

The Paradox of Protest: Political Dissatisfaction and Satisfaction with Democracy

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Introduction

Citizens' dissatisfaction with their government has long been a subject of concern for scholars of democracy (e.g., Torcal, 2006; Crow, 2010; Dahlberg, Linde, and Holmberg, 2015; Ariely, 2013; Stecker and Tausendpfund, 2016). While disillusionment with government performance might intuitively seem to erode support for democratic institutions, the relationship between these two concepts may not be so straightforward. Dissatisfaction with government performance does not always translate to a broader critique of democracy itself. In fact, some citizens may even channel their frustrations through actions that reaffirm their democratic engagement, such as political protests.

This paper examines whether dissatisfaction with government performance, as expressed through political protests, diminishes citizen support for democratic institutions. Contrary to the assumption that protests signal a failing democracy, I argue that political protests may instead reinforce democratic satisfaction. Protesters, by engaging in a critical form of political participation, demonstrate their commitment to democracy while holding their governments accountable. Building on existing research on the behaviors of engaged citizens, this study introduces a framework for understanding the dynamics of democratic satisfaction. By focusing on protests as a specific mode of political expression, I aim to highlight how citizens may simultaneously critique their government's actions while appreciating the democratic freedoms that allow them to voice such criticisms. Using pre-existing data on protest frequency and democracy moods, I evaluate how the frequency and nature of political protests influence satisfaction with democracy over time.

Theoretical Framework

Does dissatisfactory government behavior incur citizen dissatisfaction with the institutions of democracy itself? It often is the case that frustration with government performance can lead to disillusionment with democracy itself (e.g., Easton, 1965; Norris, 2011; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Citizens who find themselves dissatisfied with the performance of their government, whether it be because of policy or economic performance, can erode citizen support for democracy. One way to narrow the scope of this question is to analyze modes of expressing government dissatisfaction and whether this still leads to disillusionment with democracy. More specifically, I ask this question: how does dissatisfaction with government performance, as expressed by way of political protests, affect support for democratic institutions?

In this paper, I theorize that government dissatisfaction, as manifested by way of political protests, does not diminish support for or satisfaction with democratic institutions. On the contrary, it may increase democratic satisfaction. This argument rests on two mechanisms: first, citizens protest because they feel empowered by their political system, which in turn fosters satisfaction with the democratic institutions that uphold and enable that political system; and second, citizens who protest are exercising their democratically-protected right to associations and speech and therefore recognize the safeguards provided by democratic institutions. These two mechanisms function upon two different assumptions. First, while democratic satisfaction is multidimensional, it can specifically measure how citizens feel about democracy *itself*, independent of its outcomes; participation in democratic institutions, namely protests, demonstrates support for democracy as a principle rather than for its outcomes. Second, protests must be political in nature to be able to effectively evaluate satisfaction with democracy.

First, when citizens feel confident that they can influence the political matters of their regime, they are more likely to support the democratic institutions that give them confidence in

their influence. The ability to engage in protests is a strong signal that citizens feel empowered by their political regime, or that they experience high levels of subjective political empowerment (Christensen, 2016). In fact, Norris (1999) coined the term “critical citizen” to describe a citizen who is committed to democracy but finds himself dissatisfied with the performance of the government. Those citizens are especially likely to engage in unconventional forms of political participation, like protests, as a means of expressing their dissatisfaction with government performance. This pattern is prevalent in the realm of voting as well— when voters are dissatisfied with a certain element of democracy in their country, they support parties that target their feelings of democratic dissatisfaction (Hernández, 2018). In any case, when citizens are dissatisfied with the government or tend to be politically engaged, these are the people who will protest (Walsh and Elkik, 2021). The comfort that citizens feel in engaging politically, despite their discontent with government performance or the way that democracy may be functioning at the time, will mobilize them to protest, but it will not decrease the support they have for the fundamental concepts of democratic institutions. Citizens can express their discontentment with government performance in a way that doesn’t equate to democratic dissatisfaction, and expressing their dissatisfaction with the government does not necessarily lead to democratic dissatisfaction.

