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Protest Event Analysis: Grievances, Triggers, and Strategies in Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes

Niranjan Nampoothiri

May 2024

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) delivers world-class research, learning and teaching that transforms the knowledge, action and leadership needed for more equitable and sustainable development globally.

Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA) was an international research programme which explored how social and political action can contribute to empowerment and accountability in fragile, conflict, and violent settings, with a particular focus on Egypt, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Led by the Institute of Development Studies, A4EA was implemented by a consortium which included: the Accountability Research Center, the Collective for Social Science Research, the Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives, Itad, Oxfam GB, and the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research.

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Summary

Protests are a feature of both democratic and non-democratic regimes. However, protests in non-democratic regimes have received insufficient academic attention. The nature of protest grievances, strategies, and tactics have been little studied in authoritarian and hybrid regimes. Additionally, triggers of protests are themselves an under-theorised concept. This paper uses protest event data to understand the grievances around which protests take place, which factors trigger protests in authoritarian and hybrid regimes, and the key strategies and tactics collective action actors use when protesting. This study explores these issues using data collected from Bangladesh, Guatemala, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan. It finds that these protests can be triggered by a wide variety of issues including economic injustice, political representation, and civil rights. Key categories of triggers include violence and policy failures. Strategies used by protesting groups in such settings include forming strategic alliances whilst distancing from some actors, being mindful of confrontation, framing of grievances, and usage of social media.

Keywords

Protests; grievances; protest strategies; tactics; triggers; protest event analysis; hybrid regimes; authoritarian regimes; accountability.

Authors

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Executive Summary

Protests in authoritarian and hybrid regimes are more common than expected, despite limited civic space and weaker formal institutions for state accountability. However, these protests are not as well studied or understood as those in democratic regimes, in part due to the difficulty in documenting and accessing data from these settings. This study uses rich protest data, collected through the **Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA)** programme to contribute to this understudied subject by exploring the following questions:

1. What types of grievances are aired in authoritarian and hybrid regimes?
2. What triggers protests in these regimes?
3. What are the strategies and tactics used by protesters in such regimes?

The study synthesises findings from A4EA publications by creating a unique data set consisting of 43 protest events from six countries: Bangladesh, Guatemala, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan between 2007 and 2021. This data set notes the protest event, the grievances aired by protesters, events that triggered the protest, and strategies used to protest. The findings reveal that failure of political representation was the largest grievance aired in protests. This grievance included lack of security provided by formal authorities to vulnerable populations, instances of violent repression by state actors, corruption, and failure of judicial systems and accountability mechanisms in cases of sexual harassment. The next largest grievance was on economic issues such as rising inflation, removal of fuel subsidies, privatisation of public services, labour conditions, and inequality. Protestors also expressed grievances about the poor state of civil rights, including gender rights, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

Key triggers across the data set were acts of violence by state or non-state actors and policy failure. Key strategic choices faced by protest actors included building alliances whilst distancing from other actors, the degree of confrontation with authorities, framing grievances, and using social media as a cross-cutting strategy. Within these strategic choices specific tactics were identified such as mobilising international support; using gender, nationalist, and constitutionalist framings; choosing strategically which issues to be confrontational about based on expected backlash; and using non-violent disruption to be less confrontational. Specific tactics included using legal petitions, peaceful sit-ins, strikes, writing public letters, refusing financial support from opposition parties, distancing from more confrontational actors, and using hashtags on social media.

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Acronyms

A4EA	Action for Empowerment and Accountability
BBOG	Bring Back Our Girls
CSO	civil society organisation
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LHW	lady health worker
MIR	Música de Intervenção Rápida (rapid intervention music)
PMLN	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) political party
PEA	protest event analysis
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad (Nigeria)
SMS	short messaging service (texts)
V-DEM	Varieties of Democracy project

1. Introduction

Globally, protests have been on the rise in the last two decades in both democratic and authoritarian regimes (Chenoweth 2020; Ortiz *et al.* 2022). This rise is not limited to protests linked to rights, accountability, and freedoms, but also to right-wing protests in support of illiberal and authoritarian values (Youngs 2019). Alongside the global rise in protests, the world is becoming increasingly authoritarian, with several countries witnessing democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space (Bethke and Wolff 2020; Maerz *et al.* 2020). Protests are one of the few ways of demanding government attention towards a grievance in authoritarian regimes (Carothers and Press 2020). Generally, protest is an important political resource used by people who are unable to influence policy through other means (Lipsky 1968). Given that the world is becoming more authoritarian and non-democratic, it is important to understand how and when this important political resource is used in authoritarian and hybrid regimes.

While there has been growing recognition of the importance of understanding protests in authoritarian regimes (see Almeida 2003; Carothers and Press 2020; Chen 2011; Chen and Moss 2018), several questions remain unanswered. What types of grievances are aired in these protests? What triggers protests in authoritarian and hybrid regimes? What strategies and tactics are used by protesters in such regimes? These are all complex questions due to a lack of documentation of protests in authoritarian regimes (Almeida 2003; Carothers and Press 2020; Chen 2011; Ong and Han 2019). Answers to these questions would help scholars working on citizen–state relations, authoritarianism, protest participation, and social movements, and practitioners working on campaigns, social movements, and mobilisation in authoritarian states. Furthermore, in light of rising authoritarianism, the answers would also be relevant to those working in states which are experiencing democratic backsliding.

This study attempts to answer these questions based on five years of research data collected by the Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA) programme. A unique data set comprising 43 protest events (see Table A3 in the Annexe) was used to answer these questions. This study finds that there is a wide variety of grievances, triggers, tactics, and strategies in protests in authoritarian and hybrid regimes. Grievances on the failure of political representation and economic injustice are the most common types of grievance found in this data set. Protest triggers include acts of violence and policy failure. Strategies include building alliances, distancing from certain actors, being mindful of confrontation, framing grievances, and using social media. Tactics include building alliances with international actors, such as the diaspora, to exert external pressure on governments; using gender norms, nationalism, and constitutionalism to frame grievances; refusing support from opposition parties;

non-violent disruption through strikes, sit-ins, and writing public letters; filing legal petitions; and using videos and hashtags on social media to mobilise supporters. The study confirms findings from other studies that protests in such settings are not rare and can be related to a wide variety of grievances, importantly including political and economic grievances, as well as a substantial number related to civil rights. It also highlights the value of understanding protests through grievances and triggers, offering theoretical insights into how triggers can be studied and a variety of strategic choices.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 will explain the methodology, the creation of the protest event data set, and operationalisation of key terms for the coding process. Section 3 contains the literature review of key concepts of grievances, triggers, and strategies. Section 4 reveals the findings from the protest event analysis of the data set in relation to the research questions. Section 5 contains the conclusion and discusses the implications of the findings on literature and practice, and notes remaining dilemmas for future studies on the subject.

2. Methodology

This study used qualitative data collected under A4EA, a five-year research programme which ran from 2016 to 2021. The programme explored two broad questions:

1. How and under what conditions does citizen-led social and political action contribute to empowerment and accountability?
2. What are the strategies used, and with what outcomes, especially in settings which are democratically weak, politically fragile, and affected by legacies of violence and conflict?

A4EA studied social and political action to understand accountability and empowerment in authoritarian and hybrid regimes (Gaventa, Joshi and Anderson 2023). It generally took a 'citizen-eye' view of how authorities are perceived, how grievances are expressed, and authorities are held to account. The studies looked at citizen action broadly, which included protests among other forms of action. A4EA research varied methodologically, with qualitative, quantitative, participatory, experimental, conventional, and innovative approaches to the research questions across a wide array of projects (Anderson *et al.* 2022).

A4EA studied different types of citizen action, including protest events, in its focus countries of Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan, and initially Egypt. Other countries such as Bangladesh, Guatemala, India, and Zimbabwe were examined as part of some of the programme research outputs even though they were not a focus country. A4EA had two research phases and a total of 20 projects. It brought together more than 100 researchers from over 25 research organisations to produce 220 research outputs (Anderson *et al.* 2022). A4EA had several different sub-themes such as fuel protests, gender framings, civic space, donor action, and everyday forms of governance, which focused on different aspects of empowerment and accountability. The studies looked at civic action broadly and were not limited to protests.

