

: Programme

The Berlin Summer Dialogue – Online Edition 2021

Protesting for Political Reforms –

**Prerequisites for peaceful transformations
and violence prevention**

Online/worldwide

Each Tuesday from 1 June – 15 June 2021, 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

Final session on Thursday 17 June 2021, 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

Public Evening Event

Thursday 17 June 2021, 18:00-19:30 hrs (CEST)

Conference language

English

Cooperating Partners



#bsd21

BACKGROUND

Protest movements, including on a global scale, are nothing new: we need only think of the Vietnam War protests, social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, and the protests that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet and satellite regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Some led to peaceful revolutions; others were ultimately followed by violence and fragility. Starting with the Arab Spring, the world has seen a new rise in protest movements around the world in the last decade, sometimes dubbed the “age of mass protests”.

A spike in protests was seen in 2019, with people in countries across the world demanding more participation and social reforms. Many of these countries have seen transitions from one form of government to another in the past. Some seem to have overlooked the need to redesign the social contract between the state and its citizens throughout the past decades (a topic discussed at the Berlin Summer Dialogue 2019). This has driven discontent and often sparked protests for a new social contract or an overhaul of government. Lack of political representation, social inequalities and corruption among political elites are just some of the factors contributing to anti-government protests worldwide. The coronavirus pandemic has the potential to further increase grievances and protests in fragile states and puts economic and social progress at risk. Furthermore, Freedom House has identified a decline in global freedom in the past decade, with shrinking spaces for civil society in democracies and authoritarian regimes alike.

At the Berlin Summer Dialogue (2nd online edition), we would like to shed light on the causes and consequences of reform protests, particularly in fragile settings. Are there common patterns to be found, e.g. with regard to economic crises, social exclusion and the erosion of social contracts? What forms do protests take in fragile situations? What were “make or break” moments for protest movements in the past? How can social development be ensured? What causes protests to turn violent? To what extent does the internet play a role in forming protest? And what is the role of external actors in preventing violence and supporting human rights? These topics will be discussed with international experts at a series of online events throughout June 2021.

: Session I: 1 June | 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

ONLINE DIALOGUE

COMMON GROUND? ROOT CAUSES OF PROTESTS TOWARDS REFORM

Some protests in the past decade seem to have been ignited by a seemingly minor incident or issue, such as the metro fare increase in Chile. In other cases, however, grievances against governments' anti-democratic policies or falling living standards had been simmering for years or decades. The coronavirus pandemic has the potential to exacerbate existing grievances, especially in already fragile situations. What are common root causes of anti-government protests? The first session aims to provide an overview of common ground and the various causes of mass protests.

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach

i3kommunikation, Bonn

Virtual Check-in

Welcome to the series

Dr Maria Flachsbarth MdB

Parliamentary State Secretary

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Bonn,

Member of the Board of Trustees of the Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Meeting your fellow participants (breakout rooms)

Interview: Protests from an artist's perspective

Lara Baladi

Artist, Archivist and Educator

Cambridge, MA/Cairo

Interview: Protests from an academic perspective

Thomas Carothers

Harvey V. Fineberg Chair for Democracy Studies

Interim President

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C.

Discussion with the audience

: Session II: 8 June | 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

ONLINE DIALOGUE

FROM THE STREETS TO THE INTERNET AND BACK.

DOES DIGITALISATION PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE FOR MODERN PROTEST MOVEMENTS?

The protest movements during the Arab Spring were the first mass movements to network online in order to organise on the streets. But the internet does not only help to network within a specific movement; it also spreads information on movements elsewhere, creating a sense of a wider context. To what extent does digitalisation play an important role for modern protest movements? How do governments react to online protests? Is their power to control diverging opinions even greater than the power of people in the streets? Are there smart ways to prevent violence and destabilisation being incited online?

