

A WORLD ALIGHT

GUIDE TO MASS PROTESTS AND UPRISINGS THROUGH 2019 TO THE PRESENT

BY MARIYA MUBEEN, MIKE HERMIDA, KIERAN DELAMONT, AND TIM KITZ | DESIGN BY CRYSTAL YUNG AND ADAM ASHBY GIBBARD

While a new year comes with new beginnings, it seems like 2020 may already be weighted — check that, energized — by spillovers from 2019 resistance. A recent report by risk assessment company Verisk Maplecroft shows that 47 countries had some form of civil unrest in 2019, and they project that 2020 will see a generous rise in that number. While technocrats, bureaucrats, and plutocrats might groan in dismay at these disturbances, we're here to celebrate them at *The Leveller*, and to explore how these movements are connected with each other.

FRANCE



THE YELLOW VESTS MOVEMENT

The gilets jaunes, the yellow vests: whatever you've heard about it, whatever you think about what they stand for, it is probably the most visible protest movement to hit a G7 nation since Occupy in 2011. Named for the protesters' yellow traffic vests, which French drivers are required to have in case of emergency, the French-born protest has spilled over to other countries in the West — and given it an enduring and easily recognizable symbol.

We've come to associate the yellow vest movement in Canada with kooky far-right conservatives, anti-immigrant conspiracy theorists, and fossil-fuel cheerleaders. But the origins of the movement in France are less partisan, and more economically populist.

It started in 2018 specifically in response to a planned fuel tax hike, then grew over 2019 into a wider class-based protest that pointed the finger squarely at an economic elite and the rigged system from which they benefit. Initiated by an online petition in May 2018 and defined by a viral and eclectic list of 42 demands posted in November 2018, French citizens quickly brought their clicktivism into the real world. Protesters hit the streets demanding lower fuel taxes, a higher minimum wage, the reintroduction of a solidarity tax on the rich, and a constitutional amendment enabling citizen-initiated referendums.

For much of 2019, but especially in the early spring, protesters flooded the streets throughout France every Saturday at sprawling demonstrations that French police often met with heavy force. Protesters were violent too, at times, but as usual state-sponsored and approved violence had the upper hand, with hundreds of serious injuries among the demonstrators. 24 protesters have lost an eye to rubber bullets meant to be fired at the legs, while an 80-year woman was killed in her home when a tear gas canister struck her in the face.

The movement has existed outside traditional labour structures — and started out rather disunited of them — giving it a kind of free-form nature. Its political affiliations are diffuse and differ from time

to time. Its supporters think this is great, a sign of a united workers' movement that bypasses entrenched labour interests; its critics point out that it also attracts Islamophobes and anti-Semites.

Whatever its future, the yellow vests movement has inspired other wildcat strikes among transportation workers, port workers, and oil workers.

PENSION PROTEST

Planned pension plan reform in France, announced on December 5, has provoked a wide-reaching strike movement, including rail workers, airline staff, energy workers, and so on. The French pension plan is treasured by many as a cornerstone to the state's social welfare system and a guarantee of their future financial security, and any attempt to reform it comes with a hefty political price.

The protests began in response to Emmanuel Macron's plan to seemingly 'gamify' the national pension plan into system where you build up points over your working life, which then determines how many pension bucks you get for the rest of your life.

French workers are not necessarily opposed to pension reform or a simple, universal system. The current system can be an administrative nightmare to deal with, especially if you have worked in more than one field during your life. Yet the devil is in the details; Macron's plan is not designed with the interests of pensioners in mind.

"Indeed, around France, working people have been getting out their calculators to work out how much they're set to lose," writes Alexis Moreau, in *Jacobin*. "You don't have to be a rocket scientist to work out that most wage earners would lose out from this."

Since the announcements, the strikes have brought Paris' transportation grid to a standstill and have inspired millions to demonstrate in cities across the country. It's a more traditionally union-led strike, and has benefitted by inheriting some of the energy from the yellow vest movement as well

ALGERIA



The Hirak movement or Revolution of Smiles began in February 2019, as a response to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's announcement he would

run for president for a fifth term. Bouteflika had been in power for 20 years, but due to a stroke during his last term, he hadn't been seen in the public eye.