From the 220 research outputs, this study used texts which explored: (1) different types of protest events in, (2) authoritarian and hybrid regimes, and (3) with enough information about the grievances, triggers, and strategies of the protest events to provide meaningful analysis. A total of 16 texts met all three of these criteria and they were coded on NVivo to reveal a total of 43 protest events explored by the programme. The texts included journal articles, working papers, and reports.

Hybrid regimes refer to a regime showing both democratic and non-democratic features. For this study, the qualification for a regime to be considered authoritarian or hybrid and to be included was that either the V-Dem democracy

report classified the country as an 'Electoral Autocracy' or a 'Closed Autocracy', or The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) democracy report classified it as a 'Hybrid Regime' or a 'Authoritarian Regime' in the year the protest event took place. The earliest protest event included in this study is 2007 and the latest is 2021. Based on this categorisation, Bangladesh, Guatemala, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan emerged as the authoritarian and hybrid regimes which would be used for this study (see Tables A1 and A2 in the Annexe).

This study uses protest event analysis (PEA), which is a form of content analysis used to map, interpret, and analyse several protest events across geographical locations and over a period of time (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Ortiz *et al.* 2022). Within PEA and its various offshoots, protests are defined differently, which can make a huge difference to the final data set that is analysed. The earlier generations of PEA looked only at violent events, but now protests include non-violent and virtual forms as well (Carothers and Press 2020; Hutter 2014; Koopmans and Statham 1999; Kousis, Giugni and Lahusen 2018; Ortiz *et al.* 2022; Tilly 1999).

In this study, the definition of protests provided by Ortiz *et al.* (2022: 120) was used, which is 'an event or sequence of events with a common and identifiable grievance or set of demands, and... the "protest event", comprising protest activities lasting no longer than one year'. Protests could be physical (marches, rallies, strikes), virtual (online campaigns), paper-based (petitions, posters, placards) or legal (filing legal petitions, litigation) (see Table A5 in the Annexe). Based on this definition of protest events, 43 protest events were identified (see Table A3 in the Annexe). Though PEAs normally use sources such as newspapers and police records to identify protests, for this study, protest events were identified based on journal articles, working papers, and reports from the A4EA programme, which explains the small number of protests identified unlike other PEAs which have identified over 1,000 protest events (see Ortiz *et al.* 2022).

All texts were coded for different types of 'grievances', 'triggers', 'strategies', and 'tactics' using the qualitative coding software NVivo. These terms formed the highest level of 'parent nodes' and each of them had several 'child nodes' which were added iteratively. For example, 'grievances' had the 'child nodes' titled 'economic injustice', 'political failure', 'civil rights' and 'global cause', which again had multiple child nodes under each of them. The parent node 'triggers' had child nodes of 'acts of violence' and 'acts of policy failure', each of which again had child nodes under them, and the parent nodes 'strategies' and 'tactics' also had relevant child nodes. A codebook for the NVivo coding was developed based on key concepts of interest which included triggers, grievances, and strategies and tactics. In some cases, the child nodes were determined typologies relevant to the study's conceptual framework; for example, for grievances, the typology used by Ortiz *et al.* (2022) (see Table A5 in the Annexe) was used. The coding

process was iterative as different themes emerged and different concepts became of interest. Some child nodes were clubbed together at a later stage to reflect an update in the conceptual framework. Using the coded material, this study provides a discussion of the grievances that concerned protesting citizens, the acts which triggered citizen mobilisation, and the list of strategic choices which citizens were faced with while organising protests.

Given the complexity of the research questions in this study, it is important to note at the outset that it does not use an exhaustive list of protest events to answer them but uses the data available from the A4EA programme. Additionally, since the programme had focus areas such as fuel protests, gender, and Covid-19, there is a bias in the data set used. A4EA collected data on protest events as a part of different projects so all protest events were not covered with equal detail and the details that were captured were not always relevant to the focus of this particular study. Therefore, the study will use a data set (see Table A3 in the Annexe) of protest events created by synthesising A4EA data which speaks to grievances, triggers, strategies, and tactics.

3. Literature on grievances, triggers, and strategies

The three central concepts of this study – which are grievances, triggers, and strategies – have been present for decades. Within social movement literature, concepts such as shared grievances have been around since the early 1900s (Park and Burgess 1921), whereas strategies and tactics became more central to the discussion in the 1970s (Tilly 2010). The question of what triggers protests has also been tackled somewhat in the literature, but indirectly and with little conceptualisation of the differences between triggers and grievances. But before looking at the literature on these three concepts, it is important to note that they are being understood in relation to protests and social movements, so it is also important to look at the state of literature on these subjects.

Protests have been studied for almost a century (see Park and Burgess 1921), but they have received more focused attention since the 1960s when several different types of social movements emerged (della Porta and Diani 2015). While much of the literature on protest has focused on democratic settings (Almeida 2003), in the last two decades, protests in authoritarian settings have also been of interest to scholars (Almeida 2003; Carothers and Press 2020; Chen 2011; Chen and Moss 2018; Clarke 2012; Kadivar 2017; Li 2017). Studies on authoritarian settings have focused on political opportunity structures (Almeida 2003), contentious protests (Chen 2011), non-violent protests (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), and the role of the internet in protests (Ruijgrok 2017). However, these studies have rarely looked at the different types of grievances, triggers, and strategic choices protesting actors make in authoritarian and hybrid regimes. Discussions on strategies and tactics have often looked at non-violent and violent strategies, but without listing them or revealing the rationale behind choosing one over the other or using them in combination. The literature on events triggering protests has focused on political processes such as political opportunities like competitive elections and institutional access, or threats such as economic depression, but it has not conceptualised triggers or understood these events as separate from grievances.

Social movements have been defined as ‘an excluded collectivity in sustained interaction with economic and political elites seeking social change’ (Tarrow 2011: 6). Social movements have been studied for over a century, but major turns in the literature include ‘breakdown theory’ from the 1950s, which focused on protests as linked to political and economic breakdown; in the 1960s and 1970s the literature turned towards ‘political opportunity structures’ and ‘resource mobilisation’ which looked at structural aspects like political openings and the importance of resources for social movements. In the 1990s, the literature

focused more on the framing of issues, and towards the 2000s there was a cultural turn in social movement literature which looked at psychology and the emotions of protesters (Benford and Snow 2000; Jasper 2011; Snow and Soule 2010).

3.1 Grievances

Snow and Soule (2010: 23) define grievances as ‘troublesome matters or conditions, and the feelings associated with them – such as dissatisfaction, fear, indignation, resentment, and moral shock’. Klandermans (1997) defines grievances as a sense of indignation about the way authorities are dealing with a social problem. The role of grievances in protests has seen waves of interest in the literature, with an initial rise in the 1960s and a fall in the 1980s, and now again a rise since the 2000s (Simmons 2014). Grievances in the first wave, particularly as per strain and relative deprivation theories, were understood as having a direct causal relationship with protest participation (Bergstrand 2014; Simmons 2014). Strain and deprivation theorists understood grievances as structural strain and deprivation in comparison to earlier times or to other groups which leads to increased protester participation (Bergstrand 2014; Simmons 2014). With the rise in varied social movements in the 1960s, particularly in the United States (US), different understandings of social movements arose, and the deprivation theories were critiqued by resource mobilisation theorists for having a simplistic view of protests and grievances.

Resource mobilisation theory highlighted the importance of resources which the deprivation theorists were not accounting for in their approach (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Other critiques of deprivation theory included that grievances were almost always present but social movements were not, so grievances were not an explanatory variable of the emergence of social movements (Simmons 2014). Within the new paradigm of social movement literature in the 1970s which consisted of political process theorists who focused on political openings, resource mobilisation theorists who focused on access to resources, and framing theorists who focused on the framing of grievances, grievances were given attention but were considered secondary in importance to political openings and the infusion of resources (Simmons 2014). Grievances found space in political process literature but were understood as threats that give rise to political opportunities (Almeida 2003, 2018; McKane and McCammon 2018).

