

# DO POLITICAL PROTESTS MATTER?

How does political change come about? While freedom of speech and assembly are central pillars of democracy, recognized as intrinsically valuable, it is unclear how effective exercising these freedoms is in bringing about change. Although there are numerous historical episodes where political change has been associated with, or been preceded by, political protests and demonstrations, such as the French Revolution, the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and the recent Arab Spring manifestations, it is unclear to what extent these protests caused the change. Since protests are likely to occur during episodes when political beliefs in society change, it is difficult to disentangle whether protests cause political change, or simply reflect unobservable belief changes. Empirical evidence of the causal effects of protests therefore remains scarce. In fact, there is no empirical work quantifying the causal effects of protests on subsequent political behavior by citizens and politicians. It is an open question to what extent political protests cause political change, and, if they do, what the mechanisms are.

As an example, we investigate the impact of the Tea (*Taxed Enough Already*) Party movement protests in the United States on policymaking and citizen political behavior. The Tea Party movement is a conservative-libertarian political movement in the United States that has organized protests and supported candidates for elected office since 2009. This setting is a well-suited testing ground for hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of political protests. The movement propagates an agenda that is systematically to the right of the status quo, which makes the measurement of policy outcome changes in the direction desired by the movement relatively straightforward.

The main empirical challenge in estimating the impact of protests is that unobservable political preferences are likely to determine both policy and the number of protesters. A naive regression of policy on protest size is therefore unlikely to reflect a causal effect. We address this problem by exploiting absence of rainfall during the day of the

protest. The idea is simple. People are more likely to participate in the (outdoor) protests if the weather is nice, compared to when it rains. Nice weather on the protest day therefore leads to large protests in counties and congressional districts. Conditional on the likelihood of rain, since rainfall is a random event, whether it rains on the protest day is arguably uncorrelated with other determinants of policy and voting behavior. Under the assumption that absence of rainfall affects policy and voting behavior only through the number of protesters, this allows us to estimate the impact of protest size using an instrumental variables approach.

The Tea Party protests therefore seem to cause a conservative shift in terms of policymaking, both directly and through the selection of politicians in elections. We find evidence of significant multiplier effects. Our baseline estimate shows that every Tea Party protester increases the number of Republican votes by 15 votes. Our most conservative estimate lowers the multiplier to 7. In assessing the mechanisms through which protests affect policy, we find that protests increase the strength of the movement. We find that a temporary positive shock in protest size causes a persistent increase in the number of active movement members. Larger protests may also increase monetary contributions to the movement, where the effect is increasing over time. Beyond that, we show that protests cause subsequent protests, as larger Tax Day protests lead to higher townhall meeting turnout during the following summer and larger Tax Day protests in the following year. This is mirrored by the impact on media coverage, as protest size in 2009 does not only cause more media coverage during the 2009 protests, but also in the following year. Together, these results are consistent with larger political protests creating a stronger political movement that can push its policy agenda more effectively come election time, which ultimately affects both incumbent behavior and election outcomes.

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## Workshop # 1 – Reading Section

### Reading Section

**A. Based on the text, match the words in bold in column A with their closest meaning in column B.**

#### COLUMN A

1. **intrinsic**
2. **disentangle**
3. **policy**
4. **coverage**
5. **subsequent**
6. **suited**
7. **evidence**

#### COLUMN B

- A. release or become free from confusion; extricate
- B. right or appropriate for a particular person, purpose, or situation
- C. the extent or degree to which something is observed and analyzed
- D. belonging to a thing by its very nature; basic and fundamental
- E. the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid
- F. coming after something in time; following
- G. a plan of action adopted or pursued by an individual, or government

**B. Complete the following sentences using information from the text above. Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS in each gap.**

A. Speaking freely and meeting other individuals constitute the \_\_\_\_\_ of living in a democratic society.

B. It is difficult to establish the repercussions of protests on \_\_\_\_\_ by citizens and political figures.

C. Using information from the conservative-libertarian political movement – *Tea*, some research has been focused on testing the \_\_\_\_\_ protests.

