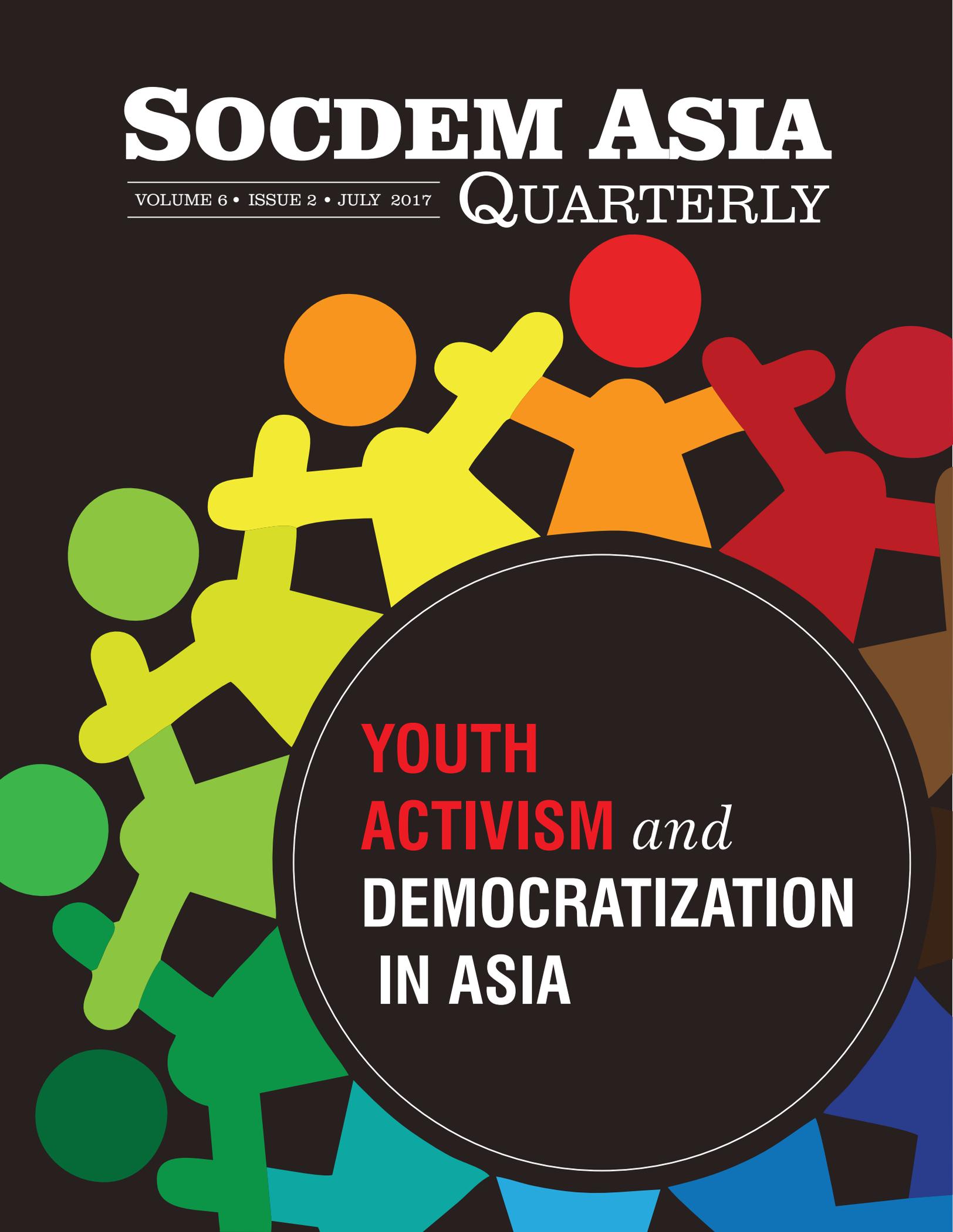


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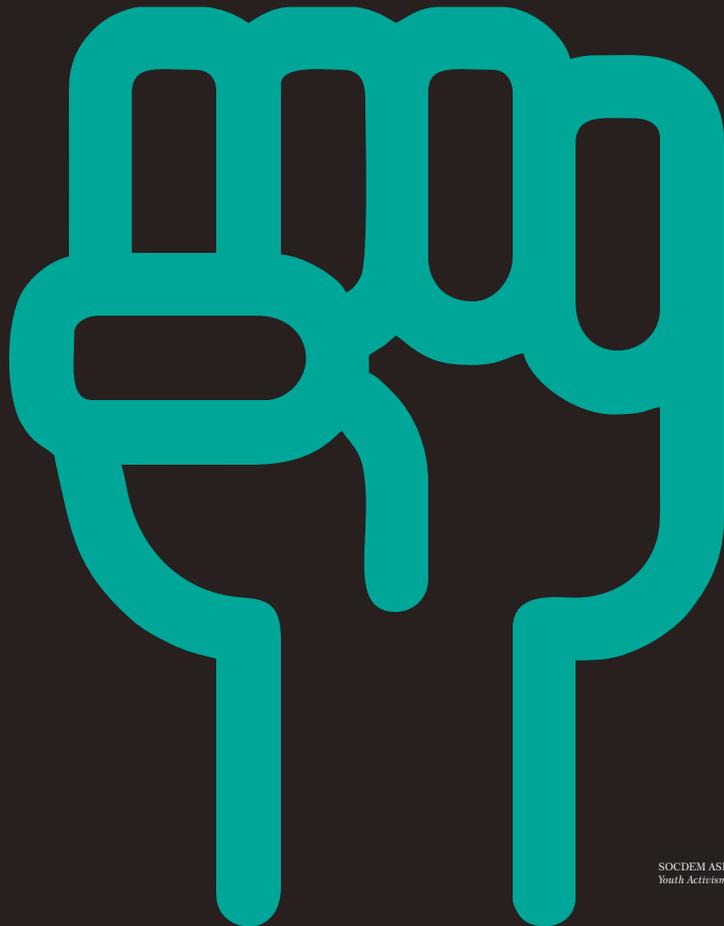
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QUARTERLY

A graphic illustration of a group of stylized human figures in various colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) arranged in a circle, holding hands. The figures are simplified, with circular heads and rectangular bodies. The background is dark grey.

**YOUTH
ACTIVISM** *and*
**DEMOCRATIZATION
IN ASIA**

Youth
Activism *and*
Democratization
in Asia



“The youth is the hope of our future,” remarked Filipino revolutionary thinker Jose Rizal, whose vast body of work inspired independence movements across post-colonial Asia. On the surface, the quote seems cliché if not an oft-quoted truism.

RICHARD HEYDARIAN
Editor-in-Chief

Yet, upon closer inspection, what the founder of the Filipino nation had in mind was no less than the role of the youth in laying the foundation for the future of a nation. He didn't see the youth as innocent and feckless bystanders in the forward march of history, but instead as key agents of political transformation against the ossified institutions of a society (often under the yoke of the older generation).

For Rizal, the youth, in the prime of its age, should take the initiative to bring about necessary changes for social justices and the dignity of their nation. What they lacked in experience, they compensated for in their idealistic passion and unbesmirched fidelity to what is good and what is just not only for themselves but for their respective communities.

A century since Rizals' execution at the hands of Colonial Spain, at the tender age of 35, the youth is

still striving for a tangible and consequential voice in shaping history. On one hand, we have seen the proliferation of global initiatives, which surely give extensive lip service to the role of the youth in shaping our world: UN ECOSOC and UNESCO youth forum, the world youth conference, the UN world Program for Action for Youth is a policy for youth, the UNDP Youth strategy, and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Strategy on Adolescents. There is even a UN Secretary General's special Envoy on youth office, which was created in 2013.

Numbers alone just tell us how important the youth are: Up to 1.8 billion between the ages of 15 and 29, most of them (87 percent) in the developing world; a third of the population of societies in East Asia and South Asia. Yet, their numbers hasn't necessarily translated into actual political voice or socio-economic empowerment.

The youth are twice likely to be unemployed than other demographics; 60 percent of them are unemployed, though they constitute close to 40 percent of the global working-age population; less than 2 percent of the world's parliamentarians; a fifth suffer from mental health concerns, while a third are grappling with the daily challenges of conflict and failed state institutions.

Unemployment rates are highest in The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, while significantly lower in East and South Asia. This partly explains the fragile and explosive nature of politics in certain regions of the world, from the Arab uprisings to the so-called Islamic State proliferation and ongoing sectarian warfare across much of MENA.

In South Asia, certain cultural practices, particularly the caste-based stratification, has created deep structural inequalities, which have arbitrarily favored certain sections of the society at the expense of others, who are often stuck at the bottom rung of the ladder of social mobility. More so with the erosion of secularism and state policies based on discriminatory pre-modern cultural practices in recent years.

“The promotion of Hindu culture by the state provided them state funded extra privileges to hill Hindu Brahmin culture at the expense of the marginalization of many ethnic culture and other religions that are not Hindu,” Sanjaya Mahato, a Nepalese sociologist, writes in the *Quarterly*. “The extra preferences for Brahmins from the state helped them to dominate key sectors.”