In recent decades, political process theory has been critiqued for looking at social movements from a very structuralist position and not including emotions and culture into understandings, resulting in an emerging scholarly focus going back to grievances but looking at them from the lens of emotions, morals, and the psychology of protesters (Jasper 1998, 2011; Klandermans 1997). Social movement studies have taken a cultural turn, adopting a constructivist and

psychological approach to social movements in the last two to three decades (Jasper 2011). Recent explorations of grievances have looked at different aspects such as threats (Almeida 2003, 2018; McKane and McCammon 2018), shocks (Jasper 1998), and the varying ability of grievances to mobilise protests (Bergstrand 2014; Galais and Lorenzini 2017).

While there have been different approaches to understanding grievances, scholars have categorised grievances in different ways. Zald (1991, in Simmons 2014) categorised grievances as 'hard' or 'soft' based on the rate of change experienced by people. 'Hard' grievances are the result of rapid powerful changes felt by many as a grievance which generally lead to protests, and 'soft' grievances come through slow changes which happen over time and despite being a grievance rarely lead to protest. An example of a 'hard' grievance could be a new draconian law being passed in the parliament of a democratic country resulting in a rapid change in freedoms, whereas climate change where changes in the environment were initially slow and so took much longer to mobilise large-scale collective action could be seen as an example of a 'soft' grievance.

Klandermans (1997) categorised grievances into three types: illegitimate inequalities, imposed grievances, and transgression of principles. Illegitimate inequalities are inequalities such as the ones described by relative deprivation theory; imposed grievances are sudden emergent grievances which have not previously existed, such as pollution in cities; and transgression of moral principles are grievances such as protests against a hostile policy towards war refugees. Snow and Soule (2010) spoke about individual and collective grievances and argued that protest requires collective grievances. Simmons (2014) categorised grievances by the meaning they take, with those which have 'potent' frame resonance and others that do not. Ortiz *et al.* (2022) categorised grievances on a descriptive typology of failure of political representation, economic injustice, civil rights, and global justice.

Studies on protest grievances reflect a greater focus on Western liberal settings and a lack of exploration of authoritarian settings (Almeida 2003; Carothers and Press 2020; Ong and Han 2019). With very few exceptions, studies which have looked at global protest data and protest grievances have not explored grievances by regime type in much detail (see Carothers and Youngs 2015; Ortiz *et al.* 2022). However, there are studies on different grievances in authoritarian settings which include in-depth exploration of particular grievances such as fuel subsidy cuts (Hossain *et al.* 2021; Hossain and Hallock 2022).

For this paper, given the lack of data on the types of grievances over which people protest in authoritarian settings, the grievances derived from the A4EA data will be categorised according to the Ortiz *et al.* (2022) typology which categorises grievances into different types including failure of political representation, economic injustice, civil rights, and global protests. Ortiz *et al.*'s

(2022) typology is the most appropriate as there is insufficient data to use Zald's (1991), Simmon's (2014), or Klanderman's (1997) typologies which require data on perceptions and emotions. The benefit of using Ortiz *et al.*'s (2022) typology is that it was used to study protests in 101 countries across regime types, whereas the other typologies mentioned have not been used to study grievances globally. Using this typology, therefore, allows this study to compare its analysis with global data on protest grievances and even compare across regime types. Note, however, this study only looks at cases where there were collective grievances (Snow and Soule 2010), although the A4EA data also included individual grievances (Anderson *et al.* 2023).

3.2 Triggers

While the different types of and approaches to grievances have been discussed above, it is important to distinguish grievances from triggers. Triggers in this study are understood as moments that catalyse public participation, when grievances turn into a form of collective social political action. These moments can comprise events such as the release of a report, a violent act, significant changes in a policy, a speech, or an individual creating a platform to name and shame abusers. Triggers catalyse grievances into protest moments which push people to act. For example, while sexual harassment in the workplace has been a known concern for decades and different movements have raised the issue, in the last decade it was a tweet by a popular figure which triggered considerable global citizen action in the form of naming and shaming sexual harassers and which gained mainstream attention (Tadros and Edwards 2020). The grievance in that case is sexual harassment and the trigger is the tweet from a highly visible popular personality.

It is hard to understand what triggers protests, especially in cases where resource mobilisation or political opportunities appear to have changed as well, making the analysis more complicated since more variables are at play. Triggers have not been studied extensively to understand if they hold any explanatory power in the protest following them. Some scholars use political opportunity, resource mobilisation, and framing to explain protest triggers; however, recently these concepts have not been helpful in explaining protests in economic crisis such as after the Great Recession¹ which triggered waves of protests (Galais and Lorenzini 2017). The lack of explanation offered by theories on political opportunity and resources mobilisation led to an increased focus on grievances and triggers to understand such protests (*ibid.*). More work has gone into grievances and the role of emotions, morals, and personal characteristics in triggering protests (see Benski and Langman 2013; Brandstätter and Opp 2014; Jasper 1998, 2011).

¹ The Great Recession was the period of global economic decline which took place in 2008–9.

Given that there is a lack of data on protests in authoritarian contexts and that people have different, and at times multiple, reasons to join protests, triggers in such contexts become a complex subject of study. To get to the root of the trigger of a protest one would need to interview the protesters or the social movement organisation, which can be a tough task in settings with an authoritarian government. Since such data is not available from the A4EA studies, this study will limit itself to identifying triggers based on researcher perception, the actors interviewed in the coded texts, and interpretation of the data by the author.

Apart from the problem of lack of documentation of protests in these settings, some of the concepts referred to in this study are complex. For example, the concept of 'triggers' is complex not just because of the lack of data and studies on the subject, but also because there are multiple ways to approach it which could lead to different answers (Carothers and Youngs 2015) and there is an overall lack of theorisation of triggers. Some scholars explore the psycho-emotional aspects of triggers, some look at the political opportunity structures, others look at framing of the issue. For example, the 2011 Arab Spring has been analysed by different scholars and each of them has come up with different triggers such as corruption, repression, and social media hashtags (Carothers and Youngs 2015). In this study, I define triggers as events that cause people to demand change from relevant authorities and catalyse political action in individuals. I will identify the triggers based on the judgements of the authors of the texts coded for this study and/or the protest actors they interviewed to write their texts. I will include any instance where they might have not used the language of 'trigger' but otherwise indicated that a particular event catalysed political action. Grievances, on the other hand, are broader concerns, which people might have, but do not lead to political action until faced with a trigger which catalyses people into publicly raising grievances or engaging in another form of political action.

3.3 Strategic choice and tactics

The third key area this study explores is strategies and tactics in protests. The distinction between strategies and tactics is important since they are often used interchangeably. Smithey (2009) argues that strategies are external-oriented actions which link means and end, they need not be rational but there is a sense of purpose, whereas tactics are used for both external-oriented actions and for in-group activities such as building solidarity. Tactics are also communicative action (Larson 2013). Ennis (1987: 520) notes that tactics are the essence of protest.

Smithey (2009) argues that social movement theorists have focused on social movement emergence, but insufficiently on the actions the movements take.

And while there have been studies which have explored tactics, these studies have not focused on authoritarian contexts. The studies have instead looked at the efficiency of different tactical choices (Oberschall 1994), organisation structures (McCammon 2003), and with the cultural turn in the literature, on social definitions (Ennis and Schreuer 1987), collective identity (Smithey 2009), and diffusion of tactics (Larson 2013). Recently there has also been a significant focus on non-violent resistance, and tactics under that (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Tilly (2010) contributed significantly to the theorisation of action taken by social movements through what he calls the 'repertoires of contention'. Tilly's theory argues that contentious actors choose their tactics from a limited set of familiar repertoires of contention which vary based on actor, place, and time (Franklin 2013: 178). But most of these studies were set in democratic countries. Some scholars suggest that repertoires of social action should change with the political context or regime type, but there is no clear consensus (Osa and Schock 2007; Tilly 2008, 2010).

It has been noted that tactics are neither clearly defined nor listed sufficiently, especially for authoritarian settings (Smithey 2009). But while Smithey (*ibid.*) makes a strong case to explore the wide variety of tactics used in authoritarian states, some studies have looked into specific cases of protests and social movements in authoritarian states to explore the strategies and tactics they used (Almeida 2003; Joshi 2022; Kadivar 2017; Li 2017). Strategies found in these studies include strategic positioning of protesters, anti-politics rhetoric, repertoires of self-sacrifice, solidarity, and using non-violence (Almeida 2003; Joshi 2022). Tactics found in the studies include sit-ins, marches, petitions, music performances, and using women at the frontline of protests (Li 2017).

