

Perspectives on Politics and Fashion  
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Though it may not always seem like it, political interests and fashion trends are constantly intertwined as discussed by Linda Welters. In certain countries, lawmakers enact rules about dress for reasons such as religion and modesty. In other places, political leaders or activists can use dress to set trends that may not even have much to do with fashion. Politics are concerned with all of the activities associated with the governance of a country or area. We observe people in power and the messages that they send through their dress and appearance. Fashion also connects to politics when we realize that we are bound by trade policies, which could ultimately limit what we all may consume.

Historically, royal families and other people of high social status have dictated the styles of clothing that most of society will come to adopt. Jacqueline Kennedy, wife of President John F. Kennedy, used her political power and social standing to become a style icon of her time. Kennedy can be credited for the popularity of the use of solid, jewel-like colors in women's clothing, pearl necklaces, and pillbox hats. Kennedy once said to her husband, "As a public figure, you'd be humiliated if I was photographed in some saggy, old housedress." Her style was sophisticated and modest, and people began to copy what she was wearing. Every woman wanted to dress like the president's wife.

Fashion can also be used as a form of resistance to political power. Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement, wore a dhoti to symbolize his rejection of British rule and British textiles and garments. Gandhi advocated for the spinning of Indian cotton, and reducing India's reliance on British imports. His choice of clothing directly correlated to his political views and beliefs, which he was able to communicate to his followers.

Another example of fashion as a form of political resistance is the pink pussy hats worn at the recent women's marches. The hats are worn to symbolize resistance to the Republican Party and displeasure with decisions made by the Trump Administration regarding women's reproductive rights and equality. The hats stand for so much more than what the name suggests. They are a symbol worn by political activists calling for change in policy. The hats make a visual statement and are a clear example of how fashion and politics come together.

Politics also meets fashion through laws and regulations. In countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, religion is interconnected with the state, and women are required by law to wear veils, regardless of their own religion. Politicians who deal with international issues have the power to place tariffs or embargos on foreign merchandise. This limits the mix of textiles and apparel that consumers are able to easily obtain. In other words, politics and political discrepancies can directly affect the international fashion industry.

Fashion and politics are heavily connected. People have the ability to showcase their belief systems through dress. People of high status are able to show their political views through their choice of clothing and gain followers to join in their movement. Fashion is also affected by laws made in political forums that ultimately dictate what people may or may not wear.