Image: www.rappler.com

Elsewhere, as in Indonesia, the concern is the absence of institutionalized mechanisms to ensure the meaningful participation of the youth. “In Indonesia, there is currently no specific mechanism to ensure the ‘youth[s] involvement’ in policy-making process, Anderson King, Secretary of Youth Development Partai NasDem Indonesia (North Sumatera Branch), writes in the *Quarterly*. Even existing efforts to give greater voice to the youth tend to miss “the needs, realities, obstacles, priorities, and opportunities for young people,” he adds.

In some states, particularly in Malaysia, the government itself seems to be discouraging youth activism and meaningful

participation in governance. As Vince Tan, a Malaysian youth activist and legal student, writes for the *Quarterly*, “The Government of Malaysia introduced the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971 as a way to restrict and curb student activism.” As a result, he continues, “Students tend to shy away from politics inside or outside campus to avoid disciplinary action, which might also render their scholarships withdrawn.”

This doesn't mean, however, that the youth aren't trying to challenge the system, particularly through the use of new technologies. Yet, their adept usage of social media has not often been accompanied by on-the-ground political reform.



Image: www.bbc.com

Justine Belane, International Secretary of Akbayan Youth, writes in the *Quarterly* about the bittersweet experience of youth activists around Southeast Asia: While we see greater engagement, autocratic states have so far proven quite resilient. Case in point is the New Democracy Movement in Thailand, largely made up of youth millennials, who managed to garner huge social media following against the junta's draconian constitutional referendum, but eventually fell short in mobilizing votes when the crucial day came.

“[P]olitical conditions aren't usually friendly for youth activists to gather in public,” Belane notes. “In Malaysia and Thailand, their governments have used draconian laws to round up critics.”

The broader challenge, as Aaron Dimaano, Secretary General of the Association of Law Students of the Philippines, writes in the *Quarterly*, is that “young

progressive leaders must be consistent advocates of basic human rights and human dignity,” especially against “growing tide of fear and use of warmongering type of politics” regardless of short-to-medium-term results.

There are signs of hope, without a question. In Malaysia, for instance, draconian state laws haven't prevented students from challenging various manifestations of authoritarianism. If anything, a new breed of political activists has emerged in response. As Nalina Nair, State Secretary of the Democratic Action Party's Women's Wing, shares in the *Quarterly*, “Students like Adam Adli, Anis Syafiqah, Hilman Idham, KS Bawani and many others became household names for the causes they fight during their time in university. This comes together with a lot of Gen-Y student activist stepping out from their comfort zone to tackle on causes that are close to their heart.”

In the Philippines for instance, a growing number of millennials have mobilized against perceived neo-authoritarianism under the Rodrigo Duterte administration. “The largely organic – unorganized – nature of the protests was unprecedented in post-Marcos history,” explains JC Tejano, National Chairperson of Akbayan Youth, in the *Quarterly*, referring to student protests against Duterte's decision (November 2016) to bury former dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the Cemetery of National Heroes. “Studies distinguished millennials from previous generations in terms of consumption behavior, spending patterns, and technological aptitude. Today, millennials manifest the same creativity and zeal in their protests.”

This edition of Socdem Asia Quarterly brings together leading young thinkers and activists from across Asia, mapping the trajectory of youth activism in the region and beyond.



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Finding adaptive, innovative, consistently effective solutions:

*Some reflections on the
role of young progressives
in today's society*

BY AARON MARC M. DIMAANO



To say that today's society is in a state of upheaval would probably be not too far from the truth. Politics and governments, international economic systems, cultures and religious traditions, science and technology, and even the environment are seemingly all in a state of flux and uncertainty.

Of course, this is not to say that our world has radically changed. It has not; at least, not for the most part. We still see corruption, inequitable wealth distribution, wars, incurable diseases, pollution and poverty. But it would also be incorrect to say that the world is not changing. It is. The cause for concern and really important question is whether it is changing for the better.

Unfortunately, there are indications that the change might not be working out for the greater majority and underprivileged sections of human population. For example, the lack of clear, strong and united environmental preservation efforts from the world's governments has resulted to ineffective mitigation of the dangers of climate change threatening the peoples of earth's most vulnerable nations.

Also, when the world's major economies were shook by crises a few years ago, the hardest hit were the poor and middle class of the affected countries; but even when the worst of the financial woes have eased and the growth in the number of billionaires in the world has been remarkable, the growth has proven to be grossly inequitable.

Far worse, there has been a noted rise in terrorism and extremist groups in already volatile countries, which has led to great instability, death and even the beginnings of genocide. This has, in turn, created waves of human displacement and migration from Africa to the Middle East that collectively is starting to become a staggering humanitarian crisis. This is exacerbated by the growth of support for right-wing fundamentalists, in generally liberal democracies, who aim to close borders and foment racial tensions instead of fostering diversity and solidarity.

Faced with these problems, there arises the challenge to the modern day progressive leader to not falter. Instead, all the preparations, trainings and past experiences that a young leader has made and gained must be

used to prove that only progressive thinking can lead our countries to a better path.

While the idea of progressiveness is in itself up to debate, it does provide for some essential values. In particular, the underlying values of progressiveness that will be discussed in this paper are the rejection of status quo and pursuit of change, tolerance and open-mindedness, as well as a profound affinity with the fulfillment of basic human rights and human dignity.

So what is the role of a young progressive leader? Must such a leader be able to provide solutions to all the problems? Must the leader be able to have monopoly over politics and governance?

To begin with, a young progressive leader must come from a place of clear analysis and critique in order to identify the weaknesses of the status quo and the necessary direction to take. After all, it is the role of young progressives to highlight clearly unacceptable mechanisms, policies and institutions in both public and private spheres of society.



Image: www.inquirer.net

it is also the role of young progressives to counter the growing tide of fear and use of warmongering type of politics.

In many instances, the young have the propensity to rebel, to challenge the system and cry for change. This energy must then be harnessed and empowered to become well-grounded both in theory and in reality, in order to put forward genuinely critical and relevant views.

Economy can be a concrete field where young progressive leaders can put forward both critiques and innovative alternatives to current economic models of growth and neo-liberalized globalization that might have contributed more to the poverty of peoples than it has otherwise. Trickle-down economics, for example, has still failed to prove its worth.

Thus, if it is often the case that government becomes too stiff, and majority of the elders of society chooses to be conservative, then it falls on the shoulders of young progressive leaders to point out the absurdity when everyone else admires the emperor's new clothes.

Secondly, it is also the role of young progressives to counter the growing tide of fear and use of warmongering type of politics. While it is clearly understandable why and how societies have increasingly been anxious of the evils of terrorism and religious fundamentalism, it does not become automatic that such phenomena should be acceptable.

Sure, much of the conflicts of the world either in Iraq, Yemen or Nigeria, are more fundamentally political and military in nature, than they are cultural and religious. Whether it is control over natural resource wealth or political power, wars are brought about by government instability more than cultural discord.

Still, much can be achieved by pursuing multi-cultural dialogue, not just in conflict areas, but also in societies where racial tensions have also increased, either in the United States, in South Africa or in Malaysia. Young progressives can be and should be at the forefront of these efforts for diversity and solidarity across cultures within countries and without.

This openness and tolerance necessarily extends to combatting forms of discrimination and social exclusion of groups because of their difference, whether because of their sexual orientation, and gender identify and expression, or because of their handicap.

Most important, the young progressive leader must be a champion of democratic conversations by ensuring that a plurality of voices is heard in the most critical of venues. This means, however, that there should also be no monopoly of knowledge, expertise and solutions, not even by the young progressive leaders themselves. Thus in a way, they should always be open to compromise and adaptation if it means that solutions become more effective.

Lastly, and without great need for elaboration, young progressive leaders must be consistent advocates of basic

human rights and human dignity. It might seem as obvious advocacies to take, but if indeed our societies today are in the verge of greater upheavals, all the more that there should be always be greater emphasis on human rights and dignity as we go through whatever transition we need to face.

Whether it is migration from labor-intensive to technology-fueled economies, or the breaking up of barriers for international trade, human rights must always be top-of-mind of young progressive leaders. This is so because truly progressive solutions should always redound, clearly, to the benefit of humanity.

They must indeed be adaptive and flexible, highlighting their readiness for a modern society that revolves around a knowledge-based economy and politics; and they must also be innovative, which entails not just inspiration but a direct and continuous investment of time, effort and resources in coming up with new answers to problems and even just in new ways of looking at current problems.

Nevertheless, young progressive leaders must never forget that while the ideas they hold might be compelling and truly inspired, they cannot serve with ideas alone. Public service will always entail hard work and consistently effective solutions.

Thus alternative solutions must work, and progressiveness must make sure economies do bring food to the people's table; otherwise, the public can be fast in their rejection of our brand of politics.