Different factors affect strategies in authoritarian settings. Studies on China have shown that protestors often try to balance confrontation and obedience (Perry 2010; Chen 2011). Confrontations can happen with local officials whilst respecting the central authority (O'Brien and Li 2006). Protests can be 'boundary spanning' in the sense that they combine lawful activities with disruptive activities (O'Brien 2003) and have a combination of legal and extra-legal challenges to authorities (Zweig 2010). Li (2017) argues that in authoritarian states, protests are limited to spaces controlled by the authorities and the tactics used by protestors keep this in mind. While some studies have looked at how civil society organisations (CSOs) change the formality of their organisation to adapt to closing civic space (Young 2021), others have looked at the strategies used by social movements such as reframing issues, shifting from national to local issues, and focusing on service delivery. However, overarching strategies used by social movements have not been adequately explored, especially in non-democratic settings (Chen 2011).

4. Findings

Based on the above discussion on the literature, this section will present the findings from the analysis conducted from A4EA cases on grievances, triggers, and strategies and tactics. The analysis on grievances uses the typology presented by Ortiz *et al.* (2022), the analysis of triggers is based on a descriptive categorisation of the triggers, and the analysis of strategies and tactics builds on the definitions used by Smithey (2009) and Larson (2013).

4.1 Grievances

Based on the coding of the A4EA research material (see Table 4.1) we found that 18 of the 43 protest events had more than one type of grievance which was relevant to this study. Perceived failure of political representation and systems was the most common grievance in the A4EA cases followed by economic injustice and civil rights respectively. This is in line with Ortiz *et al.*'s (2022) and Carothers and Press' (2020) findings from the global study of protests and study on authoritarian states respectively.

Table 4.1 Distribution of grievances among total A4EA cases

Type of grievances	Total cases	Total grievances (%)
Failure of political representation	25	40.9
Economic injustice	19	31.1
Civil rights	17	27.8

Note: There are a total of 43 protest events and 61 grievances, of which 18 protest events had 2 different types of grievances and 24 had one relevant type of grievance. See Table A4 in the Annexe for information on the process of categorising the grievances.

Source: Author's own, based on A4EA data.

4.1.1 Failure of political representation and political systems

Grievances on issues such as corruption, lack of justice, and security and accountability come under the category of failure of political representation and political systems. These grievances emerged in different studies conducted by the A4EA programme. Some examples include accountability and justice regarding sexual harassment such as the global #MeToo movement, or security of girls in the Nigerian #BBOG (Bring Back Our Girls) movement (Atela *et al.* 2021a; Tadros and Edwards 2020). Outside of accountability, corruption was the

most frequently mentioned grievance in this area. Protests in Guatemala, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Pakistan often aired grievances concerning corruption, but this was often one of several grievances alongside other issues such as rising energy costs (Hossain *et al.* 2021). In Mozambique, protests in 2008 and 2012 were linked to fuel and food prices along with inequality and corruption (*ibid.*). The 2012 fuel protests in Nigeria became more explosive when corruption cases became public (Atela *et al.* 2021b).

The 2015 youth protests in Guatemala were against corruption. Reports of corruption by elites in the government triggered a wide youth-led anti-corruption movement. The movement was initially started under the banner of #RenunciyaYa when it was targeting individual politicians involved in corruption (Flores 2019). These protests were non-violent and successful in getting the Guatemalan president and vice-president to resign in the face of public pressure.

Apart from corruption, failures of justice and insecurity were grievances in many protests as well. Grievances concerning failure in justice included the #BBOG movement in Nigeria which protested the kidnapping of Chibok girls by Boko Haram in conflict-areas. The movement sustained media and popular attention demanding political action on bringing the children back (Atela *et al.* 2021a). Similarly, the Hazara protests in Pakistan about missing persons, and the women in Chiango, Mozambique mobilising on a lack of road safety leading to children dying (Khan and Taela 2023) were examples of grievances concerning failures in justice. The #EndSARS (Special Anti-Robbery Squad) protest in Nigeria, sparked by the SARS unit's murder of a young man, was another significant case of people demanding justice from government (Ibezim-Ohaeri and Ibeh 2021).

Grievances concerning insecurity included Pakistan families of missing Baloch persons staging their annual Eid sit-in in 2020 in front of the Quetta and Karachi press clubs, demanding the government find their missing family members (Khan, Khwaja and Jawed 2020). In August 2020, a Baloch student was shot multiple times outside his house in Karachi by a paramilitary member which led to further protests (*ibid.*).

4.1.2 Economic justice

There were multiple grievances that emerged from the A4EA research under this theme including fuel and food price rises, labour conditions, privatisation, and inequality. As observed in the methodology section, a part of the reason for the significant finding on energy protests is because this was one of the thematic focus areas of the programme. In Mozambique, Nigeria, and Pakistan, the price of energy, labour conditions, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms were all concerns of protesting groups (Anderson *et al.* 2021; Hossain *et al.* 2021).

For example, as Hossain *et al.* (2021) find, in 2008, the Mozambican government increased the price of fuel to account for the rising costs of imported oil. Soon after, people were sending SMSs (texts) to each other about a strike against the rise in prices and a violent protest erupted on 5 February 2008. Similarly, in 2010, after the Mozambican government increased the price of bread and electricity soon after a price rise in fuel, SMSs were circulated calling for another *greve* (strike) and violent protests followed with some deaths, hundreds of injuries, and cases of destruction of public property. Atela *et al.* (2021b) note that fuel protests broke out in Nigeria in 2012 after fuel prices were increased from 26p a litre to 56p a litre. Tens of thousands protested in multiple cities including Lagos, Kaduna, Benin city, and Kano.

In urban Pakistan, affordable electricity was considered to be a part of the social contract with the state. Electricity shortages and a rise in the price of electricity was reported to trigger protests multiple times between 2007 and 2015 (Javed, Hussain and Aziz 2021). The expectation that the state will provide access to affordable electricity is illustrated through this quote from a lady in Javed *et al.*'s study, 'if the *hakoomat* [government] is not ensuring that our fans stay on during the summer months, what good is it there for?' (2021: 24).

Economic injustice in the form of poor labour conditions was also a common grievance across Mozambique, Nigeria, and Pakistan, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic (Anderson *et al.* 2021). Health worker protests were witnessed in multiple countries during the pandemic, including in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Mozambique. While Pakistan had already been witnessing mobilisation by community-based health workers and medical doctors for greater job security before the outbreak of Covid-19, the pandemic brought a greater sense of urgency to these demands (Khan *et al.* 2020). Doctors and nurses in several Pakistani provinces were threatening to go on strike if adequate protective gear was not provided. The frontline community health workers in Pakistan called the 'Lady Health Workers' staged a huge protest in the capital city of Islamabad for seven days demanding better equipment, and in response the government agreed to give them support 'soon'. Several health groups also came together to form the Grand Health Alliance to oppose a bill that proposed to increase privatisation in the health sector which was a part of IMF-supported reform in Pakistan (Khan *et al.* 2020).

In Nigeria, health workers went on strike and engaged in other forms of protest to demand better protective gear, sufficient budgetary allocations for health, to highlight discrimination against doctors during the pandemic, and for other concerns (Ibezim-Ohaeri and Ibeh 2021). Similarly in Mozambique, the Medical Association of Mozambique took the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economy and Finance to court over not paying overtime and risk subsidies to medical staff during the pandemic. Additionally, budget monitoring groups monitored the way the Mozambican health budgets were spent during the

pandemic, to which the Ministry of Health responded by showing answerability to these civil society groups (Pereira, Forquilha and Shankland 2021).

There were also protests linked to labour rights outside of the health sector. In Pakistan, for example, home-based workers and other informal workers protested not just against the economic slowdown but also the adverse impact of reforms on minimum wages (Khan *et al.* 2020).

4.1.3 Civil rights

Of the 43 protest events documented in the study, perceived violation of civil rights was a grievance in only 17 events, being the least common grievance compared to the other two types documented above. Within civil rights the most frequently emerging themes involved gender rights, freedoms of expression, and peaceful assembly and association. Anderson *et al.* (2021) found that across Mozambique, Nigeria, and Pakistan civic space was changing, with Covid-19 being used to further add restrictions to freedoms.

