violence would be inevitable. Zimbabwe would be a pool of blood creating a devastating history and an obscure future to the generations to come.

Evolving of the movement: The protest movements are likely to evolve if the economic status in the country does not improve. The government should take measures to cut these issues from the grassroots level, if they take these protests for granted it is impossible to strategically react towards the future hazards caused by the same group of students.

Spillover effect: Continuous student protests would result in a spillover effect over the African region where other school students shall also be evoked by such movements.

Postulate that unemployment of the educated youth be addressed: The importance of entrepreneurship should be the best suggestion for the educated youth that are unemployed in Zimbabwe. Government should advocate young entrepreneurship to the school curriculum as well as the universities. Teaching and examining students should be encouraged so from their younger age they will engage themselves in doing something productive and later on in life they will find their own way of living. In this way the exhausted economy of the country could be mended and on the other hand students would avoid conflicting with the government for jobs.

A wave of global protests: Finally, there is a higher tendency that the national discourse would become an international discourse because the protests are led by students. Just as Greta Thunberg being the revolutionist and heroine of the younger generation, the fight for educational rights too will be of significance for them. It does not take long to build up a transnational chain for ambitious students who want to make a change in society.

Conclusion

The student movements cannot be neglected and ignored; their basic needs should be one of the major concerns of the state. It is not just the responsibility of state but also their duty to make the children more innovative and productive citizens of their country. Change is necessary for people to grow, if they students are ready to be the next positive agents of change, there is better hope for the future of Zimbabwe. Secretary General of the United Nations addressed the youth in the year 2012 on the celebration of the International Youth Day. What he said in his speech was that the youth should be given adequate sustenance in order to build a dynamic nation in the future, "Let us support the young people of our world so that they grow into adults who raise yet more generations of productive and powerful leaders." As a matter of fact it could be achieved if the young generation is accommodated by the older generation to receive proper education without violating their rights. They should have the opportunity to enter the job market and be employed for what they have achieved through their education system. Hence the decisions that the government policy makers make regarding the youth should be of prior important. If they endanger the future of them by making short term decisions, they will be bringing utter chaos to the long-term implementation and progress of the country.

The students protest in Zimbabwe has its own justifications. True that the quality of education level has to include its core skills but the literacy rate of the country is greater. The

effectiveness of the educational side is not counter balancing with the economy; in fact, the learning capacities of the children are met only with the declining economic performance of the country. The Education for All Policy which was enacted by the government in 1980 made the youth more educated worsening the unemployment crisis for the educated youth in the country. It can be said that the Zimbabwe was victimized by its own success.

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‘The Revolution of Our Times’: Protests in Hong Kong

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What began with a murder in Taiwan, the Hong Kong protests, ran strong for months before it took a backseat due to the pandemic. What is the relevance of pro-democracy protests in China’s autonomous regions? What are issues, causes and major trends in the Hong Kong protests? What can be expected from the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement in the future?

Background

The extradition bill was introduced in February 2019, called the ‘Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation 2019’, and covers China and other jurisdictions that do not have an extradition agreement with Hong Kong. The need for this bill came when a man killed his girlfriend in a hotel room, on their trip to Taiwan, and returned to Hong Kong. He could not be tried for this murder due to the lack of a formal agreement on extradition between the autonomous regions and China. In this context, the bill was introduced to establish transfer of fugitives for Macau, Taiwan and the mainland.

The existing extradition law in Hong Kong allows transfer of fugitives with approximately 18 countries but, specifically mentions that extradition does not apply to “the Central People’s Government or the government of any other part of the People’s Republic of China.” The proposed amendment would have allowed any country to request for extradition of criminal suspects, even with countries it does not have an extradition treaty with, the Hong Kong government would have to consider such requests. However, the amendment mentioned that it would consider requests on a case-by-case basis by the Chief.

Critics to the amendment felt that this would give undue advantage to the Chinese Government to subject people to unfair trial, detention and torture, arbitrarily. Immediately, from lawyers to church groups, hundreds of petitions were raised against the amendment, criticizing its credibility. Another concern to the critics were the poor state of protection norms for defendants under Chinese Law.

With this as the background, the protests began in Hong Kong. They were peaceful and well organised for the first few months. Many observers lauded the attempts in Hong Kong, and named the protests as an ideal attempt for challenging authority. However, after the first few weeks, the protesters were seen indirectly attacking the attempts of the police forces that were active around them.

The first wave of visible violence in Hong Kong were observed when the protesters walked

into the legislative building and damaged the building. Through the weeks the situation has gotten worse. Protesters began to directly attack the police. These police were stationed in areas, with clear orders to not engage with the protesters.

After the CCP and Carrie Lam expressed their intentions to not engage directly with the protests on the streets, their approach changed. The protesters were seen using provocative means to irk the government, by publicly burning the Chinese flag, or damaging surveillance for example. Meanwhile, in June it was announced that the bill would be delayed, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in protests demanding that it be revoked entirely. To this, Carrie Lam announced that the bill was 'dead,' and the same would be announced when the Legislative Council's term ends. This however, failed to calm the protests.

In October when the Legislative Council convened after the summer break, the bill was formally scrapped. But by then, the protests had spiraled beyond the amendment bill and had developed into aggression against the government. In mid-October 2019, a serious split was observed in the groups of protesters. A faction of the protesters began to display obvious hatred to the police and direct confrontation with the police was observed. While a large group among the protesters were fixed on not wanting to use violence as a means to get the attention of the government. These differences were observed when one group began to say that the violent methods are counter-productive to the cause and they would refrain from helping this approach to the protests. This is seen as the first set of divides among the groups of protesters.

The protesters were well organised from the start. They had the support of the media, and the first few weeks, they had strong public support. Throughout, the protests remained leaderless. The end goal of the protests was never seen. When the demand to scrap the bill was met, they had a list of 4 other demands against the government, each of the demand, challenging the core of the structure in Hong Kong. While the protests initially erupted from frustrations and anger, very soon evolved into a youth-led movement for democracy against the Chinese Communist Government. From "Be water" as their rallying cry, the protests have moved to "If we burn, you burn with us."

Multiple rounds of interactions were arranged between Carrie Lam and select protesters, but they refuse to compromise on their demands. But protesters vowed, "the protests would not stop until every demand is met." Other than declaring the death of the extradition bill, the attempts by the Lam government to contain the protests were sparse for the longest time. The CCP too made a conscious decision to not involve directly with the protesters. In a legislative meeting that happened in Hong Kong after months, Carrie Lam addressed the issues of expensive real-estate but did not mention the protesters. Instead, Carrie Lam announced that "there would be no further negotiations till the protests stop."

The next set of frustrations can be observed among the groups of people who are on neither side of the protests. They include daily wagers, the middle-aged workers and old people who initially supported the protests but now would like it to stop, so that they can go ahead with their regular lives. The argument that this is a protest for 'democracy,' no longer seems convincing to them.

Hence, for the longest time, the anti-government protests went on with no end in sight. The

intention to keep in mind that the failures of Umbrella Movement. During the umbrella movement, the protesters sat down and watched each of them being taken away while protesting on the streets; this time during the protests they do not want to get stuck in a static situation, hence, 2019 Protests show a sense of urgency right from the demand to scrap the extradition bill to accountability of police actions extending to asking for full democracy. Each time one of their demands were close to being met, it would embrace new forms: “Be Water.”

First sense of slowdown in the protests were observed after the council elections in Hong Kong. A drastic slowdown was seen with COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, however, when China announced that it would use the infrastructure on the border towns of Hong Kong, there was strong objection to it. Protests began against the proposal to set up quarantines in Hong Kong, they demanded that the border to China close completely.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

One country, two systems

Hong Kong became region of China in 1997, the ‘one country, two systems,’ is a constitutional principle where Hong Kong would remain a special administration region of China till 2047. The people of Hong Kong believe that when the UK signed the deal with China, the opinions of the people living in Hong Kong were not considered. After the handover, in multiple occasions, the people of Hong Kong have accused the mainland of overstepping their authority. Three large-spread protests have taken part in Hong Kong, against the Chinese authority on Hong Kong since the handover in 1997.

The first protest since the handover was regarding the national security reform in 2003, where the mainland attempted to introduce anti-subversion legislation. This received strong criticism from the people of Hong Kong saying, the reform would impinge on their freedoms. Popularly referred as the Article 23, the legislation prohibited treason, sedition, secession and subversion against the Chinese government and it also outlawed the theft of state secrets. More than 500,000 people stood for protest against this article, which ended in the resignation of the then Chairman and the bill was shelved indefinitely.

The second was the Umbrella Movement in 2014, which was sparked by the demands for the reformation of the electoral system of Hong Kong. Young protesters, mostly students took to the streets and tried to reclaim a public square, they occupied the streets around the government building and the financial center, including the office towers around it. This was against the Beijing’s role in allowing only voters to select from a list of candidates chosen by them for the elections, the demand was to grant universal suffrage in elections for the leader of the city. In between the two, in 2012, there was an attempt to amend the curriculum of the Hong Kong education system and include China’s history, national identity and culture. A 15-year-old student Joshua Wong became the important figure in this protest, which saw students and parents stand against the idea of curriculum change. There was some sense of success in both the cases.

The protests of 2019 could be easily considered as the most organized of them and the one that has made a huge impact on how the world saw Hong Kong. Along with it, the protests in Hong Kong became an inspiration that led to protests in various places across the world,

in Europe, West Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Murder in Taiwan

Chang Tong-kai and his girlfriend Poon Hiu Wing went on a holiday to Taiwan. In his statement at the court, he said that the pair got into a fight after Ms Poon said she was carrying a baby of another man. Chan was made to serve 29-months sentence in Hong Kong for money laundering, stealing and using Miss Poon's credit card. The was to be surrendered to be tried in Taiwan, due to which the extradition bill was created. However, on 23 October 2019, Chan was released from the Hong Kong prison. During this time, there have been a significant number of possibilities discussed by the administration of both Hong Kong and Taiwan on the method in which Chan can be put to trail but without any success.

The first few months of the protests in Hong Kong were strictly against the extradition bill that was introduced against the murder case. When the bill was announced dead, the protesters pushed for democratic reforms after the confrontation with the police. The confrontation with the police and reports of police brutality, the protests began to take a new turn, where the focus shifted to accountability of police actions.

For a brief moment after Carrie Lam called for a meeting with some of the protesters, the protesters rallied stating that they have, "Five Demands, not one less!" The first demand was met, to withdraw the extradition bill which was formally withdrawn on 23 October 2019, the second to ensure that the protesters are not labelled as 'rioters,' as the punishment for it would be heavy, the third, to drop charges against the protesters that were identified, fourth, to conduct an independent inquiry into police behavior and last, to implement genuine universal suffrage for both the Legislative Council and the Chief Executive. In the council elections end of 2019, a whole 17 of 18 councils won by pro-democracy candidates, which showed the true reflection of the frustrations and divide in the society. The Poly U seize can be seen as the peak of the protests where the anger and frustrations of both the sides could have broken into a full-blown confrontation.

7,165 people have been arrested for the protests since June 2019, two deaths were reported caused during the protests and over 2600 people including protesters and police were injured during the protests.

Leaderless and organized

The Hong Kong protests have sustained itself without a visible leadership or any known organization. Social media platforms facilitate the exchange of information that becomes vital to the coordination of protests. This could include legal support, medical services, police presence, information about transportation and the like. The platforms become the base for expressing anger, provoke the population and the promotion of emotional contents. However, the structural characteristics of these social media platforms and the attitudes of the population are the main driving factors of either the success or failure of a protest.

The efficiency and sustenance tactics of the protests in Hong Kong has took the world by surprise. They have set new standards and thoroughly adapted to the changes as they came. The protests managed to get millions of citizens in Hong Kong to the streets. In the backdrop however, there were thousands of computer experts, journalists, college students, lawyers

constantly providing support to the cause. Companies allowed people to take paid leave and in some cases during the early weeks, police were known to have shown significant restraint in following the orders of the authorities in some places.

Media platforms like WhatsApp and telegram, popularly known to have secure encryption protocols and have become very important in spreading information without being traced. Telegram is exceptionally safe because it does not collect metadata even. Telegram has been the target of various political challenges in the past years, in 2018 it was banned in Iran and Russia because it stops the government from accessing the communications of their citizens and other users within their countries. This platform was extensively used in the protests in Hong Kong.

Besides this, the protests in Hong Kong are known to have received support from the news agencies and journalists. They played an important role in sustaining the protests for such a long time, by providing access to funds and more importantly: high-power support. Large amounts of money were donated by people both, from within Hong Kong and abroad to keep the movement going. What is also interesting is that multiple grassroots initiatives have popped up across the city who have been providing everything, right from the water, food, and equipment to the protesters, these without the need to know their identity. Simultaneously, people have been raising funds for lawyers to represent arrested protesters while also paying for medical bills or even to fund research and publicity of the happenings around them.

“There are a lot of creative ways to support the movement,” said one of the supporters and co-founders of HKProtect, a company which sold protective gears to protesters who did not want to be identified. Everyone is using their profession or parts of their expertise to be part of the process. Graphic designers, helped create countless posters, website and internet experts worked round-the-clock to provide people with updates on safety and upcoming plans, architects helped draw floor plans of protest sites with escape routes. These coordination methods assumed the leadership and the donation/funds, coupled with the support of media agencies, became the driving factors of the protests.

Use of online forum for mobilisation and support

LIHKG is a forum created for the cause, popularly dubbed as the ‘Hong Kong Reddit’, it emerged as one of the virtual command centres. Much of the essential commands and plans were discussed on this forum. Formed in 2016, LIHKG is a news forum, site-based in Hong Kong which was formed by the creators of the now-defunct forum HKG+, which was formerly affiliated as a third-party application with another local forum site HKGolden. After HKGolden banned HKG+, LIHKG surged in popularity, in the same year. It replaced HKGolden as the go-to site for Hongkongers to discuss political content. LIHKG is often compared to Reddit, which is an American forum where users create threads and submit content of various interests through relevant subreddits that categorize the posts into different categories.

The portal consists of over 90,000 subscribers which mainly included expatriates, tourists or locals comfortable in English and since the extradition bill crisis, the subreddit has been actively reposting translated information from LIHKG for non-Chinese speakers. Protesters

have been able to use LIHKG to call more people to the streets and request supplies to aid those on the front lines. The forum is known to be actively used for crowdfunding; one example is the backing of a bid for world leaders to address the extradition bill crisis during the G20 Summit. In the meantime, the forum lets the users remain relatively anonymous despite its demand for an email address by any prominent provider. Their goal is to ensure preparedness for what comes.

#Be_Water.

Mainland versus Hong Kong Government

The worst position to be on during the protests would undoubtedly have been that of Carrie Lam. She is the first woman to lead Hong Kong, but has become one of the most hated persons in Hong Kong since the 1997 handover. She pushed for the extradition bill which sparked a domino of protests in Hong Kong. However, she was caught in between the politics of having to deal with her people and having to deal with mainland China.

Mainland China could not directly involve itself with the protests in Hong Kong unlike that of any other region in China, merely because of the political lines that China could never cross without being seen as an aggressor. The protesters knew of this and in a sense, the protests can be seen as a subtle provocation against the Chinese government after the extradition bill was scrapped.

There were no options with the governments on how to deal with the situation. The fact that the protests were leaderless, made it that much more challenging. Carrie Lam was a social activist before she took the leadership path. As someone who sided with the powerless in the past, her legacy would leave her approach to the protests as one of her failures. Mainland China, in the early weeks of the protests announced that it would 'trust' Carrie Lam to take care of the situation. When the protests began to turn violent, Xi Jinping issued a public warning against Separatism, the Chinese government stationed its soldiers on the borders of Hong Kong.

The strategy of both the mainland and the Carrie Lam government was to wait it out. That became the only option after the negotiation attempts with the protesters failed. However, the frequency and ferocity of street protests eased after a landslide victory in district council elections. The protesters ensured that their movement continued, where a small group of them would gather, on say, 21st and 31st of every month, 'till every demand was met.' Demonstrations continued in 2020, in the early weeks of the virus outbreak they said, "Fight the virus, but don't forget our cause," this however, stopped with the outbreak of corona virus. The ongoing protests were able to keep the mainland from setting up makeshift medical centres in the borders and within Hong Kong.

Major Trends

The protests put the lessons learned from the Umbrella Movement to good use. Every time their plan was compromised, a new one would emerge. If the police stood against blocking the metro stations, they would go to the airport, for example. The biggest strength to the protests were the support of the pro-democracy media and businesses to the cause, both from within Hong Kong and outside of Hong Kong; specifically, the support of the US media.

The strong resistance to the actions of the government, through well-coordinated unions and groups ensured that the five demands made were never compromised.

When violence became a part of the movement, one can observe the damage that were caused was largely to Chinese infrastructure and systems, the surveillance camera poles were broken, for example; sending the signal that they do not want mainland China watching over them. Reports emerged in February and March of 2020 that soldiers from PLA were part of the police during the protests, some reports suggested that there were soldiers even among the protesters, watching over their movement.

Forecast in 2020

The protests have halted due to the ongoing pandemic but months before the outbreak, the protests were sustained by very few people. The protests would resume once the threat from the pandemic reduces, but it might remain symbolic. This means, it may fail to get public approval because the priority and the immediate pressure would be to get back to normalcy. A sense of fatigue among the population was felt when there was a split among the groups in terms of using violence as a means. The second sense of fatigue was seen after the elections, a good amount of support for the protests ended because it was seen as a pro-democracy victory. The third sense of fatigue can be seen with the inaction of the government. The waiting-it-out strategy of the government left both sides with no sense of achievement on either side. Hence, if the protests were to renew it would need to have evolved into something much more challenging. Economy will return to stability after minor slump. With the impact of the protests alone, there were positive signs that the economy is entirely capable of weathering the outcomes of the months' long protests, however with the onset of the pandemic, this may not be the case. The tourism sector is highly impacted by the protests, from the rest of the world, but most importantly tourism from the mainland dropped drastically due to the protests. A technical sense of recession was announced by a few experts in October of 2019, however the main markers of the Hong Kong economy, the financial and professional services remain strong even in March 2020. This could be because, after the initial months of the protests, people went back to their work places and remained protesting during the weekends.

GDP rates shrank as an impact of the protests, in the fourth quarter alone the GDP shrank by 2.9 per cent and the annual shrink of GDP in 2019 was at 1.2 per cent. A slowdown in the economy can be expected throughout 2020 despite the important sectors remaining strong. Protests emerged in Hong Kong in the context of lack of confidence on the government's ability to deal with the pandemic. The measures taken by the Hong Kong government drew a lot of people to the streets when attempts were made to convert the local medical centers and local clinics into specialized coronavirus treatment centers. Protests erupted in the later weeks of February when mainland China refused to close the borders when the numbers began to peak in China. Clashes were seen between the protesters and the police one again in February 2020. Thus, coronavirus outbreak became another reason for contention between the protesters and the administration.

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Looking Inwards: The anti-government protests in Iran

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Background

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been the epicentre of the unrest. When looked into late 1970's, it took a decade for the movement to gain consciousness about democracy amongst the elite segment. As another decade passed where President Mohammed Khatami comes to power in 1997. Here the reformists intend to strengthen the democratic component but due to a strong authoritarian casing the mission fails. Even though they struggled to cause disruption to his plans, the failure was epidemic and kept people away from 2005 elections to vote. This loophole gave rise to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who was declared winner in 2009 elections. People had to take part in 2009 elections due to prolonged isolation and depreciation of currency and they felt that the result was unscrupulous. This gave to demonstrations in the streets called Green uprising, led by middle class protestors of Tehran and fronted by underclass and the unemployed of provincial towns. As observed the movement failed due to many reasons but mainly because of an important policy followed by the parliament. That is, the constitution was framed in a way to grant three-fourth political power to the office of supreme leader who is a permanent member and remains unelected but given control of the IRGC, armed forces, foreign policy, intelligence, judicial and extrajudicial powers to implement his decision. Whereas the president, who is democratically elected is given no power to question the leader. So, by default the system has remained blindfolded by its own flaws, resisting to grow and inability to adapt the environment. In contrast to the present riots, the protest had a clear political vision but were detained, indicted and suppressed very rapidly.

Spread of the Movement

The reformists let the green movement 2009 bygone and elected Hassan Rouhani in 2013. He was portrayed as moderate who promised international normalization and economic prosperity, that ignored the reality of his nature of being a loyal servant of Iran's Islamic Revolution who was dedicated to preserve the repressive, theocratic regime. The first term of President Rouhani sided well with the notable agreement with the United States. But in the second term the Americans began to back out from the promises of nuclear deal. With the schemes of corruption coming into light and pressure building from the right-wing President Rouhani decided to justify by raising taxes on gasoline. This profligacy inspired protestors to come to the streets in November 2019 for the three-fold rise in gasoline prices. This was the proximate cause of the current unrest, which was only a trigger. Another unlikely turn was Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) admitting that it had shot down

a Ukraine International Airlines with 176 passengers on January 2020. This second wave of protests spread to all segments of people mainly students at its forefront from universities and to various cities around the country. This gave different dimensions to the protest, where students of Yazd University protested for poor conditions of food and had reported as suffering from digestive problems due to bad quality and hygiene. Whereas, in the Industrial sector from factory workers to taxi drivers, a large sum of protestors held demonstrations for laying off and overdue salaries. As per report on 13 February, 2020 from The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) has identified 724 out of 1500 protestors killed by the regime.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

Regime and leadership

The proximate cause to these demonstrations is the Islamic Regime and its suppressive attitude. As mentioned before, the framework of constitution is in a way that it provides mammoth powers to the supreme leader. So, when the leader prioritizes his personal motives over the economy and welfare of people, rise of protests or an uprising are of no doubt. The regime has lacked transparency and accountability, which divulges the image of corruption. Being a second largest producer of gas and with agricultural surplus people believed that corruption had spread to all levels of government that has kept Iran from developing. Traces of mismanagement was seen not only from a week administrative but also from the conflicts between the alliances and other powers. The president has tried to work towards economic openness and privatization but the control lies with the Supreme leader, who is responsible for the delineation and supervision of the domestic and Foreign policies. Hence the leadership is the backbone of Iran and the power only gets extended through representatives and not given to them.

Involvement in Regional conflicts

With an ongoing decline in infrastructure, the government decided to opt for a nuclear programme and an expensive ballistic missile programme that will attract more sanctions from US. This was carried out in comparison with the turkey model of exporting its products by developing its defence industry. In case of Iran, this hasn't done any good to its economy. But since 2018 the regime has fuelled money in supporting terrorist groups of Hezbollah and Houthis and Hamas at the cost of its own economy which is borne directly by Iranians. Neither president nor his cabinet can control the funds spent on Iran's expansionist ventures in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. This staged nationwide protests for the mismanagement of economy by the government. They expressed deep concerns that the focus of the regime should shift towards domestic issues rather than costly external interventions. Alike the question of corruption, Iranians are ignorant of the degree of control the state organisations practise in the economic sector and the volume of expenditure on foreign policy. Effects of this intervention has provoked protests, people demanding for exit of Iran from their state affairs.

Economic inflation

The Iranian economic downturn was the decision in November to increase the price of gasoline on an average by 50 per cent. The Iranian public had to accustom to a

heavily subsidized price of oil and its sudden increase by such a high margin acted as the trigger for the protests to break out instantly as the other basic commodities were already in price hike. Being a major producer of oil and increasing the price of the most available product irked an insecurity and put out the volatility of the economy amongst the Iranians. Yet, these anguishes build on the frustration generated by political repression. The economic adversity took base from the economic sanctions by US (withdrawal from joint comprehensive plan of action). As the Iranian economy depended on its oil exports that added three-quarters revenue, this move will affect its GDP. According to IMF, Iran's economy is already in "severe distress" and expects to contract by 9.5 per cent this year under the weight of sanctions.

According to the World Bank, "Higher import prices from the devaluation are expected to push inflation back above 30 per cent in the coming years as inflationary expectations spiral and consumer sentiment falls leading to once again a period of stagflation for Iran. Despite the depreciation and drop in imports, the reduction in oil exports is estimated to almost eliminate the current account surplus which is lower than the earlier sanctions episode as oil prices are almost half of the levels, they were in 2012/13–2013/14. The economy's downward trajectory is also likely to put further pressure on the labor market and reverse recent job creation gains."

Concentration and centralisation of capital are two mechanisms of capital accumulation. For Iranian economy both the processes have been problematic as in the last two decades. The economies of scale declined from 0.8 to -0.16 with international economic alliance restrictions in place. Thereby limiting the flow of foreign investments due to high investment risk. The crony capitalism practised by the regime with religious foundations, militia controls, it monopolizes a large part of economic woe.

This inflation on Iran's demography, especially among the youth who comprise the most faces unemployment of 40 per cent, who are college graduates. Thus, the young population is a big part of protests, known as "bread riots" or "youth riots." According to World Bank estimates, the unemployment rate was over 12 per cent as of April-June 2018 with youth unemployment over 28 per cent in June 2018. We can expect this go up further with economic crunches hitting from US and pandemic in place, it will result in massive negative impact on the economy and forecast for an uprising against the regime.