The people of Algeria believe him to be a placeholder for the ruling elite surrounding him. Realizing the full force of the protest, Bouteflika withdrew his candidacy for the election in March.

The protests have been very peaceful, with limited crack-down from government forces. The military has kept themselves restrained to prevent the possibility of another civil war like the one that began in 1991 and persisted well into the decade, racking up a large casualty count.

The protesters have not relented though, as they continue to congregate, calling for deeper changes and using social media to spread the news of protests to remote areas. They have demanded that officials who were a part of the Bouteflika government also resign and refrain from participating in future elections. Apart from a cleansing of the Bouteflika regime, the protesters have demanded a proper transition into a more democratic form of government.

IRAN



Civil unrest in Iran began in November 2019, as a continuation of general strikes in 2018 related to various price increases and worker's rights. With surrounding countries like Lebanon and Iraq pushing for changes in their respective governments, Iranian citizens also took to the streets in November in response to an increase in fuel prices.

The unrest was met with brutal crackdowns from the government — Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei gave free reign to his subordinates to "Do whatever it takes to stop them," as Reuters reported. This led to the military opening fire on protesters in the city of Mahshahr.

Official reports claim the number to be as high as 148 casualties during the five-day protest. There have also been reports of protesters being shot from rooftops and helicopters, their bodies being hidden to conceal true death counts, and families being threatened against talking to media or holding funerals. The protests have also been hit with internet shutdowns to disrupt organiz-

ation of the protests.

The protesters have demanded a complete upheaval of the Islamic Republic, with chants of "Death to Khamenei" and "Death to the dictator." They also expressed discontent with Iran's involvement in regional conflicts with Israel, Lebanon, and Egypt. The Iranian government's deception and then subsequent admission it shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane has only exacerbated the public's discontent.

The Senate-commissioned report investigated oil alliance PetroCaribe between 2008 and 2016. It concluded that Haiti had been borrowing oil from Venezuela, founding member of the alliance, for decades. But the Caribbean nation deferred payments promising to invest in its economy and social programs. Instead, \$2 billion have gone missing and the government continues to be in debt to Venezuela. (The report also says that Moïse helped embezzle funds for banana plantation Agritrans.)

T h i s caused

Demonstrations in Colombia began in late November 2019 for a multitude of reasons including Indigenous safety, labour rights, and cuts to public education.

A country-wide workers' strike took place in November 2019 in response to rumours surrounding labour reforms and pension cuts. Meanwhile, university students were protesting government corruption and cuts to public education.

These two factors, coupled with an upward trend of violence toward Indigenous people and social activists led to mass, peaceful protests known as cacerolazos. Other major movements across Latin America, especially those in Bolivia and Chile, also provided inspiration.

The government's slow implementation of a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — proposed by the previous government — has been blamed for recent violence against Indigenous and social leaders.

The three strands of protest made common cause with one another. The demands of the now-amalgamated organizers reflect each original group's grievances. All together, they call for more investment in public schools, higher wages, and the implementation of the

peace deal. Protesters also call for improvements to the health-care system and the elimination of riot police.

Days after the mass movement began, protesters have been met with tear gas by the Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron — a branch of the National Police designed to control unrest and re-establish order.

The national government has also responded by closing borders while the municipality of Bogotá established a curfew. So far, four civilians have been killed by the police, including one Dilan Cruz, after he took a headshot from a 'non-lethal' projectile fired by the police. And the unrest continues...

HAITI



Haitians took to the streets in June 2019, reacting to a report that revealed systemic government corruption. Protesters attacked businesses and government buildings and called for the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse.

The Senate-commissioned report investigated oil alliance PetroCaribe between 2008 and 2016. It concluded that Haiti had been borrowing oil from Venezuela, founding member of the alliance, for decades. But the Caribbean nation deferred payments promising to invest in its economy and social programs. Instead, \$2 billion have gone missing and the government continues to be in debt to Venezuela. (The report also says that Moïse helped embezzle funds for banana plantation Agritrans.)

T h i s caused

Demonstrations in Colombia began in late November 2019 for a multitude of reasons including Indigenous safety, labour rights, and cuts to public education.

