

Review of: "Exploring factors explaining the scarcity of climate protests in East Asia"

Karen Haydock

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

You have reported an interesting study on an important question. Your statistical methods seem to be robust, although of course your results are limited by the limitations of the data you used.

In the introduction, you state, "The scarcity of protests in several East Asian countries (e.g., China) would be attributable to the lack of democracy." The use of the term "democracy" is problematic, since it is hard to define. You have relied on the definitions and categorisations of the 2019 Democracy Index (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020), and the countries that had joined the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OECD) by the 1970s and were categorized as either "full democracy" or "flawed democracy". I might be better to use a more specific index of whether the governments allow these kinds of protests.

You used data from a single source, the Fridays For Future (2022) website, to find out the number of protests during 2018-19. Wouldn't local news reports be a better source for such data? At least you should justify why you used only this one source, and give reasons why it may or may not be accurate.

You have not been able to label the other (western?) countries in Figure 2. You might label a few of the more interesting ones - e.g. a few that have indices close to those of the east Asian countries.

There are some obvious factors that you did not include in your study: the relative amount of pollution that people are exposed to, the local experience of extreme weather and natural disasters that might be due to climate change, and the rates of certain kinds of violence (that may make protesting more dangerous). Comparing the countries' relative economic status (e.g. some measure of the median standard of living), and the gap between rich and poor, are obvious factors to consider. Or, the economic class of individual people may correlate with how likely they are to participate in a protest. This may or may not be related to the 'individualism' that you discuss. We might expect individualism (and alienation) to be higher for people of higher classes. These questions would require more study.

These are all factors for which you might be able to find some data. Then there are other factors that may be important but may be harder to measure, such whether people have (or think they have) any avenues besides protesting, in order to solve environmental problems. You mentioned that a survey has found that people in Japan are more apt to participate in petitioning than in protesting. I wonder if petitioning is also relatively more successful in Japan than in other countries. Are environmental problems more prominent in political party manifestos in some countries than in others?

I am glad that you discuss whether having western-style protests is really the only way or the most effective way to work



for solving the environmental crisis. Additionally, maybe working through NGOs is not necessarily the most effective route.