When looked at the Islamic regime, it was a complete surprise and was off guard to see massive protests across parts of the country burning buildings and gas stations, including the participation of all segments of people of all age groups coming together. The Regime, known for its brutality and suppressive measures to control the protests and arrest activists. The supreme leader office and his council has been giving orders to enforce militant forces against its own people claiming it to be counter revolutionaries and foreign adversaries. While the government has announced to provide financial assistance to it people and stated that, will not stand any form of anarchy or rioting. But protests gained momentum mainly through social media, an app named Telegram was vastly used by Iranians to communicate and were able to bring more strength to the protests. Unlike other government in totalitarian states, Iran was well aware of

people being educated and cannot shift the blame on the sanctions levied every time. So, it did not restrict the media coverage. Iranians were given freedom to some extent different from that of other states like Syria where complete control is exercised. The military along with Islamic revolutionary guard corps (IRGC) had other ways to control than force, firstly it had shut down the internet to block the communication and moved against the protestors killing more than 100 in first 48 hours. The brutality factor still remains a key function of the regime to control mass protests.

In the Middle Eastern region, Iraq geographically and politically being closest. People of Iraq protested by setting fire to buildings and offices of Shiite Militias and political parties against its government for letting Iran into internal affairs of the state causing deterioration to its economy. Due to Iran's infiltration and exploiting of Iraq public funds that has resulted in poor infrastructure, corruption, unemployment and economic fallout. This invoked aggression amongst Iraqis and nationwide protest including the torch of Iranian consulate in Iraq. Same in the case of Hezbollah and Lebanon, the people have raised questions and demonstrations against Iran to stop its influence over their governments. The main blame seems to fall on the Shiite militia and its proxies for the instability caused in the middle eastern region. As far as Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that "Israel stands with the United States in its just struggle for peace, security and self-defence" Israel sees it as a positive step to benefit its security interests. Whereas Turkey, which is in good alliance with Iran since Turkish military coup attempt in 2016 and President Erdogan had cautioned the interference of parties outside. While Saudi Arabia keeps itself away from allegations of interference and takes pleasure in seeing the domestic unrest reveal.

In the international level, European parliament has passed a resolution that was supported by six out of seven factions in the EU for the brutal clampdown on demonstrators. The resolution states "The Iranian security forces used disproportionate means and force against protesters [and] according to civil society reports, Iranian security forces opened fire on unarmed protesters who did not pose any imminent risk, and allegedly shot to kill."

This resolution was supported by blocs across the political range, from the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), which initiated the resolution, to the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and others. The far-right Identity and Democracy Group was the only group that remained from signing. The European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), Foreign affairs spokeswoman Anna Fotyga who is a veteran of the anti-communist riot in Poland. She stated that a country prioritizing the supreme leader's personal power and wealth over the rights of its citizens and executing through violent suppression and invoking fear into the population to avoid further protests that will bring out the carnages done by the government. She called out that the EU should rethink its relation with Iran and insisted that approach to the regime should be revised by the European parliament immediately.

Daniel Schwammenthal, the American Jewish Committee's Transatlantic Institute director, said the vote is a shift, since the EU was thus far "incomprehensibly reticent

to condemn the regime's violence." According to him, the EU must levy sanctions on the regime officials and the security services that were directly involved in the brutal murder and arrests. He stated that the resolution passed by the parliament is a forward move to portray the stand for the Iranians and not the regime. Also, pointed that the trigger to these protests were the price hike in gasoline that was due to extraneous funding into Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syrian President Bashar Assad's ethnic-cleansing campaign by the regime. He necessitated on the EU to try to contain Iran's belligerence in the Middle East by putting Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps on its terror list.

As per the United Nations, they had called for the Iranian authority's restraint the use of force to disperse the protests and the demonstrator's rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly to be held by the government as priority.

Major Trends

Working class and The Green movement

According to Sohrab Behdad, the co-author of *Class and Labour in Iran: Did the Revolution Matter?* The Iranian working class was no longer a traditional bourgeoisie, but a group of educated and young with no change from a middle-class attire. The movement had a wider emphasis going around the right of vote, elections, human rights and freedom and lacked a focus of bringing in the demands of the working class. Even then, it did not stop the people from industry from joining the movement against suppression, but the issues of the labour were not brought in front neither in the riots nor in its slogans. Another factor that failed the Green uprising was, no attention was given to social justice demands, which is not only the freedom but worker rights at its midpoint. This was similar in case of reformists in the period of Khatami. In the first 30 years of the regime, the gap between the middle class and working class has narrowed down on everyday basis because the bourgeoisie have become the backbone of the government by generations, taking up the management of government enterprises, revolutionary courts and becoming the members of parliament, chief executive officers gaining the levers of political power. But didn't vow to remain so and with a shift of massive power their personal advantage role played and changed their class position. People who protested against capitalism got involved in accumulating it. While in the case of woman they did not step back but faced a challenge in working place and lost their jobs. With capitalist firms coming in, the employment rate fell. This shift caused a setback to the Iranian economy and deviated the focus of protests from social justice, marking the failure of green movement.

The sceptical class

In the present days of protest, the support from the middle class remains strayed because of two reasons. One, it is not like a situation they have something to lose because they are not the middle-class population that used to be unskilled. they are backed with something and are well educated. Secondly, the political leadership is not in their hands nor the elites, who support the protestors only through issuing statements. The mass protests emerge from those who are at bottom of the sector, the 11 million underprivileged who do not have access to urban amenities. In comparison to the earlier decades, the worker organization issued statement asking

for abolition of death penalty and discriminatory laws against women but the focus on working conditions or social status justice was absent. In the recent outbreak people from various backgrounds from industrial workers, taxi drivers, students and artists have voiced out but not in the effective means. The gap between the middle class and economic elites have nearly diminished but the people who remain below the poverty line still mass the demonstrations as they have nothing to lose.

Psychology of Iranians

When it comes to the movement, the mindset of the protestors is important because a mass population can gain momentum with a right focus and attributing the necessary factors to the focus. When we look at the Green movement, people voiced out for their right to vote, transparency and freedom against the Islamic regime without a strategic ask on what issue they were facing which was social justice. With president Rouhani coming into position again, under an economic crunch phase. The price hike of commodities evoked anger and the people's motive for economic equality was slowly turning to political, opposing its leaders and protest for a regime change. After the assassination of IRGC leader Qasem Soleimani by the Anti-Iran president, there were mass protests against the US. We have to look into the protestors here because they were not the people who were marching against the government but those bourgeoisie people who became white collars in time. As far as Iranians this incident vanished in thin air after the shot down of Ukrainian aircraft. Where it exhibits the togetherness of the protestors to riot against the ruthless regime. From the current demonstrations, we can learn that the Iranian seek democracy and that has been their struggle since the Islamic revolution.

Leaderless protests

When we look back to the history of protests in Iran, especially in the late 90's. Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi were recognised as leader of the anti-Iranian movements. They were in the forefront to mobilize people from all sectors to protest for democracy, transparency and accountability but here again the slogans that were chanted were more to the general population rather than the workforce. But failed to address the issues of the working class who were the eccentric to the functioning of the government. They missed to funnel the protests for specific needs such as social justice, work salaries and unemployment. Although the movement did not reach past the democracy seeking step till now. The leadership was short sighted.

In the case of current protests, there are massive crowds rising against the government and the regime but at a diasporic way from being united. They have definitely raised questions about the country's alliance in the region, government policy's, working conditions, overdue salaries, economic inflation and corruption. But a real strength to a movement is concentration, which can be achieved by a leader. Mobilization hasn't been a challenge due to social media but to articulate the reason for protest is more significant. With a repressive measure taken by the Iran government to put down the protest like shutting the internet and use of force, these protests will face a challenge to sustain and only if they endure long enough anything can be accomplished. The mass killings and forceful actions to derogate the protest show that they stand no chance of being heard.

Recurrence

When it comes to Iran, protest have not been a onetime event but have continued to occur though decades of every presidency from Reformist, conservative and moderate. Under the first reformist president Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, student protest erupted in 1999. After a decade, under president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, there were outbreak for the disputed election results by mass of Iran. With the current government under Hassan Rouhani, who happen to be called as a moderate is also facing numerous demonstrations since 2018. "Protests have occurred under every type of presidency. Thus, they are not party, personality or leadership bound." Second, the orientation to a foreign interference was perpetually high. Where US, Saudi and Israel partner to instigate and encourage these protests. There has always been an intervention into the Iran's internal affairs. Lastly there has been variations to the reason of protests to occur. Mainly, between economic and political needs. This tell us that the foundation of revolution was built over 3 core tenets. "The first had to do with notions of anti-imperialism, the quest for national liberation, and resistance against foreign encroachment – themes that routinely surface in Iranian political rhetoric."

Economic to Political Justice

Late Fred Halliday said that, 'not all the problems of the Iranian people stem from imperialism.' Indeed, Iran's perceived independence from the hands of foreign powers has not inoculated the leadership from internal turmoil. With US withdrawing from the nuclear deal of 2015 has brought economic recession to the economy through sanctions, which the government wasn't foreseeing to happen and had invested in extra-territorial assets as it deemed. While the sanctions crunched over its population the ideal model to achieve economic development was a failure in the hand of the Islamic republic. This was confirmed by the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran, Abolnaser Hemmati who underscored that Iran's economic growth has fallen below the country's real economic potentials.

The Right of the "Oppressed" (Mostazafan in Ayatollah Khomeini's words) being the core tenet of 1979 revolution, which was started as the "Revolution of Barefoot" to rise up and to demand economic justice. This right was inscribed into the fabric of Iran's post-revolutionary consciousness. It tells why the Iranian people endure to voice their demands with movements, strikes, protests, and at the ballot box. The protests that emerged from the price hike of gasoline but as the movement grew bigger the chanting of slogans started to give an anti-regime outlook from being economic need based. This poses a serious threat to the regime, especially the supreme leader who has failed to gain the consensus of his people unlike his predecessor. This suggests that between the ruling class (elite parliamentarians) and a large segment (Poor and unprivileged) of Iranians, the gap widens giving no option for the exchange of conservatives and reformists to enclose the void. After 40 years of creation of the Islamic revolution, it is a question on the existence of the regime.

Forecast in 2020

Revisionist Regime

The question that arises is, what makes the Islamic revolution an aggressive regime? As mentioned earlier the constitution bases the political power in the hands of an unelected Supreme leader. From observation, the Islamic leader has three

motives or objectives. First, to make Iran a Nuclear State, second, Expansionism i.e. Pro-Iran government in the Middle East and thirdly to follow Anti-Imperialism. The administration being quiet without a revolting nature against the domestic mismanagement and international sanctions. If they continue to ignore the economic crisis that has arisen from secret funding to advance the nuclear power of the state and develop its militia (proxies) in Syria, Iraq and Hamas, the Iranian economy will cripple down resulting in the closedown of industries, job losses, poverty index going up and losing its international goodwill.

When such economic inflation occurs, the increase in price of oil will lead to more protests including all sectors and the State will enforce to spend millions on its military personnel to control such demonstrations every time, killing masses and Imposing punitive actions. This can be eluded if right reform policy is in place to meet the needs of the population. As people have been protesting for 4 decades now and haven't got even a slight change to their lifestyles. It has only become worse. If the regime opts to reform its policy or eliminate the use of security forces, a civil conflict or an uprising can be avoided. Else, the region might become conflict prone as not only Iranians but people of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon are protesting against the Iran government for its intervention that is taking a toll over their economies.

This might lead to an external intervention, which the Iran government will not prefer. They must prioritize the development of its economy and second its nuclear or arsenal expansion.

Nuclear Deal

The Iran's, economy deep recession has worsened since the withdrawal of US from the accord. In spite of president Rouhani efforts to keep the currency from depreciation, it has halved down in last 2 years. US was the biggest market for Iran, with that out of option the accord included 6 other countries Russia, China, UK, France and Germany. They still believe that Iran can be elevated from the economic crisis for which china has lifted its sanctions and is one of the top 3 traders to Iran. If Iran see this as a way to keep its currency afloat, improve its exports rather than threatening the European countries to withdraw from Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Iran has been a signatory since 1951. If so, it will lead to nuclear arms race. Shifting the focus from its economy to building its nuclear missile can be vicious to its people. This will result in repercussions on its middle class and household budgets. With the recent assassination of general Qasem Soleimani has provoked more tensions in the regime and questioning if nuclear non-proliferation a realistic possibility?

Wider protests

In contrast to past protests where not all segments were participative in the protest, the current demonstrations have been magnetic to join the poor, the bourgeoisie, the middle class and the elites together against the regime. Although this spread has led to speculation of external powers instigations. As far as there is no modification done to the office of the supreme leader and the cabinet stays powerless to express the demand of people, the protests will be a permanent feature to the Islamic republic of Iran.

For these protest to actually make impact there are two important factors, more specific demands should be made that will change the living conditions of the affected poor class of Iran who are educated and skilled unlike the initial period of revolution. Next will be asserting a leader these movements because any leaderless protest can be easily diminished using force as there won't be a unity in the mass protests but with a leader one can carry forward a unified demand that will suit all and no chaos but a well-planned protest with a strong message. When it comes to social dynamic, it is hard to predict. Many aspects such as the determined action, maturity of the leaders and representatives of the social currents may vary.

According to Shirin Ebadi a human rights activist, recommend that violence can be avoided by protestors by right use of legal right and create pressure on the government. For instance, "if they have money in the bank, they should withdraw the money from the bank. Such a move would damage the economics of the state banks and they would get to the brink of bankruptcy or do not pay for water, gas, taxes and municipality services to pressure the government economically." Through this form, the protest cannot be dangerous and no one is killed or arrested. But when pressure is put on government through mass protests, they are compelled to use force.

Economic Forecast

According to IMF and World Banks, a GDP between 0 and 0.5per cent is predicted, which is dependent on the export of 500,000 barrels of oil every day. The country has been hit by sanctions and the load of recession is purely borne by the lower and upper middle-class of Iran. "The IMF report from October 2019 shows skyrocketing inflation rates in Iran of 35.7per cent, meaning that the average price of consumer goods over the past year has increased by that per cent age. The World Bank said that these increases have "disproportionately affected the rural population" and are especially high for food items." The Statistical Center for Iran (SCI) assessment is even more negative with an overall inflation rate of 47.2 per cent and a higher rate of 63.5per cent on food and fuel.

An Iran-based economist, Ehsan Soltani said that "When people spend a major part of their income on necessity goods, they have not much money left for anything other than that." In the case, where people run out of money to spend on other goods, it leads to grave economic stagnation. This means that when the consumer doesn't have money the cost will rise by 40per cent which will be a social and economic disaster. Iranian experts also agree that essential goods are most affected by the inflation rate. As maximum pressure sanctions policy continue, Tehran lacks the concrete policies to address the dismal projections and Iranians are prospective to face the economic Hardship in 2020.

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'Solve economic crisis': Indigenous movements in Latin America

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Background

Latin America has witnessed an eruption of indigenous movements that reflected the growing discontent among the community. Historically the heterogeneous group of indigenous citizens lacked political representation which resulted in the cohesive efforts to change the political system through peaceful street protests, constitutional reforms, and electoral politics. The paper traces the emergence of the indigenous movements across nations in the Latin American region and the actors involved in these movements. The movement have gained momentum in the international arena through the involvement of more transnational actors. The paper examines the protest movements lead by the indigenous people demanding an inclusive economic process. Indigenous movements prospect to expand beyond the region by inspiring various protesters on success techniques. This is analysed with the reference with to historical events of the region. The paper also identifies the issues with protests and the unclear demands by the various segments of the indigenous communities which act as an impediment in the protest movements. The indigenous movements cannot automatically be considered progressive or emancipator. They are just as often enacted in pursuit of backward-looking and even conservative objectives. The paper highlights the changing trends of the indigenous protest movements across the centuries. The structural barriers and the glass ceiling in the society impede the growth of indigenous communities. The paper assesses the subject with the relevant theories of international relations.

The Latin America that we are observing is the former colonies of Spanish and Portugal powers. The history of indigenous people is one of the longest struggles in Latin American history. It starts from the European invasion to the region and continues till date. But the reasons have changed across centuries. Indigenous peoples made significant social progress, experienced a reduction in poverty levels in several countries and gained improved access to basic services during the boom of the first decade of the century, but they did not benefit to the same extent as the rest of Latin Americans, according to a new World Bank study. The poverty of indigenous households decreased in countries like Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador, while in others, such as Ecuador, Mexico and Nicaragua, the educational gap that for decades excluded indigenous children was closed which evidently shows that a combination of economic growth and good social policies becomes the primary demand among the communities in the villages. The World Bank estimates about 28.6 million Brazilians moved out of poverty between 2004 and 2014. But the bank estimates that from the start of 2016 to the end of this year, 2.5 million to 3.6 million will have fallen back

below the poverty line of 140 Brazilian reais per month, about \$44 at current exchange rates. A nationally representative survey conducted in the first decade of 21st century indicated that unemployment was 4 per cent and by the end of 2004 it rose to 13 per cent, but by the end of the decade, unemployment had jumped to almost 30 per cent. The growing unemployment and cut to various social welfares aggravates the economic crisis among the indigenous communities. However, the data for analysis clears the point that though the communities have gained significantly from the past conditions but still the gap keeps widening in the case of development among the entire population. They continue to be confronted with glass ceilings and structural barriers that limit their full social and economic inclusion. While indigenous peoples make up 8 per cent of the population in the region, they represent approximately 14 per cent of the poor and 17 per cent of the extremely poor in Latin America. Also while looking at the key aspect of increasingly globalized societies; they continue to face challenges to gain access to the basic services and the adoption of new technologies. This growing feeling of exasperation set off the supporters to organize as never before and using new, more open democracies to take on the traditional, light-skinned ruling classes whom they are blaming for keeping their countries mired in poverty and their people on the sidelines of power for decades together.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

Income inequality

The discrimination, economic inequalities and racially discriminatory policies and practices continued to play a major role in the disproportionate placement of indigenous children and youth in detention, custody, foster care and adoption in many countries. Even the dynamic governments that have represented a few Latin American nations as of late, while they made noteworthy gains regarding salary dissemination, didn't accomplish considerable duty changes. To a prominent extent, inequality has been reduced in recent decades in several countries of the region which includes Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Argentina. The progress in tax systems did not improve the distribution of wealth in the framework. The redistribution was mostly because the subsidies financed by different types of income, like the ones that are generated by mining and the export of raw materials but the wealth in Latin America has no solid foundation since it is dependent on the mercantile commodities that is now over, and subsidy systems that can easily disappear. With the return of right-wing governments to many countries in the region, reforms are likely to go hand in hand with lower taxes and less tax redistribution.

Economists know very well that high inequality is a major barrier to economic development, and Latin America is no exception. The colonial legacy of the Latin American countries prevents them from making the most of their potential rather inheriting the unequal social structure. Only by involving the entire population in economic progress can a country grow steadily, and for this a strong public sector with redistributive capacity is essential. Its consequences in the economic and social development have been evident throughout history. Reports show that both European countries and the successful economies of South-East Asia began to grow steadily after managing to redistribute wealth. This was done through sound tax mechanisms.

The emphasis of strong and progressive tax system has awakened even the developing states with neoliberal systems. Only with a strong tax system, and a social covenant in which those who have the most contribute the most, can essential public goods such as infrastructure, public services and efficient institutions be financed, and then a national identity that goes beyond colours and flags can be achieved.

The taxes have been viewed as the burden and the aversion to paying taxes has become a common phenomenon. Generally, the upper and upper-middle classes do not feel the moral obligation to contribute to the public coffers, nor are they aware of their importance, not only for reducing inequality, but also for good economic performance of the country as a whole. The reasons for such behaviours are nothing but the concept of redistribution is an alien idea for them and the taxes were treated as the synonym with stagnation, waste and inefficiency. The consequences of the inability to understand the collective goods attacked the inequality in the society seriously which is denoted as the fractured society by David Castells-Quintana, the economics professor who points out the consequence that generated the extreme political conditions and the permanent social conflicts.

Privatization

The indigenous communities are becoming fragile due to the globalization of resources and the privatization of markets. The indigenous communities of Latin America lives on the lands that contain the strategic resources for market exploitation such as water, oil, gas, forest and biodiversity which made them vulnerable to the liberal market system. They are eventually losing economic and social ground by losing control over their lands, waters, and other natural resources. Both academic researchers and indigenous organizations show that market-driven global processes are increasing environmental deterioration and poverty in indigenous communities, blocking the viability of sustainable indigenous communities and societies. The political and economic speculation brought by the spread of globalization shove the indigenous people to engage in new forms of fighting while concentrating on consolidating their autonomy. National indigenous federation AIDESEP's Beatriz Huertas says indigenous peoples in "isolation" refuse sustained, direct contact with "outsiders" and are extremely vulnerable to the invasion of their territories because of their total reliance on the forest for their lives and livelihoods, and because of their lack of immunological defences which can decimate them if contact is made. Turning to the right to land, territories and resources, she said the report discussed securing ancestral lands and waters in a manner that provided the basis for indigenous peoples' economic, social, cultural and spiritual development. Those areas were particularly vulnerable to climate change policies and laws. The judicial procedures or the policies that sought to build dams and wind farms, or to plant bio fuels, create incentives for relocating indigenous peoples which in turn denies their rights. The right to free, prior and knowledgeable consent was associated to those for self-determination participation. "Free" meant that indigenous peoples should not face any coercion or intimidation. "Prior" meant that their consent must be sought sufficiently in advance of the start of any activities. It also should include accurate information about the nature and reversibility of any project. Indeed, opportunities had to be provided for indigenous peoples to debate any proposal that might affect them. The indigenous

communities are often displaced without proper knowledge on the policies and moved to the unfamiliar places. They become more vulnerable in every aspect in the new life that is started (i.e.) jobs, education and facilities are received after struggles.

Political corruption

Many countries lack strong, independent regulators and justice systems, allowing corruption to flourish in political campaigns and government contracting. Peru's past four presidents have all been ordered to be detained on corruption charges though each has denied wrongdoing. With weak institutions, George Mason University political scientist Jo-Marie Burt said, it becomes more difficult to address problems. In some countries, "there's an inability to process social conflict through normal political channels. So you end up seeing street protests" or the dissolution of congress.

Poverty

Poverty rates among the indigenous people paralyse their socio economic status of the community which drives core reason for the protest movements in Latin America. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) said the proportion of people in extreme poverty, which is characterized by lack of access to basic human necessities like food and shelter, rose to 10.2 per cent of the population in 2017, or 62 million people, from 9.9 per cent in 2016. The poverty gap (average difference between the incomes of the poor and the poverty line) among indigenous peoples is also deeper, and shrank more slowly over the decade, compared to the same indicators among non-indigenous populations. In the countries like Mexico, Guatemala and Bolivia the national poverty rates declined where the poverty gap, as well as the poverty rate, diminish more slowly for indigenous people relative to the rest of the population. In fact, in Bolivia, the indigenous poverty gap actually increased. The poverty gap between the indigenous people and others are widening and the reasons are unclear. The reports submitted by the World Bank shows the per cent age of the poverty gap faced by the indigenous communities in Latin America is illustrated with the statistical reports. The remaining 8 per cent points remain unexplained, suggesting that indigenous communities face unique challenges in moving out of poverty.

A brief note on the developments

The stated causes aid to understand the reasons for the protest and the dissatisfaction that is building upon in the minds of the people. In Latin America the year begins with Juan Guaido Auto proclaiming himself as the interim president of Venezuela provoking huge protests in the streets of Caracas and other cities. Throughout the year, malaise in the region increased as did the idea that citizens have the power and capacity to organise themselves and influence the policies of their governments. However, the disproportionate use of violence and repression against protesters in the region has also been a common yet worrying theme, which represents a serious threat to democracy in Latin America. During the first two weeks of October, thousands of protesters took to the streets of Quito to express their collective frustration about the aggressive economic measures of Lenin Moreno's government, who had previously negotiated a set of austerity measures with the IMF that would have negatively affected the most vulnerable of Ecuadorian society. The straw that broke the camel's back was the rise in petrol prices presented alongside other cuts in order to reduce the

country's deficit to pay off its IMF debt, a project known as the 'paquetazo' in Ecuador.

In 2019 a violent battle between riot police and protesters began when the enraged indigenous communities and other social sectors by the measures decided to mobilise and travelled to the capital. Indigenous communities in Ecuador have been victims of extractivist exploitation for centuries, and it was also a general rejection of petrol extraction, deforestation, and mining that led them to march in Quito. The indigenous groups successfully negotiated with the Ecuador government after the 12 days of conflict. The leaders and the communities camped out in Quito until Moreno responded to their demands. They agreed to abandon the 'paquetazo'. On the other hand most of the initiatives taken to increase the economy of the states are failed by the corrupt governments. The projects are often negotiated behind the backs of indigenous peoples, in open violation of Convention 169 of the ILO that states that indigenous peoples have the right to be consulted before decisions that affect their territories or natural resources are made.

In this context, many indigenous people perceive "globalization" as a euphemism for a second colonization. The following statement from the "Abya Yala Indigenous Peoples' Mandate," from a continental congress of indigenous peoples in Quito in 2002, is typical of dozens more emanating from indigenous federations and gatherings in recent years. "This one, directed to the ministers for economic issues in the Americas, states: It has come to our attention that, representing various countries, you are meeting to design a project for Latin American integration. However, we who were the first inhabitants of these lands, and therefore the hosts, have not been notified, much less consulted. Because of this, we consider your presence to be suspect and unwelcome".