Gender rights were a common grievance in the cases studied (Khan and Kirmani 2018; Khan and Taela 2023; Nazneen 2018; Tadros and Edwards 2020). In Bangladesh, for instance, in 2008 there was a protest against the formation of a working group for reviewing gender policy which included religious leaders such as *ulemas* (scholars of Islamic doctrine and law) who were suspected to be against gender equality in personal law (Nazneen 2018). In Pakistan, the Aurat March (women's march) has been taking place since 2017 to demand the rights of women (Khan *et al.* 2020). In 2021, after the violent rape of a woman, the police in Pakistan blamed the victim and a religious scholar blamed universities for sexual harassment which led to a protest against these statements (*ibid.*).

Another broad category of protest against the violation of civil rights included violence against citizens. Some of the cases which come under this category include the Nigerian #EndSARS protest in 2020 which took off after a video of the young man being violently murdered by the SARS unit went viral (Ibezim-Ohaeri and Ibeh 2021). Another example is the bombing of Hazaras in Pakistan in 2013 which led to families refusing to bury the bodies of their dead in protest (Khan and Taela 2023). The annual sit-in by the Balochis in Pakistan protesting the disappearance of friends and family linked to suggestions of state violence against their group is another example of civil rights as a grievance. Religious rights and the rights of doctors to travel during the pandemic were other grievances which emerged in the protest event data (Ibezim-Ohaeri and Ibeh 2021; Khan *et al.* 2020).

From the above discussion on grievances, there are three important findings worth highlighting. The first is that unlike Tilly (2010), who argued that protests in authoritarian settings are rare, this study confirms that there are a wide variety of

protests in such settings (Carothers and Press 2020; Carothers and Youngs 2015; Chenoweth 2020; Gaventa 2023; Ortiz *et al.* 2022).

The second important finding is that there is a wide variety of grievances which lead to protests happening in authoritarian settings. This confirms the finding by Carothers and Press (2020) that protests in authoritarian and hybrid regimes occur for a range of grievances. Ortiz *et al.* (2022) did not focus on authoritarian regimes but their global analysis reveals that within the four categories of grievances (failure of political representation, economic injustice, civil rights, and global justice), there is a wide variety of individual grievances. This study found grievances linked to failure of political representation and political systems, economic injustice, and civil rights. The lack of grievances under 'global justice' can be explained by A4EA's focus on accountability and empowerment within specific countries and that the programme did not focus on transnational protests.

The third finding, and perhaps the most critical one, is where this study's findings depart from those of Carothers and Press (2020). The A4EA data set reveals that economic injustice is a common grievance in authoritarian and hybrid regimes, which confirms the trend Ortiz *et al.* (2022) observe at the global level. This finding differs from Carothers and Press (2020) who found that political and governance issues were the most common grievances in their database of protests with economic grievances featuring far less. The A4EA data set finds several instances of economic grievances such as violations of rights of labourers or health workers, inflation, or change in fuel subsidies. While we recognise that this might be partly due to the bias in the A4EA studies which focused on issues such as fuel protests, the link to the importance of economic inequalities and grievances within authoritarian and hybrid regimes is an important area for further study.

4.2 Key triggers

From the literature reviewed for this study, it was noted that the current understanding of triggers is underdeveloped and that a closely related concept is that of 'moral shocks'. However, as discussed previously, the A4EA cases do not have sufficient data to analyse triggers using the lens of morals, emotions, and psychology, and therefore this section will take a more descriptive approach, categorising triggers based on their description. Through coding the A4EA material (see Table A3 in the Annexe) we can identify two different descriptive categories of triggers which are particularly important: acts of violence and acts of policy failure. These acts were triggers in the sense of immediately leading to organising around the grievance/s. The two categories of triggers, i.e. acts of violence and acts of policy failure can be differentiated from categories of grievances such as failures of political representation and political systems,

which include grievances of insecurity and injustice, by noting that triggers are singular events whereas grievances are broader than just those specific events and one trigger could be linked to a variety of grievances.

4.2.1 Acts of violence

A prominent trigger in the A4EA cases was a violent act followed by the failure of justice systems to hold the perpetrators to account. In the case of the #BBOG movement, there were multiple violent acts committed by Boko Haram in 2014 which included killing 59 boarding schoolboys in February, the abduction of 276 Chibok schoolgirls in April, and the killing of a dozen people in Abuja the very next day through a bomb explosion. The abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls led to #BBOG trending on Twitter and a movement being formed by the end of April 2014 (Atela *et al.* 2021a).

In Pakistan, the 2012 and 2013 Hazara protests against the attacks, massacres, bombings, and persecution of Hazaras by extremist groups triggered protests against the lack of security provided by the government for their community (Khan and Taela 2023). In another example from Pakistan, the violent murder of a Baloch university student in Karachi by the paramilitary forces led to student protests (Khan *et al.* 2020). In Nigeria, the video of the brutal murder of a young man by the SARS forces in October 2021 triggered the mass #EndSARS protests emerging after the previous #EndSARS protests in 2017 (Ibezim-Ohaeri and Ibeh 2021). Violence against doctors during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria led to protests from the doctors (*ibid.*). There are several examples from the A4EA research where violence against women, verbal or physical, by state or non-state actors, led to protests (Anderson *et al.* 2021).

What all these cases have in common is that an act or repeated acts of violence triggered protests. These acts could have been committed by non-state actors or state actors. Some of the examples of protests triggered by violent acts committed by **non-state actors** include the cases of the #BBOG movement, the 2012 and 2013 Hazara protests, the Nigerian doctors' protests during the pandemic, and the 2021 Beria anti-kidnapping protests in Mozambique because of children of businesspeople being kidnapped. Examples of protests triggered by violent acts committed by **state actors** include the #EndSARS protests; the 2020 student protests against the murder of the Baloch student; the annual Baloch protests; the 2020 North Waziristan protests by women against the abduction by security forces of men in the region; and hip-hop songs of protest, such as Ubakka's 'Meu povo chora' (My people are crying), against Mozambican government violent repression.

4.2.2 Acts of policy failure

In several cases it was policy decisions from a government which triggered protests and broader social and political action. One example is in Mozambique in 2008 when the government removed fuel subsidies, resulting in private passenger transportation costs increasing by 50 per cent and the price of bread increasing by 12.5 per cent, which led to mass protests pushing the government to quickly backtrack and provide subsidies for fuel and food (Gonçalves *et al.* 2021). Similarly, in Nigeria, when the outgoing government of Olusegun Obasanjo removed fuel subsidies six days before leaving office, resulting in a substantial increase in the cost of fuel, labour unions protested and managed to push out the new government and get the cost of fuel reduced along with a guarantee that prices would not be increased for another year (Atela *et al.* 2021b).

Apart from policies related to fuel and food prices, policies concerning non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the protection and wages of medical workers also led to protests and social political action. In Mozambique, Nigeria, and Pakistan health workers protested for lack of protective gear being provided to them during the pandemic, and additionally issues of overtime pay which were government commitments were not realised (McGee 2023). In Pakistan, the Punjab government established a rule that all NGOs needed to be registered with the Punjab Charity Commission portal within 30 days. In response to this, several NGOs submitted a joint petition to the Lahore High Court demanding a change (Khan *et al.* 2020). Another example of an act of policy failure was the IMF reform in Pakistan which was going to lead to privatisation. This led to protests by trade unions against the reforms (Khan *et al.* 2020). Finally, in Nigeria, during Covid-19 lockdowns it was reported that the government was hoarding welfare provision which led to a crowd ransacking the warehouse and taking the provisions (Ibezim-Ohaeri and Ibeh 2021).

From the above discussion it is evident that there are multiple grievances and triggers which could be categorised into smaller groups by their type and nature. The link between grievances and triggers appears to be that long-term grievances, in some cases, need a triggering event which then acts as a tipping point; a blatant breach of the social contract that could be violent or a significant policy failure to make people protest. In most cases there are long-standing grievances that, when exacerbated or when publicly addressed, can trigger social political action such as in the case of violence against young boys and girls by Boko Haram in Nigeria where the kidnapping of the Chibok girls was a tipping point. Similarly, triggers such as government action in the case of removing fuel subsidies in Mozambique and Nigeria and privatisation in Pakistan relate to a tipping point of often pre-existing grievances around inflation and the cost of living. These examples offer insights into the different types of triggers in

authoritarian and hybrid regimes including acts of violence and acts of policy failure that mobilise people into participating in protests.