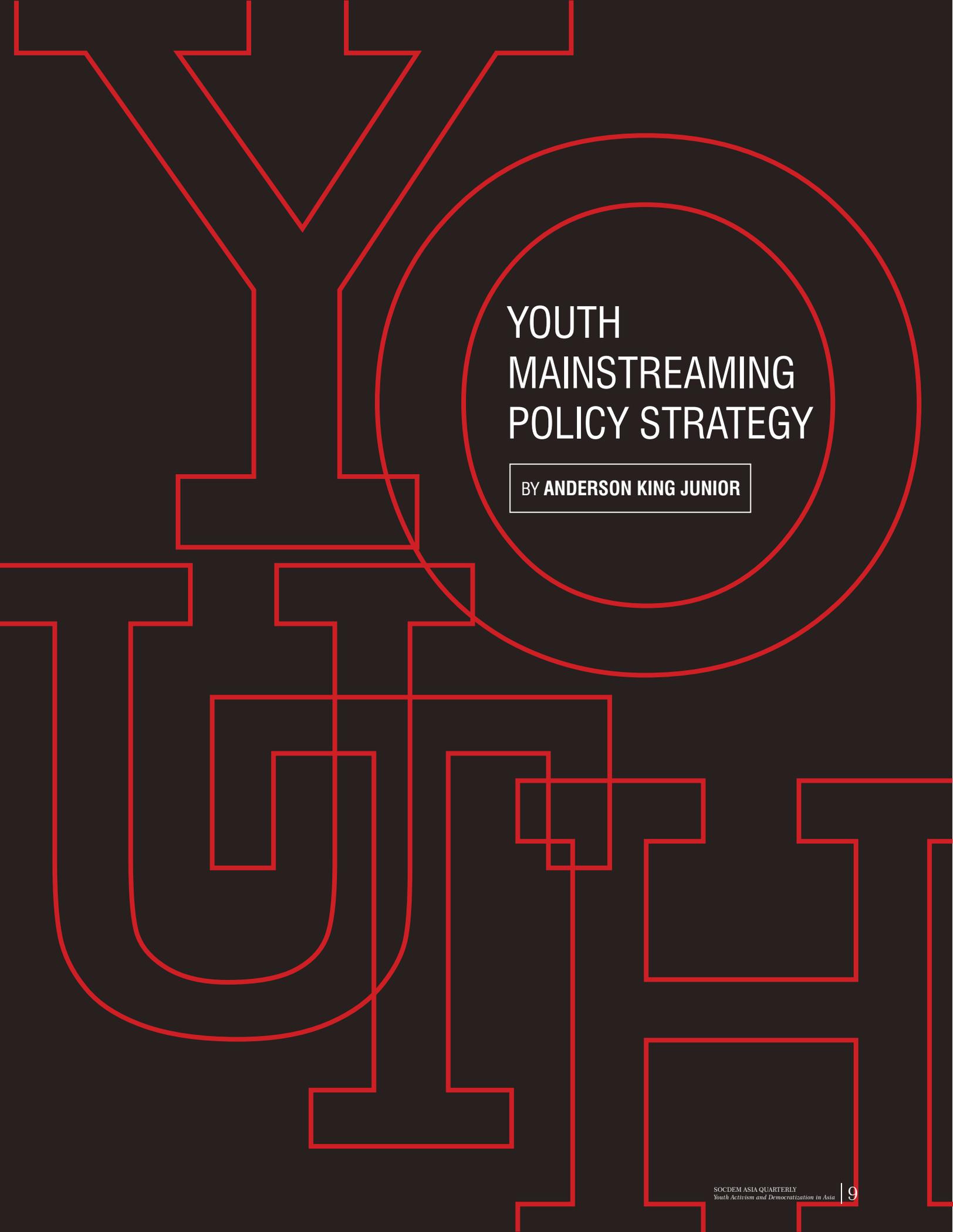
Thus, even if the slopes of the mountain are steep, young progressive leaders must help shed light on the correct path, and ensure we are truly changing for the better.

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young progressive leaders must be consistent advocates of basic human rights and human dignity

Image: www.rappler.com





YOUTH
MAINSTREAMING
POLICY STRATEGY

BY ANDERSON KING JUNIOR

“Young generation is the future of a nation”.
We often heard or read this statement in discussion forums, political journals, and articles. However, reality proves that the young generation's involvement in governance and development tends to diverge from expected goals.

History shows young people were the main factors behind the changes of many regimes. In Indonesia for instance, the massive movement of students in 1998 was the main factor behind the end of Soeharto's regime, paving the way for a new era, the so-called Reformation Era (*Reformasi*). This led to changes in Indonesia's various governmental institutions, reforms in the structures of the judiciary, legislature, and executive office. The famous 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong was also started by young people in order to have the right to nominate and directly elect the head of the Hong Kong government, known as the chief executive instead of through vetting process by an electoral committee of tycoons, oligarchs and pro-Beijing figures.

Those few examples prove that young people are no doubt exceedingly important in

changing the course of history and progress but also the establishment and preservation of a country and nation. Handling youth is like holding soap, can't be too strong because it might jump out from our grab and can't be too soft because it could stumble. Like preserving a young tiger cub, if we know how to persuade, it will be submissive and obedient to us; otherwise it will attack and fight us back. The role of youth in the history of the Indonesian nation is dominant and indeed monumental.

According to the United Nations, the number of young people (15-24 years) worldwide reached 1.2 billion. Approximately 87% (\pm 1 billion) were in developing countries as well as 8 out of 10 young people are in Africa and Asia. The data also showed that nearly 50 percent of the populations in developing countries are youth and children. This figure represents a

great potential if it can be utilized optimally. On the contrary, if the potential is not well managed it will negatively affect the ongoing development process. Therefore, to ensure that the potential of the youth can be channeled to generate the maximum benefit, the youth need to be involved in the development process. This involvement is important because if the youth are outside the circle of development process, it will potentially limit the factors of development. Especially, considering they have great energy and high power of innovation. If they are being marginalized, it would encourage more social problems which result in serious effects.

Research conducted by Indonesian Ministry of Youth in 2012 and 2013 (Indonesian Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2013) shows that in some regions Indonesia, there is still a lack of

opportunities for the youth to participate in the governance process. Young people do not have access to participate in the processes of planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of government activities. Youth development was placed as an object and not as subject/actors of development. It was partly due to lack of communication and information that can be accessed by the youth of the stages and processes of development. In Indonesia, as in elsewhere, there is currently no specific mechanism to ensure the involvement of youth in development. In addition, the government administration does not have the confidence to engage youth. Young people are still regarded as the source of the problem, rather than as a potential and major capital construction. It is revealed in a study carried out by young people based organizations (pamphlet) and facilitated by UNESCO which stated that socialization, transparency and accountability of young people run by the government both at national and local levels is rare. Furthermore, there is a glaring lack of participation of stakeholders, especially young people and youth organizations both in formulating policies and programs, vision and strategy, implementation and in the evaluation stage.

Youth participation in development and governance has been a concern for the international community. Department for International Development (DFID) has compiled the Strategy Guide Youth Involvement in Development which can be used both by policy makers. The United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF) has even conducted a study on Youth Participation in Poverty Reduction Strategy and the National Development Planning in seven regions in the world. The study indicates that although many national poverty reduction strategies have mentioned the needs of young people, this strategy is often limited in analyzing the situation of youth and a lot less concerning the needs, realities, obstacles, priorities, and opportunities for young people. A strategy promoted by the Indonesia Ministry of Youth in order to increase youth participation in development is through Youth Mainstreaming. In fact, Youth Mainstreaming is

one of the grand strategies in the development of youth in Indonesia. This strategy should be carried out systematically to increase youth participation in all aspects of human life and involvement of the youth in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programs in various fields of life and development. Moreover, Youth Mainstreaming strategy requires the commitment of all parties to prioritize youth development in any governance process starting from planning, implementation to monitoring and evaluation, conducted in coordination, synergy and harmony.

In Indonesia, as in elsewhere, there is currently no specific mechanism to ensure the involvement of youth in development.

Image: www.scmp.com



According to the United Nation Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, youth mainstreaming is defined as "the process of assessing the magnitude of the effect (on youth) of the planned actions, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels". This includes strategies for awareness and experiences of youth serve as an integral dimension in doing the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all fields of politics, economic and social in order for young people to be able to gain the advantages and equivalent benefits.

The purpose of mainstreaming is to shift a paradigm, which is conducted through three parallel approaches, bridging, branding, and boosting. Learned from the European Union which has implemented this principle, mainstreaming involves three principal administrative elements, namely:

1. The commitment to open the entire door policies that lead to a mainstreamed policy areas.
2. The existence of a system that can evaluate the impact of mainstreamed policy.
3. The existence of a strategy to force / encourage administrative actors in order to pay attention and implement mainstreamed policies.

In combination with the development of youth, the Youth Mainstreaming strategy requires the commitment of a policy that would make the issues and the involvement of youth as an important part in supporting national development. In other words, the government must ensure

youth mainstreaming is defined as "the process of assessing the magnitude of the effect (on youth) of the planned actions, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels"

Image: www.askideas.com





Image: www.sbs.com.au

In other words, the government must ensure that the perspective of the youth can be integrated in each package of policies and programs in all fields.

that the perspective of the youth can be integrated in each package of policies and programs in all fields. It could be done by building mechanisms that support youth involvement, both men and women, and ensure their participation in decision-making regarding policies and programs that affect them. Other issue that is important is the emergence of policies, programs and activities aimed at narrowing the gaps that exist so far in certain areas in terms of the empowerment of youth.

The next point of view that must be built with the connection with the youth Mainstreaming strategy is that the views that are sensitive to the issues of youth suggests that a system built in order to evaluate the impact of

policies and programs involving youth. It should be understood that the development of outputs and outcomes of youth are abstract and need a long period of process. However, it is rare that youth programs have a thorough evaluation on the impact of the system to see the extent to which programs / policies that affect them since the evaluation system is needed to ensure efficient use of resources, the accountability of the program, as well as to determine the sustainability of the program and the overall effectiveness of the program.