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) called free trade pacts "a new crusade to re-colonize our territories, our cultures, our consciences, and nature itself." The "Declaration of Chilpancingo," produced at the National Gathering of Indigenous Mexican Peoples and Organizations in Mexico in 2002, talked about trade pacts "which turn over our sovereignty to large national and transnational capital, turn their backs on the interests of the majority, and seek to maintain a homogeneous nation, rejecting the plurality and diversity of the peoples. The wide spread understanding of globalisation and the discomfort faced by the indigenous communities are voiced out in the international forums by Nongovernmental organisations. In Ecuador, unrest blew up after President Lenin Moreno ended fuel subsidies. Thus protests are happening against every single issue which evidently shows the rising expectations of the people and the inability of the government to satisfy the need.

"We feel like we've been hijacked by the protesters who have their own agenda on this," said Theresa Tait Day, whose hereditary name is Wi'haliy'Te. "They've used our people to advance their agenda.". The issues among the protesters are being deviated or misunderstanding of the proper policies which is often utilized by the opposition parties to gain popularity. The successful individuals command their people and organize protest movements. Apparently the globalized media houses voice the leader's opinion to the world against globalization. Tait Day, president of a group called

the Wet'suwet'en Matrilineal Coalition who was stripped of her title of hereditary chief after supporting the Coastal Gas Link project, testified at a parliamentary committee in Ottawa. According to a statement released by Tait Day, only a limited number of Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs oppose the pipeline and the broader community wants it to proceed, including the majority of the elected chiefs. The lack of confidence and unclear vision on development dilutes the demands of the indigenous movements in the recent times.

Major Trends

The understanding of the major trends in the recent protest are analysed through the comparative study of the earlier movements and the later protest movements. Earlier in the 20th century the goals of the protest movements are the fundamental rights, more recognition in the social and political life and greater representation in political decision making. The 21st century protests have a shift in demands which demanded more economic opportunities, to stop violence against them and equality in the society. New balance of international powers in the region provides Latin American countries with new options and creates more competition for both economic opportunities and political influence. Indigenous peoples have historically had to build their political entities inside nation-states, which mediated and still mediate many of their relationships with the world. While a decade ago, they took their concerns only to the state, now they also go to the international arena. The indigenous people begun to deal the problems directly when their political powers expanded, they approached the multilateral organizations like the World Bank, the Inter American Development Bank (IDB), the Ibero-American Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (a multilateral organization created by the Ibero-American heads of state, also known as the Indigenous Fund), and the Andean Community of Nations. They approach them looking for consent on projects and consensus around political operations which in turn the corporations negotiate local investment and resource exploitation projects directly with local indigenous leaders.

Earlier the protest demanded more political representation and the outcome was the political leaders. The asymmetrical power at work, indigenous peoples find themselves subordinated to new forms of governance. Gains in autonomy are in danger of being quickly lost to the World Bank, IDB, and other multinational institutions that are now able to impose policies and initiatives directly on indigenous communities, organizations, and lands. The legal changes imposed by the trade and investment organizations are coupled with the coercive power that comes along with loans and development aid. Structural adjustment-driven decentralization has opened the door for the direct incorporation and absorption of some indigenous communities into the scenario of dependence, indebtedness, and business associations that are all increasingly threatening indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples' desire to govern their own territories, combined with their poverty and isolation, render them vulnerable to these programs, which operate on the same policy imperatives that are heavily pushed by the region's governments, and often with even more socially and economically devastating impacts. The recent protests are ongoing and the outcome is the spread of protests across the region.

Earlier the protest was coup d'état and violent in manner. The Zapatista army of

national liberation in 1994 are the guerrilla groups who waged a war against the ruling party and brought significant changes in the governing system itself. They were based in Chiapas state rainforest in Mexico and demanded for land reforms and political autonomy. Since 2014 the unrest caused in the region because of “Latin American spring movement” started in Venezuela against the president Nicola Maduro. When the protest was controlled violently it started spreading to neighbouring countries to Guatemala, Ecuador and gradually to all other countries. The core cause shifted to corruption and the region witnessed a series of protest movements. The recent movements are street protests and started in a peaceful manner, their voices are heard in the social media and writings in the journals but they face violence in the course of time. Invasions of indigenous territories and attacks and murders of indigenous leaders have increased dramatically since President Bolsonaro took office in January 2019. Indigenous peoples across Brazil are protesting against President Bolsonaro’s plan to steal their lands and open them up for exploitation.

Violence against the group is a vital issue addressed in the recent protest movements. Indigenous groups lack education. Most of them live in poverty and the majority of the population face unemployment according to the economic surveys. Thus the youngsters ended up in forced drug trafficking. The vast amounts of drug money washing through Latin America have intensified corruption, fuelling violence and political instability in countries from Colombia to Mexico. In Bolivia, for example, Plan Dignity has been effective not as a challenge to drugs, but as a challenge to popular opposition to privatization of state-owned natural resources. The militarization of these and other countries in Latin America has paved the way for expansion of neoliberal globalization. Bolsonaro has said he wants to assimilate Brazil’s indigenous people into Brazilian society and plans to develop the Amazon economically, arguing that the tribes live in dirt poverty. Brazil has the largest number of isolated and uncontacted indigenous groups, 114 of the 185 known to exist in South America, said Vaz, who warned of the risk of ethnocide. According to the press release in February 14, 2020 the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples March was organized. The indigenous women in particular face disproportionately high rates of violence with more than 84 per cent of American Indian and Alaska Native women experiencing violence in their lifetime. The release also says nearly 5,600 Native American women were reported missing last year alone.

Throughout the Americas, indigenous peoples are losing economic and social ground. The rights that they got after long episodes of struggle are not executed or practically applied in the everyday life. The indigenous people fights with the courts to get justice and voice out their struggles in the public spheres. They receive support from minority right people across the world. Their fragile control over their lands, waters, and other natural resources is loosening. Both academic researchers and indigenous organizations show that market-driven global processes are increasing environmental deterioration and poverty in indigenous communities, blocking the viability of sustainable indigenous communities and societies.

On 5 February, 2019 the President signed a draft law known as “PL191/2020”, which allows large-scale mining, oil and gas extraction, and other destructive activities on

indigenous territories. It has been sent to a parliamentary commission for approval, and could then be voted on by politicians. The proposal, which Bolsonaro has described as a “dream”, is the latest in a series of actions in his “war” against Brazil’s indigenous peoples. It violates existing Brazilian legislation, and international law. Indigenous leader Sonia Guajajara tweeted in the social media referring the President’s dream as a night mare and voices their opinions against the mining which causes death and diseases, firmly through these social media. Joenia Wapichana, Brazil’s first indigenous Congresswoman accounted that mining on indigenous land is illegal and against the constitution. It only brings pollution and death. We don’t want the rivers, the forest and indigenous people to die. They emphasise that indigenous peoples depend on their land for their survival. The invasion and theft of their territories could wipe out entire uncontacted tribes – the most vulnerable peoples on the planet. The tribal population that are living in the dense forest rarely comes out and voice their opinions are taking up stands against the government. They take up protest stages to express their infuriation against the destruction of forest in the name of economic developments. The government’s method of handling the issues gives a different angle of perspective altogether.

The comparative analysis of the earlier protest movements and the recent struggles gives a better understanding of the growing trends and developments in the indigenous movements. In many ways the indigenous rights movement itself was “born transnational”. “Transnational organizing and coalition building opened up new opportunities for pueblos to influence national legislative agendas, and many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that specialize in development or human rights came to see indigenous peoples as clients”. In the 1970s, the emerging principles of democracy resulted in the growing establishment of indigenous social-movements and organisations that sprang up from Mexico to Argentina. These organisations typically have their roots in local movements which were formed to defend land rights. Later these movements started to address additional agendas such as bilingual education and respect for traditional indigenous systems of law and self-government. By the 1980s and actively supported by international donor organisations and other stakeholders, including human rights organisations, churches, and environmentalist groups, national-level indigenous organisations had formed in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. At the same time, organisations covering specific and often large regions within states were active in Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru. Some of these national organisations had only very limited funding at their disposal and were initially only loosely organized but they nevertheless increasingly provided a platform for interaction with national and international actors regarding economic development and human rights policies. Local protests in the earlier period i.e. late 20th century and early 21st century received positive responses for their demands. The recent movements are voiced out publicly through various social media which invites sympathy wave from subaltern right activists across the world.

The indigenous movements echoed in the Global arena which reflected in 2007 UNGA adopting a resolution. United Nations General Assembly passed on the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People. UNDRIP was adopted by 144 countries

across the world. The declaration is the product of almost 25 years of deliberation by UN member states and Indigenous people. All over the world we are witnessing a resurgence of native culture, native claim and native pride. The involvement of major international actors such as NGOs, take up these issues across the world. The concept of globalization becomes the primary reason to start the movements in most of the developing countries. The spread of globalization was looked upon as the new style of colonization. Also the network and technology that connects the whole world facilitates the spread of indigenous struggles and their demands to the global level.

Forecast in 2020

The indigenous population is not the entire population of the land. Their demands through political change do not stand as the representation of the whole of the state. For example, the decline of one of the indigenous movements in Ecuador which was earlier started as the representative capacity of the Ecuadorian party: Pachakutik. It was formed in 1996 and became a political branch of CONAI (confederation). It won the elections, one of the presidents was from this party and they were quite successful in their initial years. But people started losing hope in the party. They considered the party after obtaining political representation they have compromised many of their demands. This is because the vision of development is different for the indigenous people and the policy makers. The reason is both of them are stating at the different positions and looking for a change. Poverty is the state of indigenous people and better development in infrastructure is the need of the elites. This inequality destabilises both the demand and the protest has been spread to all category of the people which has resulted in the decade of protest for Latin America Latin America's citizens are angry at their political system.

Mass direct action has toppled governments in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina. Government proposals to privatize public services have been soundly defeated in Uruguay, Peru, and Bolivia. In Mexico, the peasants of San Salvador Atenco blocked plans to build a new airport on their agricultural lands, and in Peru the peasants and provincial authorities in Tambo Grande kept agricultural land from being taken over by a multinational mining company. In opposition to this agenda, the new subaltern movements offer a politics of hope, which is the focus of this special issue of Socialism and Democracy. Analysis of Latin America's anti-systemic rebellions and social movements becomes all the more imperative as the US hastily regroups forces to restore the neoliberal order, which has been under attack since the early 1990s.

Latin America will face a major challenge of engaging in a complex global sphere if countries do not achieve a higher degree of coordination and regional integration. Brazil is already playing an important global role, while Mexico may move in the same direction, depending on its international priorities. For many emerging powers, several obstacles are preventing the transition from middle-income to high-income status. Whether a middle-income trap exists or not (the question is currently under debate), Latin America is not immune to the possible dangers. Global scenarios highlight these risks and reinforce the need for strong policies to ensure growth and governability. Latin America's governance advantage may be undone by political and drug-related violence, especially in Mexico and Central America. South America also

faces an ongoing risk of political violence (particularly in Colombia) and instability if institutions are not modernized to channel citizens' demands for public goods, transparency, and participation. Exploring alternative worlds can allow us to identify national or regional issues that could be better addressed by expanding our view beyond the local level. Each of these global trends will significantly affect Latin America. The communities that protest is often unclear with their demands. The untouched indigenous tribal communities wish for a forestation and freedom from the modern society.

The indigenous communities living in the towns and villages who fought their rights and had it wants equality and better lifestyle in the society. The failure of the government policies affects the indigenous people and push them to the pathetic conditions. They demand for further inclusion of their community in the economic progression. Also, the leaders of the indigenous communities claim to be against the globalization and demands for backward reforms which made the indigenous movements weaker in the recent times. The ambiguous reasons and demands of the indigenous communities' limits to the researcher to analyse the future of the protest movements. Although the recent protests are becoming weaker the earlier protests lead by the indigenous communities have inspired and ignited the episodes of protests in Latin America. The future is expected to include the styles of protest by indigenous people that was followed a decade ago will be utilized by the frustrated middle class of the Latin American countries.

The study on the indigenous movements in Latin America with the focus on solving economic crisis draws the attention to the small group that lives unrecognised and voiceless who are facing major problems. They are often ignored by the policy maker which results in violent protest movements on social and economic recognitions. The study limits the various social reasons that shape the indigenous protest movements. In Latin America the protest movements are very strong which in consequence shakes the stability of the state itself. The major problems across the Latin American counties are connected with the thread of basic unheard problems of the communities that are spread across the nation states. The research looks for the scope of analysing the spread of similar problems across the territories and the combined organized movements by the common name "indigenous communities". The hypothesis of the paper insists that the economic issues are common among the Latin American citizens and worse among the indigenous communities. The increase in economic inequality among the indigenous communities leads to the rise of protest movements in Latin America.

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‘The yellow vests will triumph’: The middle and working class protests in France

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Background

In 2018, France experienced one of the most significant social mobilisation in its recent history, which laid bare the country’s social ills, anti-elite sentiment, growing inequalities and need for social reforms and justice. It all started on 17 November when thousands gathered on the streets across the country to protest against rising fuel prices. The fuel prices were raised as part of French President Emmanuel Macron’s environmental policy strategy of green tax on fuel. The move set off nearly a month of protests around France. The French Interior Ministry then estimated that 1,36,000 protesters had turned out across the country over the weekend, in addition to 2,80,000 in the consequent weeks. The protests had since continued and has gained recognition for its yellow high-visibility jackets which French motorists must carry in their vehicles. The protesters wearing these yellow jackets and in protesting against the high fuel prices have led the movement be reckoned as the ‘Yellow Vest’ protests. The protests started in the French rural provinces from where individuals commute to work in public or private transport and then spread to Paris, where demonstrations turned into riots over a few days and scenes of violent civil unrest played out along the city’s famous Avenue des Champs Élysées (the industrial hub). In 2018, the movement resulted in a 10 billion Euro aid package for the poor and led President Macron to back down in the face of protest, something he had said he would not do. The protest that started in 2018 still continues as Macron crystallizes the anger of all protesters and their language is getting more and more violent: “We’re going to hang the banker!” and “Macron, we’re coming to get you at your place!”

So how did day-to-day frustrations about fuel prices and ‘green taxes’ transform into a nation-wide protest movement attracting hundreds of thousands of people in a matter of weeks? It all comes down to Macron’s apparent failure to connect with the people, understand their concerns and steer France away from the neoliberal policies that have only led to a higher standard of living in an already unequal society where the income differences between rich and poor has only increased. With no social security and adequate welfare measures to facilitate the income distribution, the yellow vest protesters have taken to the streets asking for mundane issues from wages to fuel prices to be solved.

Protests and revolutions have forged the sociopolitical landscape in France but are the yellow vest protesters the modern Jacobins fighting contemporary tyranny or something different? Danielle Tartakowsky, a history professor at Paris University in

his recently published book wrote “the current demonstrations are unlike any other, marking an important shift in France’s political landscape.”

Scholars since at least the 1980s have noted that structural economic changes in advanced industrial democracies have decreased voters’ demand for traditional political parties of the center-left and center-right. Deindustrialization and its shift from manual labour to a more service-oriented economy has reduced the working class share of the population since at least the 1950s, decreasing the electoral viability of parties of the left. For example, the working class share of Germany’s electorate was more than halved between 2000 and 2016, from 39 to 17 percent. In Britain, the working class share of the electorate declined roughly 20 percentage points from 1961 to 2006—from nearly 60 per cent to less than 40 per cent—as the growing white-collar middle class became a majority of the country’s electorate by the middle of the 1980s. The economic development behind deindustrialization and the growth of the middle class in advanced democracies also led to an increasingly educated population. Russel Dalton and Michael Wattenberg suggest that increasingly informed electorates have become less dependent on information from traditional parties to make individual political judgements. Rather voters have become less deferential to party elites and less attached to party labels, and increasingly engaged in nonpartisan forms of political mobilization, such as through civil society organizations. For example, as the share of the Portugal’s electorate belonging to a political party declined in the 1980s, the number of Portuguese voluntary organizations created each year reached triple digits.

In France, a traditionally centralised political system have always received its electorate and affiliations through centrist, right or left political ideologies driven unions. Thus the working class movements in France were traditionally affiliated with left-wing parties and workers’ unions and its socially conservative movements have been linked to the right and religious groups. But the yellow vests are an amorphous group of people from all different political leanings including socialists, communists, conservatives, far-right extremists, anarchists, and even centrists who identify as former Macron supporters. The yellow vest protest should be understood in a social context when educated and apolitical consumers in the form of middle class has become the majority. The middle class in France appear to belong from no particular economic background whether rural or urban, engaged mostly in the service sector and have derived its awareness from the television and social media. Thus, this movement stands apart from the party ideology driven mobilization in the past and focuses more on all political elites’ power arrangement and policy impacts on the mundane life of all people. In this context Macron’s as a populist leader has become the pivot around which the mobilization has expanded.

On top of making controversial policy decisions that favoured powerful corporations and rich individuals, Macron also repeatedly demonstrated his unfamiliarity with ordinary people’s struggle to survive in the country’s competitive economic environment. In 2016 while he was the minister of economy Macron was confronted by angry trade unionists and was recorded telling one young man: “You don’t scare me with your T-shirt. The best way of paying for a suit is to work.” In a 2017, Macron said

train stations were wonderful places, for there you can cross paths with both “people who succeed” and “people who are nothing” (presumably the ordinary French citizens who are the majority in the country). The yellow vest protests led by the working class aims to transcend Macron’s personality as the embodiment of “metropolitan France” and a target for the anger of rural and also the less advantaged (who has received nothing the imbalanced economic structure) in France who feels left behind. The problem goes deeper, as political scientist Pisani-Ferry argued, in 20th century ideologies—communist and socialist have collapsed and “now what’s dangerous for democracy is the feeling that half of the population has been shunted aside.” All this gradually accentuated the economic concerns of the French middle and working classes and led them to be more and more suspicious of all mainstream politicians with Right and the Left affiliations. They came to believe that the political elite protects the interests of the wealthy and does not care about the wellbeing of ordinary citizens. Macron was elected as he chose to differentiate himself from the establishment in Paris and sort to act as the representative of a “new world order” throughout his election campaign. But his still represented the same system and institutions which the people have faulted of apathy.

With the rise of the middle class and working class as the main electorates, the traditional political parties in France had moved to appeal them abandoning their traditional base using television/technology for broader appeal. This has led to a homogenous strategy by all political parties. Increasingly the policies of all political parties started converging leaving little space for the people to seek a political union, organization or group to communicate with the political elite when a policy hurts them the most. For example, as the policy positions of the major British parties converged in the 1990s, the share of working-class respondents who told pollsters that they supported no party roughly doubled between 1980 and 2010, from just under 20 per cent to nearly 40 per cent. As social democratic parties in Germany and Sweden similarly moved to the center, supporters’ attachments to these parties and enthusiasm to vote declined; in Sweden alone, the share of Swedish Social Democrat (SAP) supporters who considered themselves “strong” supporters declined from roughly 40 to 25 per cent in the 1990s, and by 2006, 14 per cent of SAP supporters abstained from voting. Gino Raymond has observed that France’s mainstream center-left and center-right parties have loosened if not abandoned their traditional ideological positions. In particular, the Socialist Party’s (PS) political and ideological compromises after obtaining the presidency in the 1980s—including implementing austerity policies after 1982—probably turned off much of its core working-class constituency, even as it attracted new middle class voters. In presidential elections between 1981 and 2012, the share of the working class votes for any party on the left fell from 68 to 40 percent, according to Nonna Mayer. By 2002, only 11 per cent of Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin’s voters were workers, while nearly one-quarter of his electorate was white collar managerial class.

Party system volatility had subsequently wracked France’s party system since the 1990s as voters have disengaged from politics; turnout in France’s legislative elections dropped nearly 20 percentage points between 1993 and 2017, from 65 to 47 percent of registered voters. In the 2017 National Assembly election, 41 per cent of the

electorate switched party votes from the 2012 election, and Macron's newly formed La Republique En Marche! (LREM) gained voters at the expense of traditional center-left and center-right parties. The PS in particular lost 22 percentage points off its 2012 vote, and was reduced to just five percent of the seats in the National Assembly.

But Macron after his election has pursued the exact same neoliberal agenda like his predecessors in the 1980's that has been hurting the poorest and helping the rich. The French president has been trying to claw back the support of local officials and citizens who felt ignored by a leader they saw as arrogant and out of touch.

The yellow vest protest has begun in this political and socio-economic context where the people wanted a different kind of leader, someone who can understand their long-rooted social and economic concerns and deliver real, practical solutions. For the past four decades, French people have been worried about the erosion of social protections in their country. Since Francois Mitterrand's socialist government controversially decided to impose austerity policies in 1983, successive governments have taken slow but consistent steps to dismantle the French welfare state. In addition, France lacks the political culture of clear interlocutors today whether through student leaders or labour unions who would have addressed the grievances of the people. Philippe Laurent, the mayor of the city of Sceaux, just outside Paris, and the secretary-general of the association of French mayors, once said he wasn't convinced that Macron had actually won over mayors during his grand débat road show. But Macron, a technocrat, lacks the political culture of his predecessors, who had more on-the-ground experience. The process was the epitome of "disintermediation" in politics—the reduced clout of political parties and other mass organizations to serve as intermediaries between the government and citizens. Historically, labor unions in France have been key to organizing large scale protests, but today the yellow vest protests have gradually shifted this traditional political cultures and participation and mobilization in France. And in turn the yellow vest protests have been an attempt by the middle class in France to form groups that can take issues like fuel prices or pension directly and seek social justice.

Against this background, the essay aims to analyse two issues: first, yellow vests protest as a symptom of a largely globalised economic system in a post-industrial liberal democracy that have failed to trickle down the economic and social benefits to a young middle class bulge. Second, the outcome of the protest will shift the political landscape of France from centrist parties to more issue based, independent and rigid ideological based groups.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

The immediate trigger for the protests has been economic, that is, the proposed fuel hike in 2018. In the past two years the protesters have embraced other issues such as minimum wage, living cost and economic inequality as the causes behind the protest. In 2018, the price of petrol was the spark that lit "gilets jaunes" or yellow vests in France. In 2019, people again took to the streets against pension reform. The primary focus of the protestors to demand for changes has been Macron who is seen as the source of their problems. Along with his early reforms to loosen labor laws and slash

France's famous wealth tax, the fuel tax reinforces protesters had rallied their voice around Macron as the President 'of the rich, for the rich and by the rich.' Now there have also been calls to dissolve the National Assembly and hold new elections. Thus, the protest began as a protest of a fuel-tax hike and have now evolved into a wave of economic anxiety and anti-establishment sentiment—with bursts of violence, such as the torching of banks and businesses in Paris.

In the process, the 'yellow vests' has emerged as the symbol of the class struggle where the underdog needs to be noticed and the bright yellow colour served the purpose. The attack on the political elite class and the hierarchical nature of the French society also shows the demand for more presence of the democratic institutions. The incremental retreat of the state from rural France: maternity clinics, district courts, army barracks, post offices and shops disappearing from the centres of small towns and the people affected by this retreat realized, thanks to the internet, that they were on the margins. What the yellow vests gave them was visibility, solidarity and a common cause to mobilise.

The national response to the protest has been promises by Macron to raise worker's pay and cut taxes. In 2018 when the protest first began, Macron was in Buenos Aires for the G-20 summit over the weekend and he denounced the violence from Argentina and said those responsible for the chaos would be found and punished. After he returned to Paris, he went straight to the Arc de Triomphe and held a crisis meeting with top ministers. The Prime Minister Edouard Philippe sort to speak the protestors which was later cancelled citing personal security concerns after receiving anonymous death threats. The government had already invited yellow vest protesters to talks but the delegation abandoned the meeting when they learned the discussions wouldn't be filmed or broadcast. Hence a dialogue between the representatives and the demonstrators have not yet materialized with the protesters becoming more violent in their approach. They have vandalised banks and sett rubbish bins on fire. At the end of 2019, the national intelligence coordinator Pierre Bousquet de Florian warned: "We are facing an unprecedented 'ensauvagement' of our society with a degree of violence and a rapid rise to hatred."

The protest deescalated after the primary issue of fuel hike was retracted by Macron. But that didn't address the structural unhappiness and distrust on the system hence the protest has continued today. Most yellow vests at blockades around France are mostly peaceful protesters but violence have also erupted when police have sort to control the demonstrations. Paris police held 380 people in custody in 2018 and the city administrations have estimated a total damage at 3.4 million dollars. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire in a press meet in 2019 had told that a month of protests have hit the French economy hard, with trade in shops, hotels and restaurants businesses falling significantly. Some sectors saw their revenues hit by between 15 and 50 percent. In the region, the yellow vest as a symbol of the class conflict has inspired similar anti-government protests seeking economic changes from Iraq, Bulgaria, Israel, Taiwan to the UK.