Second, although citizens may be protesting because they feel that some element of democracy is not being exercised correctly, citizens who protest recognize that their rights to protest are being protected by the democratic institutions of their country. Protests have become one of the major elements of political participation for citizens in democracies (Norris, Walgrave, and Aelst, 2006). Without this as a protected right, citizens in many democracies would lose a prominent method of expressing political dissatisfaction. Healthy democracies maintain the right

to protest, so seeing protests in a healthy democracy should not be considered a sign of a failing democracy; instead, it should be considered a sign of a motivated and encouraged citizenry who feel strongly about holding accountable its government. One can be critical of the government's policies or performance—and demonstrate that criticism by way of political protests—while still supporting the democratic system as a whole (Muller, Jukam, Seligson, 1982). Therefore, the presence of political protests in a democracy should be taken as a sign of a healthily functioning democracy, not one that is experiencing elevated levels of democratic dissatisfaction.

It is critical to recognize that satisfaction with democracy is a multi-dimensional measure that is often contingent on many factors. While many citizens do base their support for democracy on the physical outcomes often associated with democracy, like government performance, Easton (1965) suggests that there are two types of support for democracy, specific and diffuse, where diffuse support measures satisfaction with democracy as based on how democracy manifests itself, like by way of institutions and political and civil rights. While specific support is often pervasive in measures of democratic satisfaction, it is possible to measure support for democracy in the name of its institutions and procedures. This means that satisfaction with the outcomes of democracy, like government or economic performance, is not always indicative of satisfaction with democracy. Research has pointed to the fact that those who continually support democratic values may still do so in the face of opposing the governing political party (Öney and Ardag, 2022). Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that citizens can maintain their confidence in democracy even when they are frustrated with government performance.

When allowed to do so, many citizens take to protests to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with any element of their lives. This is because protests are an effective means by which citizens

can verbalize their true feelings in hopes that changes will come as a result. However, it is important to note that protests in this study must be political in nature to be relevant; if a protest is not political, then it is very unlikely that the message behind the protest is against dissatisfactory government behavior. In order to accurately understand the relationship between citizens who protest dissatisfaction with government behavior and their satisfaction with democracy, it is important to only analyze the protests that are truly representative of ill feelings towards government actions.

Ultimately, citizens participating in political protests does not give way to dissatisfaction with democracy; while protesting may be indicative of dissatisfaction with the government, this does not necessarily translate over to dissatisfaction with democracy. If citizens live in a regime in which they feel empowered to engage politically, a regime where democracy is healthy enough to permit the existence of protests, then they will not be dissatisfied with democracy. Instead, they will find themselves supportive of the democracy that enables them to protest what they consider to be an ineffectual government. With this study, I will explore whether the uptake of political protests as a means to express discontent with government behavior does not lead to democratic dissatisfaction—and may even lead to increased democratic satisfaction.

If my theory is correct, the observable implications are clear; as the frequency of political protests against government policy or action increases, satisfaction with a country's democracy will subsequently increase. Citizens will recognize that, while they may be dissatisfied with, for example, the current government leaders or the decisions that they have been making, their ability to protest, and the fact that it is a protected right to do so, will cause them to indicate their they are satisfied with their country's democracy when asked to indicate their feelings.

Research Design

Understanding satisfaction with democracy has often been explored by examining case studies to pinpoint specific causes of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with democracy. However, surveys are also commonly used to measure how satisfied citizens are with the way democracy works in their own countries, turning satisfaction with democracy into a quantitatively measured concept. Thus, I propose a quantitative model that allows me to examine the global trend of how dissatisfaction with government performance affects subsequent satisfaction with democracy.

Quantitative modeling offers several advantages in this study. First, it allows me to produce an analysis of the global trend of dissatisfaction with government performance, rather than focusing on isolated extreme cases. This broader approach makes the results more generalizable across various political contexts. Second, using data with yearly recordings allows me to lag the dependent variable to examine whether dissatisfaction with the government has delayed effects. While case studies can highlight the lengths of time between overt displays of dissatisfaction and subsequent shifts in democratic satisfaction, a quantitative model can more systematically demonstrate this relationship at a global level.