In the evaluation process, young people -- as the beneficiaries of the program -- must also be included. By Involving youth from planning, implementation,

until the evaluation is a unity in a series of activities since it will increase the sense of ownership of the activities and to improve their management capabilities.

Finally, all parties must be aware that by implementing youth mainstreaming they will create a more integrated approach to the problems of youth. Human resources will be put to better use in order to develop a nation, the establishment of respect for the rights of young people in decision-making. As a result, the younger generation will be well prepared to take an active role and responsibility towards better governance, transfer of positive values and knowledge between generations, and more investment towards young people considering the advantages by involving them as potential human resources.

Anderson King Junior, Secretary of Youth Development Partai NasDem Indonesia North Sumatera Branch

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Millennials Rising:
*Youth Activism
in the Philippines,
Past and Present*

“This is the youth of today,” a colleague said, as she looked upon the hundreds of millennials gathered at the EDSA People Power Monument on the night of November 18, 2016. In black, they were chanting all night, “Marcos, Duterte, *diktador, tuta,*” (Marcos, Duterte, dictator, lapdog) and “Hukayin!” (Exhume!), pertaining to the burial of the former dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, in the Cemetery of National Heroes. They chanted too against the different luxuries enjoyed by Imee and Sandro Marcos, daughter and grandson respectively of the late dictator, denouncing them as fruits of the ill-gotten wealth amassed by the latter during his rule: “Botox ni Imee, pera ng bayan! Tuition ni Sandro, pera ng bayan!” (Imee’s

Botox, funds of the people! Sandro’s tuition, funds of the people!). Meanwhile, some of them sang familiar revolutionary songs, while others taunted motorists to blow their horns against the Marcoses.

Earlier that day, President Rodrigo Duterte granted a hero’s burial for former President Ferdinand Marcos, thirty years after the end of his authoritarian regime that left the country in external debt and many families without fathers, mothers, and children. Anger erupted immediately on social media and millennials took to the streets in Manila. They held protests in universities and business districts, and then converged at the People Power Monument.

The largely organic – unorganized – nature of the protests was unprecedented in post-Marcos history. It confounded supporters of Presidents Duterte and Marcos. They repeatedly asked: Why would millennials, who never experienced martial law, be so aggressive in opposing the burial? Some who could make no sense at all of the phenomenon dismissed the millennials as misguided or paid protesters. “*Bayaran*” became a term for activists accused of being paid by traditional political forces. The term used to refer to politicians paid for favors and rent-seeking activities.

It was not the only terminology redefined by that phenomenon.



BY **JC TEJANO**



Image: www.philstar.com

The largely organic – unorganized – nature of the protests was unprecedented in post-Marcos history.

It was only recently when the advertising industry came up with the term “millennials” to refer to the generation born in the 1980s to the 1990s. Studies distinguished millennials from previous generations in terms of consumption behavior, spending patterns, and technological aptitude. Overnight, the term gained new meaning in the Philippines, in addition to its economic connotations. Today, to be a Filipino millennial is to be creatively expressive of political beliefs and to transcend one's immediate context and experiences – to be conscious of injustices past and present. In a word, the millennials are, politically, rising.

This aspect of political consciousness and assertiveness

is of course not unique to millennials. At critical historical conjunctures, generations of Filipino youth manifested the same fervor, energy, and creativity in struggles against oppressive rule. As early as 1869, students were already protesting against the Spanish colonial regime in the Philippines. In the Universidad de Santo Tomas, students led by Felipe Buencamino and Paciano Rizal organized the Juventud Escolar Liberal (Liberal Young Students) with the guidance of influential teachers like Padre Jose Burgos. The organization scattered leaflets on campus, advocating for better teachers, the expansion of education, and the secularization of higher education. For this, Buencamino and others were arrested and

detained for almost a year. Meanwhile, Padre Burgos, along with Padres Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora, were executed by garrote in 1872.

The execution inspired many young natives like Dr. Jose Rizal, Paciano's brother, who would later on comprise the Propaganda Movement against imperial abuses in the 1880s. In turn, the Movement would inspire young revolutionaries like Andres Bonifacio who, at the age of 28, formed the Katipunan, which would later on succeed in overthrowing the Spanish regime. Although not exactly a youth organization, many leaders of the Katipunan like Bonifacio were young Filipinos. Gen. Emilio Jacinto was only 19 when he joined the Katipunan and Gen. Gregorio del Pilar was only 20 when the Revolution erupted.

Under the dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos, various leftist youth organizations of different ideological permutations emerged against the regime despite its suppression of the right to organize. In the 1960s, communist students formed the Kabataang Makabayan (Nationalist Youth) and the Communist Party of the Philippines. In the 1980s, socialist and social democratic students likewise organized KAMAG-ARAL, AKMA, and the Student Union for the Realization of Genuine Emancipation (SURGE). Student protests then numbered 200,000.

In 1971, a year before the declaration of martial law, students in the University of the Philippines held (occupied) the Diliman campus and declared it the Diliman Commune. The

students resisted the Philippine Constabulary with molotovs, improvised explosive devices like the pillbox, and barricades of armchairs from their classrooms. Under martial law, students attached protest banners to cats, which could not be arrested by the police, and organized underground as fraternities and sororities, the only allowed student organizations at the time.

Several martyrs of the movement against the dictatorship were Filipino youth. Lilia Hilao, a campus journalist, was only 23 when she was tortured and killed in detention by the police. Archimedes Trajano was only 21 when he was murdered after challenging the appointment of Imee Marcos as head of the national youth organization Kabataang Barangay. Meanwhile, many of the leaders of the movement also came from the youth. Edgar Jopson, leader of the National Union of Students of the Philippines, was in his early twenties when he joined the Communist Party. He was killed by the military at the age of 34. In the 1980s, intellectual activist Lean Alejandro led the student movement against Marcos and became secretary-general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN).

In many ways, therefore, the palpable consciousness among today's Filipino youth – the millennials – is similar to the consciousness of the generations of youth in the late 19th and late 20th centuries. Creative protests in the form of leaflets, propaganda materials, and even occupying the campus characterized the past generations. Their zeal produced revolutions in 1896 and 1986 that eventually toppled

oppressive regimes. Today, millennials manifest the same creativity and zeal in their protests. On November 18, they surprised the nation with placards and new chants mocking President Duterte and the Marcoses in their own albeit often profane language. Twelve days later, they organized a concert at the EDSA People Power Monument to hold President Duterte accountable for allowing the burial of the late dictator. Thousands of youth and students came to protest. Online, they flood social media feeds with outbursts of anger and frustration against the burial, the ongoing War on Drugs that has reportedly summarily executed 7,000 lives in the nation's poorest communities, the imminent reinstatement of death penalty and lowering of the age of criminal liability to nine years old, the immunity enjoyed by the police in their abuses, and the unapologetic (humorous) fascism of the President.

The comparison exposes a crucial difference, however; and herein lies the challenge to today's young Filipinos. The generations of youth under the Spanish and Marcos regimes were politically organized. The 19th century had the Juventud Escolar Liberal and the Katipunan, while the 20th century saw different leftist organizations emerge among the youth. These organizations operated clandestinely, recruiting in secret offices, headquarters, and classrooms. The youth then did not enjoy the right to organize and they faced detention, torture, and death in their work; yet organize they did. Through their organizations, they produced two revolutions that challenged and eventually

succeeded in defeating colonial and authoritarian rule. Without such an organized effort, their creativity and zeal would have been futile against the oppressive regimes. To succeed, then, the Filipino millennials, like the past revolutionary generations, must not only become politically conscious. They must organize.

JC Tejano is the National Chairperson of Akbayan Youth, a democratic socialist youth organization in the Philippines. He has degrees in law and political science from the University of the Philippines.

¹ The title is a tribute to one of the first works on the generation by William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000).

² There is a continuing debate on whether the generation should include those born in the late 1970s. See The Nielsen Company, *Millennials – Breaking the Myths* (2014) and Synchrony Financial, *Balancing Multi-Generational Retail Strategies: Winning over Millennials without losing Boomers* (2014).

³ Ma. Corona S. Romero, Julita R. Sta. Maria, and Lourdes Y. Santos, *Rizal and the Development of National Consciousness*, Quezon City: Katha Publishing Co., Inc. (2nd ed., 2006).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Maricris Valte, *The Philippine Student Movement: Prospects for a Dynamic Student Politics*, 2 *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 3, p. 49 (1987).

⁶ *Ibid.*

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⁸ Human Rights Watch, “License to Kill”: *Philippine Police Killings in Duterte’s “War on Drugs”* (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/01/license-kill/philippine-police-killings-dutertes-war-drugs>.

YOUTH AND REVOLUTIONS:

*The cases of Malaysia,
Thailand and
the Philippines*

BY JUSTINE BALANE





Young people have always been central to revolutions and reforms in Asia.

From the People Power Revolution in the Philippines in the 1980s, to the overthrow of the Soeharto regime in Indonesia in 1999, young people have been part of a long history of fighting autocratic leaders.

The youth is once again called to the fore with the rise of authoritarianism in the region. With a pro-military referendum in Thailand, massive corruption in Malaysia and a dictator-family's return to power in the Philippines, young people around Asia trooped to the streets recently to demand for justice and reforms.

In Malaysia, where a huge corruption scandal involving billions of looted state funds rocked the country recently, a

citizen's movement is getting popular support calling for a clean government and fair elections.