Major Trends

Firstly, the yellow vest protest has increasingly put focus on the pattern in which the (white collar) middle class demands have joined the agrarian and industrial labour class demands. Working middle class from different race, religion has been on the rise in France and this group is well assimilated. Broadly speaking this protest has been successful in putting together the demands of the both the working and the middleclass agendas such as economic inequality, rural-urban divide and the anti-globalisation backlash. Originally, the yellow vest protesters were people from rural areas who have to drive long distances as part of their daily life. They said they couldn't afford the hike in fuel prices. And the protests, reflecting their demands, appeared in pockets around France to denounce Macron's green tax and then quickly grew into a larger movement that includes members across groups who started expressing their frustration about slipping standards of living. They say their incomes are too high to qualify for social welfare benefits but too low to make ends meet. Thereby making the movement organic, largely representative and has no official leadership. The lack of institutional framework is one of the things that sets the yellow vests apart from previous political movements and give them independence from any particular party, politician, or political leaning. That is one of their strengths, says Tartakowsky in his book, since it gives the movement broader appeal. But at the same time, this very nature of being all pervasive has caused the movement to suffer from a lack of coherent messages. Even its elected representatives disagree with one another about the future of the movement. Thus, while the yellow vest movement began as a protest against the French government's planned increase in fuel taxes, other demands from gender inequality to the funding of public services and immigration policies have joined the cause. This made the movement sway from its purely economic demands and made it difficult for the government to engage in dialogue with the yellow vests. Second, unlike previous large-scale protest movements in France, the yellow vests was born out of the frustration of a small group of individuals who organized the protests entirely on Facebook. Tartakowsky says that's one way in which these protests are unique. Typically, French protests on the left have been organized or supported by major labour unions, and protests on the right (such as the marches against the legalization of gay marriage in 2012) were typically organized by Catholic groups. This protest is assimilated through Facebook posts but that doesn't mean the protest was apolitical. This made the protest a direct confrontation between the people and the government removing the intermediate groups. The demands translated into attacking political leaders: demands of Macron's ouster and abolition of the Senate. New antagonism openness of systems (stepped in equality values), all round wellbeing of the people which has been underestimated by the people has been gradually advocated through the social media posts. The yellow vests as a tool for mobilization have come and gone from the streets of Paris, but the same people are meeting, planning future actions, and learning how to use the encrypted messaging app Telegram.

Third, another trend of the yellow vest protest has been the slogans and the references to French Revolution made by the protestors. The protestors have invoked the revolutionary spirit from the establishment of the France Republic. France is a country that's no stranger to protest movements—from the massive student demonstrations of 1968 to contemporary union-led strikes. But during the "yellow vest" the protesters chanted slogans like "We are running the revolution" and "Macron to the Bastille." The Arc de Triomphe bore a message in spray paint: "We have chopped off heads for less

than this,” a reference to the death by guillotine of King Louis XVI and his wife, Marie-Antoinette.

Fourth, by borrowing from history, the protestors have particularly not aligned with any contemporary political parties. The political leaders such as Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Rally (formerly the National Front), and Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the far-left France Unbowed have tried without success to latch on to the yellow vests. The inability of these two parties, who have traditionally fared well to represent the groups who feel marginalized, signals that the yellow vest protesters are tired with all figures of the political establishment. In French, the political parties often depend on the practice called the ‘ground-up’ movement, which means taking support from the base. “And this base is all-powerful.” But for Macron this base is not supportive, he is a strong leader with weak support from his base and few political allies and interlocutors. On the other hand, yellow vest protest is the base who have rejected all leadership.

Lastly, what has spread beyond France aren’t its working-class protests, exactly, but the props of those marches such as the iconic traffic vests have become a symbol of discontent. For example, in Bulgaria the gas protests started a week before the protest in France using the yellow vests. Successive protest inspired and inspiring yellow vest protest have broken out in clusters because countries are similarly affected by common world events, such as increases in fuel prices, the collapse of international banks that doesn’t indicate the protesters are emulating each other rather they are reacting to similar societal problems.

Forecast in 2020

The yellow vest protest is likely to continue so far, the social problems, economic inequality and a strong leader with a disdain for the labour force continues. Two years later in 2020, the yellow vest protests are still out on the streets protesting indicating that even if one issue is solved and the momentum erodes, the protests wouldn’t die. The protests will evolve and adapt to the changing economic structure and policies. The global pandemic (COVID-19) had been an interrupter to the protests but as the country slowly lifts its lockdown measures, laying bare the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, the yellow vests have returned to the streets since 12 September, 2020. The French police fired tear gas and arrested more than 250 people in Paris as they tussled with “yellow vest” protesters seeking to revive an anti-government movement curbed by a coronavirus lockdown this year.

The protests are born as a response to the larger socio-economic problem. It seeks an answer: How can a government help people left behind in the rapidly changing globalised economic system? Similarly, when the class, voting patterns, economic needs of the base are changing, Tartakowsky argues, this leaderless, grassroots yellow vest are a logical continuation of this reorganization of political and institutional life. A new social compromise remains to be born. Away from the traditional ideologically driven political parties, the protest will propel a fast orientation towards issue based political groups. A trend in countries like the UK, Ireland has been evident with the social green parties rallying around environmental issues. But at the same time, the

biparty politics in France will also embrace the issues of the base and seek to reorient its political arrangement in which the yellow vests will mark a catalyst for the change.

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Rise of the middle class: Independence protest movements in Catalonia

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Background

Catalonia possesses an inherent nationalism. The wave of a series of demonstrations and protest movements that started after 2008 was contributed by various reasons. It was not a spontaneous uprising. An already existing social base was shaped to evolve into a movement. Apart from the nationalist feelings, many other factors pushed the Catalans to enter into a movement for independence and to establish a sovereign Catalan State. The people of Catalonia were dissatisfied with the fiscal policies of Madrid. A sense of injustice and ignorance from the Spanish Government were the motivators for the movement. Along with this, the after effects of the global economic crisis made the living conditions of people much worse. This pushed the middle class, who constitute the major portion of the Catalan population, into the streets demanding for an independent Catalonia. Two hypotheses have been drawn from these which are: first, apart from nationalist feelings other socio- fiscal reasons have also contributed to the mobilization of a large number of Catalans. Second, the majority of pro-independence supporters and protestors involved in the movement are middle class Catalans.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

Firstly, Catalonia is a region with a distinct culture and language. They have their regional parliament, flag and other national symbols. The region has been demanding for more autonomous powers since very long. The indigenous Catalan population saw themselves different from rest of the Spanish population. Catalan nationalism fundamentally revolves around the defence and promotion of Catalan language and culture. Some of the social and fiscal disturbances added fuel to the Catalan nationalism which remained dormant in the minds of people till then.

Secondly, Catalonia being a wealthy region constitutes around 20 per cent of Spanish GDP. Catalonia complains that Madrid takes huge taxes-revenues from them but has not been returning and spending proportionate amounts for their welfare. A strong sense grew in the minds of Catalans that they are paying for what doesn't correspond to them. People started to have the urge of resistance against fiscal transfer to poorer regions. Also, the global economic crisis of 2008 had huge impacts especially on the Catalan middle class. Some of the sections in the middle class experienced direct poverty maybe for the very first time. The comparative privileges they experienced became subject to severe constrictions. Middle class youths and children's expectations of a stable and prosperous future became bleak and many turned to be a new poor. People of Catalonia found political expression of the dissatisfaction following the

economic crisis.

Third reason which intensified the crisis is the mode in which both the blocs, i.e., Catalan nationalist and Spanish Government approached the situation. The demand for secession of Catalonia was rejected by Spain. Madrid tried to suppress the movements and protests with heavy forces and this elevated the intensity of the crisis and a solution through discussion became distant. Catalonia was also not moving back from their demand for independence and adopted violent means to put Madrid in pressure. These led to ruthless street clashes some of them even lasting for days. The Catalan popular movement is a series of incidents, protests and disturbances extending over years and still unpredictably ongoing.

A brief note on the developments

In July 2010, Spanish Constitutional Court cut down the autonomy statute of Catalonia. This statute was passed in 2006 by Spanish Congress and later ratified by referendum. The Catalan language status, powers on immigration, taxes and judiciary and the right to call referendum were cut back. The court declared that the preamble of the statute which referred Catalonia as a “nation” has no legal validity. The exclusive powers granted to Catalonia in various sectors were also taken back through court ruling. As a response, Catalonia’s capital Barcelona witnessed a huge rally of around 1.5million people including students, workers and the youth to defend the will of the people and to defend the statute. People mobilized under the slogan “We are a nation and We decide”. This movement is sovereign Catalonia can repair the damage to Catalan community. seen as first major popular mass mobilization for Catalan secession and articulation of self-determination.

In the following years, many smaller and larger movements including marches and demonstrations occurred in the streets of Barcelona. In the meantime, Catalan secessionist leaders held series of informal, non-binding votes and opinion polls on independence in regional towns and cities. On June 2017, the then Catalonia President Carles Puigdemont announced that on October 1 Catalonia will move to polling booths for a referendum. The Spanish Government approached the court against this and the Constitutional Court of Spain suspended the referendum declaring it as unconstitutional.

Committees for the defence of referendum were set at regional levels and thousands came up to volunteer as referendum stewards. Before the day of referendum, volunteers occupied the booths in the fear of police confiscation. On October 1, police met with the people who defied the state ban and turned out to vote. The Catalan nationalists responded to every escalation in the oppressive force mounted on them by Madrid with stronger mass mobilizations. The actual number of participants is still uncertain due to ballot seizure and sealing of polling stations. The counted votes were equivalent to 43 per cent of the Catalan electorate out of which 90 per cent polled “yes” to independence. The voter turnout and referendum results show that only Catalan nationalists who really wanted bid to independence came out to cast their poll. Roughly half the population respected the order of Spanish constitutional court and did not turn out to vote. But the Catalan parliament declared themselves

independent on 27 October 2017. Madrid couldn't agree to this and imposed direct rule over Catalonia and dissolved the Parliament. Cases were charged against main secessionist leaders and regional election was called in Catalonia. Catalan pro-independence parties together won majority in the election and Quim Torra, a close ally of former President Puigdemont sworn as new President. In June 2018, the new Catalan government took back control of the next and the latest major outburst in the movement were on October 2019, when nine of arrested pro-independence leaders including former ministers were sentenced imprisonment. Former Catalan Vice-President Oriol Junqueras was also jailed for 13 years charging sedition and misuse of public funds.

A news article in The Guardian says, "Thousands of young Catalans marched on Barcelona El-Prat airport in an attempt to occupy it. Police responded with baton charges and fired rubber and foam bullets and clashes have been followed by three further nights of unrest in the region. Cars have been torched in Barcelona, barricades set ablaze, buildings vandalised and police officers attacked with petrol bombs, fireworks and stones. For some pro-independence Catalans, patience with traditional form of protest appears to be running out"⁶ The airport occupation was the brainchild of Tsunami Republic, a secretive group which control and coordinate movements and protests through apps and social media. Many simultaneous marches and protest demonstrations happened in many other parts of Catalonia by other groups like not everyone in Catalonia wants independence. Catalan society has been polarized deeply. Roughly half of the population wants a sovereign, independent Catalonia whereas the rest advocates for a united Spain. The election results of Catalonia also show this division. For instance, the pro-independence parties collectively won majority in the parliament in 2017, their combined vote-share was only around 48 per cent. The party strongly opposing Catalan secession came in first position with highest votes. Almost all the recent elections conducted at different levels reflect this difference of opinion among people. Also, united Spain supporters and far-right activists had conducted counter-demonstrations and rallies in Barcelona and other regions of Catalonia. Several times this led to direct clashes with the pro-independence activists resulting in prolonged violence. During football matches, pro-independence and united Spain gangs fought inside stadiums. Many Catalan people were fed up with the riot situations and general strikes which constricted them from earnings and a peaceful living.

But why does this polarization occur between people of Catalonia?

Committees for the Defence of Republic (CDR).

Catalonia is a prosperous region and a hub of industries and many businesses. Large number of people from other parts of Spain has migrated to Catalonia from 19th century onwards. A large portion of the current population in Catalonia has roots elsewhere in Spain or other parts of the world. This section of people won't have the affinity or nationalist feeling that the indigenous population possess. Several groups with varying interests emerged in the region based on family origin, first language and class. Most of the migrants have Spanish as their first language and are more loyal to Madrid than they are to Catalonia. Directly or indirectly they are also supported by large businessmen who want a United Spain for smooth running of their business.

Catalan Government and Institutions in support

Catalan government supports the pro-independence movements. It is that only pro-independence parties or coalitions had come to power in Catalonia. Independence of Catalonia is the only major campaigning topic during the regional elections. Nothing matters more than the bid for independence. The Catalan government is seen as the sponsors of the movement. The protestors, in turn, have shown due respect to the Catalan institutions and local bureaucracy. Catalonia has its police force, Mossos d'Esquadra. They are inclined towards the protestors and bit reluctant to use force against them. While massive protests or rallies happen, Madrid employs riot police to handle the crowd and in some instances, Catalan police is also brought under Spanish Government.

Spanish Government opens discussions

Madrid cannot even think of a Spain without Catalonia. Spain has to hold Catalonia at any cost. If Catalonia splits from them, then more regions in which nationalist feelings are strong but dormant will demand independence and this may eventually lead to balkanization of Spain. Most recent statics shows that the number of people opposing independence is higher but Madrid doesn't want to take even a slight risk by conducting a referendum. When Mariano Rajoy was the Spanish Prime Minister, he was unwilling to have negotiation talks with the Catalan nationalists. Forces were employed to check protests and rallies. Barcelona witnessed some of the ruthless violence during his regime. The attempts to suppress and ignore the movement have failed and in turn caused the movements to strengthen. Rajoy was ousted by current PM Sanchez with the help of Catalan pro-independence parties. And also, Sanchez's party has only quarter of seats in parliament. So, he has displayed a soft approach towards Catalonia. Recently in February 2020, Sanchez had a first round of talks with Catalan President Quim Torra. But, Torra stiffly demands for independence and Sanchez clinging to the stand that Spain can't approve their demand since it is unconstitutional.

King of Spain, King Felipe VI also opposed the protests, mentioning as "reckless" movement which stands "outside the law and outside democracy". The pro-independence parties said, "We have no King" and boycotted the new opening of Parliamentary Session in Madrid. Barcelona also witnessed anti-monarchy demonstrations. King Felipe had addressed the secessionists only once and during the address, he endorsed Spanish Central Government which further radicalized the protests. The King has to preserve the "unity and permanence" of Spain but also "arbitrates and moderates" its political institutions. But the King also cannot take any decisions singlehandedly. His decisions or initiatives require consent from the Spanish government or concerned ministers. As the talks have been initiated between both the parties a reconciling role is expected from the King.

EU unwilling to interfere

European Union was reluctant to intervene in the crisis. EU stated that the Catalan issue is Spain's internal problem and they don't want to involve in it. Even while police used disproportionate force against the protestors during October 2017, EU Barcelona Football Club had extended solidarity with the Catalan demand for self-determination. For Catalans, Barca FC is "more than a club" as its motto says. When Madrid banned the referendum FC Barcelona responded, "FC Barcelona, in remaining faithful to his

historic commitment to the defence of the nation, to democracy, to freedom of speech, and to self-determination, condemns any act that may impede the free exercise of these rights. Therefore, FC Barcelona publicly did not make any statements even under humanitarian grounds. This may have pushed EU into a dilemma in extending support to either of the blocs. EU should have mediated to find a solution which is legitimate and acceptable for both sides.

Major Trends

Rise of the middle class

One of the major characteristics of Catalan movement is the political mobilization of the middle class. A major portion of indigenous Catalan population falls in middle class. Catalonia has less income inequality as compared to other parts. A good portion of migrant class who settled in Catalonia before decades acquired middle class status. So the strength of middle class population is higher than the working class or the elite class. As mentioned earlier various economic disturbances added with the nationalist feelings created an urge for resistance among this Catalan population. The 2008 global economic crisis made many jobless and a generalized decline in material well-being. Andrew Dowling who is a senior lecturer in Cardiff University writes, "In the last two decades, the security of the middle class across much of Europe has declined. The bailing out of banks and giant financial enterprises was facilitated by the economic crisis and as a consequence, the value of pensions, savings and securities and erosion of future prospects hit the middle class. This sector has also been an important component in politics" (Dowling 2018). The middle class had to anyhow resist the downward pull to the lower strata of the society and cannot easily give away the privileges and status they enjoyed during the years. This anxiety grew during these years and many were dragged to the verge of becoming a new poor or experiencing direct poverty which they may not have experienced ever in their life. Self-confidence was lost and their expectation, especially the middle-class youth's expectation can be mapped.

Why did this impact of economic crisis turn out to be a secessionist movement only in Catalonia? The regional and nationalist identity was prominent and sufficiently strong in Catalonia to mobilize and erupt into a secessionist movement. Unlike many other movements, the nationalist movement only mobilized an already existing identity.

The middle class was well involved in the Catalan politics. Being the major vote banks of many of the parties the traditional politics parties also worked in favour of them. But in the post-economic crisis period, the loyalty towards these parties declined. The mobilization of the middle class happened disregarding the strings of political parties. The movement did not follow their politics but the political parties had to extend their support to the movement. Interestingly, the leaders of those traditional parties also fall in the middle class or the upper middle class which made this shift rapid. Assemblea Nacional Catalana(ANC) is an organization formed in 2011, pushing for independence of Catalonia, increasingly comprised of Catalan middle class. ANC organized pro-independence rallies with massive participation standing outside the structure of parties. "The ANC sought to build a new kind of organizational model built around concentric circles arranged by location, profession and level of activism.

The ANC is distinguished from traditional range of social movement by its tactical and strategic moderation. The movement was built by an articulate and educated middle class," Andrew Dowling describes. But it is not that the middle class are the only supporters or participants in the Catalan movement.

Even though industrial workers joined hands following the economic crisis. They did not construct a new one or struggle to propagate the need to resist. The nationalists succeeded in convincing the people how a sovereign Catalonia would be able to address their issues. A social base which was already present was made ready for a movement through series of consultations. But movement during general strikes and marches, their support was minimal. The working class have been experiencing employment instability, social and economic insecurity for decades. Compared to the middle class, these are not new experience for them. They don't believe that the formation of an independent, sovereign state would anyhow improve their condition. They work daily to meet two ends of life, so the independence of Catalonia doesn't fall in their list of priorities.

The elite class and big businessmen have opposed Catalan secession. Splitting of Catalonia from Spain will harm them more than good. It will result in the loss of their market especially in the rest of Spain and also business with other EU members might be constrained. Concerned about business and economic interests the elite class has not embraced Catalan independence. A graph drawn with income and support to independence will show highest peak in middle and falls towards both ends where the income is low and income is too high.

Changing face of the movement

When the pro-independence leaders were sentenced for imprisonment violent clashes occurred in the streets of Catalonia. The noticeable move from the part of protestors was the occupation of El-Prat airport in Barcelona. Thousands of people were on the streets and roads, especially the youth and students, without a clue of how to protest or where to gather. On the call to occupy the airport, they moved to El-Prat airport in large numbers which resulted in the cancellation of more than a hundred flights. The call for occupying airport was not given by political parties or other traditional pro-independence organisations. It was the brainchild of a new group called "Tsunami Democratic" which controls and coordinates the protest through social media and apps. It is a secretive online group whose leaders are yet not identified. Tsunami democratic announced themselves on their website, twitter, instagram and telegram, "We are not a new organization, we are a continuing and inexhaustible campaign. A wave is beginning and you are the protagonist. You are the Tsunami" "Be like water" is a popularly used slogan in Hong Kong to mobilise masses. Tsunami democratic also addressed protestors as "Tsunami," maybe a modified Catalan pro-independence website, the updates of protest movements around form of "water," urging them to be rapid, unpredictable and flexible. Many other similitudes can be seen which are adopted from Hong Kong and other contemporary protest movements. Paralysing the airports, use of lasers to blind police, usage of encrypted messages and online groups and many more such similar strategies shows that protest movements across the globe learn from each other. Even some of the modern pro- independence groups took the same

instructions, graphics and techniques given by the Hong Kong protestors on how to protect themselves from tear gas, water.

Forecast in 2020

“Catalexit” remains bleak. It won’t be an easy process to split apart and to achieve international recognition. If Catalonia declares themselves independent the global community, except a few will not recognize them as an independent, sovereign nation. Even if a legitimate election occurs in Catalonia, the fate may be similar to Quebec or Scottish referendum since the support for independence is merely half. On the other hand, if Catalonia becomes independent, it will not be an easy way forward for them. The economy may become even worse.

Talks have initiated between Spain and Catalonia. Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez offered talks with Catalonia but with constitution in hand. Only outcome Spanish Constitution allows is “Spanish Unity”. Unwillingness to negotiate made the first round of talks unsuccessful. Both sides exhibit the football spirit. It seems like they don’t want the game to end in a draw. But the Catalan leaders may be well aware that Catalan independence is not easily attainable in the present situations. Giving more autonomy to Catalonia including financial autonomy leading to a win-win solution will be acceptable for both blocs. The result of the discussion will decide further developments in the movement. Catalonia will be facing general election later in this year. The results of the elections will decide the fate of the movement. Disturbances within pro- independence coalition asked Quim Torra to call for early elections. The coalition solidarity to Catalan protests with Catalan flags, Catalan slogans and placards. If a United Spain supporting government comes in power in Catalonia, the movement may become dormant for quite some time. When sufficient anti-government feelings evolve, another mobilization could be expected, which will be against Spanish Government as well as against regional Catalan government. This uprising will be incorporated with more violence since the regional government will try to suppress the movement and protestors will be urged to become more radical.

Middle class tensions will prevail. It is hardly possible to address all of their issues. Even if Catalonia wins independence, the struggle to remain in the upper strata of the society will continue and the tensions persist. Also, Spain is one of the countries in which COVID-19 virus made the situations worse. An upcoming economic crisis will affect the employment and material well-being of a major portion of this population thereby increasing the number of unsatisfied. Catalan movement will not completely end but may temporarily halt. The nationalists and protestors are not going to disappear. They will adopt new forms, become dormant and fight back strongly. The strength and support for the movement may fluctuate, but the movement and their demands will not die.

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Not just regime change: Women and protest movements in Sudan

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Background

The beauty of a revolution lies not in the fact that it happened in the most unfavourable of circumstances but that it is gender inclusive. Protesting men represents only half of the population and sometimes even less. It is the women and all the other genders, which most often remain discriminated, who adds substance to a protest. 2019 was an eventful year full of protests led by powerful women and other genders across the globe. Whether they are vouching for equal opportunities and rights or for the change of a regime or a corrupt government, all the other genders (apart from male of course) left no stone unturned. They showed the world that they are much more than what the latter perceives them to be. They are on the streets in countless numbers “braving tear gas, rubber pellets water cannons, sticks and harassment”¹ but still intact and consistent towards their respective causes.

But it must be understood that all the revolutions are heterogeneous not only in the issues they are raising but also in the location they belong to. The factor of the geographical location is very much important in order to proceed with a non-judgemental analysis. For example, the Himba tribe of Namibia are nomads. They live a very rustic lifestyle and roam around in groups of less than 50 people out of which majority are women. Though the women’s jobs are the same as the rest of the world, their clothing is scarce. Their upper torsos remain all bare. Now, these women will never understand the “no bra movements”² nor why the “girl in the blue bra” in Tahrir Square, Egypt became the symbol of women’s bodies being subjected to moral and social lenses.

On similar lines, a women’s protest in the Middle-east regarding “equal property rights and citizenship laws” cannot be understood in countries like India where these issues are absent. Where in India and the USA and in most other democratic countries, women can take a case to the law and not be judged, in most North African Islamic countries women are not even allowed to step outside their homes let alone go to the court to file a case.

In Sudan, the matter was two times worse than other countries with similar issues. First, the overall Sudanese population lived under the constant fear of then Dictator President Omar Al-Bashir’s regime. His regime was racist, brutal and was keen on building a nation with politics of fear. Non-Arab people, mostly indigenous Africans, are treated with utmost severity. Laws and punishment kept constantly changing

according to the will of the ruling government because of which no one could even stand up against them. Second, the plight of the women in Sudan is acutely downtrodden. The first blow comes to them in the form of the extreme male domination they are subjected to in their houses and in public. The second blow came in the form of the brutal regime their country had.

Revolutions in a country like Sudan are a complex power play. Mostly because half of its population which are women can be easily oppressed using the centuries old “forced” religious testimonies. If that is overcome by the women, still there stays one more full-proof strategy to stampede a revolt. The weapon of war⁵ that proves to be the most instrumental for regimes like these is ‘rape’ by the men in arms. If it is thought that rape is just for sex then the thinking is not profound enough to understand what these women have went through for ages. Rape is more about domination, harassment, humiliation and degradation of the gender. Most of the rape cases go unreported because of the stigma and fear of humiliation attached to it. That is where half the battles are lost. But, solidarity should reach those women who, in spite of all the obstacles and physical and mental torture, came out in the open and said “tasgut bas”. The women in the forefront of the Sudanese revolution were adamant enough not to return back to the safety of the home until and unless their democracy was instilled. They were united for the very first time, drawing force and motivation from each other, to brave anything that comes between them and their freedom. Hence, the “fetishization of their protest”⁷ must not cloud their bravery; they must be supported and encouraged with much better way-outs than just mere applause.