As discussed in the theoretical framework of this paper, government dissatisfaction, my independent variable, will be measured using a count variable of the occurrence of political protests in countries, excluding protests that are not political in nature. This data comes from David Clark and Patrick Regan's Mass Mobilization Protest Data, which includes data on political protests against states from 1990 to 2020 (Clark and Reagan, 2016). The dependent variable, democratic satisfaction, will be measured using Christopher Claassen's democratic satisfaction data. This variable was measured using survey questions that asked respondents to evaluate democracy, (e.g., asking respondents to compare democracy to an undemocratic alternative or asking respondents how satisfied they are "with the way democracy works"), and

the collected data was expanded using a Bayesian latent variable model (Claassen and Magalhães, 2022). The data set ranges from 1973 to 2020.

To control for exogenous factors, I add economic and political rights variables to control for how other factors, like economic growth or regime strength, may affect satisfaction with democracy. I add an economic control because citizens often equate how well their government is performing with their satisfaction with democracy, so it is necessary to control for residual effects of economic satisfaction. Similarly, I control for the degree of liberal democracy to account for variations in democratic satisfaction arising from differences in democratic quality across countries. A strong argument can be made that higher-quality democracies experience higher levels of democratic satisfaction, so it is important to control for this possible confounding effect. I also include a control for the state's response to protests. My theory is contingent on the idea that the right to protest is protected; when the state responds in a way that is indicative of limiting the right to protest, this may not produce the subsequent increased democratic satisfaction that I theorize. Therefore, I control for whether a state engages in any such activity (e.g., arrests, beatings, killings, shootings, or crowd dispersals). Finally, I also include a count variable for the number of protests where protesters were violent, modeled the same way that the total protests variable is modeled. When I calculate the results using a binary protest variable, I employ the same method for the violent protesters variable.

In this paper, I employ an ordinary least squares (OLS) model to examine the relationship between political protests and satisfaction with democracy. As discussed earlier, I lag the democratic satisfaction score in an attempt to model how reported satisfaction may be delayed and therefore may not be evident in the year where protests are occurring. While I maintain the original, no-lag democratic satisfaction variable, I will also employ a one-year and two-year lag

to demonstrate the lagged effect that takes place after one year and the possible diminishing effects on satisfaction after two years. Additionally, I use fixed country and year effects to control for unobservables within country-year terms. Finally, I include a binary version of the dependent variable that indicates whether or not a country experienced a political protest in a given year, and I run the same models—including the lagged democratic satisfaction variables and fixed effects—with this independent variable.

Results

The results are presented in the following order. First, I discuss the results of the total protests variable on the democratic satisfaction variable, where the number of protests is measured as the number of protests that occurred in a country in any given year. The democratic satisfaction variable in these results is the results as given in each year as normal without any lag effects. Next, I display and discuss the results of the total protests variable on the democratic satisfaction variable lagged one year. Then, I display the differing effects of the total protest count on democratic satisfaction with varying levels of lag. Finally, I demonstrate the effects of changing the measurement method for protests in a given country, instead turning the variable into a binary indicator of protests occurring in a country-year term.

In Table 1, we see the results of the simple OLS model without any fixed effects, as well as the results of varying levels of fixed effects. Column 4 shows the full model while controlling for unobservables within countries and years. The coefficient of -0.002 means that when comparing characteristically similar countries, a country that has one more protest in a year has, on average, a decreased democracy satisfaction score of about 0.002 standard deviations. However, this coefficient is not statistically significant. The direction of this coefficient holds

consistent under the no-lag variable, even when alternating fixed effects by country and year. A notable result here is present; total protester violence and state retaliation¹ does not seem to