Another important point to note is that while the act itself is critical in being a trigger, the way information about the act reaches people could also be very important in triggering citizen action. For instance, in several of the A4EA cases circulation of a video of the act was what triggered citizen action, whereas in other cases it was a tweet, a government report, or news articles. With increased access to internet across the globe, and the speed at which videos, photos, and text get circulated, social media is an important space where such triggers can be communicated and it can also trigger responses in multiple different regions, mobilising diverse crowds quickly. Visual footage of triggers like violent acts or policy failures, such as in the cases of the #EndSARS protest and the #BlackLivesMatter protest after George Floyd's murder in the US, demonstrate how triggers can be framed visually to mobilise protesters.

4.3 Strategies and tactics

Across A4EA cases of protest, protesting actors used different strategies to communicate their grievances and they faced several overarching choices in their approach to demanding change. While this study's data set does not offer consistent data on the choices and the reasons behind the strategies and tactics across the protests, for some of the events, actors did reveal the reasons behind certain choices. Using the available data, this section offers insights into the repertoires of strategies and tactics utilised by protesting actors and authoritarian and hybrid regimes.

4.3.1 Strategic alliances and strategic distancing

One of the key strategies used by social movements was to build alliances across actors whilst being mindful of actors from whom to distance from. In the #BBOG movement in Nigeria, one political leader, Hadiza Bala Usman sent emails to multiple people and CSOs to mobilise them for protests. The movement was approached with offers of help by CSOs, local governments, and international actors and #BBOG asked them to voice their support for the Chibok girls (Atela *et al.* 2021a). In the 2012 Pakistan electricity protests, local market associations and political elites became important in mobilising huge crowds for the protests (Javed *et al.* 2021). In the Nigerian fuel protests, it was observed that the broader the coalitions for the protest, the more the protest escalated (Atela *et al.* 2021b). In the Guatemalan anti-corruption protests, the presence of elite allies like the Attorney General and the International Commission Against Impunity helped keep the outcomes of the investigations into corruption public and in the public consciousness, and aided in successfully pushing the political elites to resign due to the scandal (Flores 2019).

In several cases, protesting actors internationalised issues, mobilising support in other countries to exert pressure internationally. This strategy was used by the #BBOG movement, the #EndSARS protests, and the fuel protests in Nigeria. In the #BBOG case, representatives from other countries, the Nigerian diaspora in North America, funders and other external actors were mobilised to exert pressure on the Nigerian government to rescue the Chibok girls (Aina *et al.* 2019). In the 2012 Nigerian fuel protests, through social media, the labour unions, and the traditional media, the Nigerian diaspora and international trade unions were mobilised to protest outside the IMF and World Bank offices in the US, and in the streets of the United Kingdom, Canada, Ghana, South Africa and the US (Atela *et al.* 2021b).

At the same time, who you formed alliances with had consequences, so it was also important to maintain a distance from some actors. Siding with opposition political parties, getting foreign funding, or associating with some NGOs had serious implications for movements or for the social political action cause, at times positively but at other times negatively. Siding with a political party could benefit the cause in some contexts, while in others it could lead to increased repression. In Nigeria, for example, the #BBOG movement decided to distance themselves from political parties altogether to demonstrate their political neutrality (Atela *et al.* 2021a). Senior #BBOG leaders were required to relinquish their role in the movement on entering government jobs or applying for political roles, for example Dr Oby Ezekwesili who ran in the presidential elections (*ibid.*). The policy of distancing from political parties was not just limited to #BBOG members, but also to the movement's funding. #BBOG had a principle of funding purity which meant that they would not receive funds from external actors or political parties. This principle was adopted to ensure that their agenda was not swayed by funder interests, they did not get caught up in issues of handling foreign funding, and their integrity was not questioned by the government or the people (Atela *et al.* 2021a).

In some protests actors maintained a distance from other protesting groups such as in the case of the Hazara women's protests, who kept their distance from the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement due to security concerns from the military (Khan and Taela 2023). In some other cases, protesting groups had elite allies, a significant factor in political opportunity structures. But these choices were not always strategic and could just be to sustain the protest, such as in the case of the 2012 fuel riots in Nigeria when several invisible elites funded the protests by providing buses to transport protesters, and food and money to enable the protesters' participation (Atela *et al.* 2021b). In the study of the electricity protests in Pakistan, it was observed that linkages with opposition political parties were significant in the escalation of the protests. In Punjab, the linkages between vendors and the opposition party Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PMLN) enabled a huge number of people to take to the streets (Javed *et al.* 2021).

The research shows that, at times, movements chose to keep their distance from political parties, other movements, and funders for public perception concerns or to enable them to maintain their autonomy. However, in other contexts protesting actors gained resources to mobilise larger protests through linkages with political parties, or to navigate civic space through external funders.

4.3.2 Degree of confrontation

It is well documented that CSOs in authoritarian settings need to be careful about appearing confrontational due to fears of government repression (Moss 2014; Toepler *et al.* 2020). They often face the option of either collaborating with the government or being confrontational (Lewis 2013; Buzaşu and Marczewski 2020; McCargo 2015; Mirshak 2019). In the case of the Hazara women's protests in Balochistan, the protesters knew that they could not be too confrontational and challenge the military since there could be strong reactions to such actions. The Hazara women made clear to differentiate their protests from more confrontational protests in the province which were embedded in local politics, so they stayed away from outfits like the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement which protested against military crimes in the region since the women did not feel adequately positioned to question the army and raise sensitive issues (Khan and Taela 2023). The Hazara women strategically chose to not be confrontational about some issues and instead frame their issues strategically.

One of the main non-confrontational tactics amongst the A4EA studies was non-violent dissent. Many protest events were non-violent, and it was a conscious decision by movements to make non-violence important to their communication of the grievance. Several protests in the data set had sit-ins with placards and marches, which were disruptive but non-violent. The protests on the missing Baloch men in Pakistan in 2020, the #BBOG protests in Nigeria, anti-kidnapping protests by business people in Mozambique in 2021, the Lady Health Workers protests in Pakistan, and the anti-corruption protests in Guatemala all used the tactic of non-violent disruption (see Table A3 in the Annexe).

4.3.3 Framing

Grievances can be framed in a manner which is sensitive to the sensibilities of the government and the people. In several A4EA cases, framing was used strategically to persuade the government and the people. In several such cases, emotions, identities, and norms were invoked, such as patriotism, obligation of the state, and gender roles. The tactics on leveraging gender norms, constitutionalism, and nationalism sit within this strategic choice.

In the case of the women's movement in Bangladesh, Islamic clerics used the binary framings of traditional/religious women against notions of modern/secular women to delegitimise the women's movement and paint it as not traditional and

as disrespectful of religion. In contrast, the women's movement used counter-framings such as the language of rights, the state's obligation, and appealed to the spirit of the Liberation War² to argue that the religious actors were upholding fundamentalist norms and not respecting the spirit of the nation, and state promises towards the welfare of its women when Bangladesh was formed (Nazneen 2018: 215).

In some of the events, norms around gender were used to frame the protests (Nazneen 2023). In the 2012 Hazara protests in Pakistan, over 100 women from the Hazara Women's Democratic Party threw bangles at the gate of the provincial legislative assembly building, suggesting that the state had failed to protect their honour (Khan and Taela 2023). In Mozambique, Chiango women protesting poor road safety which they said was causing the deaths of young children in road accidents, performed a childbirth in the middle of the road to illustrate the loss and pain of grieving mothers (*ibid.*).

Framing around nationalism has also been used, for example in Mozambique where hip-hop artists often contest the legitimacy of the current ruling party Frelimo by glorifying the past, and in particular using the words of one previous political leader, Samora Machel³ against the current ones. Artists do this by using audio and video clips of Samora Machel (Manhiça *et al.* 2020).

In all the above examples, the movements used strategic framing of their issues and their social political acts to communicate sensitive issues to an authoritarian or hybrid regime.

