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Unaccomplished Protest Movements in Iran and the Challenge of Building a Collective Imaginary of Political Change

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Abstract

The post-green movement years in Iran are marked by the emergence of a new generation of protest movements that no longer aim to reform the Islamic Republic by calling for a radical change in the political system. The two popular Movements in 2017 and 2019, severely repressed by the state, are examples of this political rupture and this paradigmatic shift. These popular protest movements, largely using social networks, were spontaneous, without leadership or political project. The Woman, Life and Freedom Movement that emerged from September 2022 in the context of a society in political impasse, was original and unprecedented. Despite the bloody repression, the Movement that was triggered after the death of Mahsa Aminin, the young girl arrested by the morality police caused a wide political crisis in Iran. The young girls and boys involved in this Movement protested against deficiencies and injustices that were directly linked to the authentic and human needs of individuals in modern society. This time too, the actors of the movement knew very well against what they were contesting without being able to propose an alternative project and a new horizon for society. The purpose of this text is to make a critical reading of these unaccomplished movements which, despite their ampleness or the legitimacy of their protest, fail in mobilizing the whole of society around a collective imaginary and imposing significant political change.

Keywords

social movement, social imaginary, Iran, protest actors, Woman, Life, Freedom Movement

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Iranian women's Agency in the "Women Life Freedom" and Its Consequences

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Abstract

The "Woman Life Freedom" movement started with the murder of Mebsa-Jina Amini and the protest against the behavior of the Sharia police (Gashte Ershad), with the call of women's rights activists to protest against this action, and continued with various calls for at least 100 days throughout Iran. This study examines the agency of Iranian women in the "Woman Life Freedom" movement and its outcomes. This research is exploratory, using the qualitative method and a semi-structured interview. In this research, 19 Iranian women were interviewed, including 16 inside Iran and 3 outside the country. These interviews are conducted in order to find out the different types of agency of Iranian women in this movement. The findings demonstrate that Iranian women have performed all kinds of activism, which in this study is categorized as symbolic, physical, caregiving, legalistic, and cognitive activism. Turning women into political signifiers, raising women's rights again, making women visible, increasing religious tolerance, giving women more control over their bodies, changing the position of anti-feminists, spontaneous organization, hope for change from within, and a promising future. are among the categories that are extracted from interviews with these women.

Keywords

agency, women's agency, women's movement, "Woman Life Freedom" movement

Farzaneh Sadeghi and Maryam Tehrani are Independent researchers.

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Criticism of the Normal Subject

Entering the Discourse Analysis of the "Women, Life, Freedom" Movement

Mohammadreza Nikfar

Abstract

The subject of this note is leadership, but not in the context of a specific individual or group. By analyzing the discourse of the current movement in Iran, the focus of the note is on the normal subject, a subject whose normality conceals the structural abnormalities of Iranian society.

Keywords

Discourse, Discourse analysis, Normalization, Subject

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Is Iran on the Verge of Another Revolution?

Asef Bayat

Abstract:

How do we make sense of Iran's "Women, Life, Freedom", the extraordinary political uprising that came to being following the death of the Kurdish Mabsa Zhina Amini in September 2022 in the police custody for wearing an "improper" hijab? This is neither a "feminist revolution" per se, nor simply the revolt of the new generation, nor merely about mandatory hijab. This is a movement to reclaim life, a struggle to liberate free and dignified existence from an internal colonization. As the primary objects of this colonization, women have become the protagonists of a movement that may set the Islamic Republic on a revolutionary course.

Keywords

Iran, internal colonization, revolutionary course, social movement

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Historical Origins and Dynamics of the ‘Kurdish Question’

Kamran Matin

Abstract

The revolutionary movement of ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ began from Kurdistan and spread to Iran. This slogan is a product of Kurdish freedom movement which has been ongoing for more than a century. The strategic significance of the slogan ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ in the current conjuncture of Iranian politics necessitates a dynamic and historical understanding of the so-called ‘Kurdish question’ in Iran and the wider region. This paper is a tentative response to this need through an intellectual framework that on analytical level avoids ‘methodological state-centrism’, and on theoretical level avoids ‘internalism’. It foregrounds the intersocietal nature of the historical emergence and evolution of the Kurdish question and the abiding significance of geopolitical dynamics within it. It argues that due to the international dynamics of the Kurdish question only a new, plural and democratic conception of ‘the nation’ and political and cultural centralization can offer a sustainable solution to it.

Keywords

Geopolitics, Iran, Iraq, Kurds, Kurdish Question, Kurdistan, Nationalism, Turkey

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