

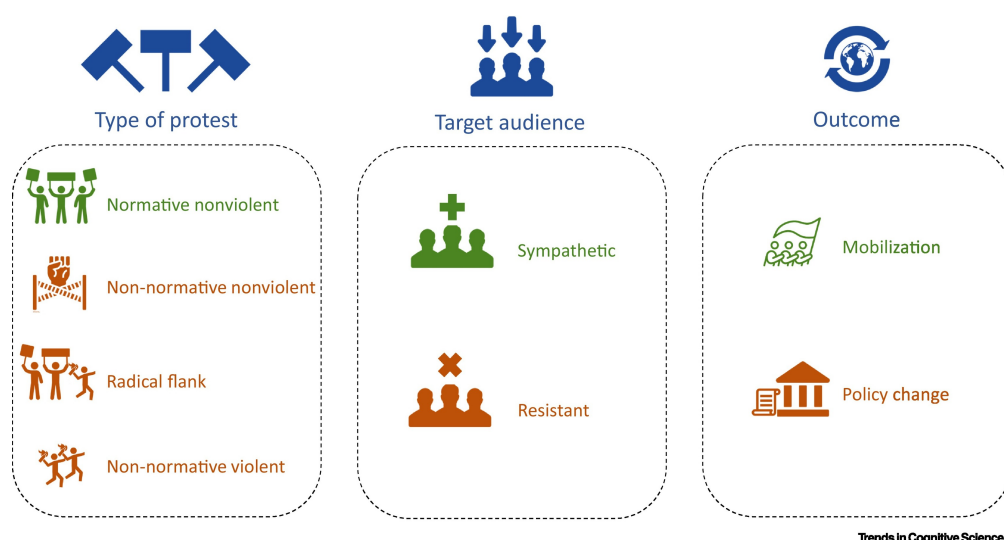
Science of Protest

Why in News?

A global study stated that protests are increasingly seen as a way to express disagreement or a lack of faith in institutions.

What is a protest?

- **Protests** – A protest is an action which involves the occupation of space over a long period of time by camping, usually in public places, to express strong disagreement with something.
- **Objectives** – To publicly express views on unfair policies and laws, to dissent from them, to shape minds & form public opinion against them, to speak to and against the government, to challenge it.
- **Causes** – It may be due to the political decisions, social injustices to people, climate change impacts among others.
- **Short term impacts** – It can influence media coverage, public opinion, policy, and politics.
- **Long term impacts** – Protests can also help to spur longer-term changes in public opinion yet such influences are harder to trace.
 - **For example:** Civil-rights protests in the 1960s and the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in 2020 changed voting behaviour and even flipped elections.



- **Success factors** – The study by Pearson suggest some factors that are responsible for success of protests.
- Large protests seem more effective than small ones
- Non-violent protests appear to be more potent than violent ones
 - **For instance**, Non-violent protests such as the Philippines' People Power

Revolution, were successful in ousting Dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.

- *Unified goals* might achieve more than diffused demands do
- *Repression by police*, for instance can win more support for protesters.
 - **Example:** The *repression by Columbia University in New York City* to arrest student protesters for Gaza peace reportedly sparked an escalation in media coverage, resulting in a wave of student protests across parts of the US and abroad.
- Conversely, violent protests are often labelled as riots and disorder by the media.

What is the status of protests across the world?

- **Increase of protests** - The study reveals that global tally of ***protests tripled since 2006***.
- **Higher political protests** - *300 protests* and revolutionary campaigns between 1900 and 2006 aimed to dethrone national leaders.
- **Success of mass movements** - Every movement that mobilised *at least 3.5% of a population* was successful as mass participation enables political leverage.
 - **For instance:** The *Take Back Parliament campaign in 2010 in UK* saw success that influenced the UK referendum in 2011 for electoral reforms.
- **3.5% Rule** - Any protests require this level of participation to ensure change but the figure can be misleading.
- A much larger number of people are probably supporting a successful revolution even if they aren't visibly protesting.
- **Non-violent disruptive protests** - Little is known about this methods.
 - **For example:** *Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion*, which include throwing soup on paintings, glueing themselves to government or oil company offices, and blocking traffic.
- Multiple surveys suggests that *disruptive methods can stimulate negative opinions* on an issue.
- **Major protests** - It include the *Arab Spring* and Occupy movements of the 2010s and the global *Black Lives Matter protests in 2020*.
- *Farmer protests* have erupted in countries such as *Germany, Belgium, and India* over new regulations.

What is status of protest in India?

- **Historical protests** - The background of the Indian Constitution is formed by its anti-colonial struggle.
 - **For instance:** Gandhi's satyagraha movements including *civil disobedience movement in 1930* (salt satyagraha).

*The **International Day of Non-Violence** is observed on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of non-violence.*

- Protests have also offered points of inclusion and participation to the voices that are

not part of the mainstream as seen in the protests for creation of Andhra or the Chipko movement.

- **Constitutional recognition** - The Right to protest peacefully is enshrined in the Indian Constitution
- **Article 19(1)(a)** - It guarantees the freedom of speech and expression.
- **Article 19(1)(b)** - It assures citizens the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
- **Article 19(2)** - It imposes reasonable restrictions on the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
- **Article 51A** - It makes it a fundamental duty of every citizen “to safeguard public property and to abjure violence”.
- **Reasonable restrictions on protests** - They are imposed in the interests of
 - The sovereignty and integrity of India
 - The security of the State
 - Friendly relations with foreign States
 - Public order, decency or morality or
 - In relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
- **Supreme Court** - In ***Ramlila Maidan Incident v. Home Secretary, Union of India & Ors. Case (2012)***, it had stated, ‘Citizens have a fundamental right to assembly and peaceful protest which cannot be taken away by an arbitrary executive or legislative action.’
- **Recent protests** - The farmers' protest in India during 2020 was the largest among those studied between 2006 and 2020, with an estimated 250 million participants.
- 2020 strike against the CAA-NRC citizenship matrix in India involved 250 million.

What lies ahead?

- The Right to protest is one of the core principles on which democracy survives and thrives.
- However, when a protest turns violent, as seen in some places in recent protests, it defeats the very purpose of the protest.
- While enjoying the rights, one must adhere to one's duties and responsibilities in a democratic society.

References

1. [Down To Earth| Increase in Protests across the World](#)
2. [Telegraph India| Protests in India](#)