The essay hypothesizes that: the attention and the immediate results the revolution brought did highlight the plight of Sudanese women to some extent. But the question that can be posed here is that whether this single strike revolution will bear any long-term effects for the women of Sudan. The sustenance of the spirit of the revolution is clearly what is required over the obsession of women participation in an Islam dominated African country. The women of Sudan must continue with a version of the protest to bring permanent remedial solutions to their long-standing social issues.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

So far, it has been clearly understood that the causes for the civil uprising in Sudan and the causes for the fierce women participation are almost similar. But in addition to that the women have their own separate narrative attached to it. For a country from the Middle-East or the African continent, long-standing issues pertaining to women’s under-development has raised many eyes across the world. A solution is, however, a distant dream or exercise as these nations are run in the lines of the highly orthodox and poisoned patriarchal beliefs. Lack of women force in the employment sector is only holding these nations to prosper further.

Of course, it is the ardent urge to break free from the shackles of male domination which makes women protests from these regions so popular. But, the battles are tougher in the grounds than in minds. The protest movement in Sudan is not a typical protest movement from two points of view. First, it exhibited the most vehement women participation in its entire history of existence, especially in reference to its

archaic yet strict religious teachings and cultural practices. Second, it was not “yet another” women’s protest demanding equality before law for the historical oppression the women were subjected to. While the first point is easily understood, the second point is the one that demands attention. It was not a women’s protest specifically. It was a normal civil protest where the women only “outnumbered” men in flooding the streets and holding up slogans against the dictatorship. Not only they were up for the fight but were aggressively consistent as well. But the smart move was when the “liberation of women”⁸ narrative was attached to the main narrative of toppling al-Bashir’s rule. So it was the main narrative working and then there was this sub-narrative placed perfectly under its umbrella to earn some symbiotic good.

Before gliding into the explanation of it, one must understand why exactly the people of Sudan started the protests. The answer to that is quite simple yet bizarre. When Omar Al-Bashir came into power after a military coup 30 years ago, he brought with him a rigid and obnoxious regime which literally stripped off basic rights from women. No men had any problem against it and even if they had, they did not object to it. Then he commented on giving a “decent lifestyle”⁹ to the people of Sudan which turned out to be no more than “survival. This was when the civil order started to collapse. The male-dominated society only became aware of their own plight when their freedom was curbed too because of economic restraints.

Sudan was already going through its second civil war when al-Bashir took power. Though he claimed that his government was all focused on uplifting Sudan’s poor economy, worse things happened and the graph only lowered over three decades. The major issues were economic in nature. Sudan has seen a string of protests in this decade due to the rising prices of cooking gas and fuels to start with in 2013. It was followed by a total standstill in the capital of Khartoum in 2016 where the people disobeyed the government by staying at home and abandoning their work and duties. It was in response to the inflating prices of fuel, electricity and medical amenities. The economy was not at all regenerating which was hampering the people to maintain a decent lifestyle.

The most recent protests took place as the economy completely gave away its potential to serve the nation. Inflation rate was at 70 per cent high as well as people denied withdrawal of their own money from banks and ATMs. The latter are almost always without cash and banks let the people withdraw no more than 500 Sudanese pounds which is very less to sustain even one day. The price of a loaf of bread increased to three Sudanese pounds which eventually led the people to erupt into one of the largest protests in the nation’s history. Another reason for it was that after the independence of South Sudan, most of the oil fields went under their territory. This resulted in a major downfall in the economy of Sudan which was mostly oil-based. The currency eventually devalued into all time low as there were scarcely any other restorative means to reconstruct the economy back. On top of that there were the economic sanctions imposed by the USA for 20 years which made foreign investment near to zero in Sudan. It has managed to cripple the nation in all the ways possible in order to curb terrorism and along with it strangled the development of the civil society. All these led the people agitate against al-Bashir’s government but then the protests

suddenly became political. Reaction against a failing economy was simple and expected but it was bizarre because the political demands of toppling Bashir's rule was nowhere gender inclusive at first. The fall of Bashir was not expected to free the women from the absurd rule of law they are subjected to over centuries. This is where the women's revolution seeps its way in. As mentioned initially, the women's revolution has two reasons to cater to. First, the overall fall of the economy and the inflation because they are the home-makers who are in charge of the household expenses. Their life became hell when some could not even manage the daily bread for their families. Second, is the fact that they are born as women in one of the most gender discriminatory regions in the world. That makes them live hell twice as the Islamic law debilitate their rights and mobilization and make them house-bound in most of the cases. Al-Bashir's chaotic regime had preposterous laws against women's conduct, behaviour and dress code. Police could openly "flog" 10 women who dare to wear trousers out in the open and trials for sexual misconduct and rapes were almost non-existent. The countries of Africa, especially the Islam dominated ones, are rampant in cases related to domestic violence, sexual assault, female genital mutilation¹¹ (FGM), child marriage and whole lot of other discriminatory activities against women. Sudan comes next to Egypt in the heinous act of conducting FGMs which impairs a girl child for life. Menstrual and maternity health are compromised which leads to wide miscarriages, infant mortality as well as maternal mortality.

In addition to that women are socially obstructed to undergo education and have a life out in the public. They are easily harassed and finger-pointed in case of any complaint of dissatisfaction they want to file before the law. In the 21st century when the rest of the world is more or less celebrating women and womanhood, these nations have not seen any women in the forefront. Of course it frustrates the women in bondage to see their counterparts across the world enjoying rights, accessing education and taking over the world in every sector. When the women took to streets in Sudan, it was out of both- the historical suppression and the failing lives due to the poor state of their nation. They protested like there was no tomorrow and indeed there wasn't. It was a do or die situation for them which they utilized to the fullest not only to show the world that they are equally brave and capable citizens of their nation but also to bring justice to their gender by vouching their feminist agenda along with the main protest.

Major Trends

As discussed before, these protests were not the first ones. But they are the culmination of all the other protests that preceded before it. A failing economy and an autocratic rule were reasons enough for the dissatisfaction of the common people erupting a protest here and there. Especially in a country like Sudan which already has a low standard of living (average), economic recession is not greeted with joy in any manner by the public. Sudan started civil disobedience since 2013 as the inflation was soaring and people were suffering in excess. Hence, the first trend of this protest movement is its continuity. That it is not something which brewed overnight with a single economic spiralling and is a result of continuous civil unrest taking place in Sudan.

Second trend is the demand of civilian rule and democracy. With very less nations being under a totalitarian regime in the contemporary world, the people of Sudan

may have seen positive hope in restoring the nation if it is turned into a democracy. The streets were filled with civilians all day and night for more than three months continuously, demanding al-Bashir to step down from power and hand the reigns to the people. The unrest was astonishingly consistent as the people were hell bound to end a disastrous dictatorship which has time and again denied the people their basic civil rights and disrupted normalcy with policies and laws.

Third trend is obviously the most important one. As the paper discusses about the women's contribution in the protest, it can also be perceived as a trend. It can be understood in the lines of the women's liberation movement across the world. Though the liberation movement is history for today's world and women have ever since become more and more independent worldwide, but for countries like Sudan the norms are still ancient. It was as if the Sudanese women were only waiting for a perfect moment to come out and raise their voices. They were, in that matter, successful. The moment can be called perfect because Sudan needed an overwhelming support from each and every citizen. Only the men couldn't have filled the roads and squares and strengthened the crowd. The participation of women which would have been otherwise questioned and harassed was accommodated with ease. Now, 'accommodation' is not same as acceptance. While the male dominated society did not accept the parity of women with themselves, they only compromised for the time-being because they needed all the possible voices and resistance against the regime. Women took this great opportunity to voice their gender issues and make them heard to the rest of the world. Alaa Salah, became an icon overnight with herself clad in white, standing atop a vehicle and shouting out slogans of resistance. She became the symbol of the entire protest movement against Bashir's rule but most importantly, she became the symbol of the women uprising in Sudan which signified that winds of change have indeed arrived.

Fourth trend that this protest movement followed was that of age-inclusive participation. Students across the nation protested vehemently. The average age group of the protest was between 17 to 23 years. Student protests have indeed been quite a recurring phenomenon in the contemporary society. Especially in Africa, Latin America and South Asia, students are very active in recognising and acting against the anti-social elements. They are young and the pillars for the future of a country, hence, their protests are given interest by the governments and their issues catered to. Sudan saw many of its high school and college students agitating against the dictatorship which greatly signified that even education sector was under-developed and students dissatisfied with the quality of it.

Sudanese protests were successful to a large extent by incorporating many trends which gave them substantial momentum in bringing political and social changes. Economic changes are not mentioned because they take time to be visible. And especially for a country like Sudan, it will easily take a decade of good governance to uplift it from its current dilapidated position.

Evaluating the Responses: National, Regional and International

The response towards a particular protest movement is dependent upon many

factors. It is true that protest movements do garner positive response for the nature of its cause which is always for the betterment of the people. Nonetheless, a movement has its share of institutional negativity which is mainly from the parties which has perks to lose because of it. The same happened to the Sudanese revolution as well. United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt which are some of the major powers in the Islamic world and in the region have backed the ruler of Sudan and supported his regime. While other nations were mostly in support of the protestors, but the influential forces backing up the dictator was a huge hurdle on the way. Those nations feared similar civil unrest erupting in their countries after the Sudanese pave the way. The African Union suspended Sudan from its membership by calling out for constituting a civilian led transitional authority instead of the military council. It believed that if military still stays in power, the whole point of the revolution is meaningless. The United States of America did not voice any opinion over the issue at all.

Speaking about other national and international response was that in social media and digital platforms where hashtags were coined so that the whole world could follow every bit of the protest. Hashtags such as #tasgutbas #BlueForSudan #SudanUprising #KeepEyesOnSudan were used to share protest videos, slogans, poems, songs and updates. But along with that the symbolization of Alaa Salah was quite an *idée fixe*. Her choice of dress and jewellery for the moment was also dissected and analyzed which may be was just co-incident! She became a success story of marching thousands of women towards a new direction but it was all too overdone. The revolution was just the beginning of a long battle to rights and freedom in Sudan and the world was already obsessing over the might of the Sudanese women. This fetishization over support is a very negative sign of how women are treated across the world in general. What Alaa Salah and the thousands of other women want are far greater than mere applause. Though lauding them is necessary but it should not just stop there. It should continue as a growing support for the women to help them sustain themselves as heroes and not just being the hero for a day. A revolution like this may have toppled Al-Bashir but is not the whole battle won for the women. They have a long way to go. They are not in need of temporary praise for their 'breakthrough' revolution but all they want is equal participation in the democracy they fought for, equal participation in the household they tend to and equal participation in the crowd they constitute. Military took over Sudan's reigns in April 2019 but a series of mishaps made it share its powers with the civil society. The suspension of Sudan from the African Union put immense pressure over the Transitional Military Council (TMC). It was also as a result of the 3 June, 2019 massacre by the military which killed many civilians. The TMC took responsibility for it and explained that they were just trying to rule out criminals with it.

With the suspension of the nation from AU and protestors staying put outside the administrative headquarters, the TMC arranged talks with the "Forces of Freedom and Change" and initiated an agreement. A formal agreement signing ceremony was organised on the 17th of August, 2019 where both the parties signed on a constitution which lead the way for a transitional government. The constitution described the powers and duties of the transitional government and the members and also the process of election. A period of 39 months is awarded for the government to bring

back Sudan to a state of normalcy by the end of which elections would take place like any other democracy. The formation of a sovereign council, a legislature and a cabinet was announced. It was decided that a military general would head the council for the initial 21 months followed by a civilian for the remaining 18 months. The council will have 5 civilian members and 5 members from the military and a remaining one member would be nominated with consensus. A Prime Minister would be elected by the pro-democrats to head the cabinet. The other important ministries would also be headed by pro-democrats except for the ministry of defence and interior.

The transition period was chosen before the democratic elections as Bashir's rule was deeply entrenched in Sudan and would need time for dissembling. But women were still angry over the arrangement of the transition government. They asked for equal participation in the government but were only given with less than 40 per cent seats. Though the foreign, sports and youth, education and development and labour ministries are given to women leaders, dissatisfaction continues to linger. Only two seats were given to women in the sovereign council. The upcoming elections would give 40 per cent quota to the women but some activists say that it is not enough for the pain and fight they had to put up with. The only positive sign of the recent developments is that the oppressive public order law was abolished. That law, as mentioned before, allowed the police to flog any women in the public who wear trousers. Abolition of this law is bringing the much deserved public life to the women of Sudan. They would fear less of being slut-shamed or termed inappropriate for the society.

Forecasts in 2020

After an exotic revolution the results are always over-expected. While the Sudanese revolution did culminate Omar Al-Bashir's totalitarian rule and brought in an interim government which would pave way for the democracy, whether or not it will be able to provide its women the long sought liberation and equality is a question to ponder upon. The first and foremost expectation from the discussed protest movement is the sustenance of the momentum the women created. As mentioned before, the new transition government did include women in its core committee but it is not enough. 40 per cent seat reservation is not called 'equal'. Hence, more participation from the women is to be encouraged plus they should be included and consulted in any major decision concerning the re-building of the nation.

Here, one more clause arise which is very important to take into consideration. This point is about 'participation'. The psychology of participation¹² is often inductive in nature. This means that a person gets directly or indirectly induced to participate in something by another person or a group of them. This in turn means that, at times, participation depends upon the activeness of an event or the activeness of the majority of people to participate in it. In Sudan's context, the expectation is indeed a lot but it may get hampered due to the lack of a chaotic and active protest environment. While during the course of the protest, everyone was filled with vigour to accomplish a goal. The primary goal was accomplished as well. But the women's revolution is the associated narrative attached to it whose journey only started after the accomplishment of the primary goal. The situation in Sudan right now is relatively

stable and not many women will be out in the open protesting for their rights. Half of them will consider the participation in the revolution enough for their lifetimes or enough to bag their rights. While the other half will be worried about the proceedings and whether they will eventually get their equality before law or not, but they will be too reluctant to step out of their homes. They will fall prey to the gimmick of overall low participation subjecting them to harassment. This harassment may come from the government which is still largely male-dominated or from their society itself which is still patriarchal. The Sudanese revolution may seem like an equal space for both the genders to openly fight for their rights but in reality it is far distant from the dream. Men gave chance to the women of course because of selfish reasons explained earlier. This not at all means that patriarchy or its roots and branches are uprooted from its soil. One must not mistake on that. Hence, this very patriarchal mindset which is all the more present in the minds of the women and the now passive revolution may cut short many of the expectations one has from it.

Although the political future of women cannot be entirely predicted in a positive note, the social picture seems a bit blurry too. Whereas the public flogging and harassment may go down relatively more, the domestic violence and sexual assaults will still stay a problem for the nation. But, comparatively, it will be a bit easier for the women to go file a complaint for any such activities only if she can gather courage enough to cross the courtyard of her home in the first place. The main expectation from the interim government and the democracy to follow will be a ban on the female genital mutilation. Though it will be very difficult to trace and detect affected women in a country where Islamic law hangs on the heads like a sword. Still, hopes of confession will be alive.

Along with all this the girls must be educated and must be incorporated in the employment sector. The employment cannot be a compulsion but the education must be. Education will not only open them up to the world of possibilities but also make them understand, not question, which things should be followed and which should be discarded for their good. They must be able to decide for themselves and be able to stand alone in a crowd of a thousand men with a brave heart. The revolution has indeed initiated a starting point and with the right education they must be able to pave the path for the generations to come.

Also it is expected that more and more foreign investment should be brought to Sudan to save its economy. A democratic government would mean a relatively stable one- but most importantly a safe one. The government should devise its foreign relations in such a manner that foreign companies feel the ease of investing in a new economy. The African Union must intervene and help Sudan constitute an action group against peripheral instability¹³, especially in Darfur region. This would keep a check on the extremism and frequent warfare. This would also give out a picture of integrated and safe Sudan to the world and hence, can attract more investment to it.

Last but not the least is the expectation regarding maintaining the democracy Sudan is moving towards. The question is never about initiating something; it is about keeping it stable and working. Whether it is the new democracy or the women's revolution

for equality and freedom, all will only be well when they are nurtured and sustained with proper attention. Abandoning anything in between thinking that it would go on without any effort is the biggest mistake Sudan can commit at this critical point.

To discuss on the further evolution of the protest, one must take into view two contrary statements. First is the success of the revolution leading to a gender inclusive government and a free Sudan for the women. If this happens as expected the protests in all forms will automatically end and Sudan will be seen as a safe, sound and secured nation. There, a protest would only arise if the democratic government fails. One should keep in mind that democracy never fails; it is the manifestation of it in the respective states which does. It will be indeed very historic if it works, even by a quarter of a cent. But if it fails, the protest has all the intention to come back into action. This can be understood by the fact that women are still not very happy with the structure and composition of the government and some of them are ready to protest more to fulfil their demands.

So the second statement can be- failure of the revolution regarding bringing substantial long-term changes into the society. If this happens then new protests will surface again. This time, the people especially the women would be well versed with the protest mechanism. They would lead new protests- may be general or feministic in nature. The unequal democratic set-up will for sure pose a serious problem for the women and they would keep on protesting in whatever means possible. This leads us to understand about the nature of the future protests, if any. The protests may not become as violent as they were back in 2018-2019, but they would be consistent in their manner. The participation of women may not be very large as well but whoever participates will do it with conviction.

The second statement would also include the failure of sustaining the annulment of the penal code 157 which is abolishing public flogging on women. Moreover, if the domestic and public safety and security for women does not improve there might be another string of protests with respect to it. Also, if their contribution towards the success of the revolution is ignored or forgotten in any manner and oppressive patriarchy continues its hold on them, another truly feminist revolution might brew for rescue. Therefore, Sudan must move slowly and strategically forward while catering to all the basic demands which can otherwise end it before it even starts.

With the spread of the COVID-19 (Corona virus) pandemic across the world, Sudan now, is more worried about its survival as compared to its neighbours. Because of its poor infrastructure and inadequate health care facilities, the Government of Sudan is urging the United Nations to offer help and save them from the crisis. The capital city of Khartoum has been locked down for three weeks starting from 18 April, 2020 after the cases arose to 66 with 10 deaths. All the flights and visas to eight highly affected countries are cancelled temporarily. Shortage of testing kits and protective gear for the health workers are reasons for their utmost worries. The interim government, so far, is handling the situation with the best of their capabilities. Out of the largest spread of the virus in the continent of Africa, they are sure that Sudan will be worst hit in the coming days because of its infrastructural defects. Mosques and public gatherings are

banned and strict security forces including the military are guarding various checkpoints across the city.

Sudan is going through a very delicate phase in its governance. If the interim government in Sudan right now takes utmost care in the fight against the pandemic, with of course respect to their economic stability, the people will be definite of a better Sudan in the future. If Sudan comes out of the pandemic with satisfactory results, protests may even stop for a while. In any case, even after the lock-down will be lifted, people will be in fear of large gatherings and public visits for a long time to come. This will in itself lower protest participation to a large extent. But, if the government fails to cater even to the very basic needs of the people during this pandemic, then there might be another round of protests on the way.

Conclusion

Time and again, protest movements around the world show us the solidarity of good beliefs. Whether they are success stories or failures, one thing special about them is the consistency they exhibit. The failed movements teach the world, all the more, about how to minimise mistakes the next time they strike again. Protests are the rawest form of resistance and dissent. A society needs its share of protests to keep the system in check. Because the people in administrative power will always tend to misuse their positions, hence, it is important for the power of the common people to bulge its head out to counter those. The women's revolution in Sudan is a perfect example of a raw protest. It can be called so because there was no turning back for them. It was free from planning and strategies and direction from the men. It was fierce and it was the beginning of something unique in Sudan.

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#NiUnaMenos: Women and protest movements in Latin America

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Background

The fight against the patriarchal ideas about what it means to be a woman has been the nerve spot to women protest movements over the past decades. The machismo culture, where men are expected to exhibit an overbearing attitude to anyone in a position perceived as inferior, has spread across the Latin American region. Latin America that ranks second in femicide has the distinction of being the most violent region in the world. For years, people have fled from Latin American countries to escape violence, search for economic opportunity and find a safe place to raise their family. Violence is the crux of the immigration problem, but specifically, women and girls in Latin America are most vulnerable to deadly violence. Even though there has been powerful women's movement in Latin America, for a long time the region remained mired in the cycle of gloom and doom. The protest against gender-based violence has gathered momentum in the past few years in Latin America. In recent times, the region has witnessed a marked increase in participation by women in social movements. The murder of the teenage Chiara Páez in the province of Santa Fe sparked an unprecedented social movement called the #NiUnaMenos movement. This movement was started in Argentina, in the year 2015 which is committed to fighting gender inequality and the abuse and murder of women. The name of the movement, 'NiUnaMenos' translates as 'not one less', meaning that not one more woman should die at the hands of men.

The #NiUnaMenos derives from "Not one woman less, not one more dead", a phrase that is attributed to the poet and feminist activist Susana Chávez Castillo, who denounced the cases of femicides that occurred in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state. This movement inspired thousands of women in Argentina to take to the streets of their cities in protest. In its official website, NiUnaMenos defines itself as a "collective scream against the Machista Violence". The movement was catalyzed by the murder in May 2015, after a three-day search, 14-year-old Chiara Páez's body was found buried in the garden of her 16-year-old boyfriend's house. Chiara was beaten to death after having been forced to take medication to terminate her pregnancy. On June 3, 2015, nearly 300 thousand people went to the Plaza de los dos Congresos with the slogan #NiUnaMenos, with aftershocks of the murder, throughout the country and abroad. The rape, torture and murder of Lucia Perez in 2016 led to protests and a national women's strike in Argentina and across Latin America. This then blossomed into the first International Women's Strike on March 8, 2017, which took place in over 50 countries. In the words of Marcela Ojeda, the number of people who joined the call is due to "their transversality", since "the women realized that at some point in their

lives they were violated, without the need to reach a physical blow". It is the marginal woman who is represented there, but not only because of their class origin but because they do not abide by the heteronormative. They are the female heads of household, precarious workers, sex workers, artists, activists, lesbians, Trans, disabled, black, and fat. All women are expelled to the margins of the macho system.

Ni Una Menos movement holds protests against femicides. In addition to femicide, this movement also comprehends topics such as gender roles, sexual harassment, gender pay gap, sexual objectification, and legality of abortion, sex worker's rights and transgender rights. This movement is a huge and powerful movement resisting the femicides, abductions and sexual violence that plague many countries in the Latin American region. The movement became widely recognized by the use of the hashtag #NiUnaMenos on social media, the title under which massive demonstrations were held on June 3, 2015. In line with the massive mobilization called in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Mexico organized marches, and rallies against violence against women. Uruguay echoed the regional call to reject violence against women, with mobilizations in more than 15 departments, organized by women's groups and local social organizations. The NiUnaMenos movement gradually spread across the Latin American region. Thousands of people marched in Buenos Aires to protest against sexist violence to the cry of NiUnaMenos in 2016. The 12-year-old girl, Micaela Ortega was missing a little more than a month from her home in the Buenos Aires city of Bahía Blanca.

The macabre find took place hundreds of kilometers from his home and although the perpetrator of the crime was arrested, the case again brought to the forefront the extent to which gender violence calls for less rhetorical strategies in Argentina. The protest movement in Buenos Aires also called for confronting other less visible forms of violence: psychological, obstetric, symbolic, economic, sexual, reproductive, and family. According to the first Survey of perception and incidence of violence against women in a relationship, in the City of Buenos Aires, only one in ten women who suffer violence makes a police report. Moreover, 15% of the more than 1,000 women surveyed said they had also been the victim of sexual violence. This movement in Latin American region made visible the tragedy of thousands of victims of sexist violence and encouraged a call to the conscience of the entire society to curb the drama of so many women who still suffer this scourge that puts them permanently in danger only because of their gender status.

The essay primarily examines: the primary hypothesis of the paper focuses on how Social Media has helped the growth of Women protest movements in Latin America and established Solidarity for gender issues around the world.

A brief note on the developments

On International Women's Day, March 8th 2020, thousands of women, including journalists, took to the streets in the main cities of Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Chile. During the march, some journalists present were attacked. According to the Spanish news agency EFE, unknown men sprayed fire extinguisher powder and an unidentified gas in the faces of two journalists, respectively, in Mexico City. According

to EFE, the March 8 protest brought together more than 80,000 people. The massive march had two colors, lilac that characterizes feminist movements and green for the fight for independence of the woman's body. Most of the women who participated in the protest wore lilac clothing as a representation of their gender and to demand justice for the women murdered in that country in the face of the growing wave of femicides.

According to official figures, during 2019 over one thousand women were murdered, Telemundo published. In Argentina, the March 8 protests this year were largely led by the #NiUnaMenos movement against gender violence and round the demand for the legalization of abortion and also the inclusion of a gender perspective, in keeping with El País of Spain in keeping with the National Federation of Journalists (Fenaj for its acronym in Portuguese) of Brazil, the most problems faced by women journalists in Brazil are moral and molestation on social networks. In keeping with a Fenaj report published in January 2020, attacks on journalists and also the media in Brazil increased by 54 percent in 2019 compared to 2018. Two particularly horrific crimes have galvanized the locomotive March 8th, 2020. The first crime - Cabanillas, a women's rights activist and artist who was a part of a collective called Hijas de Su Maquilera Madre, which defends women's rights, ecofeminism, gender equality and assists families of victims of ladies who disappeared within the area on January 18th, 2020. She was found shot dead in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. The second crime - Escamilla, a 25-year-old woman was brutally murdered by her partner, on February 9th, 2020. In keeping with reports, her partner skinned her, removed her organs and dumped them during a sewer drain to cover the evidence. Photos of her gruesome death were printed during a local newspaper. The murders are a part of an extended line of femicides within the country and now, activists are rising to mention 'enough is enough'.