TABLE 1. Regression Results (No Lag)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Democratic Satisfaction (No Lag)			
	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Multilevel Model</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Total Protests	-0.010*** (0.004)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.004)	-0.002 (0.002)
Liberal Democracy	-0.172** (0.087)	-0.838*** (0.125)	-0.110 (0.092)	-0.838*** (0.125)
GDP Per Capita (in 1000s)	0.027*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.026*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)
State Retaliation	0.060 (0.046)	0.007 (0.021)	0.058 (0.047)	0.007 (0.021)
Total Protester Violence	0.015 (0.012)	-0.007 (0.006)	0.014 (0.012)	-0.007 (0.006)
Constant	-0.249*** (0.046)			
Observations	2,312	2,312	2,312	2,312
R ²	0.252	0.078	0.251	0.078
Adjusted R ²	0.250	0.031	0.239	0.031
Country FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Note:</i>		*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001		

¹ State retaliation was calculated using the following method. The Mass Mobilization Protest Data set includes a variable that accounts for the ways in which the state retaliated to protests, including accommodation, arrests, beatings, crowd dispersal, killings, shootings, or ignorance. I took the state actions that were inherently anti-protest, namely crowd dispersal, arrests, beatings, shootings, and killings, ranked them by severity of action (in the order that I just listed them), and assigned them a value from 0 to 1, increasing in increments of 1/5. I summed the occurrence of these actions and divided them by the number of protests that occurred in a single year, since this mode sums the number of protests that occur in each year.

significantly affect the relationship between total political protests and democratic satisfaction.

The state retaliation variable, which was calculated by averaging the severity of and frequency of state retaliation actions by the number of protests that occurred in a year, does not significantly change.

TABLE 2. Regression Results (One-Year Lag)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Democratic Satisfaction (One-Year Lag)			
	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Multilevel Model</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Total Protests	-0.011*** (0.004)	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.004)	-0.003* (0.002)
Liberal Democracy	-0.204** (0.089)	-0.789*** (0.132)	-0.130 (0.094)	-0.789*** (0.132)
GDP Per Capita (in 1000s)	0.027*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.026*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)
State Retaliation	0.073 (0.048)	0.020 (0.022)	0.068 (0.048)	0.020 (0.022)
Total Protester Violence	0.023* (0.012)	0.0002 (0.006)	0.021* (0.012)	0.0002 (0.006)
Constant	-0.250*** (0.048)			
Observations	2,208	2,208	2,208	2,208
R ²	0.253	0.075	0.251	0.075
Adjusted R ²	0.252	0.026	0.239	0.026
Country FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The results in Table 2 differ slightly. When a one-year lag is incorporated into democratic satisfaction to account for the delay in transforming beliefs about democracy, the results become statistically significant. Column 4 presents the full model, including all controls and fixed

effects, showing that, on average, a country experiencing one additional protest in a year has democratic satisfaction scores lower by about 0.003 points. Although this coefficient is small in magnitude, its statistical significance highlights the key difference between the results in Table 1 and Table 2, which lies in the significance of the results.

TABLE 3. Full Model Regression Lag Variable Comparison

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Satisfaction (No Lag) (1)	Satisfaction (One-Year Lag) (2)	Satisfaction (Two-Year Lag) (3)
Total Protests	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Liberal Democracy	-0.838*** (0.125)	-0.789*** (0.132)	-0.706*** (0.139)
GDP Per Capita (in 1000s)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)
State Retaliation	0.007 (0.021)	0.020 (0.022)	0.011 (0.023)
Total Protester Violence	-0.007 (0.006)	0.0002 (0.006)	0.002 (0.006)
Observations	2,312	2,208	2,104
R ²	0.078	0.075	0.068
Adjusted R ²	0.031	0.026	0.016
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Note:</i>		*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

While a one-year lag appears to capture the transformation of beliefs, Table 3 shows that this effect fades by the two-year mark. Although the coefficient in Column 3 is identical to that in Column 2, the statistical significance of this effect diminishes after the first year. This finding has important implications; it suggests that total protests likely require a lag to influence democratic satisfaction, but that this effect weakens over time.

Finally, Table 4 presents the effects of modeling the protest variable as a binary indicator of democratic satisfaction. A binary protest variable is not a modeling decision that is consistent with my theory, that increasing numbers of protests will lead to increasing democratic satisfaction. However, this model serves as a robustness check for the general relationship between political protests and democratic satisfaction. Table 4 includes coefficients that differ in direction from the coefficients in earlier models. These coefficients are not statistically significant, which mainly makes this inconsistency inconsequential, but this may indicate that the number of protests could be the causal factor in creating a negative effect, not just the occurrence of a single protest.

TABLE 4. Binary Protest Regression Results

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Satisfaction (No Lag) (1)	Satisfaction (One-Year Lag) (2)	Satisfaction (Two-Year Lag) (3)
Protests (Binary)	0.023 (0.021)	0.021 (0.022)	0.021 (0.022)
Liberal Democracy	-0.824*** (0.125)	-0.776*** (0.132)	-0.700*** (0.139)
GDP Per Capita (in 1000s)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)
State Retaliation	0.017 (0.025)	0.016 (0.026)	-0.004 (0.026)
Protester Violence (Binary)	-0.058*** (0.022)	-0.025 (0.023)	0.001 (0.024)
Observations	2,312	2,208	2,104
R ²	0.075	0.073	0.067
Adjusted R ²	0.029	0.024	0.015
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Analysis and Discussion

I initially theorized that the occurrence of political protests in a country would not decrease satisfaction with democracy but that it would actually lead to an increase in democratic satisfaction. The results of this study reveal that this may not be the case. The results in Table 3 can be interpreted to mean that the count of protests in a country only matters to democratic satisfaction for about a year in the aftermath of protests. The insignificant coefficients of the no-lag and two-year lag variables support this idea, indicating that, one, protests will not immediately affect satisfaction with democracy, and two, protests matter in the short-run but that the effects of protests on democratic satisfaction will be negligible after a certain amount of time. This theoretically makes sense, and lag variables are common practice in political science academia (e.g., Barro, 1999; Gleditsch and Ward, 2006). However, this would be most applicable if sentiments about democracy arise primarily as a product of protests and are not present to a significant extent beforehand. If the sentiments cannot be isolated as direct products of protests, it becomes less likely that democratic satisfaction is best captured with a one-year lag.

Even so, the results in Table 3 argue against what I theorize. I argued that an increase in protests would lead to an increase in satisfaction with democracy; Column 2 of Table 3 provides evidence against this theory. While the coefficient is of small magnitude, the range of democratic satisfaction scores in this data set is limited (-2.435 to 3.027), meaning that even a small coefficient is significant here. While recognizing that this relationship may truly be negative, I provide here a potential explanation for a relationship contrary to the one I proposed. The literature on democratic satisfaction has often discussed the difficulty of measuring democratic satisfaction. Citizens often focus on the tangible outcomes of democracy when evaluating their satisfaction with democracy (Ferrín and Kriesi, 2016), which may pose some issues with

separating satisfaction with government performance and satisfaction with democracy. Given that I was attempting to measure how dissatisfaction with government performance affected democratic satisfaction, it is very likely that my chosen democratic satisfaction variable is influenced by government dissatisfaction, which would explain why increased government dissatisfaction (as expressed by a greater number of political protests) leads to decreased satisfaction with democracy.

Furthermore, measures of satisfaction with democracy are often simple, asking respondents how satisfied they are “with the way democracy works” in their respective countries, which is exactly the kind of question that the democratic satisfaction variable relied on for their scores (Claassen and Magalhães, 2022). Much of the current literature on measuring support for democracy takes problem with simple measures like this because it does not measure very well what is meant by democracy. While I do not negate the results of this study, I bring to light these considerations to address why the results may appear contrary to what I initially theorized.

Table 4 displays the results of the robustness check I ran using the binary protest variable, but the results here may indicate a consideration that I had not anticipated. Where the count protest variable amasses all total occurrences of protests in a country for a given year, the binary protest variable simplifies this to a single indicator for whether there was at least one protest in a year. By doing this, the binary variable simplifies the model and reduces the explanatory power of the independent variable. The positive coefficients in Columns 1 through 3 in Table 4, although insignificant, suggest that the effects of protests on democratic satisfaction vary by size. It may be that, when citizens participate in one protest, they do not feel very different about how democracy is functioning in their country. It may be, rather, that a “critical citizen” (Norris, 1999), who actively and regularly participates in the political process in the name of commitment

to democracy, is engaging in protest enough to recognize that the right is being protected. Where a single protest may not be enough to remind citizens of the rights that their democratic institutions protect, repeat participation in protests may be sufficient.

Furthermore, the less democratic a country is (as measured using V-Dem's liberal democracy index), the less likely the country is to have multiple protests in a single year (see Appendix A Figure A1). It is logical to assume that countries where liberal democracy is not strong—countries where protests each year are limited or repressed—are countries where citizens will not be very satisfied with the performance of democracy in their country because democracy is not performing well in their respective countries. In countries where the quality of liberal democracy is high, protests are more frequent, and therefore, citizens are more likely to be satisfied with democracy in their country because they do have the right to vote.

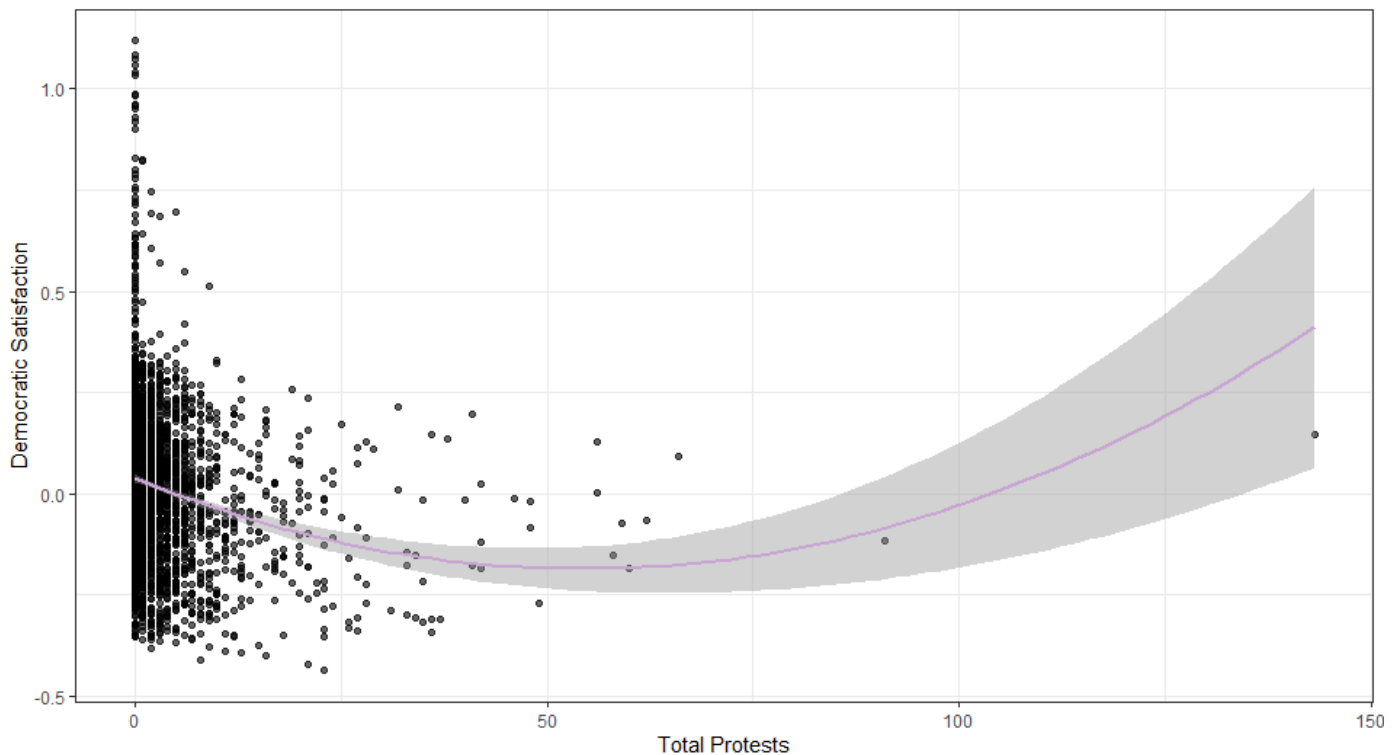
To account for this possibility, I modify my initial model by adding a quadratic term to capture exponential increases in protests. The assumption is that as protests initially rise, democratic satisfaction decreases, but after a certain point, repeated protests lead to a greater appreciation for democratic institutions, causing satisfaction to increase.

Table 5 clearly demonstrates this pattern; mapping the total sum of protests in each country-year term yields a negative linear relationship, meaning that as the total number of protests increases, democratic satisfaction decreases. However, the positive and significant squared total protests term indicates that, after a country has surpassed a certain threshold in a given year for a number of protests, each additional protest increases democratic satisfaction. While this new addition does not fully support the original theory I proposed, it provides evidence that protests, when occurring with sufficient frequency, can have some predictive power for democratic satisfaction.

TABLE 5. Regression Results with Quadratic Term (No Lag)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Democratic Satisfaction (No Lag)			
	<i>OLS</i>	<i>Multilevel Model</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Total Protests	-0.016*** (0.004)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.006*** (0.002)
Total Protests * Total Protests	0.0001** (0.0001)	0.0001*** (0.00003)	0.0001** (0.0001)	0.0001*** (0.00003)
Liberal Democracy	-0.164* (0.087)	-0.853*** (0.125)	-0.105 (0.092)	-0.853*** (0.125)
GDP Per Capita (in 1000s)	0.027*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)	0.026*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)
State Retaliation	0.082* (0.047)	0.020 (0.022)	0.078 (0.048)	0.020 (0.022)
Total Protester Violence	0.011 (0.012)	-0.010* (0.006)	0.010 (0.012)	-0.010* (0.006)
Constant	-0.240*** (0.047)			
Observations	2,312	2,312	2,312	2,312
R ²	0.253	0.081	0.252	0.081
Adjusted R ²	0.251	0.034	0.240	0.034
Country FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Note:</i>			*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.01	

Visualizing the data further supports this theory. Figure 1 graphs the predicted values of the equation from Column 4 in Table 5; it demonstrates that, when adding a squared term that accounts for exponential increases in total protests, the relationship between total protest count and democratic satisfaction becomes U-shaped, where the inflection point falls around 30 protests.

FIGURE 1. Nonlinear Relationship Between Protests and Democratic Satisfaction

Conclusion

Understanding how the occurrence of protests affects democratic satisfaction in a country is complex. My findings suggest that the relationship between protests and democratic satisfaction is dependent upon the total number of protests itself, not merely their existence, and that it is not perfectly linear. While the results of this study somewhat challenge my initial hypothesis, they offer valuable insights into the interplay between citizen engagement and democratic satisfaction. In high enough doses, protests may ultimately reinforce democratic satisfaction, even amidst political disapproval. This suggests that citizens are more appreciative of and satisfied with their democracy the more they exercise their institution-protected rights. Even so, the difficulty of collecting accurate data on citizens' satisfaction with democracy limits my confidence in the results that I have discussed. In order to verify the results of this study, more research must be done.

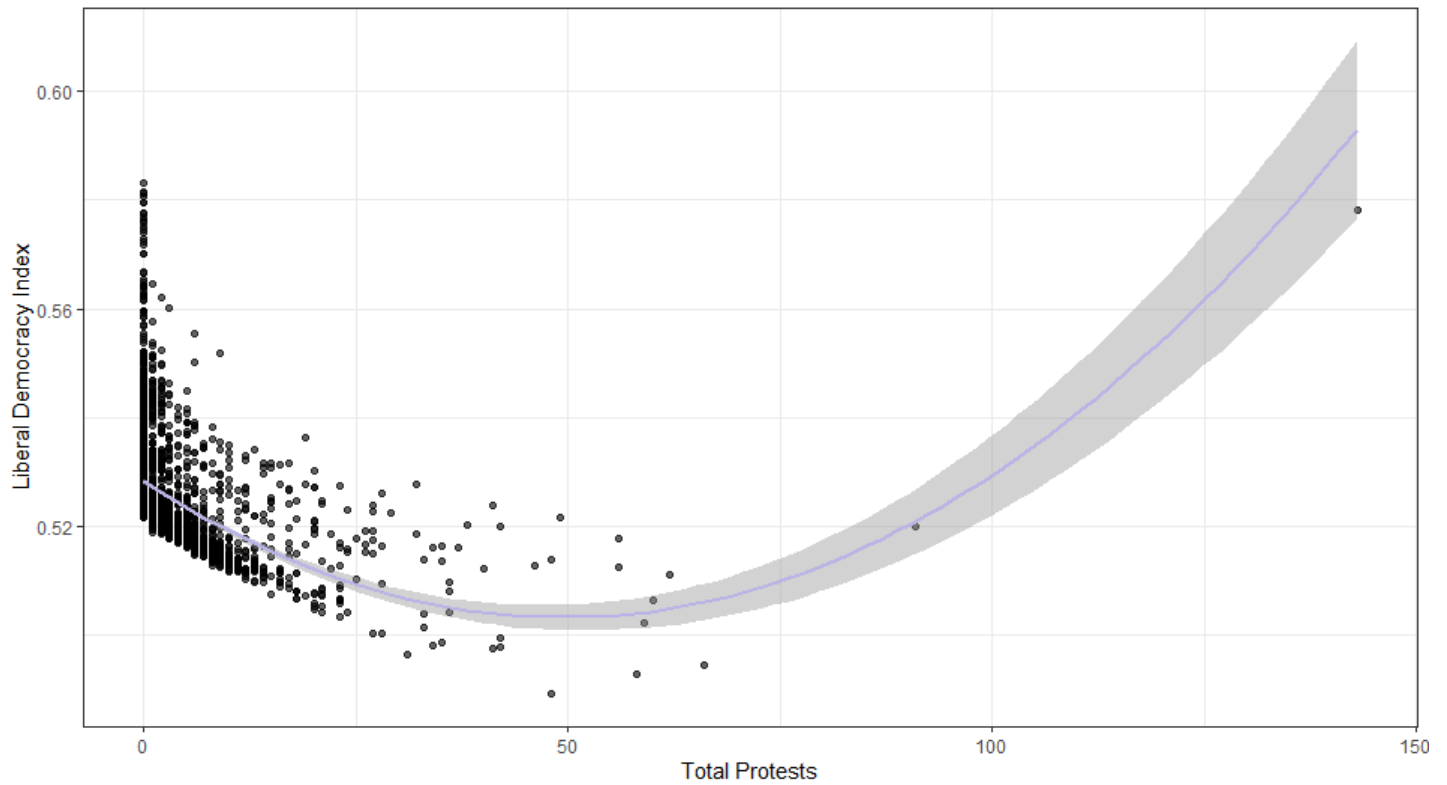
The role of the critical citizen in supporting democracy despite deficiencies in their government performance still requires further research. This study provides the foundation for how we can conceptualize dissatisfaction with government performance. The next step is using measures for quantifying democratic satisfaction that do not inadvertently measure government satisfaction. By finding a way to eliminate elements of specific support from measures of democratic satisfaction, future studies can verify the quadratic nature of the relationship between protests and satisfaction, or they can demonstrate the true relationship between the two variables.

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Appendix A

FIGURE A1. Nonlinear Relationship Between Protests and Liberal Democracy Index

Note: even when dropping the outlier result at (Kenya, protests = 143), the relationship between protests and the liberal democracy index remains unaffected.