Starting as a watchdog for elections, the Bersih (Clean) movement has seen its forces grow as their recent mass demonstration in Kuala Lumpur alone gathered more than 15,000 people. The movement has also led thousands of people from six key areas of the country to march to the nation's capital to join the rally.

Nalina Nair, a 27-year old law student, volunteers for the Bersih movement after her classes. As an activist, she shared that it was Bersih's platform for clean government that drew her into the movement.

"If I want a change in government or at least better governance, then clean and fair elections and institutional reform is vital," Nair said.

Although Bersih was formed by senior civil society members, most of Bersih's staff and volunteers come from the youth.

Massive youth participation in protest movements is not uncommon in Asia. In the case of Thailand, where a military junta has passed a constitution that will extend their powers, student activists take the leadership role in bringing back their civil liberties after a coup in 2014. Rackchart Wong-Arthichart, known to friends as Oh, shared that young people became the "heart" of the movement to thumb down the junta's constitution in this year's referendum.

Oh, an activist from the New Democracy Movement, said that students aged 18 to 30 years old make up the core group of their campaign. They are also supported by the academe and several thought leaders.

Oh's movement is known for using humor in their campaigns. In an effort to bring out the No vote against the junta's constitution, student activists in Thailand distributed satirical magazines making fun of the military government.

Oh is often seen in a shirt with "I love General Prayuth" printed in the front and a crossed finger at the back. Gen. Prayuth is Thailand's junta leader, a constant subject of the youth's humor campaigns.

For a meme-saturated generation, humor is a powerful weapon for youth activism.

When Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos was sneakily buried in the national cemetery for heroes on November this year (upon the orders of President Rodrigo Duterte), thousands of millennials all over the country went out on the streets to protest.

The rallies were significant for witty protest signs that went viral online for days. Laced with pop-culture references from Harry Potter to Mean Girls, the outrage over the dictator's burial stretched from the streets to social media.

The popular, youthful protests were a fresh departure from mass mobilizations led by Maoists with stiff, stale calls-to-action.

For Juan Carlo Tejano, leader of social democratic Akbayan Youth, the use of humor is important to draw crowds into their cause. "Duterte derives his support from charisma and humor," Tejano said. "Humor can only be defeated by more humor."

For Filipino historian Lisandro Claudio, the youth's potential for humor and ebullience can forward movements.

In an effort to bring out the No vote against the junta's constitution, student activists in Thailand distributed satirical magazines making fun of the military government.

Image: www.pri.org





Image: www.insightonconflict.org

But political conditions aren't usually friendly for youth activists to gather in public.

"Movements should maintain their humor," Claudio said. "If we are to move forward, movements should embrace the anarchy and unpredictability that the recent protests have shown."

The youth in Metro Manila have kept the anti-dictatorship movement rolling by forming Millennials Against Dictators (MAD), a broad group vowing to fight back against past and future dictators.

The group has been organizing teach-ins and staging protests against the President Duterte's flirtation with tyrannical rule: his violent anti-drug campaign, raising terror alert levels and death threats against activists.

But political conditions aren't usually friendly for youth activists to gather in public.

In Malaysia and Thailand, their governments have used draconian laws to round up critics.

On the eve of Bersih's November protest, Maria Abdullah Chin, their 60-year old leader, was thrown in a jail for days with limited contact from friends or family.

The Malaysian government has used the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act of 2012 (SOSMA) to activists who they arbitrarily deem as a threat to national security.

They have also arrested several young people using a dangerously ambiguous Sedition Act.

"Under this law, even saying the 'bang kit' (Malay for rise) is held seditious in a recent case," Nair said.

In Thailand, the military junta has taken harsh methods to silence dissenters. In a widely shared online video, a group of protesters on the anniversary of the coup were brutally dispersed by the military.

The arbitrary arrests made it difficult for young activists in Thailand to defeat the pro-junta constitution from getting passed. The referendum ended with more than 61% of voters approving the constitution that allows the military a tighter grip on the government.

Before the referendum results were handed in, Oh had hoped that they have the majority support.

"It failed miserably because we thought that we have the popular support. The Facebook users cannot be counted when it comes to real politics," Oh said. "On-ground works are needed to get the majority supported, which is still very complicated especially during these situations."

The youth has not backed down yet, despite a government that appears stubborn against their demands. In the Philippines, rallies continue to draw huge crowds despite rumors of reimposing Martial Law soon. For Tejano, the November protests in the Philippines have redefined youth activism. "It means being in solidarity with victims of government abuses and to be profoundly conscious of civil society's role in shaping history," Tejano said.

"To be a millennial today is to be a creative protester," he said.

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Youth Power in Malaysia

BY **NALINA NAIR**

Which countries and youth movements come to your mind upon mentioning youth activism in Asia? One of the earliest student movements in Asia would be the Gwangju Student Independent Movement in 1925, where Korean students stood firm against Japanese rule of Korea. The struggle borne by the students is considered as the second most important Korean Independence movement during the time of Japanese occupation. Or perhaps the picture of the Unknown Protestor who stood in front of a row of tanks during the time of the 1989 Democracy Movement led by students at the Tiananmen Square would come to your mind.

Mark Edelman Boren claimed that Indonesia hosted “some of the most important acts of student resistance in the world's history”. During Indonesia's uncertain times during the 60's,

student groups carried out demonstrations calling for then-President Sukarno to remove alleged communists from his government. Subsequently, they then went on to demand for President Sukarno's resignation. Around a decade or so later, Indonesia saw another wave of student activism during the May 1998 Riots. This time, students stood in defiance against the military government. Speaking of military control, the Philippines saw an immense wave of student activism during the late 60's and early 70's, which led the movement against the Marcos administration and its declaration of the draconian Martial Law.

In recent times, we have witnessed the uprising of student activism in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In 2014, Taiwanese students protested the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement by the Kuomintang. The

Sunflower Student Movement opposed the trade pact with the People's Republic of China, claiming that it would leave Taiwan susceptible to political pressure from Beijing. Later that year, Hong Kong youth led the Umbrella movement in objection to the decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress regarding the proposed reforms to the Hong Kong electoral system.

Malaysia is no stranger to youth activism, especially student movements. Malaysian youth have had their share of organizing protests and rallies to stand in solidarity with the marginalized and to demand for truth and justice. However, student activism in Malaysia has long departed from its heyday during 1967 to 1974.

During this period, students allied with the peasants of Teluk Gong, Selangor when the

government destroyed their crops and knocked down their houses. Separately, another student movement protested after poor villagers in Tasik Utara, Johor were evicted from their homes despite being promised by the National Front otherwise. This led to the arrest of student leaders. In solidarity with the villagers and student leaders, student unions all over the country protested hand-in-hand. Later that year, Malaysian students carried out a large-scaled demonstration to fight against poverty stricken farmers in Baling, Kedah. Their slogan during this period was “Students and People Unite”.

The University Malaya Student Union (UMSU) took part in political campaigning during the 1969 General Election. Just like any political party, these students of Malaysia's oldest university held large-scale public rallies. Moreover, they even had their own manifesto; demanding for a better economic policy, better national education policy and land reform. They travelled the country to champion issues that were relevant to the struggle of Malaysians at that time. Following this, 9 out of the 13 Parliamentary constituencies the students visited fell to the Opposition.

Together with UMSU, the University of Malaya Malay Language Society occupied the University of Malaya (UM) to protest against then Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. The events of the May 13 riot had led to anti-regime sentiment among students. They demanded that Tunku resign from his post, blaming him for his failure to lead the Malay community out of poverty and educational underdevelopment.



Image: www.themalaymailonline.com

The main aim of the UUCA was to control and weaken student organizations.

The Stifling of Student Power

Student movements in campuses were growing and this seemed to threaten the political elite. With 2 new universities being set up in 1970, the country saw a rise of student power, but the golden age of student activism would soon come to an end.

Alarmed by student opposition to government policies, the government decided that it needed to curb the ongoing resistance in order to further secure its position. Therefore, the National Operations Council formed the Campus Investigative Committee, which carried out investigations. The results would become the basis of the University And University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971.

The main aim of the UUCA was to control and weaken student organizations. The Act gave university authorities additional powers over campus welfare and student discipline. UMSU was to be dissolved and be replaced by the Students' Representative Council (SRC), which had less autonomy and scope of duties. Apart from being a welfare body, the SRC was to aide to the vice chancellor with all activities, subject to his and the University Council's approval.

Student activists felt that their basic rights were violated by the UUCA and protested against the Act. Students, academicians, international student bodies and politicians held back-to-back demonstrations within and outside of the campus in a stretch of 3 years. Even with many injured and arrested

during these protests, it did not hinder the determination of student resistance. However, threats, violence and manipulations from the government proved to be monstrous, which eventually weakened the student movement.

In 1975, draconian amendments were made to the UUCA 1971 in order to further force the student movement into a state of vulnerability. The UUCA 1975 put an end to the era of rapid student movement that had grown into an important social and political force. As a result, it led to years of fear, bureaucratic encroachment, mentality siege and grave intellectual containment.

The amendment to the UUCA proscribed student organizations from doing anything that could be “construed” as expressing support or sympathy for the Opposition or any political party, trade union or unlawful groups, which meant they also could not affiliate with any party or trade union. Students were also prohibited from holding office in the said groups. Strict punishment meted out against dissenting students included suspension or expulsion from the university.