The hashtag #niunamas began to trend on Twitter, after the death of Escamilla, where many of us expressed their anger not just for the deaths of Cabanillas and Escamilla, but also protested against the gender violence in Mexico, that has escalated since the first 1990s. People protested and marched in cities across Mexico on February 14th, 2020 calling for justice and also the attention of the Mexican government to the epidemic of gender-based violence. Activists in the metropolis, Texas, which is true across the border from Juarez, also organized an indication in solidarity with their neighbours.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

The day Argentine society made gender violence visible, the terms machismo and femicide began to be heard in television programs, bars and offices. There was a breakdown that seemed natural and was a source of shame that remained veiled, began to attract attention, not to be tolerated and to denounce. The paradigm started changing. An example of this was observed in the newspapers: in the Police section, the category "Crime of passion" was abandoned for "Femicide", breaking with the myth of romantic love, where jealousy and possession meant loving. A new stage was being born. The regional response of this movement was that, some legislative results were achieved to fight against femicide within the region. Judge Elena Highton de

Nolasco launched the Femicide Registration Unit for the Supreme Court. Following the Femicide Registration Unit, the National Government, through the Human Rights Committee, formalized the Unit, yet because of the Fiscal Specialized Unit on Violence against Women (UFEM). However big this progress could appear, between the primary and second NiUnaMenos protests from 2015 to 2016, 275 women died as victims of gender violence. The demonstration transpires in Argentina were carried forward by women across the resident region, in Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Uruguay. This is often a section that has one in every of the best rates of violence against women within the world.

As far as a global response is concerned, notable one was the massive women's march was organized on January 21, 2017, at the United States of America which marked the origin of militant feminist struggle. The focus was against Trump and his aggressively misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic and racist policies. The idea of the march was to mobilize women, including Trans women, and all who supported them in an international day of struggle, a day of striking, marching, blocking roads, bridges, and squares, abstaining from domestic, care and sex work, boycotting, calling out misogynistic politicians and companies, striking in educational institutions. The march is aimed at making visible the needs and aspirations of women in the formal labor market, women working in the sphere of social reproduction and care, and unemployed and precarious working women in the United States. In embracing feminism, women in the United States took inspiration from the Argentinian coalition, Ni Una Menos as they define it. Ni Una Menos has many facets of gender issues.

Latin America is a region where femicide rates are highest and the funding has helped UN Women capitalize on existing progress, through the work with the National Citizen Observatory on Femicide which is a coalition of 49 human rights organizations across Mexico to prevent and eliminate femicide. An occurrence at the UN Headquarters in New York on 25 November 2019 featured prominent speakers and musical performances, to appeal preventing and ending violence against women and girls. Participants included Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, world organization Chief of Cabinet to UN administrator António Guterres, Susannah Grant, Executive Producer, Writer, Director and Showrunner of "Unbelievable" the Netflix limited series, Ajna Jusic, President of the Association "Forgotten Children of War" from Bosnia and Herzegovina and photographer Jonathan Torgovnik yet as musical performances by the choir of the UN International School. World organization commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women where multiple events were conducted worldwide, like marches, art competitions, cycling rallies, and marathons.

As a part of the UN System-wide activities for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, to urge actions to finish this scourge that impacts one in three women worldwide. At the world organization, the annual 16 Days campaign, mobilized governments and public under the umbrella of the Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE by 2030 to finish Violence against Women. This included recent movements like #MeToo, #TimesUp, #NiUnaMenos, #NotOneMore, and #BalanceTonPorc. World organizations conducted this campaign to throw fall upon the violence against women and girls that exist in every country. From treating rape as an insignificant issue, victim-

blaming, the objectification of women's bodies in movies, glamorization of violence in the advertisement, or the constant use of chauvinist language, women are all daily witnesses to the current rape culture, sometimes even silent spectators, and have a responsibility to prevent it. Every action that UN Women has taken or supported is a step toward fulfilling the words *Ni Una Menos*, a promise to the women the region has lost and to future generations of women.

Major Trends

Today, the shifting discourse points to a renewed struggle against a cultural hegemony dominated by men throughout Argentina's 200-year existence. The surging attention was given to the debate surrounding the legalization of abortion in 2019. Abortion is illegal across most of Latin America. In a predominantly Roman Catholic region of 21 countries, it is legal only in Cuba and Uruguay. Criminalizing abortion has been condemned by many women in the Latin American region, generally poorer women, to seek out abortions in totally clandestine situations, putting their health and sometimes their very lives at risk. Women in Latin America demanded the legalization of abortion, a health care issue being taken on with increasing fervor over the past two years in Argentina and across Latin America. Argentina's Congress has introduced eight separate bills for the early termination of pregnancies since 2007. On February 19, 2019 solidarity ignited by *NiUnaMenos* reportedly saw thousands take to Plaza Congreso demanding legalization. For the first time in Argentine history, the legalization of abortion received enough support from lawmakers to be debated in the national legislature. President Alberto Fernández, on 1st March 2020 said that he intends to send a legal abortion bill to congress within 10 days. As a result, Argentina is on track to become the first major Latin American country to legalize abortion. President Alberto Fernández also added that "Society in the 21st century needs to respect the individual choice of its members to freely decide about their bodies."

Argentina received a 56 billion dollars loan from the IMF in October 2018 and the National Congress passed an austerity budget to comply with the terms of the loan for 2019. Along with making gender violence a public issue, *NiUnaMenos* movement in 2019, intersected this problem with the nation's economic recession, government austerity and national debt. The national debt and austerity budget aren't just the source of economic woes, but feminist concerns as well. In this context, debt harms women because it forces them to stay in abusive relationships and take on undesirable work. The state's austerity programme had also cut retirement benefits for women who work from home.

Alongside its usual hashtags like *#VivasNosQueremos* (*#WeWantUsAlive*), *NiUnaMenos* has used new hashtags *#LibresYDesendeudadasNosQueremos* (*#WeWantUsFreeAndWithoutDebt*) and *#NiUnaMenosSinJubliacion* (*#NotOneLessWithoutRetirement*) to throw light on the economic issues that face women more heavily than men. Cecilia Palmeiro, one of the organizers of the *NiUnaMenos* movement said that since the government of President Mauricio Macri produced this National debt, which is the largest debt in the history of Argentina, one of the principal areas of interest is the relationship between state debt, private debt,

and machista violence. There is also a clear relationship between the factors such as legalization of abortion and austerity programme, because abortion is a matter of social justice and women who have the economic means can have an abortion, and those who do not have the economic means are at risk of having unsafe or clandestine abortions.

One of the major trends in the NiUnaMenos movement was the impact of social media. A Chilean Feminist Anthem called “el violador en tu camino” (The Rapist is you) spread around the world to mark the International Day for the elimination of violence against women. For protesters, the lyrics and choreography directly reflected their experiences. This Chilean anthem by the women protesters because of their video and dance moves went viral on Social media and spread across the world with performances that took place in France, Spain, and the UK.

Women in Latin America turned to apps to combat sexual violence. Women across Latin America are combating the widespread violence which is a complex task that requires a range of societal initiatives. One such initiative is the use of mobile technology in combating sexual violence against women in this region. In Latin America, a large number of apps for women have emerged, and they are widespread. Governments also played a significant role in developing such apps apart from the feminist organizations which demand a solution to violence perpetrated by men against women. In Latin American countries, there are free apps available featuring a panic button that sends a call for help to selected contacts or other users nearby. The app transmits the phone’s geodata information, which allows the recipients of the emergency call to find the user’s location in times of emergency. This is a significant helpful technology which was developed in order to fight gender violence in the region. Apps featuring this tool include We Help (Mexico), Boton de Panico Ni una menos (Argentina), #NiUnaMenos (Peru) and Antonia (Chile). Mexico’s Laudrive app and Sara Ladies & Teens in Argentina offer an Uber-like rideshare service for female passengers, with women drivers. Women in Mexico City use the Vive Segura app to report harassment on public transport or in public places directly to the police. The SafetiPin app that originated in India is similar but also allows users to mark neighborhoods and streets on a map as safe or unsafe. SafetiPin is also available in Kenya and in Bogota, Colombia. The Mexican app, Mujer Segura Alerta Rosa, found a simpler way to call for help: the women wear a bracelet with a panic button that sends a signal to a police station. This form of emergency call, however, requires a degree of confidence in local police in all countries in Latin America. These apps not only help to share the current location and send a message at times of threat, but also help to find ways in closing the gap between the reporting time and judicial action.

The cases of symbolic violence are innumerable. As already mentioned, it is not by chance that there is a counterattack, possibly to defend a cultural, political, economic and social system that grants privileges and power to certain people. Despite these resistances, three years after the first Ni Una Menos, issues that are a matter of feminism were installed in the media, such as unpaid domestic work, equality of work and wages, femicides, linked femicides, the right to sexual enjoyment and, even, the debate on the autonomy of the bodies of people capable of gestating.

Forecast in 2020

The struggle of the feminist movement in Argentina continues today with the so-called fourth wave, characterized by being a global, mediated and massive stage. The “Ni Una Menos” generation was born at a particular moment, in which the traditional and social media played a very important role. Women protest movements has now become an alliance in Latin America to end the brutal sexual violence and murder of women and girls, the rallying cry of “NiUnaMenos”, or ‘not one less’ has galvanized a call for urgent action at all levels, from government policy-makers to individual change-makers. Social media produced and will continue to create awareness of the problems relating to gender from its most visible edge. This movement started in Argentina in 2015, as women took to the streets to protest against femicide. The killing of women, simply because they are women, is one of the most heinous violations of human rights. From the massive turnout of the first marches under the slogan “Ni Una Menos” against femicides, the feminist movement in Argentina is now a firmly intersectional one weaving together all societal struggles. The slogans that appear every June 3 have expanded and will continue to expand. The violence against women’s bodies is not just physical violence. The violence is in the wage gap, in the unpaid labour that falls on women’s shoulders, in the debt, in the disciplining of their sexualities, in mandatory maternity, in unemployment, and precarious access to basic services. Recognizing this whole network of violence and the mechanisms that reproduce it enables us to question, through feminism, in all aspects of women’s lives. The slogan “We want to be Alive, Free, and without Debt,” in reference to the recent IMF agreement, is an example of how feminism in Argentina is not limiting itself to gender demands. The feminist movement today is perhaps the only one that is a mass movement with radical dimensions. #NiUnaMenos movement can be viewed as an evolving woman protest movement that will curb the rising chauvinistic nationalism in the Latin American region. The movement has come forward with a new kind of global battleground, different from the separation between the global and local thus paving way to globalization. The movement tends to form networks with other regions in the world, focus on the abuse women are facing across, mainly through social media to bring about solidarity among women and to fight against gender violence.

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'Unveiling': Women and protest movements in the Middle East

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Background

The past year has seen an increasing number of protests that has swept through the Middle East and North Africa, confronting several governments in the region such as Iran, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq and Palestine to name a few. These protests occur almost a decade after the Arab Spring and has therefore, been referred to as the 'New Arab Spring' or 'Arab Spring 2.0'. These protests share several social, economic and political features with its previous movements. Nevertheless, large number of women on its frontlines champions this new wave of protests.

Women in the Middle Eastern countries are facing the conundrum of being 'doubly oppressed'. Women have to fight rampant corruption, sectarianism, economic recession, unemployment, poverty, lack of necessities, etc., which plague their countries. They also have to deal with the underlying evils of the society that specifically target them such as patriarchy, repressive religious laws and the dire underrepresentation of women both in politics as well as in the workforce.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

Lebanon is home to eighteen officially recognized religious sects that play a dominant role in its society. Therefore, the legal status of the Lebanese women varies in accordance to the sect to which she belong despite gender equality and individual liberty guaranteed by the Lebanese constitution under Articles 7 and 8. The patriarchal society continue to offer men an unfair advantage over women in many aspects. The transfer of citizenship is paternal in Lebanon and prevents women from passing on their citizenship to their non-Lebanese husbands and children, unless the child is born illegitimately. The law is also partial to the mother who has acquired her nationality through marriage than a mother of Lebanese origin as the former can pass on her citizenship to her children, if she outlives her husband but the latter cannot if she married a foreigner.

The controversial Article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code, which allowed for a man convicted of sexual assault, abduction and statutory rape to halt his prosecution or suspend his conviction if he has married the victim, was repealed only in 2017. Moreover, while threats within the marriages are punishable offences under Articles 573-578 of the Penal Code, marital rape itself is not criminalized. Divorce is more easily attainable for men than women, as depending on the sect women can only apply for divorce under specific conditions. This also comes with great cost to women.

Islamic women have two ways to seek divorce from her husband – the tafriq and the khul. The tafriq is granted by a qadi in certain cases such as when the husband abandons or abuses the wife. Once the marriage is dissolved, the husband is obligated to pay the mahr. The khul, on the other hand, is granted to the couple upon mutual consent to dissolve the marriage. As this practice of divorce requires the consent of the husband, he often denies this consent in order to not pay the mahr. In such cases, the wife often relinquishes the deferred mahr and is then granted the consent.

Guardianship of children during marriage and custody of children in case of divorce is granted to the father. The child is allowed to be in the mother's care during the maternal custody period that is determined by the child's age but the child continues to remain under the father's custody legally. This dissuades many women in abusive relationships from considering divorce due to the fear of losing their children.

Lebanon was one of the first countries in the Middle East to gain suffrage for women in 1952. However, Lebanon ranks very low in terms of female representation in the politics thereby facing a considerable lack of women in various decision-making processes. According to the 2020 Inter-Parliamentary Union's global data on the per cent age of women in national parliaments, Lebanon ranks 183rd with women's representation rate at 4.69 per cent, despite a record number of women contesting in the 2018 national elections.

The situation is not much different in Palestine where patriarchal traditions and Islamic and Christian laws largely dictate women's basic rights. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is also an important factor that handicap contemporary Palestinian women. Thousands of women lost their life, family and property, and have had to take up the role of breadwinners seemingly overnight. The numerous wars that has taken place between the states over the years have left many women homeless and displaced.

Domestic violence continues to plague Palestinian women. Violence against women in Palestine emanate from two different sources – Israel's security measures and abuse from family and community. Israel's security measures have both direct and indirect consequences on women's safety and liberty. The restrictions imposed on the Gaza Strip deny the Palestinians access to healthcare and school admission for children if they lack a residential permit in Jerusalem. This has increased the number of home deliveries as well as stillbirths. The demolition of houses by the Israeli forces creates further burden on women who have to adapt to new conditions. In addition to the arrests and harassment encountered in the process, women are subjected to domestic abuse. In a 2019 study published by the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, of 517 ever married women from the Gaza Strip, 23 per cent reported that they are victims of Intimate partner violence (IPV). Women political detainees in Palestine have also increased over the years and held incommunicado without access to lawyers or social workers for extended periods. The political detainees once released have to deal with being ostracised by their community for fear of being sexually compromised. Such fears have been the basis of prioritizing early marriage of Palestinian girls over their education. Palestinian society also sees a great number

of femicides due to honour killings. The killing of 21-year-old Israa Ghayeb in 2019 sparked a nation-wide outrage, with thousands taking to the streets and called for stringent laws against gender violence and honour killings.

The theocratic nation of Iran has seen several instances of shutting down when it confronted with the possibility of leniency of women's rights over the past forty years. Islamic law requires women to wear compulsory hijab under Article 638, the defiance of which can result in imprisonment of up to two months or fine of up to 500,000 rials. The law was enforced under Ruhollah Khomeini following the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Over the years, this repressive law has led to the arrests of several young women, who believe that the compulsory dress code is against a matter of their personal choice.

A brief note on the developments

The rise of the protest movements in these countries and the large participation of women in them have not been without developments. Lebanon's October Revolution has come with an outpouring of support for its female protestors, both within the MENA region as well as in the global community. The sheer popularity of the movement has brought in many lawyers to the protests who help these women who are facing relentless harassment, abuse and violence in the streets, who might otherwise find legal support expensive. Besides the demand for economic development and political reform, women have demanded equal rights not only for themselves but also for the LGBTQ+ community as well as the migrants. The female protestors say that they are representing those communities whose voices have been unheard or silenced. They stress that any demand that is being called for should also include the minorities and the marginalised peoples of the society, thereby prioritising solidarity and unity.

The fact that the revolution has been leaderless has helped many women across sectarian divisions to come to the frontlines and participate in the protest movements, helming roles such as discussing strategies and organising protests. Other protestors have understood the increasing significance of women in these movements and have made sur that there is substantial female representation during media briefings, meetings and conferences. The protest movements have turned into a feminist platform, welcoming and supporting the cause that they fight for and the people who participate in it.

The October Revolution led to the resignation of the Lebanese forces who had four seats in the Cabinet. The stepping down of Prime Minister Saad Hariri soon followed. The former Lebanese Education Minister Hassan Diab was asked to form the government as directed by the President Michel Aoun and form the next government. He was nominated with the support of Hezbollah and its allies. His 20-member technocrat cabinet saw the absence of many major blocs such as the Sunni and the Druze. Among them six members are women, including the Minister of Defence who also serves as the Deputy Prime Minister, the first time the cabinet has seen a historical thirty per cent representation of women.

Palestine has linked its decade long struggle for an independent homeland with its

growing problem of gender violence and femicides. Using the slogan 'Free Homeland, Free Women', Palestinian women have taken to the streets to protest against the mounting crimes particularly abuse and homicide of women. These women say that there is no point in attaining a free homeland without acknowledging the role of women and their position in the civil society. Many women from Beirut in Lebanon and Haifa in Israel took to the streets in solidarity with the Palestinian women demanding more freedom, basic rights and protection for women. The movement has also gained the support from Palestinians who are scattered across the Middle Eastern region. These women aimed to cripple the patriarchal structure of their society by calling out against these crimes. The participation of women has brought forth both men and women who support the cause and saw their movement reach across class and divisions.

Realising the importance of education for women there has also been a rise in the number of women who attend schools and universities. Educating women has led to better job opportunities as well as marriage alliances for the young Palestinian, which has helped reduce early marriages in the Palestinian communities. In an effort to decrease early marriages further, the Palestinian government raised the minimum legal age for marriage to 18 for both the genders. In March 2018, the government also repealed a law that prevented the rapist from conviction if he married his victim.

The Iranian government did not tolerate the removal of headscarves in its territory. Masih Alinejad, author of 'The Wind in My Hair', and who started the online campaign #MyStealthyFreedom, inspired by a photo of herself running through the London streets with her hair uncovered, is currently living in exile and has received severe online harassment, threats from the government and backlash from Iranian expatriates. This motivated another Iranian woman, Vida Mohaved, to wave her white headscarf as a flag in a busy street, but she was promptly arrested an hour later. More women were encouraged to do the same and it is now known as the 'The Girls of Enghelab Street' movement on social media. Since then several women activists have been arrested or detained by the authorities.

In the 2018 International Women's Day, Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini addressed the public stressing that the western standards of women promoted exhibitionism and nudity while the hijab gave immunity and protected the modesty of the women wearing them. The same year Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's office released a four-year old public opinion survey, which revealed that nearly half of the country's men and women opined that the hijab should be a matter of personal choice and not be monitored by the government, though this majority opinion has been said to decline since then.

On April 2019, Vida Mohaved has been sentenced to a year in prison for encouraging public corruption despite having been pardoned by the Ayatollah. Nasrin Sotoudeh, an Iranian human rights lawyer who represented Mohaved in court was arrested herself on June 2018 is currently serving a prison sentence of 38 years and 148 lashes.

Major Trends

Certain key trends have been observed across the protests involving women. Women are addressing the discrimination against them through protests, demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, etc. They are captured on camera openly condemning the ruling government and their policies, and share personal experiences that many young women can relate. These opinions help realise the gravity of the issues and its influence on the society and its targeted impact on women. These videos have played an important role not only in educating the public about the depth of the issues at stake, but also inspire other women to break free from the confines of their household and take an active part in these movements.

It is widely noted that the participation of women has led to an increase in the number of peaceful protests in Middle Eastern countries. They are seen organizing candlelight vigils and silent marches. Women form human barriers between the armed forces and the protestors to protect their male counterparts from being attacked. Attacks against women and female journalists who cover the protest are also declining. This has significantly reduced the violence in protest movements, which has inadvertently seen a rise in the participants, as more people feel safer. Women also took upon themselves to treat the injuries of the protestors, provide them food and water, and address the mental, psychological trauma the protestors faced on the streets. In Lebanon, women hold constructive dialogues about their movement by setting up tents with signs that read, 'We welcome women and feminists'. More female protestors are taking part in debates, meetings, conferences and are given substantial coverage in mass media.

Women who were previously deterred by their families from taking part in the protests have managed to convince them otherwise citing the above reasons. According to Naomi Wolf, former political advisor to Al Gore and Bill Clinton, "Feminism is a logical extension to democracy". Achieving complete freedom is not possible if the rights of women are overlooked. Women are aware of their strength and believe that they bring a 'new energy', which will sustain the movement in their respective countries.

Political art has been another attribute of the protest movements. In Iran and Lebanon, men and women armed with spray cans and paints have turned to the walls to express their dissent against their ruling government through paintings and graffiti.

Another trend that is found in these protests is the growing importance of social media. Many women claim that social media has helped them overcome the barrier of censorship in their countries. Due to the global nature of the platform, women are able to receive and extend solidarity to people across the world who support their cause. Social media platforms also assist in mobilizing large groups of people at a short notice and at local levels due to the fast transmission of messages and other information. Many issues and struggles of people have become known because of the viral tendency of social media posts. An important feature of these posts is the use of catchy hashtags. Since the function of the hashtag is to find a variety of content pertinent to a theme under one umbrella, this media tag has enabled many protestors to update the progress of the protests at once through real-time messages, photographs and video clips. Protesters can also track the popularity and reach of their hashtag, which helps more social media users to tune in and become aware about the protests. Hashtags such as #MyStealthyFreedom, #GirlsofEnghelabStreet

or GirlsofRevolutionStreet etc. started by Iranian activists received overwhelming response from people across the world.

The impulsive mass gatherings that form at the grassroots levels are leaderless in almost all the nations that currently witness protests. The socio-economic and political problems many people and not a singular group. As more people identify with the cause, we are able to see a diverse participation of peoples barring class, sects, gender etc., in the protest. They unite with a common goal in mind and therefore, might view a fellow protestor as an ally in achieving it, which results in the blurring of social divisions. Therefore, the protestors are able to define the concepts of 'us' and 'they' as the people versus the government, which reduces communal tensions within the group and provides for a much peaceful protest. The protests themselves have a great appeal to the common man as they as an entirety have been denied their rights by the government. The participation of citizens in the October Revolution across its eighteen sects in Lebanon or the solidarity of men and women globally for the Iranian and Palestinian cause are examples. Carne Ross, author of 'The Leader Revolution: How Ordinary People Will Take Power and Change Politics in the 21st Century, notes that assigning particular individuals as leaders helps the government to pinpoint that individual and repress, arrest or execute the person, thereby suppressing the movement quickly. On the other hand, leaderless protests are harder to subdue.

The protests have had their peaks and lows. In the Middle Eastern countries, the protests for women's rights have intertwined with the larger anti-governmental protests. The movements have received various responses from different tiers. In Lebanon, women from different sectarian divisions have joined hands in uplifting and empowering other women and men who participate in the movement, keeping in mind the true spirit of feminism. In an act of defiance, the women have altered the lyrics of the Lebanese national anthem so that it reads, 'the birthplace of women and men', instead of men alone. They have also revised the lyrics of a traditional wedding song that is now popularly sung at the protests and during candlelight vigils. The print, visual and social media throughout the MENA region, which greatly influenced the citizens in other countries who were going through similar turmoil, extensively covered the Lebanese protests. The protests in particular encouraged women to come out to the streets and spark feminist movements, making demands against laws that repress their fundamental rights and diminish their standard of living.

Forecast in 2020

Women of all ages from Islamic communities all over the world took part in the online campaigns #MyStealthyFreedom and #WhiteWednesdays were thousands of women posted pictures of themselves without their hijabs, wearing white attires, and holding white headscarves on Wednesdays supporting the anti- hijab movements in Iran on different social media platforms. Palestinian women organised 'women in black' candlelight vigils in honour of victims of gender violence. The Ta'lat movement, a woman based group has helped redefine the Palestinian national struggle. They have helped several Palestinian women who have faced senseless persecution at the hands of government authorities or their families by mobilizing support and fighting for their causes.

Top politicians of the United States of America such as Mike Pompeo, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders supported the protests in Lebanon, calling for the government to reject violence and hold constructive dialogues with the public. Many countries and international organisations condemned the restrictions imposed on Iranian women. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called for the release of human rights activists who were arrested unconditionally in 2018.

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus pandemic or Covid-19 has dampened the momentum of the protests in the Middle Eastern countries. However according to Reuters, Lebanese protesters have covered their faces with masks, mostly using the Lebanese flag and have returned to the street in convoys of cars amid the Covid-19 lockdown. They also waved the Lebanese flags and shouted 'revolution' while maintaining distance and keeping in mind the lockdown norms. The protestors claim that the poor state of the economy that has left the citizens with no salaries or employment has made them continue the protests despite the lockdown restrictions.