A country-wide workers' strike took place in November 2019 in response to rumours surrounding labour reforms and pension cuts. Meanwhile, university students were protesting government corruption and cuts to public education.

These two factors, coupled with an upward trend of violence toward Indigenous people and social activists led to mass, peaceful protests known as cacerolazos. Other major movements across Latin America, especially those in Bolivia and Chile, also provided inspiration.

The government's slow implementation of a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — proposed by the previous government — has been blamed for recent violence against Indigenous and social leaders.

The three strands of protest made common cause with one another. The demands of the now-amalgamated organizers reflect each original group's grievances. All together, they call for more investment in public schools, higher wages, and the implementation of the

avoid popular unrest — the kind of aid that managed to build six houses with half a billion dollars in donations.

President Moïse has denied any illegal activity on his part, apologized to the Canadian government, and promised to prosecute those responsible.

SUDAN



The Sudanese revolution is a testament to what can be achieved when people unite under a cause. The increase in the prices of staple goods by the country's president Omar Al-Bashir instigated protests in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. Not long after, women and youth joined the unrest, bolstering the movement. The civil disobedience began in December 2018 and endured well into 2019.

In April 2019, Al-Bashir was forced out in a coup d'état and a Transitional Military Council (TMC) was put into place to negotiate a handover to the civilian government. Unrest continued with the Khartoum Massacre and the El Obeid massacre, orchestrated by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) who supported the Sudanese government, putting a hitch in the handover process. In July 2019, the TMC and representatives for the civilian government came

T h i s caused

Demonstrations in Colombia began in late November 2019 for a multitude of reasons including Indigenous safety, labour rights, and cuts to public education.

A country-wide workers' strike took place in November 2019 in response to rumours surrounding labour reforms and pension cuts. Meanwhile, university students were protesting government corruption and cuts to public education.

These two factors, coupled with an upward trend of violence toward Indigenous people and social activists led to mass, peaceful protests known as cacerolazos. Other major movements across Latin America, especially those in Bolivia and Chile, also provided inspiration.

The government's slow implementation of a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — proposed by the previous government — has been blamed for recent violence against Indigenous and social leaders.

The three strands of protest made common cause with one another. The demands of the now-amalgamated organizers reflect each original group's grievances. All together, they call for more investment in public schools, higher wages, and the implementation of the

election runoff.

However, the electoral organization mysteriously stopped counting votes for 24 hours. When it resumed, it declared victory for Morales' party, Movement Towards Socialism (MAS). The right-wing opposition party and the Organization of American States (OAS) took this as a sign of fraud.

This election came in the context of Morales' decision to nationalize the country's massive lithium reserve. The metal is highly coveted by the United States, who has a strong hold over the OAS, for its use in cell phones and electric cars.

MAS has also been dealing with internal dissent for building a highway that crossed a protected rainforest.

These factors led to mass protests from unsatisfied citizens who marched and blocked roads — a resistance tradition dating back to the pre-colonial Incas people.

The Bolivian military took the opportunity to call for Morales' resignation. In November, Morales fled the country and his would-be successors resigned. Shortly after, Senator

T h i s caused

Demonstrations in Colombia began in late November 2019 for a multitude of reasons including Indigenous safety, labour rights, and cuts to public education.

A country-wide workers' strike took place in November 2019 in response to rumours surrounding labour reforms and pension cuts. Meanwhile, university students were protesting government corruption and cuts to public education.

These two factors, coupled with an upward trend of violence toward Indigenous people and social activists led to mass, peaceful protests known as cacerolazos. Other major movements across Latin America, especially those in Bolivia and Chile, also provided inspiration.

These two factors, coupled with an upward trend of violence toward Indigenous people and social activists led to mass, peaceful protests known as cacerolazos. Other major movements across Latin America, especially those in Bolivia and Chile, also provided inspiration.

The government's slow implementation of a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — proposed by the previous government — has been blamed for recent violence against Indigenous and social leaders.

The three strands of protest made common cause with one another. The demands of the now-amalgamated organizers reflect each original group's grievances. All together, they call for more investment in public schools, higher wages, and the implementation of the

ment of their office as declared by the National Assembly" a new popular election must take place to fill the position.

Guaidó's declaration proved to be one of the most polarizing acts in the country.

