
SUMMARY of the Article “Street Protests,” Dawn, August 20th, 2024

Street protests have proven to be a powerful tool for toppling hated regimes, as witnessed recently in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which has left many Pakistanis wondering why similar actions haven't yielded the same results in their country. Historically, Pakistan was one of the first regional states to achieve regime change through protests, toppling Ayub Khan in 1969 and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977, while protests also weakened Ziaul Haq and Pervez Musharraf. Globally, street protests have become a prominent method of opposing regimes, with the Carnegie Global Protest Tracker recording over 700 protests in 147 states since 2017. However, only about a third of these protests led to policy or regime changes, and less than 10 succeeded in toppling regimes. Iconic revolutions, such as those in Russia, France, and China, not only overthrew autocratic regimes but also resulted in significant ideological shifts and the collapse of the old military-backed autocracy. In contrast, many modern protests, even those that topple regimes, fail to achieve lasting change or good governance, as seen in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and Iran's revolution. Effective governance requires sustained social or political movements with clear, egalitarian agendas. The challenge for Bangladesh's students, who have protested against Prime Minister Hasina Wajed's regime, lies in transforming their initial focus on job quotas into a broader and more effective political vision. Pakistan's inability to replicate such protests is attributed to fatigue from previous failed movements, the state's suppression of progressive social movements, and the evolving, shifting nature of its autocracy, which prevents sustained anger against a single regime. The article concludes that Pakistan needs strong, sustained social movements, like the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, which addresses the survival issues of marginalized groups, to pave the way for egalitarian rule.

Easy/Short SUMMARY:

Street protests have been successful in toppling regimes in countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, but they haven't been as effective in Pakistan recently. In the past, protests in Pakistan brought down leaders like Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Globally, protests have become a common way to oppose governments, but many don't lead to real change. The article explains that even when protests succeed in toppling regimes, they often fail to bring about good governance. The challenge is to turn these protests into long-lasting movements with clear goals. In Pakistan, fatigue from past failures, state suppression, and a changing political landscape have made it hard for protests to succeed. The article suggests that strong social movements, like the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, are needed to bring about true change in the country.

SOLUTIONS to The Problem:

Building Strong Social Movements

Develop organized and sustained social movements with clear agendas that address the root causes of inequality and demand lasting political and social change.

Educating the Masses

Increase public awareness about the importance of political engagement and the potential for collective action to bring about positive change.

Supporting Progressive Leadership

Identify and support progressive leaders within movements who can articulate and implement an egalitarian vision for governance.

Enhancing Coordination Among Groups

Foster cooperation and coordination among various grassroots and social groups across different regions to strengthen the impact of their movements.

Addressing Systemic Issues

Focus on addressing systemic issues such as economic inequality, corruption, and the concentration of power to create a foundation for sustainable change.

Encouraging Civic Participation

Promote active civic participation by encouraging citizens to engage in peaceful protests, community organizing, and other forms of democratic action.

Ensuring Accountability

Hold political leaders and institutions accountable through constant public pressure and advocacy for transparent and responsible governance.

Leveraging Technology and Social Media

Use technology and social media to mobilize support, spread awareness, and coordinate efforts across large populations to amplify the impact of movements.

Legal Reforms to Protect Protest Rights

Advocate for legal reforms that protect the right to peaceful protest and ensure that citizens can express their dissent without fear of repression.

Building Alliances with International Organizations

Form alliances with international human rights and democratic organizations to gain support and visibility for local movements and pressure regimes to respond

to demands.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the Article:

- The Carnegie Global Protest Tracker lists over 700 street protests in 147 states since 2017.
- Less than 10 protests have successfully toppled regimes.
- Iconic revolutions in Russia, France, and China led to significant political and ideological changes.
- Street protests in Pakistan previously toppled Ayub Khan in 1969 and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977.
- The Baloch Yakjehti Committee is highlighted as a positive example of a social movement in Pakistan.

MCQs from the Article:

1. How many street protests have been tracked by the Carnegie Global Protest Tracker since 2017?

- A. 500
- B. 700**
- C. 1,000
- D. 1,500

2. Which two leaders were toppled by street protests in Pakistan?

- A. Ziaul Haq and Pervez Musharraf
- B. Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto**
- C. Liaquat Ali Khan and Ayub Khan
- D. Pervez Musharraf and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

3. What percentage of the 700+ protests led to regime change?

- A. About 10%
- B. About one-third**
- C. About half
- D. Nearly all of them

4. What is the main challenge for students in Bangladesh after their protests against Hasina Wajed?

- A. Transforming their initial focus into a broader and effective political vision**
- B. Winning international support
- C. Avoiding military intervention
- D. Forming a coalition with right-wing groups

5. Which committee is highlighted as a positive social movement in Pakistan?

- A. Pakistan People's Party
- B. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam
- C. Baloch Yakjehti Committee**
- D. Muttahida Qaumi Movement

VOCABULARY:

1. **Envious** (□□□□): Feeling of jealousy.
2. **Regime** (□□□□□): A government, especially an authoritarian one.
3. **Autocracy** (□□□□□): A system of government by one person with absolute power.
4. **Spontaneous** (□□□□□□□): Occurring as a result of a sudden inner impulse without premeditation.
5. **Fizzle** (□□□□ □□□□□): To fail or end feebly.
6. **Iconic** (□□□□□□): Widely recognized and well-established.
7. **Elitist** (□□□□□□□): Favoring a privileged group.
8. **Revolution** (□□□□□□): A forcible overthrow of a government or social order

in favor of a new system.