In Gaza, domestic abuse of women has increased by 30 per cent as documented by AISHA Association of Women and Child Protection. As the courts are closed and the police are occupied with the enforcement of the lockdown, women have not received their alimony and have been effectively kept away from their children. The restrictions have made the situation even more difficult for women to seek the necessary assistance.

Following the national and international pressure to release the prisoners from overcrowded prisons to prevent the spread of the pandemic, over 85,000 prisoners have been freed. However, the Iranian government has yet to release several women political prisoners and prisoners of conscience including notable human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, who first alerted the international community regarding the condition of the prisons, despite pleas from over 20 human rights organisations

The governments at present seem to be using the Covid-19 to distract the citizens and sweep the root of the protest movements under the rug. However, the lockdown has only aggravated the situation and forced people to confront their government's liabilities at close quarters. The governments now need to address the source of the protests as soon as possible while simultaneously managing the pandemic. As the public grows restless due to poverty, shortages of food supply and violence within homes, they will take to the streets at a time when the governments are the least prepared for it.

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#FridaysforFuture: The global protests against Climate Change

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The very evident changes in the climate has kindled the conscience of the civil society, particularly the youth to work towards a better, sustainable planet. The protest that began as a demand for the Swedish government to adopt policies complying with the Paris agreement, grew as a movement against the inaction over climate change. But, are climate change protests in consonance with the level of economic development in a country? This essay makes an attempt to look into this hypothesis.

Background

Climate change is one of those phenomena, which has its effects on all regions, people, biodiversity, indiscriminately. Whether it is the rise in sea level or melting of the ice or burning forests, climate change has its impact on every corner of the globe, more or less. Civil society has been realizing this in recent times. Though the scientists have been issuing warnings, for a long time, the larger section of the civil society and the policy making community were hibernating. With realization and fear of extinction seeping in, people have taken active role in taking part in issues of climate change.

Greta Thunberg, a school student who spearheaded the movement “Fridays for Future” in Sweden, inspired the youth and the civil society to fight for the cause. In August 2018, she began protesting in front of the Swedish Parliament, demanding effective climate policies and stronger climate action. Her slogan *Skolstrejk för klimatet* (school strike for climate) gained popularity among school students and the youth, who joined her in her protest. 2018 was also crucial because of Swedish General Election. Her protests helped in making climate change the most important election issue.

Under the banner of Fridays for Future, the school strikes spread across communities and students across Sweden and other parts of Europe. Prior to the United Nations Climate Action Summit, the movement had found place in different countries across Asia, Africa and the Americas. Greta became the poster child of the climate protests. The United Nations and its agencies are leading the efforts of the globe towards combating climate change. In 2019, the United Nations Climate Action Summit, a dedicated platform to address various issues surrounding climate and environment was held. This is also the time when the civil society, particularly children and youth are under the limelight in international meetings and conferences focusing on climate change.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

Climate change is evident. Whether it is the global warming, polar vortex, devastating hurricanes, wild fires, floods, or sea level rise; the manifestations of climate change are showcasing the reality we live in and the kind of future we are passing on to the forthcoming generations.

Wild fires have ravaged Brazil, Indonesia and Australia and even some parts of the sub-Arctic region. High temperatures combined with dry winds are the main causes. However, in some cases, human-created disasters have proven extremely dangerous. The slash and burn technique in agriculture is believed to be the main cause of the wild fire in the Brazilian Amazon. The government is also accused of intentionally destroying vast swaths of forest land for the benefit of the corporates and in the name of economic development. The slash and burn technique is also extremely problematic in India. Annually used by the farmers of Haryana and Punjab, it is the reason for long-lasting smog across northern India. Undoubtedly, it also contributes to the carbon content in the atmosphere.

Floods and cyclones/hurricanes have also affected the population in coastal areas and near the river beds. Countries like India, Bangladesh are very vulnerable to floods that cause widespread damage. Frequent hurricanes (in the Atlantic Ocean) and Cyclones (in Indian Ocean) pose a grave challenge to the heavily populated coastal regions. Atlantic Ocean's hurricane Dorian is considered as the worst natural disaster in the history of the Bahamas. It caused destruction in its path along the eastern Coast of the United States and Canada. In South Asia, cyclones in the Arabian Sea caused floods in the southern states and western coast of India. The rise in sea level and warming waters are said to be the main causes of the frequency of hurricanes/cyclones.

Glaciers provide profound evidence regarding the extent of climate change. Though the melting of glaciers has been a gradual phenomenon since the end of Pleistocene (colloquially known as the ice age), the rate at which this has been occurring has increased during Anthropocene (an epoch where human action is capable of interfering and influencing the natural processes). On 19 August 2019, Iceland mourned the death of its glacier Okjökull. Led by Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir, the Icelandic people commemorated the former glacier with a plaque. While there are monuments and memorials for major events and eminent personalities, the plaque is a monumental symbol for an environmental disaster.

The good part of climate change is that more and more people have begun recognizing its existence and the risks associated, despite the presence of strong climate-denial groups and lobbies. Increasing awareness, which is the result of the efforts of scientists, scholars and international organizations, has contributed to a large extent.

Apart from awareness and education, the severity of the impact has been quite visible in the past decade. There is also a feeling of 'being a perpetrator'. More and more people now accept that human actions are responsible for the imbalance that is in place. Needless to mention, climate change affects the livelihoods to a large extent. Countries like Bangladesh and Maldives have repeatedly told the international

community about the crisis they are facing and the possible mass migration of people from their territories. Though the term 'climate refugees' is not defined in exact words and is not widely accepted, it speaks volumes about the seriousness of climate change.

Responses: Civil society, Countries, Regions, International Organizations

The civil society, in the form of non-governmental organizations has raised its voice for the cause. Organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Greenpeace International, and Civil Society Coalition on Climate Change (CSCCC) have global presence and recognition. They do have a voice in policy decisions.

Climate change has been a very important election issue in the Scandinavian countries. However, since 2018, this is being expressed in a very unique manner. As mentioned earlier, Fridays for Future inspired many children and young people to stand up for the cause. The movement gained the attention thanks to the social media and the lobbyists who are backing children like Greta.

In September 2019, six million people worldwide joined the global protest for climate change. Organized by the FridaysForFuture Group, it is the biggest mobilization for climate issues. The main crux of the movement was to question the inaction of the policy makers and politicians. Thunberg resonates this, when she says that the world leaders have "betrayed" the young people and the future generations.

Countries are divided over the issue of climate change and its existence. The divide is also based on the level of development, the intensity of the impact, the level of responsibility and the direction of flow of resources.

Some countries are in the denial mode, striking down every effort towards achieving a sustainable future. This might be also due to the change in leadership. The United States and Brazil are classic examples. The Trump administration is firm on its stance against climate change and any initiative in that direction. Mike Pompeo's statement in the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting of 2019, refused to spell the phrase 'climate change'. The Finnish Chairmanship of the Council concluded without any concrete agreement. US's stance on the Paris Agreement is well known.

Brazil, a country that was in the forefront of the deliberations on climate change, and hosted a number of international summits, is obstructing many environment-friendly initiatives. Bolsonaro's government is charged of destroying the Amazon and using its resources for the benefit of the corporates. The administration is also guilty of not taking enough measures during a mysterious oil spill along the Brazilian coast.

The divide between the developed and developing countries is persistent since serious talks were held on climate change. The Kyoto Protocol was not acceptable to some developed countries due to the provisions that are "discriminatory". But the argument is that the developed countries experienced growth at the cost of the climate (beginning from the Industrial Revolution) and are now hampering the process of development in the developing countries. The argument gave rise to the slogan "Common but Differentiated Responsibilities" (CBDR). Though this concept is

slowly dwindling, the developing countries including India long justified their non-environment friendly actions using CBDR.

The justification may have been pushed to back during the Paris Agreement talks, but it is a fact that the resources flow from the developed countries to the developing ones. Countries need monetary and other resources to combat the impact, and thus the developed countries automatically have more responsibility. This is the primary reason for some countries in the developed world, to turn away from issues of climate change.

Response to climate crisis also depends on the intensity. Some countries are more vulnerable to the impact than others. This vulnerability is often combined with the resources at the disposal of the country. Small island countries like Maldives or the Caribbean Islands or the Pacific Islands, are prone to high risk from rising sea levels, but they lack the resources to adapt, additionally, they also lack a strong voice in the international platforms.

In few cases, countries combine their interests and goals and take initiatives through regional organizations or by floating specific regional arrangements. Europe as a region seems to be more united in terms of climate change. The European Green Deal presented during the COP-25 Madrid is a roadmap for the EU countries to attain sustainable future. It proposes action plans to “boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean, circular economy; and restore biodiversity and cut pollution.” By adhering to the action plan, the EU would be carbon neutral by 2050. Alongside, the EU also announced the proposal of implementing European ‘Climate Law’ and launch of the European Climate Pact. Europe is also concerned about the changes in the Arctic. The melting sea ice, changes in the natural cycles, biodiversity, nuclear accidents, marine pollution, and increased shipping have been the cause of concern. The civil society is quite proactive and places climate action as one of the primary demands during elections.

ASEAN, SAARC, BIMSTEC are few other regional organizations that have climate change as a part of their mandate.

At the global level, the United Nations and platforms such as the Conference of Parties have taken the lead. The UNFCCC has been at the forefront of holding summits at various countries and pushing them for climate action. In September 2019, the UN General Secretary called for the Climate Action Summit, bringing together representatives of governments, non-state actors, international organizations and business houses. Energy transition, nature-based solutions, industry transition, cities and local action, climate finance and carbon pricing, and resilience were the five key areas identified. However, like most of the summits, countries differed according to their determination to mitigate climate change. The Nordics and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were the most determined and clearly indicated their action plan. On the extreme end, the UN vetoed the speeches of representatives of Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Australia, Japan, South Korea and United States.

The UN Secretary-General said that he wished to hear action-oriented announcements from all the stakeholders. Undoubtedly this is ambitious and far-fetched because mitigation efforts also imply a transformation of the economies. The governments are then expected not to create differences in terms of opportunities, be fair enough to solve economic inequalities and ensure that there are haves and have nots or winners or losers. As noble, the idea seems, it is not very easy for governments to achieve this feat. This is particularly apt in cases of developing countries where there is a juggle between economic growth and climate concerns.

Also, few countries would not be willing to transform their economies due to the plausible loss of revenue and the difficulty in finding alternatives. Saudi Arabia, for instance, is not very keen on giving up its status of being one of the largest crude oil producers of the world. Russia and the United States also fall in this category where they desire to exploit fossil fuels and export it.

The summit again observed the difference of approach between smaller states and big powers. Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Nordic countries, Germany, France and the United Kingdom pronounced stronger measures, while the big economies did not seem to make a mark at the summit. Civil society, through climate protests, ensured that it is heard well. However, these protests and sloganeering were limited to a few countries, mostly the developed world. Therefore, there is another concern about how people in different strata of countries perceive climate change.

The United Nations Climate Change Conference, 2019 hosted COP-25 to the UNFCCC, CMP-15 to the Kyoto Protocol and the meeting of parties to the Paris Agreement. There was no consensus here either. Parties diverged on the issues of carbon market and carbon credits. There was no uniformity in the views of the participants of the both the summits, very similar to all other climate-related summits. Nevertheless, it brought together all those states that had clear, viable, concrete plans to find solutions for this global problem. It provided a platform for youngsters like Greta Thunberg to express the concerns of their generation.

Major Trends

Global protests for climate action can be considered a social movement that is being led by the civil society. Though not uniform across the world, and sometimes hidden in the backdrop, it can definitely be considered as a social movement, as it has sustained over a long period of time. Fridays For Future is an important milestone in the movement. Four major trends can be identified in this milestone.

First, the role of youth and children is evident. They have an advantage in two aspects—one, the numbers and two, social media. There are around 3 billion people under the age of 25, two-fifths of the world population. Due to social media, mass mobilization has become a possibility. Therefore, mobilization of the young can act as a very efficient pressure point for the policy-making community. History says that major social movements across the world were started and were led by the young. The most recent example is that of Chile, where students protests for the rise in subway prices spiralled into a bigger issue, with the entire population protesting for better

governance structure. This finally resulted in the Chilean administration to agree for bringing a new constitution, considering the aspirations of the people. With immense potential, the role of youth in climate protests can make a big difference. Second, climate protests are being held across countries of different strata. A profile of the countries where protests were held, would give a clear picture regarding this- Sweden, Ireland, Belgium, France, Germany and others in Europe; Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Senegal, Ghana and Uganda in Africa; India, Maldives, Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia in Asia; Australia and United States; Brazil, Venezuela and Mexico in Latin America. Third, undoubtedly, Greta is the making of a pro-environment lobby added with the power of media. The extent of penetration of social media and other forms of media have helped the climate strikes spread around the world. The tagline “Fridays For Future” is also the product of social media. Fourth, protestors while demanding climate action, have also demanded the declaration of “climate emergency”. If not an outright declaration, which is an absurd demand at this stage, a recognition for the crisis would result in much positive action.

Forecasts in 2020

Fridays For Future is a civil society led initiative. This brings to a crucial question- does climate action require a bottom-up approach? Civil society bears the brunt of the impact of climate change- it affects every individual, though the intensity might vary. Some communities are at a very crucial stage, where their livelihoods is completely dependent on the sustainability of planet’s climate and environment. Climate change is not an issue that must be solved by the political elites. Certainly, the policies must be implemented, taking climate into consideration, but they must have primarily bottom-up approach. Individual actions can make a huge difference. In this regard, following are the four possibilities that might occur-

First, climate strikes can continue and expand further, in order to keep up the pressure on the political class. Second, due to increasing awareness, individuals might try to reduce the use of plastics, if not completely stop it. Some countries have banned the use of plastic, particularly, the single-use plastics that harm the environment. Third, reducing carbon footprint might be another increasing step resorted by the civil society. Anti-flying movement, popularly known as the “flight shaming” is a new trend adopted by environmental activists, to make people aware of their carbon footprint. Flying is the most carbon-intensive activity a person can do. Known as flygskam in Swedish, the trend is gaining popularity across Europe, particularly after Greta Thunberg sailed from to the United States from Sweden to attend the UN conference. Fourth, more people are now changing their food habits in accordance with the environment. It is well proven that vegetarianism and veganism contribute immensely to protecting and maintaining the climate. As meat consumption reduces, the forests that are cleared for animal farming and for growing crops to feed them, are saved. In fact, it is the single most effective method in mitigating climate change. The trend is now popular in the western world.

Fridays For Future began in the developed world. However, the movement for climate action is not limited to the Europe. Though the protests began in the developed countries, it is attracting the developing world, which is more vulnerable to the impact

of climate change. while the developing countries lack resources to combat climate change, they are also extremely vulnerable to the disasters that follow. In the near future, we may witness more involvement of the developing countries, a more clear stance from both government and the civil society.

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Digital platforms as tools: Rise of Anti-Fracking protest movements across the world

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Background

The world stands at a crossroads regarding the future of energy production with countries struggling to take a decision on whether to go with short term gains or sustainable long-term ways. Never before have corporate interests and people's movements clashed so strongly on energy policy making, with the challenge from people taking newer forms and gaining ever widening support.

Unlike the past, internet offers previously unimaginable possibilities of projecting one's own version of what is happening with an audience that is spread across the world. The ever-increasing number of users on various social media platforms Twitter, Facebook, Youtube etc, forecast tremendous potential for easy proliferation of information, something that was only possible by traditional media earlier. Any debate now has thousands of participants worldwide with local groups using online platforms to gain and extend global solidarity. These developments and increasing digital accessibility make online platforms a crucial factor in all sociopolitical movements. This article aims to look at the global anti-fracking movement and how internet as a platform has affected the cause.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

Fracking which was highly concentrated in US for decades, later started moving into Latin America with the political leaders around the world calling shale gas the "Game Changer", "New Gas Age".

With fracking, it's the siting location that forms the foundation of movements against it. The modern society's need to provide energy for transportation and infrastructure collides with the local communities where the fracking is supposed to begin. The process also known as hydraulic fracturing is a horizontal drilling technique for removing oil and gas largely from traditionally untapped shale. The controversial part is that environmental groups and NGOs have been producing evidence of the disastrous effects of fracking in the surrounding areas. The process involves mixing highly toxic chemicals with water before drilling and it has been found out that 80 percent of these chemicals remain underground after fracking is done. The technology behind USA's natural gas revolution began gaining supporters after oil and gas prices spiked around 2008 and companies started taking interest in "unconventional gas", soon making the country the world's largest gas producer. The anti-fracking movement in USA began taking proper shape after release of Josh Fox's documentary Gasland released in 2010 along with resistance across the nation even leading to people under the banner of

“Occupy the Pipeline” attending a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hearing with gas masks and hazmat suits. The adoption of this technology had a very low profile in Latin America with the Interamerican Association for Environment Defense (AIDA) stating that there was “no previous consultation with communities, nor holistic studies carried out about the impact and risks of these techniques in any (country of Latin America). There is also no access to information about the oil companies’ contract and operations.”

Right after Latin America was thrown into the debate, community resistance and opposition have consistently grown. The most famous protest being the one that happened in early 2018, when a biologist named Esteban Servat mobilised thousands of people in Mendoza, Argentina using Facebook. He published a secret Argentine government study of the environmental effects of fracking, after which protests erupted in Argentina forcing seven draft laws to be in Argentine congress to ban it. As a result, criminal charges were filed against Servat and a judicial investigation was launched against him and others associated with a group they created - Ecoleaks. He later had to escape to Europe fearing arrest and further continued using online platforms to spread awareness, even garnering the support of Pope Francis. Likewise, the subcontinent has witnessed multiple protests with the movement showing no signs of slowing down. Esteban Servat’s case was mentioned here as he has turned into one of the most vocal figures of the anti-fracking movement. His shot to international fame was only possible with heavy campaigning through social media.

Similarly, the anti-fracking struggles around the world have successfully extended and gathered solidarity forming what we can all a truly trans local movement. Online forums such as the Global Frackdown, Camp Frack have been generating common space for small groups and organisations to come together on an international scale in the cyberspace for organising events and sharing information. As a result, protests have been going on with many winning bans and moratoriums against fracking. In the online platform, such wins are not just local wins but becomes of global significance, filling the pages of websites around the world, fueling the movement.

The online forums record the strategies, successes to generate global solidarity, for example The Global Frackdown webpage boasts of their first effort in 2012 accounting for 200 actions in 20 countries. Though transnational, in the first Global Frackdown day of action, the majority of organizations were North American among which two thirds were from USA, Europe coming close next. The website’s mission statement says, “We stand united as a global movement in calling on governmental officials at all levels to pursue a renewable energy future and not allow fracking or any of the associated infrastructure in our communities or any communities” with the activists claiming that the reason for organizing an international day of action against fracking is that the companies and multinational corporations are international players. Hence, it becomes necessary to share experience and strategy with other local initiatives. The day has been organised with help of civil society organization, Food and Water Watch with special focus on building the movement at local levels.

Literature on this topic shows us how online platforms accommodate dense networks

for information exchange between non-state actors with shared values and common discourses called Transnational Networks (TAN), with the important assumption here being that the international actors serves as an useful agent for the local groups. This assumption seems to be holding up well as far as anti-fracking movement is considered with protestors in first world not only demanding fracking to be stopped in their countries but urging their governments to stop fracking in developing countries. The coming together of so many local narratives with the help of online platforms have made everyone realize that the dominant narrative of 'man saving nature' homogenizes extreme local differences. Unlike dominant narrative, the anti-fracking promotes the idea that new environmentalists have been trying to promote for a long time. The idea that protection of nature by humans is misleading and struggle is to protect places and sets to relationships necessary for everyday life. This understanding along with political anger have been instrumental in this movement. Further, climate change activists and environmentalists have joined this movement as fracking is a danger that is visible while global warming seems to be problem in the future attracting less people into action. People whose daily lives have been affected by fracking need no other external convincing on the dangers of the practice, hence anti-fracking movement has occupied the forefront of the struggle against climate change, bringing the topic into both the physical and political landscape.

Major Trends

Online platforms have facilitated these protests and movement in various ways. As mentioned earlier by helping to show various versions of what is happening and also helping with what Arturo Escobar says as 'articulation of alternative imaginaries. It means that internet helps in countering a common perception regarding social movements that they end once people stop hitting the streets or once media loses interest. Through internet people now have the power to promote or counter a discourse, each struggle, each news report adds an ever-lasting impression in the digital space which may or may not have repercussions. Such discourses further have the potential to sustain the movement and gather more supporters and even influencing the policy making like we have seen in so many places.

Any social movement do not happen in a flash, it consists of various stages and in this context all the stages have been immensely facilitated by digital platforms. The discontent that surrounded fracking was spread out in pockets at the beginning with the looming danger of local initiatives dying out early. The preliminary stage had no or little organization with places witnessing individual actions than collective action. Online platforms helped the discontent become more widespread and suddenly gave space for people to find like-minded others along with dissemination of information. The struggle was no more just local or individual, the path to collective action was set along with strategic plans. These translocal networks facilitated and helped various local initiatives from dying out due to lack of support. For example, in 2013 solidarity protests were held in UK for the new anti-fracking struggles in Romania and Bulgaria. A year later Romanian protesters proclaimed solidarity to people of Barton Moss in the UK. The major themes across such protests is the concept of solidarity not only within but also across borders.

The organisers of these networks have been keeping definitions loose so that local groups can accommodate their needs according to the emerging circumstances. The focus at local and transnational scale is on relationship building, beginning from networks that were preexisting and interpersonal. Activists reported using various communication tools and online platforms. The toolkit available in Global Frackdown website suggests conducting events that target elected officials of the respective areas and also promoting bans as well as pressuring policy makers to encourage research on effects of fracking. It is also clear that at the local level organizing have been heavily facilitated through social media. While earlier it was difficult to reach elected officials and policy makers as general public rarely have access to traditional media now it is much easier with online platforms. People tagging elected officials in posts regarding fracking and also tagging famous people in order to receive support have been an integral part of this movement. Anti-fracking tweets by Hollywood actor Mark Ruffalo were shared by protesters worldwide with many making pictures of his most famous character Hulk smashing fracking. Such efforts are aimed at getting more people into the movement and also at mainstreaming it. For example, the Friends of the Earth website says that Mark Ruffalo is the 'most recognisable person who opposes fracking'. Along with this they have also posted story about a UK government survey which states that the public support for shale gas is very low, fluctuating around 16% and roughly a third of people oppose it. In UK, anti-fracking groups have been springing up with the number now being nearly 300. This spike can be related with the increase in fracking after the prime minister David Cameron said the country would go 'all out for shale'. The website also gives a visitor links to these anti fracking groups while proclaiming, "Friends of the Earth has a huge community of local groups across the UK. Together we support people fending off fracking."

One more observation about how online platforms help this movement is that internet easily facilitates 'blockadia'. According to Naomi Klein, this is a 'roving transnational conflict zone', the front lines of climate movement where activists across nations work in sync. The farmers in Poland after learning that their country has the largest reserve of shale gas in Europe became overnight anti-fracking activists and caught international attention. One may wonder how this was possible, a peak into it reveals that they were joined by French Green activist Jose Bove, an already famous figure in global anti-fracking circuit after his efforts lead to victory against fracking in France. In 2011 Jose Bove along with Polish-American filmmaker Lech Kowalski, farmers, activists conducted a militant campaign against Chevron and when the company returned two years later a 400-day blockade called #OccupyChevron was done by nearly 300 farmers forcing Chevron to end its operation in Poland completely. Likewise, the company has faced strong opposition in many countries. A nationwide anti-fracking revolt in Romania forced it to pull out.

The Pungesti anti fracking protests received support from many international organizations including the European Green Party, European Peasant Movement, Helsinki Committee. Such international solidarity and resistance towards one perpetrator are a result of transnational network being of great use and those transforming into a successful version of blockadia. The very visible effects of fracking have put the anti-fracking movement on the forefront of climate change activism.

While multinational corporate interests have found it easy to choke discourse on global warming putting forward the argument of lack of evidence and other similar reasons, the fracking debate seems to be a totally different case.

Australia even witnessed a company investing a lot of money to counter the organic anti fracking discourse. The anti-fracking movement is definitely small compared to the corporate interests, but such a grassroots movement have certainly deflated fracking to some extent around the world and for each success, external solidarity has been an important factor. Unlike many types of activism which works on trouble in own backyard, activists here took it beyond that, illustrated well by famous French anti fracking slogan, "Ni ici, ni ailleurs" which means neither here nor elsewhere. This global solidarity has also helped first world activists understand various differences that were homogenized earlier by dominant narratives. For example, the anti-fracking protests in Algeria was not only about dealing with resulting water contamination but also a fight back against neocolonialism. One must note that while energy giant Total was not allowed to continue fracking in its native soil France after protests, it started seeking alternate sources in other countries. Algeria being a former French colony and Total planning to do fracking there led to strong outrage even from French leftists and environmentalists. As soon as the news about Total fracking in Algeria spread, Algerian civil society groups began discussing resistance strategies with others in Morocco, France, UK etc at the World Social Forum in 2013.