After the UUCA 1975, students had to think and speak freely with fear of having their education at stake. The trend among students of being radical and vocal became to be more moderate. Though positive amendments were made to the UUCA later on, the changes were not up to the expectations of the academic community, which said that the changes were merely cosmetic. Students

now can join groups outside the university without the Vice Chancellor's permission.

However, they are not free to join political parties or any other groups that the Vice Chancellor deems unsuitable. The amendment also prohibits students who hold positions in political parties from standing for any campus elections or hold any position in any organisation within the campus.

In a move to ensure that solidarity with Malaysian student movements are quelled, the government has deported student leaders and academicians from other countries. Joshua Wong of Hong Kong student protest group Scholarism was invited to speak at a series of events organised by a group of various non-governmental organizations, involving forums relating to the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. Upon arriving at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Wong discovered that he was on the list of people barred from entering the country and was put on a flight back to Hong Kong on the same day.

Student Activism Today

The last prominent student activists like Dr Khong Kim Hoong, Hishamuddin Rais and Anwar Ibrahim are now well into their 60s. The UUCA was successful in creating a generation of students who prefer not to participate in activism and politics.

Meredith Weiss points out that pursuing higher education in Malaysia today has more to do with wanting to secure a decent job afterwards, rather than

Today's student activists are more non-partisan, recognising themselves as the check-and-balance for the government and opposition alike.

“merely the means to pursue humanistic aims”. However, there has been a revival of student activism lately, though not as rampant as the golden age of Malaysian student activism.

Student activism was seen again in the late 1990s, during the period of *Reformasi*. Students protested against then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad for sacking his deputy Anwar Ibrahim. While the second wave of student movement was short-lived, the third wave of student activists sees a new breed of firebrands. Today's student activists are more non-partisan, recognising themselves as the check-and-balance for the government and opposition alike.

Adam Adli, dubbed as Malaysia's Mockingjay, first appeared in the news in 2011 when he was arrested for lowering a banner bearing Prime Minister Najib Razak's face during a demonstration for academic freedom. The university that Adam was studying in had accused him of tarnishing the university's name and disturbing public peace and safety, suspending him for three

semesters. Nevertheless, the activist who campaigned for protection of student rights and academic freedom said his suspension was a “necessary process” which gave him more time to engage in activism and community work.

A group of 8 UM students had invited opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim to speak on campus despite not having the university administration's approval in 2014. This was forbidden under the UUCA and the students were eventually given stiff punishments. Popularly known as UM8, the students were at the forefront of a movement fighting for the rights of the settlers of Kampung Chubadak Tambahan, whose land was sold to a private developer to make way for a new high-rise residential project the very next morning after the event.

A senior law lecturer at UM was made an example of what would happen to those who dissent from the government. Professor Azmi Sharom was charged under the Sedition Act for merely offering an academic and legal opinion on the 2009 Perak constitutional crisis. Known to be a well-liked lecturer among law students within and even outside of UM, students were quick to demonstrate such blatant misuse of the law against the lecturer.

The highlight of the new wave of student movement would be the TangkapMO1 rally that was held in August 2016. Student activists led over 1,500 protesters to pressure authorities to arrest 'Malaysian Official 1', who was named in the United States Department of Justice's civil suit linked to state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

Many have alleged that Malaysian Official 1 is clearly Prime Minister Najib Razak, due to his heavy involvement in the 1MDB scandal. 4 UM students were found guilty of acting in a manner detrimental and prejudicial to the interests and good reputation of the university, detrimental to public society and violating the university's regulations by organising and participating in the rally. UM suspended all 4 students from their studies at the university.

Marching forward, Demi Malaysia is in the midst of organising Malaysia's first nationwide youth congress. Demi Malaysia is a coalition of student activists, youth NGO's and youth leaders of political parties. The congress, which will take place on 13 and 14 May 2017, aims to rally 1,000 Malaysian youth of various political and ideological backgrounds to discuss and debate on political issues and solutions to those issues. As a result, the congress will present a 10- point declaration at the end of the event.

With the growing third wave of student activism and the optimism of youth leaders from all over the country joining hand-in-hand on such a large scale for the very first time, it is safe to say that youth power will continue to grow and hopefully, we will see Malaysian youth activism reaching another pinnacle in the near future.

While past and current leaders have paved the way to hinder youth activism in Malaysia, the onus is now on the current generation of youth leaders to revive youth activism and restore freedom of student activism by first abolishing the UUCA. As

Nelson Mandela once said, “Sometimes, it falls upon a generation to be great, you can be that great generation.”

Nalina Nair is State Secretary of the Democratic Action Party's Women's Wing and an organising committee member of Demi Malaysia. She is also the Batch President of Socdem Asia's Political Management Training 2016.

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The image features two stylized pink silhouettes of a man and a woman holding hands. The man is on the left, and the woman is on the right. They are positioned against a dark background. The woman's hair is styled in a ponytail. The text is centered within the negative space between their hands.

YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT
IN ASIA:
*Assessment and
Lesson Learned*

BY **SANJAYA MAHATO**

Youths however are the principal agent for social and economic change but they and their issues have never been a priority for the government.

Introduction:

A country's youth population can either be an asset or a liability. Countries that provided economic political and social opportunities to their youths not only achieved a double-digit economic growth but also ensured peace, social harmony and consolidation of democracy and good governance in their respective nations (GYDIR, 2016). Youth participation in formal and informal politics is not only about representation and principle of justice, but also for access to decision making process (Carter, 2015). Sen (1985) argues that political participation of youth provides them choice and capabilities required for life.

In this article, I will try to assess the state of youth empowerment across Asia and social and

cultural factors, which undermine/enhance youth participation in the governance. Moreover, I will discuss best practices, which serve as a potential model and inspiration for youth engagement and empowerment.

Defining Youth:

There is no such fixed and universal definition of youth. The definitions of youth are more contextual, depending upon the formal definition and on informal factors such as culture, tradition, and socio-economic conditions. "Youth is a period of transition during which children and adolescents gradually come to be recognized as adults" (World Bank, 2007). The UNESCO and ILO put youths in a 15 to 24 age group. UN Population fund and World Bank define youths in between 10 to 24 and 14 to 34. Various

countries have operationalized the different age groups for defining youths.

Youths however are the principal agent for social and economic change but they and their issues have never been a priority for the government. Currently, the role of the UN Secretary – General's Envoy on Youth was created in 2013. Globally, 190 countries have a national authority responsible for young people (Youth Policy Press, 2014). Youth summit such as the UN ECOSOC and UNESCO youth forum, the world youth conference, the UN world Program for Action for Youth is a policy for youth, the UNDP Youth strategy and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Strategy on Adolescents and youth have given priority for youth development and empowerment.

Assessment of the State of youth empowerment across Asia:

Reportedly, there are 1.8 billion youth population (aged between 15 to 29 in the world and 87 percent) of them live in less developed countries. Asia-Pacific and South Asia constitute the highest number of youth as a percentage of their population – 29 and 26 percent respectively. Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Europe, Russia and Eurasia, North America, South America and Central America and the Caribbean regions respectively contribute, 15, 7, 6, 3, 4, 3, and 3 percent in youth population. In South Asia and Africa one in three individuals is a young person.

While a demographic dividend implies a rising working-age population, a youth bulge implies rising dependency on an increasingly small productive, yet older, demographic. The potentials of youths to be an agent of economic and social change have been undermined by several factors. These factors include but not limited to job opportunities, restrictive political atmosphere, protracted conflicts, poor health and natural disasters. On average, across developing countries, youths are at least twice more likely than other demographic groups to end up unemployed. Annually at least one in five youths suffers from mental health challenges (WHO, 2015). At least one in three young people live in fragile and conflict affected state (ILO, 2015b).

Current global employment statistic suggest that global youth group comprises of 37 percent of global working-age population but 60 percent of them are

unemployed. In developing countries, two thirds of youth are either jobless, not enrolled in the school or involved in irregular informal employment (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013.) The largest share of the total unemployed population resides in the Middle East 38.3, followed by North Africa, 23.7. East Asia, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa come next respectively 9.5, 9.3 and 11.8 percent. (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013.)

The political participation of youth in a global level is very discouraging. Youth under 30 years make up less than 2 percent of the world's member of parliaments. There are no Member of Parliaments (MPs) under 30 years old in the 30 percent world's lower houses and 80 percent of world's upper house MPs are more than 30 years old. Only 1.9 percent of world MPs are under 30, 14.2 percent of the world's MPs are aged under 40 and 26 percent Mps are age under 45. Bhutan, Belgium and Kenya have the highest number of MPs aged under 40 years in the legislature.

More than 80 percent of MPs in the upper house of Bhutan are aged under 45 years old. However, the gender gap is very high in every age group. According to YDIR 2016, in terms of voter education, the Asia-Pacific region and South Asia, and South America have the highest level of voter education, while the Middle East and North Africa have the least.

Region Base Youth Participation in Various Sectors

Within youth age groups inequalities persists in terms of social groups, gender, class, geography, and ethnicity. YDIR 2016 reports that out of 183 countries only 4 percent of counties have achieved gender parity in enrollment in secondary education leading to a wide gap in tertiary education. Majority of females reside in South Asia and Central Africa are illiterate. Unemployment levels are up to 10 percent higher for young women than young men. The disparity of wage rate between male and female persists in many south Asian countries.