9. **Topple** (□□□□□): To overthrow or bring down.
10. **Egalitarian** (□□□□ □□ □□□□□□): Believing in the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities.
11. **Suppression** (□□□□): The action of suppressing something such as an activity or publication.
12. **Autocratic** (□□□□□□): Relating to a ruler who has absolute power.
13. **Sledgehammer** (□□□□□□): A large, heavy hammer used for such jobs as breaking rocks and driving in fence posts.
14. **Chisel** (□□□□□): A tool with a sharp edge for shaping wood, stone, or metal.
15. **Sustain** (□□□□□ □□□□□□): To keep up or support over time.
16. **Grassroots** (□□□□ □□□): The most basic level of an organization or society.
17. **Marginalized** (□□ □□□□□): Treating a person or group as insignificant or peripheral.
18. **Inept** (□□□□□): Having or showing no skill; clumsy.
19. **Reactionary** (□□□□□□): Opposing political or social progress or reform.
20. **Veiled** (□□□□ □□□□): Covered or concealed; not openly expressed.

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Street protests

Dr Niaz Murtaza

5-6 minutes

THE amazing ease with which street protests in Bangladesh and earlier Sri Lanka toppled hated regimes has left many Pakistanis envious as to why we can't do the same. But we were perhaps the first regional state to do so twice — angry protests in 1969, oddly most intense in the very cities that gained most from his elitist progress, toppled Ayub Khan's regime and in 1977 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's. Protests weakened Ziaul Haq and Pervez Musharraf to cause their fall later.

The Carnegie Global Protest Tracker lists over 700 street protests in 147 states since 2017. Street protests now rival armed struggles as the main way of opposing and toppling regimes. These global and our own events raise the issue of what street protests achieve. Nearly two-thirds of the 700-plus protests led to no policy or regime change; about half lasted a week or less and attracted less than 10,000 people. Those that led to some policy changes were usually spearheaded by organised entities with a clear agenda. Spontaneous protests led by unorganised groups fizzle out, without lasting change.

Less than 10 toppled regimes — and the media labels them as revolution. But the iconic revolutions in Russia, France and China had three outcomes: people's power (armed or street) toppled long-ruling, autocratic regimes; more crucially there was a change in the political or economic ideological system from an elitist to a pro-masses one, for example, from capitalism to communism or monarchy to one-party rule/ democracy; the old order of the army underpinning autocracy too collapsed.

However, even those street protests that topple regimes usually don't lead to the other two outcomes. Iran's revolution didn't lead to a pro-masses system. Some states, such as those that witnessed the Arab Spring, fell into chaos (Libya and Yemen) while Egypt soon reverted to autocracy. Thus, street protests can at best topple autocrats but don't ensure good governance. That only emerges if those leading the protests can convert themselves into sustainable social or political movements with strong egalitarian agendas and management capacities. Revolutions or protests may act as the sledgehammer that breaks the mighty rock of autocracy. But to craft the rock pieces into refined good governance structures, societies need the chisels of social movements.

The state crushes progressive social movements

This will also be the challenge for students in Bangladesh, which had sustained

economic stability and growth but not equity under Hasina Wajed. Do they have a clear agenda to do better than her? It is instructive to note that they initially started with the single-point agenda of job quotas, which Hasina had scrapped but the courts reinstated. So, in starting to protest, they oddly had little focus on her autocratic actions, including rigging in polls and a crackdown on the media and opposition. Gradually, they expanded their agenda but their future vision is still unclear.

So, while Hasina met her rightful end, the country faces future risks. The Awami League was the centre-left grassroots party, which became autocratic over time while Khaleda Zia's party is a right-wing entity sans a grassroots presence and was created by an army general. With the Awami League in disarray, more right-wing politics could surge, unless the students quickly provide a liberal alternative, which is a tough ask.

Why do street protests no longer emerge to topple our inept regimes even though they are worse than the Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan ones? There are many reasons. The earlier toppling of multiple autocrats via protests didn't deliver able rule. So, there is fatigue and dejection. Also, the state crushes progressive social movements and encourages reactionary ideas and groups that divert focus from egalitarian ideas. Finally, there is the veiled and evolving nature of our autocracy which doesn't let anger build against one regime or face. Our civilians last four to five years; even the real establishment autocrats retire after three to six years at the top. This allows them to pin blame on past villains. So, the case against retired Lt-Gen Faiz Hameed is being depicted as a one-off, while the reality is that he had the backing of top individuals.

Such autocracy is the root cause of our key problems. But one-off street protests will not help demolish such shadowy, shifting autocracy. We need strong and sustained social movements that use protests as just one tool. The rise of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee under the brave lead of Mahrang Baloch is progress in this regard as it has emerged from and addresses the survival issues of most marginalised groups. Similar grassroots groups in other regions coordinating with each other are our best hope for egalitarian rule.

The writer is a political economist with a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley.



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murtazaniaz@yahoo.com

X: @NiazMurtaza2

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