These are the cases that show the such movements are not just about environment justice but social justice too. Consider ourselves as a part of nature rather than the one who tames it bring newer perspectives into the game. The struggle now also becomes of power and greater democratic participation. The spread out and heterogeneous movement against fracking now not only hold promise for a world without fracking but one that is more democratized. At the core of this movement is the everyday struggle for resources of the people participating in local initiatives. For them this is also about having a greater say in policy making of the country and a struggle against social equality. Many cases across the globe illustrate a shift in how anti-fracking protests take place, rather than just being reactionary protests aimed at a cause, they are also articulating a wide range of other concerns. The reason behind is to pull in larger crowds and more diverse actors. In the process other societal problems like corruption, violation of human rights is also highlighted. In fact, anti-fracking protesters were also present in the now famous Occupy Wall Street movement. Citizens now join even though their main concern is not environmental, like how corruption scandals related to fracking industry in UK made more people to join the movement.

Forecast in 2020

The coming of novel corona virus has crippled protest movements around the world. The virus has definitely given time for authoritarian leaders to relax and initiate moves that they couldn't while active protests were going on in the streets. The unstoppable Hong Kong protest was easily dispersed citing the ban of gatherings with more than four people. Post the beginning of the health crisis a highly shared Ted Talk video speaks of how pandemics like corona virus are our future and how further uninhibited exploitation would lead to contact with viruses that human body

has no knowledge of, leading to another crisis. Such line of thinking would certainly help future environmental protests even though the economic recession would lead to multinational corporations advocating for further drilling, the aggressive practice of which may have disastrous long-term effects.

With both authoritarian and more democratic states expected to go by this considering the financial situation, post pandemic people's protest movement may certainly induce what the video predicts into their discourse. Environmentalists have been showing the decrease in pollution as a positive side of the lockdown but the hype maybe short lived with coal production expected to reach back normal as soon as lockdown ends and demand goes up. Politically, economic stimuli will certainly warm up conventional industries and would obviously put rain forests in danger like in Brazil. While it will definitely take time for on the streets protests to begin again, the online platforms definitely help the emotions to linger longer but there is every chance that states and corporate interests hijack the fracking discourse easily post the pandemic. Developing countries have less options than exploit conventional sources, further there would be much pressure from developed countries.

The question here is that how many unemployed people are willing to spend time on saving future. The recession will displace many off their social status, would the people behind daily necessities have time to rally behind people on ground zero suffering due to fracking. Pessimistic outlook into the future predict reduction of public investment in green technology as propping up other business to reduce unemployment seems important now. Even if somehow the economics become greener with optimists claiming that the uncertainty post corona virus would make people take climate change seriously there are also chances of right-wing nationalism and xenophobia gripping various countries. It must also be analysed how the anti-globalization discourse getting stronger post the pandemic would affect the anti-fracking movement as it includes people from both sides of the political spectrum.

As the bigger question of climate change looms behind, there are even environmentalists going for shale gas stating that it is better in comparison with conventional oil and coal gas and some sacrifices are necessary. Energy policy especially with the upcoming recession will only become more controversial, one can only wait and see how regulations would change and form anew. It is be looked upon whether the framing of debate regarding fracking would be limited to environmental and economic or would also include social issues and aboriginal politics in the future. Further, the intensification on one side would definitely have reaction. The left politics seems to be gaining much from the movement like we saw in Romania where the foremost demand was greater public control over use of natural resources and a halt in privatization. Likewise, tension would certainly provide opportunity for radical stream to gain control of protests. Unless people regroup post the pandemic and continue the movement, there are chances that it would lose steam in front of what Naomi Klein calls the disaster capital complex. In the name of bringing back the economy up multinational interests would induce economic plans with short term gains and the shale gas industry would be back on its feet in no time. If people wait for everything to return back to normalcy, it may just turn out to be late.

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Technology in contemporary global protest movements the world

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Background

The last decade has witnessed an increasing number of protests around the world. These protests have a lot of resemblance among them, especially the fact of masses of people coming to the streets. Yet these protests are diverse in nature, which define their unique characteristic. The increasing frequency of global protest has become a major trend in international politics. Though these protests have had different breaking points and varying catalysts leading the protests to survive for a longer period of time than expected, the impact of each remains indispensable.

The present time that we live in is called the “information age” and the 21st century is often referred to as the “age of information technologies”. The developments over the years have changed the kind of activism in a more innovative and creative way than we used to see otherwise. We do not see a complete shift in activism to nonviolent action but we have definitely moved away from the usual means and methods used in the protests. Activists continue to respond, opposing the repressive regimes in unconventional ways. They are using social media sites and other technology benefits to drive the current surge in global dissent. It has been noted that there have been more than 300 methods of nonviolent resistance, constituting plenty of innovation, specifically on the tech and digital front. At the core of these rising numbers is the increased accessibility and advancement of specific technologies — namely, ones that help activists use mass communication tools more easily and cheaply. In a way, we have seeded the growth of electronic protest and there is a need to deal with another aspect of today’s activism, which is virtual activism and the kind of impact it is going to bear on us.

Arab Spring, during 2010-2015 was a time of great mobilization in half a dozen countries by citizens attempting to bring down authoritative rulers and uphold civil society. Since then there has been a rise in the tide of citizen protests elsewhere in the world. Just in 2015, significant protests erupted or continued in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Brazil, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Iraq, Japan, Lebanon, Macedonia, Malaysia, Moldova, and Venezuela. Many of these protests have been profoundly important events in the countries where they have taken place. They are often large-scale gatherings of citizens who are determined to challenge fundamental policies or structures of power and improve the economic status of the people. The agenda of these protests vary from fighting against the autocratic and oppressive regimes to raising voices in view of increasing environmental, climate and humanitarian crises to gender equality. Harsh and violent retaliation by the state, security forces, and other pro-government elements tried to control these protests

and were successful to some extent. But over a period of time, protestors have learned to evade these tactics of state and become more aware. From the vantage point of both sides, the use of technology has benefited them to withhold their stand. Technology is a double edge sword here!

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

From the recent protest movements across the globe, we can identify a few common characteristics and trends that can be helpful to trace the path from their origin to their ongoing activities to the end of the protests that could result in changes or repercussions, if any.

The nature and the type of protests have evolved and are different from the traditional model of protest movements. There is a departure from the traditional way of carrying out the protests. The print media (newspapers, newsmagazines) and broadcast news (radio and television) used to be the only and major sources of information. Through these channels, a larger audience was reached and the information was spread and broadcasted. Otherwise, locally a large number of banners, posters, and pamphlets were used that helped to keep the spirit of the social movement alive. Word-of-mouth communication was also very prominent. Active leadership was the crux of these movements. People relied on a leader capable enough to deal with the state machinery to take the cause of the protests forward. It also helped in sustaining the goal and objective of the protest movements throughout. The states, on the other hand, used force to shut down the protests. These days the protest movement enabled with technology has different angles to its cause due to ease of access and transmission of information. There are lessons learnt and mistakes avoided every time a new protest emerges in a part of the country. Mostly leaderless, unstructured and organised on social media, these demonstrations have multiplied internationally. Cheap, readily available, easily identifiable and above all representing an obligation imposed by the state, like yellow vests have started to become the symbol of these movements helping in the movement's rapid spread.

The most ubiquitous thing that sets these uprisings apart from pro-democracy movements in the past is that millions of citizens are armed with a stockpile of tech resources. Encrypted messaging apps to Social Media Platforms have facilitated smooth information sharing. Some demonstrators feel these apps have fuelled this new kind of leaderless protest. An underlying assumption is that social media is making it more difficult to sustain an authoritarian regime. The current wave of protests is a testimony on how social networks have made regime change easier to organize and execute. They have become mere tools allowing protest groups to lower the costs of participation, organization, recruitment, and training. Some of the widely used apps are Whatsapp, Telegram, HKmap.live and social media platform sites like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube. The videos and images that are captured using these apps can be shared online in realtime and get traction on the international platform. Most importantly, live streaming via social media has exposed the authorities accountable for unnecessary use of force or violence caught on camera and it helps document the events. As authorities have witnessed social media providing a platform to protesters, the former is increasingly deploying tactics against these sites to suppress dissent.

The core of these protest movements is young people, many of them university or secondary school students. In general, youth have been impressive catalysts to bring changes given their spirit, focus, and savvy. They have maintained a clear message, mobilized a nation, and rallied support from various sectors and age groups. Youth participation is instrumental as they have been at the forefront demanding outright for democratic reforms and economic liberalization in the face of cronyism and economic decline. Hundreds of thousands of activists, many of them students, took to the streets with banners, speeches, and songs. Frustrated by police corruption, economic woes, human rights violations, and oppressive regimes, a wave of pro-democracy protests are started by the youth across the globe. Some analysts believe that “protests could not have occurred without the ideological and numerical push of a huge mass of angry youth.” With technology on their side, youth have been able to exploit and exercise freedom of speech more often and freely. The majority of the support garnered in the protest movements comes from the online communities and groups.

Major Trends

Earlier the movements that actually yielded any kind of change or that were more sustained, they had a proper organizing structure with a leader and different committees sharing responsibilities. The recent protest movements have no central leadership and they are known for being leaderless, whose organisations and proceedings are not set out within a room for party meetings; instead, they emerge on social media. A different kind of leadership is emerging similar to a networked technology that supports peer-to-peer network weaving instead of a top-down hierarchy. The whole network of people is heading the movement and these are the uprisings that are coordinated by smartphone and inspired by hashtags, rather than guided by any leader and his rhetoric. The leaderless nature of these protests acts as a shield making it harder for the authoritarian governments to quash, but at the same time, it may also make the movements more difficult to sustain.

The democracy movement finds strength in numbers but weakness in names. The fear of identification of the individuals taking part in the protests has made anonymity very crucial. Authorities of the state have found a way to combat the protestors by penalising and punishing them. It's impossible to arrest the entire crowd, but if one gets identified on the surveillance systems, it is easier for authorities to single out for punishment. The most common tools used to hide their identities by protestors include the use of masks, balaclavas, and protective headgear. The frontline protesters have concealed themselves behind cameras or by using umbrellas. The same fear of identification extends to the digital space. Protesters have adopted pseudonyms instead of their real names, locked their online accounts. They have been vigilant to erase their digital footprint in every possible way. If there are no precautions undertaken to hide identity, the risks faced can range from personal to family safety to job insecurity. Even if protestors escape arrest or punishment in the present, the chances of future unknown retaliation for participating in the movement, supporting it online, or refusing to condemn remains a possibility.

All of these protest movements and gatherings have been taking place at public spaces and sometimes in the vicinity of the government structures. Public squares have been considered as places of encounter and exchange since the time of the Greek Agora and the Roman Forum. They are not just places for people to gather and interact but

also to demonstrate reflecting the idea of people's power and their solidarity. We can notice some striking similarities in terms of scale and settings compared to earlier protest movements. Protestors have usually gathered at places that have some kind of historical, political and economic significance. Human chains around such places are a new addition to these gatherings. Though these represent acts of protest transforming the public spaces, it has often led to the rerouting of the traffic, blocking of highways, bridges or tunnels, and chaos at airports. Basically, delaying and disrupting the functioning of the government structures and also people's lives. Nevertheless, from the protestor's point of view, it's one of the ways to grab the attention of people who might be unaware of the cause or are choosing to ignore it and bring authorities on their toes pushing them to act fast and address the issue.

Technology supports protest movements. This is as true as the fact that people have also used technology-social media platforms to spread a lot of fake news, biased news reporting, twisted facts, and misguided information. Fake news, which is intentionally and verifiably false is designed to manipulate people's perceptions of reality and to influence their decision making. But it has also become a method to stir up and intensify social conflict. These facts mislead people allowing mistrust to grow among people so that unity is broken. In some cases, this mistrust results in incivility, protest over imaginary events, or violence. People with malicious intent can use fake news to make conflicts more intense. Social media has long been a battleground for government propaganda efforts. There are instances when states have tried to influence the Presidential election of a country. In another case where a government sends fake news to its own citizens, the effort is to stifle conflict rather than arouse it. Governments have even employed people to spread propaganda on social media and governmental websites.

We can see there is a rise in the biometric databases and Surveillance Systems used by the states and state-controlled organisations. In the absence of any clear law or rules and regulations that can define the limit of use of such systems either by the state or any other organisation have made the technology roll out in a "chaotic" fashion. The use of facial recognition technology, surveillance cameras, drones, overhead airplanes to monitor the target (people/groups) has increased and the debate has intensified over the threat it could pose to personal privacy. Cameras and checkpoints have been rolled out intensively. Facial recognition has been used as a crime-fighting tool for a very long time now, but it has been upgraded to the highest capacity and its effectiveness has increased by manifold. This has helped the government to cross-reference with photos on ID cards to track and control the movement of citizens and their access to phone and bank services. States have credited the use of such technology to a drop-in crime rate as low as 40 percent. States have also expanded their biometric databases recording every aspect of citizens by entering into covert contracts with Tech giants. Personal, financial, health, social, and other data is being collected by entities ranging from social media giants and apps to websites and retailers—anyone and everyone. These biometric systems are developed to control access to places, products, and services. Once the biometric data is captured, it frequently flows between governmental and private sector users. This has raised concerns about privacy risks. The privacy issue is central to biometrics and analysts believe deploying biometrics poses a considerable level of risk to human rights.

There are reports that suggest that there is a consecutive decline in web freedom across the globe and two-thirds of the world's internet users live under regimes of government censorship. The luxury of instant access to information via the web or internet has been crucial for activism. This makes it a significant threat to authoritarian governments, leading many countries to strictly censor websites, content, and communication. There are different ways employed to censor the data. One can entirely block access to websites that regulators don't approve of and remove any information on specific topics, respectively. Sites and content can be restricted either manually or automatically with algorithms that detect and stop access to controversial material. They can also be blocked and filtered on either a permanent or a dynamic basis. These techniques are going to suppress the criticism of the regime, block resistance movements, ban ideas and content that are deemed inappropriate by the state. Some governments may choose to block certain content during elections, political scandals, or other events when they perceive that the regime could be harmed.

These are all some of the common trends with respect to the global protest movements with respect to the use of technology both by the protestors and also the state. The recent developments over the last decade seem to have taken lessons from every other protest in the world and also have learnt new ways of dealing with their authoritative regimes.

The Hong Kong protests that started as a march against the proposed extradition law is one of the largest democracy fights against the Chinese regime. Both the protestors and the state used resources on their ends to safeguard their interests. There were smart lampposts equipped with sensors, cameras, and internet connections installed in the HongKong city. When these lampposts were installed, the protesters were determined to take them down. The government had said the smart lampposts would be used only for benign purposes and as part of smart-city initiatives. —that they would take air quality measurements and assist with traffic control, and would not collect facial or other personal data. But actually, this kind of surveillance infrastructure existed to monitor the protest movements and identify the people taking part in it, target those individuals and their families and impose harsh punishment. governments and corporations will certainly be tempted to run with it. Chinese platforms such as WeChat and Weibo apparently censored content related to the protests. Phones constantly pinged nearby cell phone towers, revealing locations of the movement of the human chain or the protestors.

The protestors made heavy use of two software tools: LIHKG (Li-dan), a Reddit-like message board, and the messaging app Telegram. These apps assisted different groups on these social media platforms to collaborate, to work together, to make it easier for them to communicate and consolidate and do their call to actions. Telegram includes a feature that allows one to see if a contact is a member of a group. Hkmap.live is a real-time, volunteer-run live map of protests that would help one by showing the markers for police presence, elite police units, tear gas, demonstrations, and warnings about police in public transit. Information on the map is crowdsourced through Telegram. To cut down online trolling, there were few measures taken by the protestors. They categorized users based on whether they have joined the site before or after a cutoff date at the start of the protests and only people with Hong Kong ISP email were

allowed to join the groups or be part of the protest movement. Online discussion in Cantonese which is mostly not understood by Mandarin speakers, is also used as a defense against online trolling. Such steps have blocked China from taking otherwise steps of mobilizing a pro-mainland Cantonese-speaking community to influence or derail discussions on this public forum. Protestors carried umbrellas, to block the view of CCTV cameras or the helicopters that flew overhead and yet they made it look like to avoid the scorching heat of the sun. They also made use of the laser pointers to confuse the police, and also to block mass surveillance systems, particularly the facial recognition systems. With all such bold steps, the protestors came up with an idea of forming a human chain on the 30th anniversary of the Baltic way of protest in the former Soviet Union. A human chain was formed around the MTR subway. This large action, an impressive event, was organized in just four days by volunteers who were all strangers to one another.

The Arab Spring that swept through the Middle East and North African countries, though similar, was different in every country. The revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia were non-violent. However, when the revolution spread to Libya and Syria, it became violent and Dictator Muammar Gaddafi was only defeated after the intervention of the US. Similarly, protests became violent in Syria where the revolution is still occurring. The growth of access and use of ICT in the Middle East and North Africa provided resources for protesters and governments to influence political and social events. Both the activists and the authoritarian governments had very little knowledge about social media and it was almost at the same time they were exposed to these things. Activists were able to organize and mobilize in 2011 partly using social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. They were used extensively to communicate messages amongst local participants as well as stimulate an international response. Most of the countrymen recognised the fact that the most accessible and popular state TV, was biased and the content was covered and controlled by the state military Therefore low-cost video cameras and projector were used to train community members throughout the nation to document military abuses and project these videos on walls within their own communities, in a project called Askar Kazeboon (also known as 'The Military Are Liars')Egypt's anti-military campaigns.

One of the most popular uprisings was the "April 6 Youth Movement". It was a Facebook campaign that generated tens of thousands of positive responses to the call to rally against government policies. The display of a forest of arms holding up cell phones during the demonstration recorded the police atrocities and posted on Youtube within a matter of hours. The use of font also played a great role in influencing people. In 2009 the introduction of Facebook in Arabic attracted more users than when the site was in English. There are instances when the state (like in the case of Tunisia and Egypt) cut access to mobile services and the Internet, but in turn, it encouraged people to leave home and seek information and join protests.

The state and the military in MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) have used similar channels to spread misinformation and get the situation under control. Sites like Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp and SMS services were blocked. In Egypt, nearly all the routes and networks were taken down at the same time. DNS and ISPs (internet

service providers) were also shut down. The essential information that traveled across the country as well as in and out of the country was controlled. The Syrian government labelled as “tech-savvy foe,” used to closely monitor the online dissidents. There was a suspicion that the telecommunications ministry was tapping into Facebook activity – passwords and private information remained stolen and read. A pro-government group and self-proclaimed “Syria Electronic Army”, was accused of using the Internet to attack its opposition. It once hacked into the Harvard University website and replaced the home page with a picture of President Bashar Al-Assad along with a message accusing the United States of supporting the Syrian rebels. The group even offered some online instructions on how to use Denial of Service (DoS) software to attack anti-government websites. Internet freedom was a major concern and the primary cause of the Tunisian Revolution. Tunisia had one of the most developed Internet systems for the lowest cost in all of North Africa, its government executed a malicious piece of code that would record passwords on websites such as Facebook.

The 2019-20 Catalanian protest was started in Spain when the supreme court in Madrid sentenced nine pro-independence Catalan politicians to long prison terms for their roles in the Catalan referendum on independence in 2017. What at first, began as peaceful mass demonstrations later turned into violence. A secretive Catalan protest group, basically an online activist group, calling itself Tsunami Democratic, had drawn thousands of followers and had directed its members to protest sites. This group has come up with a new app for coordinating protest activity in the region. Tsunami Democratic is using this app as an organising tool that helps in coordinating actions and evading police detection. This app is not available through Android’s Play Store or on Apple’s App Store. Instead, one has to download an APK file (an Android Package file used to distribute applications on Google’s Android operating system) from the website, and manually install it on their phone. This type of installation process avoids the big tech firms removing it from app stores following pressure from the government. It also allowed whoever developed the app to keep their identity more private than if they had published their creation through an official app store. The protest group seems to have learnt from the Hong Kong protest when one of the organising applications had to be brought down by Apple owing to the government pressure.

To counter this, the Spanish Authorities launched an investigation aiming to discover the individuals behind the group. They have also sent a takedown request to GitHub, demanding the Tsunami Democratic app to be removed and defining the organization “as a criminal organization driving people to commit terrorist attacks”.

A wave of social protest broke over all of Latin America. Growing dissatisfaction with political leadership, social and economic constraints, reprisals against austerity measures in places like Chile, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia have mobilized citizens. People have resorted to the use of technology to report violence share security and legal advice. At the time of social unrest, communication becomes a problem due to network glitch but sometimes it is the deliberate government action to block and disrupt the network. Quito saw a similar incident when people started posting about military deployments on the streets of Quito and the death of a protester and immediately the servers where the multimedia content gets stored were brought

down.

Other than the usual measures taken to stop the protestors, some states like Chile approved a bill that would penalise protestors for covering their faces during demonstrations. The surveillance systems and cameras used by Colombia state were advanced that had the ability to identify, in real-time, the features around the eyes and nose of people who have their faces covered. In Bogota, over 90 drones were used to monitor the demonstrations.

Forecast in 2020

The recent developments tell us how each side has tried to use the technology to shift the balance of power in their direction and neutralise their opponent. In this stalemate, the outcome is not the main concern but the price paid by each side. While the state continues to neutralise the protest movements, people will also resort to new platforms and tools. There are positives and negatives concerning protesting as technology advances, the more it progresses, the more the mode of protesting and the ways of neutralising it will also see a progression. It becomes imperative to deal with the negative aspects of the use of technology by both sides. The issues created out of these situations pose a severe threat to states, people and property.

One of the issues is that too much reliance on social media has given more insights into a country's governance and social problems. Sometimes this becomes a source of embarrassment for the regimes of developing countries when the deeper pockets of the country remain exposed. Although there exist many parameters based on which the countries remain divided already, a digital divide has also started persisting within countries. The global digital divide is largely an economic story. Most advanced countries have better access to the internet while the underdeveloped and developing countries lag behind.

Countries where freedom of expression is limited, automated analysis of social media is used to assess public opinion. This can affect policymaking. The estimation of public opinion by analyzing social media, the production of daily census data, or the use of algorithms to estimate the effects of and connections between different policies, all these possibilities change the way how policymaking is perceived and executed. There are a number of ways in which policymaking and the changes caused by technological progress can be transformed into new ways of governance. The implementation of Big Data Analytics supports early-warning systems, and sentiment analysis of social media or real-time decision support systems have a potential influence on the elements, steps, and consecutive nature of the policy cycle. There is no limit in terms of age or how educated a person is when they handle technology in terms of operating as simple as a smartphone or accessing a social website. But hardly 5-10% of the functionality of the technologies is known to most of the people. The fact that the technology is simple to use and it just works for anybody can be troublesome when anything out of the ordinary appears and people are not aware of the action to be taken. There is little or no attempt at trying to understand the cause and therefore no sight of the consequences. This technological literacy needs to be addressed. Reaching the uneducated, non-tech-savvy population remains a challenge as it requires to overcome limitations of technology.

With the shelter of anonymity, comes the danger of targeting the wrong people and the actual intent of the social movement could be lost. Though protestors have found a way by going incognito to evade police from identifying them it increases the risk of punishing the innocents. The surveillance systems are designed by algorithms which stand a high chance of going wrong and show results in case of similar features of two people.

Manipulation of systems can lead to loss of property and lives. When there is a stealthy manipulation of data for profits then we call it a data manipulation attack. Data manipulation attacks could result in as small as hacking a personal account to very big trouble of crippling organizations as data breaches. Data manipulation may result in distorted perception by shifting data around, which could lead to billions of dollars in financial loss or even potential loss of life, depending on the system in question, and the type of data being altered. Someone gaining access to biometric databases, health information, military codes, and secrets can create havoc and endanger millions of lives.

In the coming days, protest movements could involve the use of more creativity and innovation. Technology has forever changed how plans for protests are executed by helping people communicate. Already the old-style authoritarian governments are replaced with more tech-savvy authoritarian governments. The digital space has undergone a remarkable transformation. With the industrial 4.0 revolution catching up the pace in all the sectors the change is going to be more of inhuman giving way to automation. The future of the protest movements remains unpredictable. Some of the countries do not encourage gatherings of people in public spaces. People or groups need to take prior approval from the government for any type of demonstration. This has worked in favor of the governments as the state can avoid the rise of protest movements and the things that follow it later. In such cases, people can resort to online ways to show their dissent. There are high chances that online protests can replace the conventional way of protesting and people need not flock to the street anymore. The precision and the scale of surveillance systems can help states to reduce the corruption and criminal cases to a great extent. It is more likely to use these devices in other areas as well and protestors will have to be more cautious.

The divide between countries could widen up more. The economies of underdeveloped countries struggle to remain stable due to the poor living condition and access to basic amenities to its citizens remains always a priority. The wider use of technology in such cases would be a luxury difficult to afford. Technology can also result in the loss of hundreds of jobs as the automation is going to reduce the dependency on human effort. The Protest for employment creation is possible by all means to take place and the states can come under pressure to create more jobs. The forecast of the protests is going to be high-tech and we could see an techno-evolutionary arms race between authorities and protestors. Ultimately technology is merely a tool, and its use in an effective and responsible manner would serve the actual purpose of its invention.

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