

International  
Quarterly for



# Asian Studies

## Call for Papers

### “From Campus to Confrontation: Youth Movements against Authoritarianism in Asia”

#### Workshop & Special Issue

Guest Editors: Anas Ansar and Teresa Jopson (Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg)

In recent years, the frequency with which students and youth have been at the forefront of political and social movements across Asia has captured the world’s attention. Movements such as the pan-Asian “Milk Tea Alliance”, the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, Myanmar’s spring revolution against the military dictatorship, and the recent July 2024 student uprising in Bangladesh signal a new wave of youth activism. These movements, which are changing the course of politics, are characterised by novel patterns, innovative strategies, solidarity dynamics, and transnational digital networks, revealing a unique transformation in both scale and scope.

Youth movements in Asia have a long legacy of challenging authoritarian regimes and pushing for societal change (c.f. Chambers / Dhu Da 2024, Jayamaha 2022, Sinpeng 2021). Historical examples include East Pakistan’s 1952 Language Movement, the Philippines’ People Power movements (1986, 2001), China’s Tiananmen Square protests (1989), and Indonesia’s Reformasi movement (1998). Recent events, such as the fall of Sri Lanka’s Rajapaksa government (2022), Thailand’s youth-led political upheavals (2022–2023), Myanmar’s spring revolution against military rule (2021–ongoing), and Bangladesh’s July 2024 uprising, underline the enduring significance of student-led activism. Alongside resistance, movements like Taiwan’s 2014 Sunflower protests and Thailand’s Move Forward party (2023) highlight youth-driven efforts to mainstream progressive issues like same-sex marriage and democratic reform.

Additionally, the transformation triggered by the digital space has reshaped how young generations have used informational, transnational, visual, and emotional tools via social media to create new forms of domestic and cross-border collaboration. These digital tools have allowed youth movements to transcend borders, organise more effectively, and mobilise solidarity across regions. At the same time, these movements continue to face significant challenges, as they confront deeply rooted political, economic, and social institutions that resist the changes they seek.

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Prospective contributors to the Special Issue are invited to send a short 300-500 word proposal and a 100-word biography to the guest editors:

[asianstudies@abi.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:asianstudies@abi.uni-freiburg.de)  
by 15 February 2025

Manuscript proposal until: 15 February 2025  
Final manuscript until: 31 May 2025  
2-Days Academic Workshop: June 2025

Studying student and youth movements in Asia against authoritarianism is crucial, given the region's unique characteristics: a significant youth population, ethnic and religious diversity, varied regime types, political parties, authoritarian resilience, stagnating democracies, and a political culture that is often intolerant of dissent. Understanding these movements provides valuable insights into youth participation and resistance, particularly in the context of post-colonial nation-building struggles. This special issue expects to offer transferable lessons with global implications, highlighting the universal fight for democracy and social justice across the world.

This special issue and author workshop aim to explore the new wave of youth activism against authoritarian regimes in Asia, focusing on the diverse forms of protest and the violent repression these movements face. The project will bring together scholars, particularly early career researchers from the Global South, and activists to critically examine the contexts, demands, strategies, and outcomes of these movements. Drawing on various disciplinary perspectives and case studies, the workshop and special issue will address youth and student political movements across South, Southeast, and Central Asia. By doing so, we seek to trace the transformation of these movements and develop a nuanced understanding of resistance from below. The key questions that animate our inquiry, which we encourage scholars and activists to consider, include (but are not limited to):

- How have protest cultures evolved in response to political, economic, and social changes in recent years?
- How and to what extent are the new movements actually transforming politics within and beyond the state?
- How have cultural forms and art as resistance - i.e. slogans, graffities, music, memes, humour - played out in these movements?
- How have social media platforms changed the strategies of youth movements, and how have activists adapted to online mobilisation techniques, including navigating censorship and state surveillance?
- What attention and framing has Asian youth and student activism received on social media and in domestic and international media outlets? How do they complement or contrast similar movements happening across the globe?
- What sort of tensions are palpable within such movements - for instance, over sexual identity, plurality, ethnic, religious and similar ideological divides?
- How do youth and student movements, or segments thereof, align with other movements (labor, environmental, nationalist, etc.) and identities (ethnoreligious, queer, feminist, etc.), as well as with broadly left- or right-wing politics?
- What regional solidarity or linkages have developed, how have they formed, and with what consequences?
- How have state and societal responses to youth and student activism evolved?
- How are youth movements challenged or co-opted, including by political elites and entrepreneurs?
- How durable are these youth movements and alliances and what role do they play in regime transitions?

The academic workshop is scheduled to be held in person at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg, Germany.

Subject to the success of our funding applications, we anticipate providing accommodation and meals for all participants, as well as travel bursaries for selected attendees.

Please note that acceptance to the workshop does not automatically guarantee publication.

All submitted papers will undergo the standard peer review process after the workshop, and the final selection of papers for the special issue (scheduled for publication in 2026) will be based on this review.