At the national level, the country seems to be split by those who recognize him as the legitimate president and those who do not. These lines reveal deep economic and racial tensions, with white business owners in Caracas largely supporting Guaidó while racialized rural folk have kept their allegiance to Maduro.

Lately, however, Maduro has been losing support from those living in slums because of a rise in police brutality.

Each faction has taken to the streets to demonstrate their support for their respective leader.

On the international stage, Russia and China, along with some Latin American countries like Cuba, continue to support Maduro's government, while the United States and long time Venezuelan rival Colombia have formally recognized Guaidó as president.

T h i s caused

Demonstrations in Colombia began in late November 2019 for a multitude of reasons including Indigenous safety, labour rights, and cuts to public education.

A country-wide workers' strike took place in November 2019 in response to rumours surrounding labour reforms and pension cuts. Meanwhile, university students were protesting government corruption and cuts to public education.

These two factors, coupled with an upward trend of violence toward Indigenous people and social activists led to mass, peaceful protests known as cacerolazos. Other major movements across Latin America, especially those in Bolivia and Chile, also provided inspiration.

These two factors, coupled with an upward trend of violence toward Indigenous people and social activists led to mass, peaceful protests known as cacerolazos. Other major movements across Latin America, especially those in Bolivia and Chile, also provided inspiration.

The government's slow implementation of a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — proposed by the previous government — has been blamed for recent violence against Indigenous and social leaders.

The three strands of protest made common cause with one another. The demands of the now-amalgamated organizers reflect each original group's grievances. All together, they call for more investment in public schools, higher wages, and the implementation of the

However many still support the government even as it curbs unrest by shutting off power and access to the internet in areas of conflict — like the state of Kashmir, which has been in a state of revolt/repression and suffering under a blackout since August 2019. The protests are ongoing with no sign of relent from the government.

CHILE



Protests in Chile were triggered by a police crackdown on civil disobedience through transit fare evasions.

In October 2019, the Chilean government increased rush hour metro prices, a measure that unduly affected the poorest people of the country. In protest, high school students in Santiago — the capital and largest city — organized a mass evasion of transit prices. The police reacted by attacking students at metro stations, which quickly progressed into mass street protests.

As with the other protests of this article, activists have been faced with police brutality. Cops have attacked citizens with tear gas, rubber bullets, and other weapons, causing the UN High Commission for Human Rights to call for an independent investigation.

Dozens of people have died and hundreds more have been injured.

The protests have now evolved into manifestations of general discontent towards poverty and inequality. "It's not 30 pesos," said Chilean union leader Esteban Maturana, referring in an interview with Sputnik to the fare hike. "It's 30 years of abuse."

Protesters have called for Piñera to resign, for a new constitution, and for the government to socialize the country's pension plan. Piñera is of a family with deep ties in the Chilean right-wing political sphere. His brother, José Piñera, was the Labour Minister under the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship who implemented radical neo-liberal reforms — including pension privatization — and created Chile's current constitution. The president's cousin, Andrés Chadwick, served as Interior Minister under Piñera was already forced to resign by protests.

Massive protests continue today — as the president is yet to resign — and are considered to be on par with those in Hong Kong.

The student-led BNP government has been gradually taking steps to target marginalized populations, the recent violence against innocent student protesters in many universities and blatant discrimination based on religion has forced some of the population out of their apolitical slumber.

While the Modi-led BJP government has been gradually taking steps to target marginalized populations, the recent violence against innocent student protesters in many universities and blatant discrimination based on religion has forced some of the population out of their apolitical slumber.

per cent of the population voted.

Last October, the Spanish Supreme Court sentenced separatist organizers to between nine and 13 years in prison for sedition and misuse of public funds, which the defendants deny. As a response, Catalan separatists — notably members of a new youth-led organization called Tsunami Democràtic — organized civil disobedience acts in Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona.

Taking inspiration from non-violent protests in Hong Kong, Tsunami Democràtic blocked roads going to El Prat Airport and other important infrastructure, such as train rails and the highway between Barcelona and Girona. They did this using their own purpose-built encrypted messaging app to organize in anonymous, decentralized ways — mimicking sea waves in their mobilizations.

