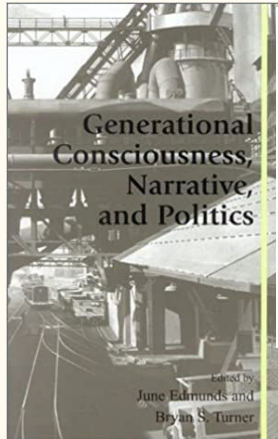


# Youth as a Social Class and Idea: Generational Politics in Iran & Malaysia

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*October 29, 2022*

# Introduction



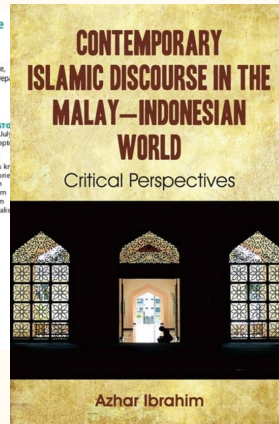
## Knowledge hegemonies and autonomous knowledge

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**ABSTRACT**  
With the emergence of the modern social sciences in the nineteenth century came recognition of the problem of knowledge imperialism both in the imperial centres and in the colonised world, understood to be inseparably tied with the dominant orientation in knowledge production, Eurocentrism. This orientation is still held to dominate the various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. While there is much consensus over this characterisation of the problem, the assumption that the central ideological problem in knowledge production is that of Eurocentrism is not sound. There are several other hegemonic orientations that affect knowledge production in the Third World, many of which predate the colonial period by centuries and have little to do with the colonial experience. These include androcentrism, traditionalism, culturalism, ethnonationalism and sectarianism. If this is true, then the task of deconstructing knowledge is far from sufficient. For this reason, scholars in the Malay world speak of the need to generate autonomous knowledge—that is, knowledge that is autonomous from not only Eurocentric but also other hegemonic orientations. This article discusses the dominant hegemonic orientation in knowledge production in our time, and the response to these in terms of the idea of autonomous knowledge.

**ARTICLE HISTORY**  
Received 12 Jul  
Accepted 9 Sept  
**KEY WORDS**  
Autonomous knowledge  
hegemonic orientation  
Eurocentrism  
androcentrism  
traditionalism  
ethnonationalism



Youth, youth movements execute a pivotal role in social change

We argue - by discussing key popular movements and political events in Iran and Malaysia - 1990s to early 2000s

Employ Ben Anderson's perspective of the youth as a social and political category (Karl Mannheim, Bryan S. Turner; Edward Said, Hussein, Alatas, Farid Alatas, Azhar Ibrahim)

# Structure

1. Identify critical youth engaged social movements in Iran and Malaysia
2. Examine the causes that led to the emergence of these movements, and their characteristics - generational politics
3. Finally, the implications of this form of politics on contemporary Iranian and Malaysian society - and the stakes



# 1. Popular Movements and the Youth

## **The 2009 Movement in Iran**

2000s Iran. Green Movement. Youth groups, women activists, civil society, political parties, intellectuals.

2009 and post-2009 generation. Roots in preceding years and decades (1990s, 1970s).

Youth bloc. Driver of social and political mobilization.

Youth participation, movement critical to formation of 2009 movement

- No memories, unfamiliar with experiences of 1979
- Ideologically and politically, possessed different views and values
- Political discourse of youth, larger movement - democracy, freedom, autonomy, rights

# 1. Popular Movements and the Youth

## **The 1998 Reformasi in Malaysia**

Youth current. Unprecedented results of 2008 General Election.

Influenced by discourse and actions of 1998 Reformasi movement.

**Reformasi period.** Suara Mahasiswa.  
Gerakan Bebaskan Anwar. PKPIM.  
Gerakan Mahasiswa Lantang Negara.  
UBU. DEMA. Chinese Language Society.  
SPF. PMI. GAMIS. WUFI. KARISMA.