4.3.4 Social media

Important strategic considerations also involved the use of social media, which cut across all the other strategies since it is about a medium of communication. Social media has become an increasingly popular platform to communicate grievances and mobilise people. Hashtags, tweets, and Facebook posts emerged as tactics from the A4EA data set.

In the Guatemala anti-corruption protests, there were Facebook invitations to join protest marches. The protesters used social media to mobilise young protesters and the interplay between traditional media and social media helped mobilise other groups such as indigenous activist groups, shopkeepers, and older activists (Flores 2019).

In Pakistan, after the order for the arrest of an activist was released, social media users used 'symbol of frights', a phrase from the arrest order, as a hashtag on

² The Liberation War, also known as the Bangladesh War of Independence, led to Bangladesh independence in 1971.

³ Samora Moisés Machel was a Mozambican military commander and political leader, serving as the first President of Mozambique from its independence in 1975.

Twitter to show dissent, and subsequently the Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court suspended the arrest order (Khan *et al.* 2020). In another incident from Pakistan, students protesting against mandatory on-campus exams in a context of rising Covid-19 cases and a lack of facilities, used #BahriaUniversity and #BahriansWantOnlineExams to air their grievance (Khan *et al.* 2020). The #EndSARS and #BBOG protests are important examples of hashtag protests in Nigeria (Aina *et al.* 2019; Ibezim-Ohaeri and Ibeh 2021).

The use of hashtag activism was common across the A4EA cases since it enables groups and individuals to spread the message widely without being reliant on the generally male-dominated elite mediums such as newspapers and television, it leverages popularity with the youth, and can be used across different social media websites such as Twitter (now X) and Facebook. Importantly it also allows other powerful actors to use the hashtag to highlight the grievance. For example, the study of #BBOG revealed that the tweets and posts with the hashtag #BBOG that received the most interaction were those from CNN (Aina *et al.* 2019).

5. Conclusion

This study analysed 43 cases of protests in six authoritarian and hybrid regimes drawn from A4EA research to understand the grievances raised by protesters, the triggers of protests, and the key strategic choices protesting actors made. The study confirms findings by Ortiz *et al.* (2022) and Carothers and Press (2020) that there are a high number and wide variety of grievances aired in authoritarian and hybrid regimes through a variety of forms of protests. Failure of political representation and economic injustice are significant grievances expressed through protest under such regimes. Additionally, this study finds that protest triggers in these settings are frequently of two types: acts of violence and acts of policy failure. Within the former, a high proportion of the protests noted in this study were triggered by violent acts committed by state actors as compared to those by non-state actors. The study also finds that protesting actors face three significant strategic choices in these settings: the degree of confrontation with authorities, the framing of issues and of themselves as actors, and who to build alliances with and who to keep a distance from. Different tactics featured in the protest events included coalition building, sit-ins, legal petitions, protest marches, writing public letters, writing hip-hop songs, non-violent disruption, exerting international pressure, and leveraging gender norms, constitutionalism, and nationalism.

These findings contribute to the social movement literature on grievances and on strategies and tactics by focusing on protests in authoritarian and hybrid regimes, an understudied area. Also, the findings on triggers contribute to the literature by noting the lack of trigger-based analysis of protests and highlighting the need for further studies on the subject to improve theorisation and to understand the role of triggers in protests.

The findings are relevant to practitioners and scholars who are trying to understand protests in authoritarian settings. The rise in the number of protests in these contexts indicate a growing discontent within authoritarian regimes. The study offers insights on triggers of protests and a conceptualisation of triggers, differentiating them from broader grievances. It offers rich detail on different types of grievances which are linked to protests in authoritarian and hybrid regimes. It also offers insights on the different tactics used in protests and the broader strategic choices made by social movement actors in such settings.

It is also important to understand the role of the digital medium, including social media, in protests in authoritarian and hybrid regimes. The role of social media in triggering protests through the sharing of videos of acts of violence and acts of policy failure needs to be studied further alongside the role of fake news in instigating protests.

While this study focused on protests demanding equality, accountability, and rights there are also several protests by actors who might be campaigning against these issues. Further studies on protests in authoritarian and hybrid settings need to explore the differences between protests to demand rights and equality, and backlash protests. Furthermore, studies could try to examine the impact of protest acts or events through interviews with protesters to find out about the psychological and emotional impact of the triggers. This could lead to a much richer discussion on what motivates protesters in authoritarian and hybrid regimes to protest, who they protest against apart from the state, and the meaning they assign to protests in their settings.

Annexe

Tables A1 and A2 contain the regime-type ratings as per the V-Dem Institute and The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Democracy Index. The ratings show the period 2007–21, based on when the protest events captured for this study took place.

Table A1 V-Dem rating for study countries

Year	Bangladesh	Guatemala	Mozambique	Myanmar	Nigeria	Pakistan
2007	CA	ED	EA	CA	EA	EA
2008	EA	ED	EA	CA	EA	EA
2009	ED	ED	EA	CA	EA	EA
2010	EA	ED	EA	CA	EA	EA
2011	EA	ED	EA	ED	EA	EA
2017	EA	ED	EA	EA	ED	EA
2018	EA	ED	EA	EA	ED	EA
2019	EA	ED	EA	EA	EA	EA
2020	EA	ED	EA	EA	ED	EA
2021	EA	ED	EA	CA	EA	EA

Note: ED: Electoral Democracy, EA: Electoral Autocracy, CA: Closed Autocracy. The V-Dem ratings began in 2017 and provided details for 2017 and 2007 to give a ten-year comparison. Subsequent reports continued this ten-year comparison; as such, this table only provides data from 2007 to 2011 and from 2017 to 2021, and the data from 2012 to 2016 is not included.

Source: Author's own, based on data from Alizada *et al.* (2021); Lührmann *et al.* (2017, 2018, 2019); Danescu (2020).

Table A2 EIU Democracy Index ratings for study countries

Year	Bangladesh	Guatemala	Mozambique	Myanmar	Nigeria	Pakistan
2006	HR	FD	HR	A	A	HR
2008	HR	FD	HR	A	A	HR
2010	HR	FD	HR	A	A	HR
2011	HR	HR	HR	A	A	HR
2012	HR	HR	HR	A	A	HR
2013	HR	HR	HR	A	A	HR
2014	HR	HR	HR	A	A	HR
2015	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR
2016	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR
2017	HR	HR	HR	A	HR	HR
2018	HR	HR	A	A	HR	HR
2019	HR	HR	A	A	HR	HR
2020	HR	HR	A	A	HR	HR
2021	HR	HR	A	A	HR	HR

Note: A: Authoritarian, HR: Hybrid Regime, FD: Flawed Democracy. The EIU Democracy reports did not provide data for 2007 and 2009.

Source: Author's own, based on data from The Economist Intelligence Unit (2021: 21–24).

Table A3 Cases, grievances, triggers, strategic choice, and country

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
2007 fuel protests	Fuel prices; sham elections	Economic injustice	Failure of political representation and political systems	Fuel price raised by outgoing government in 2007	Confrontational protests, violent	Nigeria
2007 fuel protests	Poverty, inequality, and fuel and food prices	Economic injustice		Fuel subsidy removed. Price of petrol up by 66%, and diesel price doubles	Confrontational protests, violent	Myanmar
2008 women's groups protesting review body on gender policies	Women's development policy review committee 2008 headed by religious actors undermining secularism and gender rights	Civil rights	Failure of political representation	Formation of review committee with religious actors	Framing using gender, nationalism, and constitutionalism, non-violent	Bangladesh

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
2008 Mozambique protests – February	Food and fuel price rise	Economic injustice		Fuel price, private transportation costs up by 50% and bread prices up by 12.5% in 2008	Confrontational protests, violent	Mozambique
2010 fuel protests	Corruption, price rises, inequality, food prices	Economic injustice	Failure of political representation	Increase in price of bread	Confrontational protests, violent	Mozambique
2011 counter protests against religious actors' backlash	Religious actors attacking gender guidelines	Civil rights		Allegations by religious actors that new government guidelines were anti-Islamic	Framing using gender, nationalism, and constitutionalism, non-violent	Bangladesh
2012 Hazara women's protest	Lack of security for Hazaras	Civil rights	Failure of political representation	Attack on Hazaras	Framing using gender norms, non-violent	Pakistan
2012 protests	Fuel price	Economic grievance		Increase in bus fares	Confrontational protests, violent	Mozambique
2012 fuel protests	Fuel prices, corruption	Economic injustice	Failure of political representation	Fuel subsidy removal by President Goodluck in 2012, no consultation, corruption	Confrontational protests, strategic alliances, violent	Nigeria