Region	Civic Participation	Education	Employment and Opportunity	Health and Well-being	Political Participation	YDI Overall score
Asia-Pacific	0.573	0.744	0.659	0.678	0.522	0.656
Central America and the Caribbean	0.620	0.760	0.472	0.714	0.660	0.647
Europe	0.519	0.937	0.725	0.769	0.625	0.754
MENA	0.480	0.738	0.476	0.790	0.340	0.600
North America	0.979	0.972	0.767	0.713	0.542	0.792
Russia and Eurasia	0.456	0.760	0.547	0.623	0.555	0.611
South America	0.378	0.798	0.545	0.684	0.712	0.651
South Asia	0.487	0.581	0.485	0.687	0.628	0.581
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.463	0.464	0.479	0.388	0.574	0.465
Commonwealth	0.637	0.686	0.554	0.555	0.621	0.606
Rest of the world	0.509	0.714	0.567	0.636	0.573	0.616

Very High
 High YDI
 Medium
 Low

Source: YDI 2016

Cultural Practice and Social Values that Undermines / Enhance Youth Participation

Modernization has rapidly changed the social values, presenting the youth with more challenges than preceding generations. As they become more 'rational and individualistic', their sense of communalism tends to weaken (Mulgan and Wilkinson, 1995). Moreover, there is the broader 'Asian values' argument, which tends to put economic issues in forefront (Chang, 2012). In one survey, more than 60 percent of the respondents in Asia identified unemployment, income, and poverty as the most important issues in their respective countries (Asian Barometer Survey, 2012).

Nepali society is a caste based society where *Brahmins* are in a top stratum and *Dalits* in the bottom. The caste hierarchy deeply ingrained in a Hindu culture and Brahmins always received more privileges socially and culturally. Culturally, Brahmins are primarily assigned to doing *Puja* and hence obliged to read the Hindu scripture. Many scholars argue that obligation of reading and writing boost their education and access to education helped them to get more access to bureaucracy and political office, respectively.

In contrast, Dalits are not only socially excluded but socially ostracized caste both in Nepal and India. They are the 'untouchables'. Although the Nepalese government abolished caste based discrimination more than five decades ago, socially, many still facing so many hurdles in terms of social mobility based on their caste designation. The news of caste-based



Image: www.changemakers.com

The adoption of inclusive policies has helped to maintain the inclusion of women, and many marginalized communities in the governance.

discrimination is often reported in the media in Nepal. The culture of caste-based discrimination not only suggests the social unacceptability of Dalits but also is reflected in the political domain.

However, many scholars argue that it is more about the institutional set up and state policy. The promotion of Hindu culture by the state provided them state funded extra privileges to hill Hindu Brahmin culture at the expense of the marginalization of many ethnic culture and other religions that are not Hindu (Lawoti & Guneratna, 2010; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2008, Gellner, 2008). The extra preferences for Brahmins from the state helped them to dominate key sectors. For example, in the last three legislatures 1991, 1994 and 1999, the percent of hill Brahmin and Chetri was 43, 46, and 42 percent respectively, whereas Dalits remain almost zero.

The discourse and perception of youth participation in the governance should be widened.

The problem of youth participation lies not in a real participation but in a concept and perceptions of people. Whenever we think about youth participation we think only about the formal one – representation in a legislature. But youth's participation in politics is seen significant in informal one. Their participation in lobbying, public protest, petition and demonstration is very high, particularly in the South Asian Politics. In the context of Nepal, the big social movements and political upheavals, as in 1990 and in 2006, saw youth playing a key role.

Examination of best practices

Institutional set up, formulating policy, quotas, rule and regulations have turned to be a milestone to encourage youth in a politics. The adoption of inclusive policies has helped to maintain the inclusion of women, and many marginalized communities in the governance. For example, the inclusive principle endorsed by the

Interim constitution of Nepal 2007, the constitution of Nepal helped address the social exclusion. The electoral reform – the adoption of mixed model electoral system (PR and Plurality) helped to include 33 percent of women and 13 percent of Dalits in the Constituent Assembly (CA) 2008.

Similarly, the mandatory provision made in the constitution of Nepal to include one women in a vital post (Mayor or vice-mayor) and one women and one Dalits women in the local body through local election

has significantly helped include the women and Dalits women in the local body. Moreover, age adjustment – reducing the threshold from 25 to 21 – for local body candidates helped to accommodate youths in the local body. The media reported that many youths have put their candidacy in local body election and many of them got elected.

Conclusion:

Youth empowerment does not necessarily mean the participation and inclusion in the formal politics. The youth are making their presence felt in

many other ways such as lobbying, protest, petition, among other political activities. The institutional set up, quotas and youth policy have been a major enabler in empowering youths in many sectors. The electoral reform in Nepal helped to include the marginalized groups and women in the formal politics as well as encouraged youths to put a candidacy in the local election. Similarly, Bhutan policy for youth significantly helped to accommodate youths in the legislature. And the youth quotas in the Philippines and Sri Lanka have turned milieu for the inclusion of youths.

Youth quotas and youth representation in parliament

Country	Quota type	Age group	Quota %	% under 30	% under 40
Rwanda	Reserved	Under 35	7.7%	1.3%	22.5%
Morocco	Reserved	Under 40	7.6%	1.9%	17.9%
Kenya					
Lower house	Reserved	Under 35	3.4%	No data	No data
Upper house	Reserved	Under 35	2.9%	5.9%	20.6%
Uganda	Reserved	Under 30	1.3%	1.1%	21.9%
Philippines	Legislated	Unknown	50% *	1.7%	15.8%
Tunisia	Legislated	Under 35	25% **	6.5%	22.6%
Sri Lanka	Legislated	Under 35	25% ***	2.4%	12.4%
Gabon	Legislated	Under 40	20%	0.0%	8.6%
Kyrgyzstan	Legislated	Under 36	15%	4.2%	35.0%
Egypt	Legislated	Unknown	Varied ****	No data	No data
Nicaragua	Party	Unknown	40%, 15%	1.1%	14.1%
Sweden	Party	Under 35	25%	12.3%	34.1%
Cyprus	Party	Under 45, 35	20%	0.0%	1.8%
Senegal	Party	Unknown	20%	0.0%	11.3%
Croatia	Party	Unknown	Unknown	0.7%	14.6%

Policies apply to single and lower houses of parliament, except in Kenya as noted.

*50% of proportional representation lists must come from different sectors, including youth.

**In districts with four or more seats, one young candidate should be placed in one of the top four list positions.

***Women and youth candidates together.

****Minimum of 16 young candidates must be nominated across 4 electoral districts.

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union 2016



Image: www.nepalimes.com

Case Study

Ranju Darshana (official name Ranju Neupane) was born in 1996 is a youth activist and young politician. She is active in doing activism against violent strike, frequent Nepal Bandha, and against corruption. She actively involved in Dr. Bovinda KC lead anti corruption movement in Medical sector. She is also actively involved during the devastating April Earthquake 2015 in relief distribution.

She was already caught by the media as an activist but when she put candidacy for the Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City in the Nepal Local Level Election 2017 from Bibeksheel Nepali Party, she became an

iconic figure in the political realm. She became a symbolic icon and encouragement for many youths and women.

During her election campaign she raised so many social, political and economic issues of youths and making Kathmandu the best and model city in the world. Her issues were very touching not only to the youths but also for the common people. Her election slogan for election was "Kathmandu the most beautiful city in the world".

In the media and among the people she become extremely popular and secured 3rd position with total vote 23,439 (11%) where as Bidhya Sundar Shakya a candidate from Communist

Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) was elected with 64,913 votes (33%) and second runner up Raju Raj Joshi received 45,269 votes (23%).

Her candidacy has not only play a symbolic icon for youths but also encouraged many youths to put their candidacy in the next round election which is going to be held in 28th June 2017.

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Youth Activism in Malaysia :

The Rise of Young Student Activists

BY VINCE TAN



This comes together with a lot of Gen-Y student activist stepping out from their comfort zone to tackle on causes that are close to their heart.

Student movements have always been a force to be reckoned with in the push for democratic reform. We seen the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong led by student Joshua Wong as well as the Taiwan Sunflower movement occupying the legislature as a sign of protest against trade relations with China. Malaysia and its next door neighbor Indonesia have had their fair share of history with student movement especially Indonesia during the Reformasi period and the ouster of President Suharto. Malaysia today is living in interesting times as we see many new student activists popping up. Students like Adam Adli, Anis Syafiqah, Hilman Idham, KS Bawani and many others became household names for the causes they fight during their time in university. This comes together with a lot of Gen-Y student activist stepping out from their comfort zone to tackle on causes that are close to their heart.

The 2008 General Elections in Malaysia saw a breath of fresh air in Malaysia politics. For the first time in a very long period, the ruling coalition of Barisan Nasional or National Front lost their traditional 2/3 majority in Parliament as well as losing five state government in Penang, Kedah, Selangor, Kelantan and Perak. This sparks hope that change is possible in Malaysia. This of course comes after a series of civil rights movement protest in Malaysia namely the HINDRAF rally on Indian rights after years of marginalisation, Malaysian Bar Walk For Justice demanding judicial independence after the V.K Lingam incident where appointment and selection of judges were compromised and the most important of all the first ever BERSIH rally demanding clean & fair elections. It was during this period when many students became politically conscious and decided to take part in the process of nation building.