## Post Reformasi, before 2008 GE

- Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia (2004)
- Democratization, civil rights, institutional reforms, equity

A core demand - repeal of the UUCA, free fair campus elections, academic autonomy and freedom.

Youth activism. 2000s. Critical bloc to 2008 GE.

2008 GE - Izzah, Hannah Yeoh, Nik Nazmi, Teoh Nie Ching

## 2. Popular and Social Movement: Causes and Characteristics

### Iran



- 2009 - campaign to protest electoral fraud - larger movement to demand for democratic and political rights, and socio-economic equity.
- Early 2000s - the emergence of new and different generation - distinct from those of the revolutionary and post revolution years.

Demographics changed. Economic and social structures transformed. Education institutions and opportunities expanded. Political discourses and ideas grew.

2009. Under the age of 30 years - 60 percent of Iran's population.

Usage of technology and social media. Facilitated campaign to demand fair elections and movement building.

Twitter, Facebook. Instrumental to young Iranians. Mobilize. Protest. Demand.

Political discourse and use of technology. Form of politics generational in nature.

## 2. Popular and Social Movement: Causes and Characteristics

Malaysia



- Democratization. Social and legal-institutional changes.
  - By 2000s, Reformasi generation. Young workers, professional class.
  - 2000-2008 youth, social movements. Institutional reform. Good governance. Anti-corruption. Democracy. Human rights. Electoral fairness. Justice. Socioeconomic equity.
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Solidariti Mahasiswa Malaysia (SMM). Gabungan Mahasiswa Islam Semenanjung (GAMIS). Jawatankuasa Kerja Mahasiswa/i (JKMI). Malaysia Youth and Students Democratic Movement (DEMA). University Bangsa Utama (UBU). Komuniti Jalan Telawi. BERSIH. HINDRAF. Walk for Justice. (Intellectuals?)

Iran. Malaysia. Similarities. Social conditions, social origins and nature of the movements.

Currency of the political discourse of Reformasi.

Internet, social and new media. Blogs, FaceBook, Internet news and media outlets.

Culminating in 2008 GE results.

# Youth, Social Movement, Generational Politics

## **Generational in the way that:**

1) The ideological consciousness of the 1990s/2000s generation was different with preceding periods; 2) The social structure of society had transformed profoundly; 3) New means of communications and activism had emerged; 4) The question of politics and the basis to power and values recent, had not emerged prior.

E.g. Bryan S. Turner

- “Connection between nationalist movements and political generations” - centrality of youth movements to national renewal
- We suggest - youth movements critical to political renewal

Generational politics drives political renewal and social change in society.

The elements of memory, narrative, time.

# Implications of Generational Politics

## Iran and Malaysia

Impulse for and pursuance of a diverse and better future -  
embedded in the human consciousness - by different  
generations

Changes in technology, socio-economic structures and trends  
- new and diverse values, thinking and expression

These features - embodied in the young and new generation  
- cases of Iran and Malaysia

Iran - begun to mobilize and expressed again their opposition  
to the government - power and politics

Malaysia - emergence of a new generation of youths and  
ideas - but also apathetic, towards the existing political  
system and elites

Formation of new youth centered political party Parti  
MUDA - manifestation of national and generational disquiet

# Conclusion

In this paper - show how **the youth and youth groups are a crucial component of social movements** and social change in society.

Iran and Malaysia - central actors in the political events and moments of the first decades and prior of the 2000s.

We argue - the **youth form a critical social category** - as a generation reflect new ideas, sensibilities and culture

Change, the future and agency - embodied in the idea of youth.

**Critical challenges:** inequality, climate change and environmental destruction, ethno and religious nationalism, extremism both violent and non-violent

In this milieu - will witness the **emergence of a generation and generations more conscious** and the demands of change more strident - as we have seen occurring in Iran and Malaysia and also elsewhere - trends will continue to take place (political, cultural, academic)

The **need for social sciences, humanities, area studies** - E.g. **School of Autonomous Knowledge**