2019 was also a notable year for the Spanish feminist movement. On International Women's Day (the 8th of March), approximately 350,000 people in Madrid, 220,000 in Valencia, and 200,000 in Barcelona took to the streets to protest against institutionalized sexism and pervasive gender violence. In June 2019, the Spanish Supreme Court declared 5 men guilty of gang raping an 18-year-old woman, reversing a previous ruling which only convicted them for sexual assault. This was the first time in Spanish history that consent was included in sexual violence legislation.

LEBANON



Like many revolts in history, the protests in Lebanon began as a response to taxes — in this case, the proposal to tax Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calls through apps like whatsapp and facebook. This tax was a tipping point for civilian unrest. The protests began in mid-October with people filling key streets in Beirut, blaming the political class for the abysmal economic state of the country.

Lebanon's political system follows sectarian divides that gives political authority based on the sect of the public servant. This sectarian system, exploited by current politicians, has been blamed for many of Lebanon's problems. This combined with the lack of governmental assistance in wildfires throughout the region, daily utility issues like power cuts and poor drainage infrastructure, and a debt-ridden economy has pushed the public into the most unified, cross-sectarian civil unrest that the country has seen.

The protests have continued well into 2020, as the Lebanese public demand the resignation of the president Michel Aoun, prime minister Saad Hariri, and Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, amid calls for new elections and the removal of the sectarian divides within the political system. Protesters are aware of the complacency of the current government and fear that if they leave the streets, none of their demands will come to fruition.

While the Modi-led BJP government has been gradually taking steps to target marginalized populations, the recent violence against innocent student protesters in many universities and blatant discrimination based on religion has forced some of the population out of their apolitical slumber.

HONG KONG



The unrest in Hong Kong began as a direct response to the extradition bill, which was proposed by the government in February 2019. The bill's amendment to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance would allow fugitives to be transferred to another country's law enforcement, including mainland China.

The people of Hong Kong saw this as a way for the Chinese government to take hold of their legal system and undermine the city's democratic tendencies. The bill would have also allowed Chinese forces to clamp down on critics of the Chinese government. Misconduct by the Hong Kong Police Force during protests only exacerbated the situation, fueling the protesters' mistrust in those with power.

The protest was first instigated by Demosistó, a liberal political party. It gained more traction when pro-democratic lawmakers opposed the bill in the legislature with a filibuster campaign. Soon thousands of people join in, with the protests spreading throughout Hong Kong.

The protests in Hong Kong have been hailed as one of the most innovative and technologically-advanced protests of our time. Footage spread worldwide of protesters wearing gas masks, using umbrellas and spray painting security cameras to avoid surveillance, disarming tear gas bombs, using laser pointers to throw off police and cameras, and setting up pop-up shops to provide gadgets and medical supplies to those on the front lines.

The protests were organized through online forums, allowing different groups to coordinate and congregate in flash mobs to evade police. While the protests led to the development of different groups resorting to different tactics, groups avoided denouncing or criticizing others as a mark of respect for different views within the protest and to put up a united front.

An end to the protests does not seem to be in sight, as many of the protesters' demands are yet to be met, most prominently the resignation of Carrie Lam and an independent inquiry into the behavior of the police during the protests.

CONCLUSION

The Global Protest Wave of 2019, as pundits have called it, looks to be sweeping inexorably into 2020. The question is whether "the year of the street protester," as *The Washington Post* called it, will inspire us here at home.

Might imminent ecological collapse, the growing normalization of neo-fascism, and democracy's capture by corporate interests prompt us to revolt? Or will we sit jilt at home and chill with Netflix while others around the globe put their lives on the line for freedom, equality, and a livable future?

It's pretty easy to feel snugly numb and vaguely powerless in comfortably colonial Canada, at least for those of us living in a cocoon of relative privilege. But we Levellers bet taking real action and inciting change will feel better than just watching CGI fairy tales of spandex supergods and space wizards risking everything to save the world.



CUTS TO PUBLIC FUNDING/INCREASES IN PRICES



DEMOCRATIZATION



CORRUPT GOVERNMENT



SOCIAL MEDIA MOBILIZATION



DETERIORATING ECONOMY



CULTURAL/RELIGIOUS DIVIDES



COLONIAL EFFECTS/FOREIGN MEDDLING