D. Regarding the citizens' participation in protests, it can be assumed that policy and voting behavior may be affected by the \_\_\_\_\_.

E. It seems to be clear the impact on \_\_\_\_\_ that the Tea Party may cause with their protests.

F. In fact, the protests boost the \_\_\_\_\_ of a movement.

G. It is observed that the more media coverage large protests have, the better chances can be to push a policy agenda when the \_\_\_\_\_ comes.

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## Workshop # 1 – Reading Section

# A President with Character

**A. Read a short biography of one of the most notable US presidents in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Do the statements below agree with the views of the writer in Reading Passage below? Write**

**YES**

*if the statement agrees with the writer*

**NO**

*if the statement contradicts the writer*

**NOT GIVEN**

*if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this*

**Theodore Roosevelt** often referred as Teddy, was born in New York City on Oct. 27, 1858. A Harvard graduate, he was early interested in ranching, in politics, and in writing picaresque historical narratives. He was a Republican member of the New York Assembly in 1882–84, an unsuccessful candidate for mayor of New York in 1886, a U.S. civil service commissioner under Benjamin Harrison, police commissioner of New York City in 1895, and assistant secretary of the Navy under McKinley in 1897. He resigned in 1898 to help organize a volunteer regiment, the *Rough Riders*, and take a more direct part in the war with Spain. He was elected governor of New York in 1898 and vice president in 1900, in spite of lack of enthusiasm on the part of the bosses.

Assuming the presidency of the assassinated McKinley in 1901, Roosevelt became the 26<sup>th</sup> and youngest president in the Nation's history. In fact, he intended to adhere his predecessor's policies retaining the Cabinet. He embarked on a wide-ranging program of government reform and conservation of natural resources. He ordered antitrust suits against several large corporations, threatened to intervene in the anthracite coal strike of 1902, which prompted the operators to accept arbitration, and, in general, championed the rights of the "little man" and fought the "malefactors of great wealth." He was also responsible for progressive legislations such as the Elkins Act of 1903, which outlawed freight refunds by railroads to their most valued customers; the

Hepburn Act of 1906, which gave the Interstate Commerce Commission greater control over the railroads' rates; and the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, which banned misleading labels and preservatives that contained harmful chemicals or were impure or falsely labeled.

In foreign affairs, Roosevelt pursued a strong policy permitting the instigation of a revolt in the rebellious district of Panama to dispose of Colombia's intentions to own the isthmus canal and helping to maintain the balance of power in the East by bringing the Russo-Japanese War to an end, for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize, the first American to achieve a Nobel prize in any category. In 1904, he decisively defeated Alton B. Parker, his conservative Democratic opponent.

Roosevelt's increasing coldness toward his successor, William Howard Taft, led him to overlook his earlier disclaimer of third-term ambitions and to reenter politics. Defeated by the machine in the Republican convention of 1912, he organized the Progressive Party (*Bull Moose*) and polled more votes than Taft, though the split brought about the election of Woodrow Wilson. From 1915 on, Roosevelt strongly favored intervention in the European war. He became deeply embittered at Wilson's refusal to allow him to raise a volunteer division. He died in Oyster Bay, N.Y., on Jan. 6, 1919. He was married twice: in 1880 to Alice Hathaway Lee, who died in 1884, and in 1886 to Edith Carow.

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Theodore played important roles as a commander into different US armed forces before being a president.	_____	1.
In 1901 Teddy was elected as the 26 <sup>th</sup> US president.	_____	2.
'Teddy' continued with the former president's proposals during his term.	_____	3.
Teddy's diplomacy helped US to let Panamanians have full control over the isthmus canal.	_____	4.
The Nobel Prize was given to Teddy at the end of his presidency period.	_____	5.
<i>Bull Moose</i> assisted Teddy in playing an important role against William Taft's campaign.	_____	6.
Woodrow Wilson and Roosevelt worked together to send volunteers in the European War.	_____	7.
Theodore Roosevelt's second wife died in 1886.	_____	8.

**B. Complete the diagram below using ONLY information from the text. Use **NO MORE THAN FOUR WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** in each answer.**