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
2012 electricity-related protest	Power outages and cost of electricity	Economic injustice	Failure of political representation	Power outages and violence	Confrontational protests and strategic alliances, violent	Pakistan
2013 Ubakka's 'Meu povo chora' (My people are crying)	Violence, political apathy	Failure of political representation			Non-confrontational protest using hip-hop, non-violent	Mozambique
2013 Azagaia's 'MIR música de intervenção rápida' (Rapid intervention music)	Repression	Failure of political representation			Non-confrontational protest using hip-hop song, non-violent	Mozambique
2013 Mozambique transportation protest	Corruption by municipal police officers	Failure of political representation		Police officers soliciting bribes from transport operators	Non-confrontational protests, non-violent disruption	Mozambique
2013 Hazara protest	Violence, targeting ethnic minorities	Failure of political representation and political systems	Civil rights	Death of Hazaras by bombing	Non-confrontational protest, framing using religious norms, non-violent disruption	Pakistan

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
2014 #BBOG movement	Conflict, terrorist groups	Failure of political representation		Kidnapping of girls	Strategic alliance and distance, social media, confrontational, non-violent	Nigeria
2015 youth anti-corruption movement	Corruption charges against political elites	Failure of political representation and political systems		Report by committee	Non-violent disruption	Guatemala
2015 petition on the implementation of maternal and neo-natal policy	Poor implementation of policy in Sindh	Failure of political representation and political systems			Confrontational protest using legal recourse, non-violent	Pakistan
2016 petition to ban out-of-court settlement in rape cases	High profile cases of out-of-court settlements	Civil rights			Confrontational protest using legal recourse, non-violent	Pakistan
2016 fuel protests	Fuel prices	Economic injustice		Government removes fuel subsidy increasing price of fuel by 67%	Strategic alliances, confrontational protest, violent	Nigeria

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
2017 price hike protests	Transport operators 'Chapas 100' protest against low fares	Economic injustice		Petrol and diesel prices increased by 12% and 13% respectively but transportation fares had not increased angering transport operators	Non-confrontational protest by denying service, non-violent disruption	Mozambique
2018 Chiango protests	Deaths due to lack of roads and infrastructure	Failure of political representation		Death of a child who was a member of the community	Non-violent disruption using gender framings	Mozambique
2020 legal activism for housing security	Land and housing insecurity	Economic grievances		Anti-encroachment drives	Confrontational protest using legal means, non-violent	Pakistan
2020 Radio Pakistan sit-in	700 employees protest recent sackings	Economic injustice		Mass lay-offs	Non-confrontational protest through sit-ins, non-violent	Pakistan
2020 steel mill employees protest	4,500 employees sacked as a part of privatisation reform	Economic injustice		Mass lay-offs, privatisation	Confrontational protest through a sit-in on railway tracks disrupting train services, non-violent disruption	Pakistan

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
2020 Baloch protests	Annual Eid sit-in to protest missing Balochis	Failure of political representation	Civil rights	Report on the disappearance of Balochis	Non-confrontational sit-ins through non-violent disruption	Pakistan
2020 registration of CSOs	Untenable deadline for CSO registration without consultation	Civil rights	Failure of political representation	News of new policy	Non-confrontational protest through legal recourse, non-violent	Pakistan
2020 #EndSARS protest	Crimes committed by paramilitary group	Civil rights	Failure of political representation	Viral video of youth being murdered	Confrontational protests, social media	Nigeria
2020 doctors protest against harassment	Doctors harassed by police during pandemic	Civil rights		Police harassment of doctors	Confrontational protest through strikes, non-violent	Nigeria
2020 PPE and benefits for doctors	Doctors not receiving sufficient PPE kits and benefits at work	Economic injustice		Lack of PPE kits	Confrontational but non-violent protests, strategic alliances	Nigeria

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
2020 protest Hayat Baloch murder	Murder of student by paramilitary force	Failure of political representation	Civil rights	News of murder	Non-violent protests, social media	Pakistan
Protesting bill enforcing sectarian understanding of Islam in educational books 2020	Inequality in education by imposing sectarian understanding of Islam	Civil rights	Failure of political representation	Education bill passed in Punjab Assembly	Non-violent protest	Pakistan
Student solidarity march 2020	Concerns of students, demand for restoration of student unions	Economic injustice	Failure of political representation		Confrontational, non-violent protests, strategic alliance	Pakistan
Aurat march 2020	Concerns of women	Civil rights		International Women's Day March 2017	Non-violent protests, strategic alliance, gender framing	Pakistan
North Waziristan women protests 2020	Security forces take away men after a raid on the area	Failure of political representation	Civil rights	News of men being taken away in the raid	Non-violent disruption through sit-in	Pakistan

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
Motorway rape protests 2020	Police officials and religious leaders blame victim for rape	Failure of political representation	Civil rights	News of victim-blaming	Non-violent protest, social media	Pakistan
2020 health worker protests	Lady Health Workers (LHWs) poorly paid, poorly protected	Economic injustice		Covid, increased demand for LHWs	Non-violent disruption, strategic alliance	Pakistan
2021 National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and Home-Based Women Worker's Federation (HBWWF) protests	Covid-19 impacts informal sector, inflation, low wage	Economic injustice		IMF privatisation	Strategic alliance, non-violent disruption	Pakistan

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
2021 Grand Health Alliance sit-in	Demanding personal protective equipment (PPE), opposition to privatisation of hospitals	Economic injustice		Lack of PPE kits and privatisation reform	Strategic alliance, non-violent disruption	Pakistan
Beria anti-kidnapping protests 2021	Kidnapping of children of business owners	Civil rights	Failure of political representation	News of attack and lack of civic space	Non-violent disruption	Mozambique
2021 anti-rape protests	Sexual assault and harassment	Failure of political representation	Civil rights	Victim blaming by police officer and comments blaming co-educational institutes for rape by religious scholar	Non-violent disruption, social media	Pakistan
2021 women journalists press statement	Sexual harassment of journalists	Failure of political representation	Civil rights	Women journalists trolled and accused of spreading fake news while questioning government Covid management	Non-violent protest through press statement	Pakistan

Event	Grievance	Type of grievance	Type of grievance (2)	Trigger	Strategic choices	Country
#Bahria University protest 2021	Inconsistent education policy (economic injustice)	Economic injustice		Students forced to physically appear for exams during Covid-19 pandemic	Non-violent protest, social media	Pakistan

Table A4 Grievances categorisation methodology using Ortiz *et al.* (2022)

Economics grievances	Jobs, higher wages, labour conditions – reform of public services (education/ health/ water) – corporate influence/ deregulation/ privatisation – inequality – tax/fiscal justice – low living standards – agrarian/land reform – fuel and energy prices – pension reform – housing – food prices
Failure of political representation	Real democracy – corruption – justice – sovereignty/ patriotic Issues – transparency and accountability – deep government/oligarchy – anti-war/military-industrial complex – citizen surveillance – anti-socialism/communism
Civil rights	Ethnic /indigenous /racial justice – rights to the commons (digital, land, cultural, atmospheric) – freedom of assembly /speech /press – deny rights /reject equal rights for others – women's/ girls' rights – labour rights – LGBT/sexual rights – immigrant rights – personal freedoms – prisoners' rights – religious rights

Source: Author's own

Table A5 Events classified as protests for this data set as per Ortiz *et al.* (2022) definition

Marches
Protest assemblies
Occupations (including factory takeovers)
Civil disobedience/direct action
Strikes/walkouts
Blockades
Formal statements
Educational actions
Violence – vandalism/looting
Internet activism
General assemblies
Political stunts
Hunger strikes
Hacking
Whistleblowing/leaks
Noisemaking
Celebrity endorsements
Form new political party/movement
Legal/electoral redress
Petition drives
Mutual aid
Street theatre and music
Boycotts
'Merchants' strike
Self-inflicted violence
Religious processions/public prayer

Source: Author's own

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