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach

i3kommunikation, Bonn

Virtual Check-in

Meeting your fellow participants (breakout rooms)

Panel Discussion

Dr Ryhor Astapenia

Belarus Initiative Director

Chatham House, London

Founder and Research Director

Center for New Ideas, Minsk

Espen Geelmuyden Rød

Researcher at Department of Peace and Conflict Research

Uppsala University

Discussion with the audience

🟢 Session III: 15 June | 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

ONLINE DIALOGUE

“MAKE-OR-BREAK MOMENTS” FOR PROTEST MOVEMENTS. NON-VIOLENCE AS A KEY FACTOR

A wide range of criteria can be used to define the success of protest movements; this is because these movements do not always voice clear-cut demands but are, rather, an expression of general discontent with the status quo. However, it may be helpful to look into defining moments. Studies have shown that remaining non-violent in protests is an important factor for achieving wide acceptance and sustainable progress in the long term. How can protest movements work towards the prevention of violence? What kind of leadership is needed to gain widespread support for the demands being voiced? And what are other key factors for making progress towards political reform?

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn

Virtual Check-in

Meeting your fellow participants (breakout rooms)

Input/Hands-on experience

Srdja Popovic

Executive Director
Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS), Belgrade

Panel Discussion with

Dr Véronique Dudouet

Senior Advisor, Conflict Transformation Research
Berghof Foundation, Berlin

Professor Sharon Erickson Nepstad

Distinguished Professor
Department of Sociology
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

Srdja Popovic

Discussion with the audience

🟢 Session IV: 17 June | 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

ONLINE DIALOGUE

BETWEEN SELF-INTEREST, ADHERENCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT PREVENTION. WHAT ROLE FOR EXTERNAL ACTORS?

Witnessing anti-government movements from the outside can put states and international organisations in an ambivalent position: while respecting a country's sovereignty, external actors cannot turn a blind eye to violations of the rule of law or basic human rights. Furthermore, development progress achieved with the support of external actors risks being undone by outbreaks of violence. In particular, authoritarian regimes, fearing the loss of power, are suspicious of foreign support for democratic forces in their own country and therefore find excuses to shut down offices of foreign organisations, for example. At the same time, external actors should be aware that they are not free of self-interest. Should other states and international organisations support democratic movements, and if so, to what extent? What steps can be taken from the outside to safeguard universal human rights and prevent violence in situations of turmoil? What are the dos and don'ts of international engagement?

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn

Virtual Check-in

Meeting your fellow participants (breakout rooms)

Panel discussion

Simon Bojsen-Møller

Deputy Head of Unit
Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI)
European Commission, Brussels

Dr Dylan O'Driscoll

Programme Director
Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Programme
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Stockholm

Thinzar Shunlei Yi

Democracy Activist
Myanmar

Discussion with the audience

Final Reflections on the four week series

Dr Julia Leininger

Head of Research Programme
Transformation of Political (Dis-)order: Institutions, Values and Peace
German Development Institute (DIE), Bonn
Member of the Executive Committee Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn

: Public Event: 17 June | 18:00-19:30 hrs (CEST)

PUBLIC EVENING EVENT

CITIES AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS. PROVIDING SPACE FOR PROTEST – AND DIALOGUE?

Cities are of particular importance in the emergence of protest movements: conflicts are more likely to break out in larger cities – often capital cities – due to a higher population density: Furthermore, central squares in city centres enable people to gather and give expression to widespread protest. Tahrir Square, Maidan, Gezi Park or protests at the renamed Black Lives Matter Plaza – the images of mass protests went around the world and are closely linked to the names of these squares.

Protesting against injustices, inequality and lack of political representation is a basic right and a valuable expression of the people. Looking beyond the urban space enabling mass protests, one may ask what cities could contribute to responding to protest movements. Can cities and local enforcement strategies help to keep protests non-violent? Aside from “containing” protests, could cities play a role for becoming a laboratory not only for protest, but also for dialogue? Could this provide for a starting point for change, at least on a local level?

Welcome

Michael Müller

Governing Mayor of Berlin
Deputy Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Panelists

Professor Mona Harb

Founder
Beirut Urban Lab
American University Beirut

Gábor Kerpel-Fronius

Deputy Mayor for Citizens’ Engagement and Digitalisation
City of Budapest

Discussion with the audience

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn