
Muhammad Asief Alizarzady¹, *Irza Khurun’in²
¹-²Universitas Brawijaya
*email: khurunin07@ub.ac.id

Abstract

Gun violence appears to be widespread in American culture. The year 2018 became a momentum for the founders and activists of the March For Our Lives movement, specifically the Stoneman Douglas High School Mass Shooting. This Movement’s accomplishments are quite remarkable; the most important thing is that they were able to pass around 60 bills on safer firearms. The purpose of this research is to analyze the advocacy strategies employed by the March For Our Lives Movement. One of their efforts to carry out advocacy activities is the formation of the Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN). The network then employs a variety of strategies, including Information Politics, Symbolic Politics, Leverage Politics, and Accountability Politics. This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The literature study was used to collect data from secondary sources.

Keywords: Gun Violence, March for Our Lives, Transnational Advocacy Network

***

A. Introduction

All laws related to gun control in the U.S. are rooted in the Second Amendment of the American constitution, which gives Americans the right to bear arms. This policy has negative consequences for the citizens of the United States. This is due to the fact that the United States is the country with the highest rate of weapon abuse. According to statistics (Gifford 2020) 36,000 Americans were killed by weapons per year in the last decade. Every year, 100,000 Americans are shot and injured. Furthermore, firearm-related mortality climbed by 16% between 2014 and 2017.

The Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Florida, United States, is an example of gun violence in the United States. According to (History.com 2018) On February 14, 2018, this incident happened. A gunman started fire with a semi-automatic weapon at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, during the time of the event. The catastrophe claimed the lives of seventeen people and wounded seventeen others. This tragedy prompted some activists to call for stricter gun regulation in the United States. They march as part of the March For Our Lives movement.

The victory of March For Our Lives Movement demonstrate its success. The most important victories are the passage of safer gun regulations in several states around the United States. After the emergence of the March For Our Lives Movement in 2018, 67 bills related to safe gun regulation were passed in the United States, according to (Bills
2018). 137 bills were also passed into law in various states around the United States in 2019 (Anderman 2019). Since the Sandy Hook shooting, legislative reformation in the state has been extraordinarily glacial, especially the gun safety law. After the March For Our Lives movement, the process was hastened said by (Peters 2018). However, in 2018, lawmakers approved a legislative package that established gun-control regulations, raised the minimum age for purchasing guns, and extended waiting periods (Peters 2018). At the same times, the late response from the U.S Government which happened since forever also implies that there been some blockage that happened between U.S Citizens and their Government, especially related to the gun safety issue.

They not working all by themselves. Actors that appear to be supporting this movement are likewise transnational actors. First, the United Nations, which responded right away in 2018 to the epidemic of gun violence in the United States. Afterwards, the UN, through its representation in the United States, UN-USA, demanded that the United States Government swiftly address the issue of gun violence in the United States in a variety of ways (Fabian Sanchez and Patel 2019). Apart from collaborating with transnational actors, the March For Our Lives Movement operates globally. For example, The March For Our Lives apparently organized their movement in Japan, Italy, French and any other spot in the world.

Based on the anomaly that was stated previously, we intended to analyze the strategies that implied by March For Our Lives in 2018-2019. Due to the movement works transnationally, we do believe that this movement is transnational movement that could be analyze through the concept of Transnational Advocacy Network that was initialized by Margareth Keck and Katherine Sikkink. According to (Keck and Sikkink 1999) The main assumption of this concept is an actor should work transnationally across their nation in order to advocate something. Not working by a single entity but it would be helpful to work with multiple entities transnationally. And the TAN also worked by some strategies: Information Politics; Symbolic Politics; Leverage Politics; Accountability Politics

**B. Method**

The approach utilized in this study is a sort of qualitative research. The focus of this research is the strategy of the March For Our Lives Movement in the United States about gun reform in 2018-2019. According to (Maleong 2012), this method is a type of research that would finally yield descriptive data such as written items as well as spoken outcomes from the objects utilized as study samples. The data collection technique used in conducting this research was a literature study using secondary data. The data was obtained through a literature study which reviewed through collecting journal articles, books, magazines, and news containing information related to the research object. The descriptive technique was employed in this research’s data analysis. The goal of descriptive study is to explain a phenomenon (Nassaji 2015).
C. Result & Discussion

1. The Gun Politics of The United States

Discussing gun politics in the United States will always cross with two major competing views about citizen gun ownership. The first came from individuals who supported gun control legislation. By promoting the tightening of gun-ownership rules. Those who fight for gun rights oppose new regulations reducing limitations on gun ownership. These parties frequently disagree on the interpretation of gun-related legislation and court rulings, as well as the impact of gun control on crime and public safety.

The availability of ready-to-use gun and pro-gun governmental policies have formed and propelled America's gun violence epidemic. The gun market functions in such a way that their commodity are easily accessible to the society, particularly young people, criminals, and those who are not permitted to own guns (Wintemute 2002). The gun industry in the United States is one of the sectors that has significant political legitimacy to operate. The gun business is aggressively seeking to create demand for its goods via marketing to children and youngsters.

The guns business is also heavily backed by agencies or organizations that openly advocate the circulation of these weapons. The NRA is one of them. According to (Musa 2016) In the nineteenth century, the group spent $100 million on a drive to link children and weapons. Despite the legality of weapons in the US, the firearms business has unlawful access to selling firearms to the general people in the US. And this is what contributes to the possibility for gun violence in the United States, since illegal access has allowed people who do not have the authority to acquire weapons to do so.

However, there must be a political constellation behind any firearm regulation in the United States. Both from the pro and con sides of a weapons regulation. This is referred to as gun lobbying. Gun lobbying in the United States is a wide word that encompasses efforts to influence state and federal gun policy, typically through supporting candidates who have committed to oppose gun control legislation. Lobbying tactics include direct payments to lawmakers in favor of elected officials, as well as public opinion campaigns on weapons issues. Various studies have revealed that several organisations, most notably the National Rifle Association, frequently use this lobbying technique.

As evidenced by the activity of organizations like as the NRA. From 1998 to the present, pro-gun organizations spent $171.9 million on lobbying to affect gun-related policy. According to (Open Secrets 2020), a non-profit group that records political expenditures in the United States. Since 1998, the NRA has paid a total of $63,857,564 to influence gun legislation in the United States. Gun lobbying in the United States has made it feasible for weapons to be purchased all around the country. Whether via propaganda or legislation that allow individuals to carry firearms. For example, the legislation governing Carrying Concealed Weapons (CCW) compels state authorities to grant a CCW license to practically everyone who applies, regardless of whether the applicant can establish a necessity to carry a weapon. As a result, millions of Americans now have a permit to carry a concealed firearm in public. According to (Rostron and
CCW regulations have major security consequences for schools, colleges, and other similar institutions. This is due to the fact that many CCW applicants are dangerous and have passed background checks to get guns. Furthermore, there was no systematic instruction in firearms safety provided by the state. We believe that carrying a handgun in ostensibly safe areas such as schools, colleges, offices, and similar places would be exceedingly harmful.

2. The Emergence of Gun Control Hubs

The blockade between the United States Government and its own people is the root cause of the March For Our Lives Movement. The blockade that was formed can be proven by several things. The proliferation of government entities that ignore the safety of gun regulations in the United States. This can be seen from the success of political parties in the United States in carrying out lobbying practices in the United States legislative branch. Before the March For Our Lives Movement began, several interest groups such as the National Riffle Association (NRA) were quite successful in carrying out lobbying practices in the United States government.

Since 1975, these interest groups have played an important role in lobbying practices in the US government in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In 2014, they managed to pass 104 bills that coincided with the group's interests. Bills such as S.649 related to the use of firearms. Initially, the bill would have tightened background checks on gun buyers. However, in the end, Senate members rejected the bill. Not only that, the N.R.A also played a major role in District Columbia V. Heller. In that case, the N.R.A successfully changed the interpretation of the second constitutional amendment in the United States. Of course, this was achieved with some of the resources that the N.R.A. had. In 2014, they had spent at least $998,850 on lobbying practices in the Senate. To lobby candidates in congress in 2014 they spent about $1,123,987 (Musa 2016).

It can be seen from the power possessed by several entities in the United States government that there are obstacles for people who want to tighten the gun system in the United States. In addition to the presence of dominating entities in the United States government, the communication blockade is shown by the lack of government response to the issue of gun violence in the United States. This is evident in the rampant mass shootings, cases of gun violence that occurred in the United States until 2018. In 2018, the accumulation of gun deaths published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed nearly 40,000 deaths, America recorded the highest absolute number of gun deaths in nearly 50 years (Musa 2016).

Because of this, there are several actors who feel compelled to take action on this matter. One of them is the March For Our Lives Movement. March For Our Lives marked the first time young people were organized in substantial resistance to political and social structures that permit gun violence (Dodson 2016). Activists in this movement began to take action in response to the tragedy in Florida. Taking to the streets and other activities to raise awareness about anti-gun violence in the United States are important. The movement also expanded its network internationally by utilizing social media and other resources. As a result, the March For Our Lives Movement can now operate outside of the United States.
Beside the activists in the March For Our Lives Movement, other actors such as local and international NGOs have also joined in to promote the issue of gun safety. The first NGO is Every Town Gun Safe. This organization explicitly supports the March For Our Lives Movement. Everytown for Gun Safety announced it would provide assistance to the movement including a $1 million grant program, dedicated to spurring student-driven advocacy to end gun violence (Zoller and Casteel 2022). In addition to the grants, the Everytown Gun Safe organization is assisting the March For Our Lives Movement in developing plans to launch the action. They also help students to help organize the March For Our Lives actions.

International organizations are also taking a role in pressuring the US government on this issue. This is evidenced by a statement from the United Nations. UN Disarmament Affairs chief, Izumi Nakamitsu, said that "Every day, hundreds of lives are lost due to gun violence worldwide," adding that from June 18-29, 2018, States will gather at UN Headquarters in New York, for the Third Review Conference on the Programme of Action on small arms which is the main global instrument guiding international action against gun violence (United Nation 2018). He also stated that this conference will provide an important opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to silence gun violence.

Media also take part in the hubs. According to (Naas 2018) the Parkland shooting received more attention than any previous shooting event that occurred in the United States. In the three months afterward, news articles used gun control-related terms 2.5 times more than after previous mass shootings. Looking at the various sources of tweets included in online news coverage, the news coverage of tweets by MFOL protesters was huge (Wallace et al. 2020). In the coverage of The New York Times, CNN, and Breitbart News, the tweets of March For Our Lives activists had the highest share rate. In particular, The New York Times, CNN, and Miami Herald explicitly said that their goal was to let Parkland youth or March For Our Lives activists tell their stories in their own words.

Actors such as celebrities also take part. According to (Panton 2016) the role of celebrities in transnationalism is supported by their wide audience. So that their role is quite significant in spreading norms to the world community. Their activities in influencing policy have also been present for a long time from 1960 to the present. An actor who often operated in international affairs at that time was Gorge Clooney and he also took part in the activities of the March For Our Lives Movement in 2018. Due to their power or abilities, celebrities are able to determine the public agenda and prioritize issues in the public sphere (Partzsch 2018). If drawn into the context of activism in the March For Our Lives Movement. The role of celebrities in disseminating information related to the issue of gun violence has a significant impact on attracting a large audience to advocate for the same issue. Because the celebrities who share their posts related to this issue have a large number of followers such as Arian Grande to Selena Gomez who at that time was the person with the most followers on the Instagram platform worldwide.

3. The Exchange of Information Among actors

In carrying out this strategy, the March For Our Lives Movement also utilizes social media platforms that help them to advocate for the issues raised. It is certain that
the initiators of this movement were born in the early to mid-2000s, they tend to understand how to spread information through social media to demand action against gun violence. They also understand how to spread their message on social media directly using platforms that are familiar to them. This is incredibly contrast to the Columbine school shooting protesters in 1999, who started their movement before the age of social media, or the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting protesters in 2012.

Protesters and activists from the March For Our Lives group explain the role of social media in their movement. According (The March for Our Lives Founders 2018) social media has given them a platform to say what they want to say and reach millions of people. Their posts on social media immediately caught the attention of the media, and the protesters were thrust into the spotlight. March For Our Lives activists also found a clear target to carry out this strategy. They criticized the NRA and politicians who had accepted money from certain individuals. Social media platforms like Twitter provided a platform for March For Our Lives activists to speak directly to NRA representatives and other politicians and policymakers without fear.

According to (Edrington 2022) The March For Our Lives movement employs three distinct sorts of tweets. First, sympathetic tweets are those that act like an audience by sharing interests and beliefs. The tweet’s objective is to show that the March For Our Lives Movement and gun control supporters are on the same page, so that more actors join the March For Our Lives Movement in order to put pressure on the government. Antithesis comes next. If a tweet implies the separation of persons, groups, or organizations, it is classified using the antithesis identification technique. This is done so that there is a gap between the targets or opponents of the March For Our Lives Movement and the supporters of them.

In order to carry this strategy, March For Our Lives Movement also stand with other actors, which is international media partner who works outside and inside of the U.S. The Parkland shooting drew more attention than any other in the United States. (Naas 2018) has said that in the three months following the massacre, news pieces utilized gun control-related phrases 2.5 times more frequently than before. The majority of the student tweets highlighted in the sample of online news items coupled their personal experiences with requests for improved gun control, suggesting that students were able to address various facets of gun regulation using the #NeverAgain hashtag.

The idea of visibility also has an impact on the success of a social movement. This notion states that the more visible a Movement is to the media, the more likely it is to succeed. This is because if the public is already aware of a Movement, public opinion is likely to move if the information supplied is effectively controlled and maintained (Bessant, Mesinas, and Pickard 2021). The March For Our Lives campaign executed its strategy brilliantly, capturing the attention of mass media outlets not only in the United States, but also abroad, such as BBC Al-Jazeera and others. This has the consequence of making the knowledge they broadcast more easily assimilated by the general audience. This is illustrated by the shift in public opinion in the United States about the subject of gun violence. According to (Jones n.d.)In March 2018, 67% of Americans backed tighter gun control measures. Gallup, a survey company in the United States, reported on this.
4. Symbol Role as Strategy

Network activists seek to frame the issue by identifying and providing convincing explanations for powerful symbolic events. Ultimately this catalyzes the growth of the network. Hashtags have become one of the tactics and strategies used by the March For Our Lives Movement. Through these hashtags, the March For Our Lives Movement has succeeded in raising claims on the issue it wants to advocate, namely gun violence in the United States. The hashtags have encouraged people domestically and internationally to express their stories related to gun violence in the United States. Not only that, through these hashtags people dare to urge the government to issue stricter regulations for the use of weapons in the United States. The success of using symbols in the form of hashtags can be seen from the enthusiasm of the general public in using these hashtags. The hashtag #MarchForOurLives was used 3.6 million times in 2018 (Holody and Shaughnessy 2020).

The March For Our Lives movement also use another symbol to urge the government to tighten gun policies in the United States. For example the Evil-Eye symbol (Icsman 2018). The meaning of this symbol is the society of The U.S is actually watchout the government and the constellation politics that happened behind them. Not only that, trough this symbol the society is craving for stricter gun regulation to ambushed the gun violence epidemic in The United States of America.

The protestor also wore a price-tag symbol of $1.05 during the protest on March 24, 2018 (Gardner 2018). this symbol was also purposeful and well-organized. But the reason behind the price tag is heartbreaking. The protest organizers believed that the $1.05 price tag represented the value of each Florida student to Marco Rubio, the Republican senator from Florida. So much so that they used math to come up with the figure. Rubio has reportedly received $3,303,355 in campaign contributions from the NRA. According to March For Our Lives organizers, there are 3,140,167 students in the state of Florida from both public and private schools. If the figure is divided, the result shows $1.05 per student.

Not only the symbols used during the demonstrations, the March For Our Lives activists also utilized their creativity by making a Music Video. Kesha and her younger brother, Sage, teamed up with March For Our Lives activists to create "The Most Vicious Cycle," a music video for the song "Safe," which depicts the endless cycle of gun violence in America. The music video depicts the endless cycle of gun violence in America.

5. Leverage Strategy

The March For Our Lives Movement expended their hubs through this strategy. In order to implemented this strategy there are two way to do so. The first one called Moral Leverage. They cooperate trough more powerful entities like The United Nations. UN Disarmament Chief Izumi Nakamitsu issued a statement in favor of the March For Our Lives campaign two months after the rallies (United Nation 2018). He announced that the Third Review Conference on the Arms Control Program will be held on June 18-29, 2018 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Finally, the UN, through its representation in the UN-USA, made demands on the US government. range from improving gun ownership restrictions through legislation to addressing other issues
connected to reducing gun infractions in the United States (Fabian Sanchez and Patel 2019).

Other actors who took it upon themselves to align with the March For Our Lives Movement came from among celebrities. Their contributions vary to put pressure on the United States Government. Starting from attending walkout events or demonstrations held directly. Many celebrities were present at the demonstrations. Ariana Grande also performed at the March For Our Lives on March 24, 2018, alongside thousands of young people against gun violence. She also said that she would not back down in the face of terrorism. She also performed at the Charlottesville tribute concert (McNamara 2018).

Next is the "Material Leverage" strategy used by the March For Our Lives Movement. Unfortunately, the March For Our Lives Movement does not cooperate much with entities that have great influence regarding material matters owned by the United States Government. In that sense, there are not many entities that can put material pressure on the United States Government. For example, there are no other actors that seen cooperate with the MFOL and give an economic sanction to the US. Due to that things, we do believe that the March For Our Lives movement wasn’t successful enough to play this strategy.

6. Accountability Strategy

Accountability politics is a strategy or tactic that networks can use when actors and targets have committed to changing their behavior on the issues being advocated. The goal of this strategy is to create a match between commitment and implementation of behavior change. It is not uncommon for governments to promise commitments in order to divert public and network attention to the issue in focus. Apparently, The March For Our Lives Movement also implies this strategy.

The first method used was to hold further protests in various states after the protests held on March 24, 2018. In fact, these follow-up protests were also attended by politicians and policymakers in various states. This has led to the creation of stricter laws regarding gun legalization in the United States. In addition to continuing protests, activists from the March For Our Lives Movement spoke directly with officials on various television shows (The NPR Radio 2018). Kasky, a March For Our Lives activist, spoke on CNN’s Town Hall. There, she questioned Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) on whether he would continue to take campaign funds from the National Rifle Association and was serious about eliminating gun violence in the United States. Surprisingly, another March For Our Lives leader, David Hogg, had the opportunity to directly communicate with the Trump Administration at the moment.

7. The Impact of Strategy

It is feasible for the problems stated to be heard by stakeholders in the United States by collaborating with actors with greater power than the March For Our Lives Movement. As can be seen from the above explanation, numerous global actors who joined the March For Our Lives Movement asked that the US government develop a gun control program promptly in 2018-2019. NGOs that operate locally, such as the United Nations through UN-USA. Until the media continues to mock the government's tardy response to the problem of gun violence in the United States. This is clear from President
Trump’s promise to alter gun restrictions in the United States. He stated that he will take action on the gun issue soon (Elizabeth 2019).

Policy changes, like social movements in general, can be brought about directly or indirectly through movement strategies. We do believe that, in the context of the March For Our Lives Movement, improvements in gun control policy in the United States did not emerge immediately as a result of the movement's tactics. However, the technique has various consequences. For starters, as previously said, this campaign encourages young people to vote in US elections. This is also one of the March For Our Lives Movement's objectives. Clearly, the number of adolescent participants climbed to 31% in 2018 (Peters 2018). This enabled politicians around the United States who support the March For Our Lives Movement to be elected.

D. Conclusion

In 2018, the United States was shocked by the phenomenon of mass shootings that occurred in one of the schools in Florida, namely Stoneman Douglas High School. Utilizing this momentum, the students who were the victims of the shooting formed a movement called the March For Our Lives Movement. During its operation, a total of 67 gun control-related bills were passed in states across the United States during 2018, with another 137 passing in 2019. In addition, there has been a shift in public opinion regarding increased gun control in the United States. And lastly, the increasing participation of young people in elections in the United States. In order to accomplish such things, The March For Our Lives Movement set up some strategies that were done transnationally. First, they create the hubs that connect all of the actors that back them up to put pressure on the government of The United States of America. They also implies another strategies namely: Information Politics; Symbolic Politics; Leverage Politics; and Accountability Politics. Unfortunately there were a strategy that we felt not being done optimally by the movement which is the Leverage Politics. The March For Our Lives movement fail to collaborate with some actors that have the more power than The U.S. Government, it could be seen that there are no other entities that bravely to put material sanction to the subject of the network. Even so, the March For Our Lives Movement received moral support from various actors who also pressured the government with their abilities.

***
References


United Nation. 2018. “‘Silence the Guns’ Urges UN Disarmament Chief as Global Week of Action Begins || 1UN News.”