Overcoming the culture of fear

Student participation in politics in Malaysia is very much restricted in Malaysia due to its historical legacy in the 60's and 70's. The Government of Malaysia introduced the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971 as a way to restrict and curb student activism. Student whom are caught for their political participation outside campus can be taken disciplinary action which might result in a warning, fine, suspension and/or expulsion. Prior to 2012, students are not allowed to join any political party. This has resulted in a culture of fear in local campuses and led to self-censorship in the academia itself. Students tend to shy away from politics inside or outside campus to avoid disciplinary action, which might also render their scholarships withdrawn.

In 2010, four students from the National University of Malaya were caught attending a political rally during a by-election in Hulu Selangor. They were found with campaigning materials together with them and taken disciplinary action by the university. Their defense was that their participation was for research purpose as they are studying political science in their university. These four students took up the matter to court all the way to the Court of Appeals, which held that the provision of law namely Section 15(1) of the UUCA was unconstitutional as it unreasonably restrict the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression. It was after the landmark decision that the government of Malaysia decided to amend the Act to allow student participation in outside campus politics, which includes joining a political party.

Despite the amendment, we still see students facing disciplinary action for their political participation on-campus and off-campus. One can be charged by the University for a simple reason of acting "...detrimental or prejudicial to the interest or well-being of the University...", which is an offence that is so vague and can be interpreted widely according to different standards by different person. This legislature give wide power to the University to make regulations on what students can do or cannot do and the punishment is often disproportionate in nature.

However, with all these being said that did not deter students from mobilizing their peers to campaign for good causes such as campaigning against the Solidarity4AzmiSharom, Sedition Act, BERSIH, Tangkap Najib and Tangkap MO1.

Abolish the Sedition Act

Post 2013 General Elections, many opposition lawmakers, civil society activist and students were charged with the Sedition Act 1948 for their comments against the government particularly on the election results. The Sedition Act is a law inherited from the colonial British government, which is used to silence dissenting voices against the Government and the Monarch. Criticizing the government, the monarch, administration of justice, promoting ill-will or feelings between different races in this country are all deemed to be seditious according to Section 3 of the Sedition Act and is punishable under section 4 of the said act which carries a fine up to RM2,000.00 or imprisonment up to two years. It is important to note that the Act has now been amended, now instead carrying a mandatory minimum sentence of three years imprisonment and maximum 20 years together. Prominent law lecturer in University of Malaya Associate Professor Azmi Sharom was charged with Sedition after he made comments on the constitutional crisis in the state of Perak asking the state government of Selangor to resort to the same method used in Perak to appoint a new Menteri Besar (State Minister) where the monarch plays an important role in exercising his prerogative power to appoint a Menteri Besar.

Student movements namely UM Student Union (PMUM), UM Muslim Students Society (PMIUM), University of Malaya Association for New Youth (UMANY) and Progressive University of Malaya (Progressive UM) have tag teamed with the UM Staff Union to organize a

march in University of Malaya (UM) as a sign of solidarity with Azmi Sharom and protest calling for the abolishment of the Sedition Act. Students group of that time features the likes of Fahmi Zainol, Ammar Atan, Syamimi, Safwan Shamsuddin, Khairol Najib and myself leading the pact while academics like Dr Lee Hwok Aun, Maimuna Merican, Aznijar Ahmad Yazid and Dr Rosli Mahat leading the academics.

The campaign lasted for a year before the Government decided to withdrew the charge against Azmi Sharom, which was designed to strike fear into the hearts of the academia. Despite all that, there are still students being charged with the Sedition Act namely Adam Adli (convicted) and Safwan Anang (convicted). Other names of persons charged including Member of Parliament Surendran Nagarajan, cartoon artist Zunar, lawyer Eric Paulsen and many others.

Currently the campaign against the Sedition Act is well tackled by the civil society group Gerakan Mansuh Akta Hasutan (GHAH), which stands for Movement Against The Sedition Act as well as the Malaysian Bar which is the professional body for lawyers in Peninsular Malaysia.

1MDB Scandal

In middle 2015, the 1 Malaysian Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal erupted where Prime Minister Najib Razak's personal account showed millions of ringgit unaccounted for channeled from 1MDB. This caused a massive outrage among the people of Malaysia and youth activist together with students responded by organizing a rally



Image: www.usatoday.com

Despite all that, there are still students being charged with the Sedition Act

called Tangkap Najib in English Arrest Najib. During the said rally, there was a massive crackdown on all those present there and many were detained at Jinjang police lock-up for remand.

The whole process of law was abused as a form of punishment to those who dissent despite the fact that the law of remand was to help police investigations and not served as a punishment for those whom are innocent until proven guilty. The authorities take anything, which involved criticism towards the Prime Minister, very seriously and even the Attorney General of Malaysia was not spared from his wrath as he was forced to retire on health reasons on suspicion of preparing a charge sheet against the Prime Minister.

A year after the Tangkap Najib event outside SOGO shopping mall at Kuala Lumpur, students took to the streets again at the Tangkap MO1 rally which stands for Malaysian Official No. 1 as revealed by the United States Department of Justice in a press conference regarding the 1MDB scandal. The movement Tangkap MO1 was led by Anis Syafiqah, a student from the Faculty of Linguistic and Languages, University of Malaya. Her public speech at one of the sharing session outside the gates of Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI) became viral online and this contributed to the widespread publicity of the movement, which later transformed into a huge protest around Kuala Lumpur.

University of Malaya : The Centre of Student Activism

University of Malaya has always been known to produce many prominent student activists. Back in the 60's and 70's household names like Khong Khim Hoong, Hishammuddin Rais, Syed Hamid Ali and Anwar Ibrahim were among those leading the students for protest on social issues.

Back in the old days University of Malaya featured its own Student Union which has autonomy and financial power to run its own activities as well as student welfare on campus. Political consciousness was self-evident as students participated in protests organized by the student union particularly during Orientation Week where students march around campus to create awareness on social issues like poverty. There, intellectual forums conducted during the university orientation to discuss on issues like the Internal Security Act 1960 which is a law that allows for preventive detention towards a person deemed to be a threat to national security of the country.

Despite the introduction of the UUCA to curb student activism somehow or rather student movement managed to sustain itself and often find themselves evolving from different names to become newer entities to continue the battle for academic freedom, student empowerment and democratic rights in society.

Up till today, the university still produces prominent student activists like Anis Syafiqah, Fahmi Zainol, Ammar Atan & many others recently. Many student leaders then chose the path of a reformer by joining

political parties and look to bring change within the system that is dominated by old politicians and creating a new breath for Malaysian politics.

Poet Usman Awang once wrote the following lines in a poem called “Mahasiswa” which means university students :

“Students of the university in the motherland's city

Rise !

Lift your eyes from the books

Break through the walls

All are waiting

Inviting you

To join them in the city streets.”

The 60's and 70's was the golden age of student activism and students of today are only trying to revive the glory days.

Student Politics On Campuses

Traditionally there are two camps of student groups on campus namely the Pro-Establishment Pro-Aspirasi or the Anti-Establishment Pro-Mahasiswa vying for seats in the Student Council. Most campuses will see Pro-Aspirasi as the victor due to the strong influence of the university in endorsing the Pro-Establishment camp that are friendly towards the university. Pro-Mahasiswa the Anti-Establishment camp is more student-friendly often win in campuses around Kuala Lumpur due to the strong influence of opposition politics which spurred a sense of empowerment in students after 2008 General Elections.

It is important to note that the Student Council in public universities only play an advisory role in the administration of the university and has no veto powers towards any of the university's policy. Before the introduction of the UUCA, there were existing Student Union namely in University of Malaya which is autonomous in nature and had control of its own finance. The introduction of the UUCA aimed to cripple student activism once and for all by also restricting the financial powers

of student bodies in campus and this includes the current Student Council post-UUCA. Section 15A of the UUCA expressly prohibits student, organization, body or group of students from collecting money or property from public. Exemption has to be given by the Vice-Chancellor before any student organization, body or group of students can proceed to have any donation drive or public collection even for the smallest thing like having a festival or singing competition.

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Image: www.utusan.com.my



Both the ruling Federal Government and the Opposition political parties in Malaysia pay close attention to the elections of local campuses as the swing in support to either group will send an indication for voting trend in upcoming General Elections particularly in gauging youth support from local varsities. Due to this political parties from both sides try to influence students by responding to their needs and assistance be it in organizing programs, trainings and funding. Patronage becomes an unhealthy trend in Malaysian politics as such culture might be spread into the universities due to the realities of politics itself. Political parties use this as an opportunity to scout and recruit talent to join their cause. The reality is such that student group with no financial autonomy under the UUCA and prohibited from collecting funds severely cripple their activities thus would require patronage from individuals or groups to sustain themselves. This is often done by student clubs, which are non-political in nature as well.

The Way Forward for Student Activism

The democratization in Malaysia post-General Election 2008 and 2013 has allowed for youth participation in civil society and party politics. The change in the political scenario during the last decade has made youth more interested to know about politics. Some have taken an the extra step to play an active role in nation-building by working with civil society organizations or joining political party as a platform to effect social change. We can say that the culture of fear of the last decade is beginning to fade away as more

and more people are standing out for their rights. This can be seen from the attendance of the young participants in the Bersih rallies. Despite the scandals that plague the country there is still a glimmer of hope in the youth of today.

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