

Generation Z's Protest and Political Transformation in Nepal -2025 AD

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z, defined as those born between 1995 and 2012 (Pew Research Center, 2019), emerged prominently in Nepal on 8 September 2025, when a large group of young people staged peaceful protests demanding the eradication of corruption and the establishment of accountable governance. This study employs a qualitative research approach, drawing on books, scholarly articles, national and international news, and surveys with Gen Z participants. It examines the causes, dynamics, and consequences of the 2025 Gen Z-led protests within the frameworks of social movement theory, generational change, and digital activism. The research highlights how social media networks amplified collective action, mobilized diverse groups, and accelerated political transformation. Findings indicate that Generation Z demonstrates heightened political consciousness, using protest to assert youth power and establish themselves as future pillars of the nation. Their engagement differs significantly from previous generations, relying on digital platforms, transnational solidarity, and discourses centered on accountability and transparency. The study argues that the 2025 protests not only reshaped Nepal's political landscape but also signify a broader generational shift in political participation across South Asia. By exploring youth-led movements in fragile democracies, this research contributes to understanding the longterm implications of digital-native activism for governance, civic engagement, and transformative political change.

KEYWORDS: Generation Z, protest, regime change, digital activism, youth movements

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INTRODUCTION

Generation

A generation refers to all people born and living at about the same time, regarded collectively. It can also be described as the average period, generally, about 20 to 30 years, during which children are born and grow up, become adults, and begin to have children. There are psychological and sociological dimensions in the sense of belonging and identity that may define a generation. Generation as a group or cohort in social science signifies the entire body of individuals born and living at about the same time, most of whom are approximately the same age and have similar ideas, problems, and attitudes. While all generations have similarities, there are differences among them as well. An element of generational theory is recognizing how youth experience their generation and how that changes based on where they reside.

Generation patterns

Routledge & Kegan Paul asserted the belief that people are shaped through lived experiences as a result of social change. Authors William Strauss and Neil Howe developed the Strauss-Howe generational theory outlining what they saw as a pattern of generations repeating throughout American history. Strauss and Howe have also written on the similarities of people within a generation being attributed to social change. Based on the way these lived experiences shape a generation in regard to values, the result is that the new generation will challenge the older generation's values, resulting in tension. This challenge between generations and the tension that arises is a defining point for understanding generations and what separates them.

Generations are classified as Traditionalists/Silent Generation (pre-1945), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), Millennials (1980-1994), Generation Z (1995-2012), and Generation Alpha (2013-2025), with Generation Beta following from 2025 onwards. The people born from 1995 to 2012 are basically known as Generation Z. These generations are suppressed by Baby Boomers (1946-1964) and supported by Generation X (1965-1979). Pew Research Center

,2019. While there is no scientific process for deciding when a name has stuck, the momentum is clearly behind Gen Z. Dimock, M. (2019, January 17). Each generation is shaped by major historical events, technological advancements, and cultural shifts experienced during their formative years, leading to distinct characteristics and communication styles. The new generation is more digitally native; they grew up with social media and expect fast communication and decentralized activism. Traditional hierarchical leadership is less in demand; young protesters often distrust old parties, established leadership structures. Because of economic pressures (job scarcity, inequality, cost of living) + democratic frustrations, this generation has both material and ideological reasons to protest. These protests are more unpredictable, diffuse, but potentially more resilient because they are less reliant on a single leader or organization.

The use of YouTube, web blogs, mobile mapping and bar-codes on smart phones is increasing in everyday life. Spatial representations have been inflected by electronic technologies (radar, sonar, GPS, WLAN, Bluetooth etc.) which was traditionally only used in mapping, navigation, and location and proximity sensing. Social media is transforming society (Sinaga, 2015) and there is a rise of a new generation that is "location-aware" (De Varco, 2004) and business as usual" is being rewritten by this younger generation of internet users (Van Zyl, 2009). This is also true when considering methods of teaching and learning and communication structures associated therewith.

Research Statement

This research seeks to analyze the role of Generation Z in the protest movements that culminated in regime change in Nepal in 2025. It investigates the motivations, organizational strategies, and political impacts of this generation's activism, with a particular focus on the use of digital tools and transnational networks. By examining both state responses and the outcomes of these protests, the study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how generational identity and digital-era activism shape regime change and democratic trajectories in contemporary South Asia.

Research Problem

Despite Nepal's long history of youth-led political movements, existing scholarship has largely concentrated on earlier generations, such as the student movements of 1990 and 2006.

Generation Z, influenced by globalization and rapid change, is an emerging political force whose impact on protest movements is still not fully understood. In 2025, Generation Z emerged as a significant actor in mobilizations that challenged state authority and contributed to regime change in Nepal. The gap lies in understanding how this generation's distinct identity, strategies, and use of digital activism influenced political transformation.

Research Questions

1. What political, social, and economic grievances motivated Generation Z's protest in Nepal in 2025?
2. How did Generation Z's strategies of mobilization, particularly through digital platforms, differ from earlier youth movements in Nepal?
3. To what extent did Generation Z's protest contribute to the regime change in Nepal in 2025?
4. How did the Nepalese state and political elites respond to the protests led by Generation Z?
5. What broader implications does Generation Z's protest have for democratic participation and regime stability in Nepal?

Theoretical Framework

Society, young generation and rapid development of social platforms are the key elements of this theory. International political influences upon the new generations develop distinct scenarios throughout the countries. Generational Theory explains social change through "generational units"—groups of people who share similar formative experiences during their youth and develop distinct social norms, attitudes, and behaviors. The theory highlights how new generations, with their fresh perspectives, emerge as former ones decline or disappear, contributing to the dynamism of society and culture. Karl Mannheim's (1952). Gen Z in Nepal grew up with democracy, technology, and political instability shows distinct political behavior compared to Millennials or Gen X. Nepal's democratic fragility, corruption scandals, and weak governance provide issues around justice, corruption, unemployment, and systemic change Generation Z.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Merriam-Webster and Oxford to the Urban Dictionary now include this name for the generation that follows Millennials, and Google Trends data show that "Generation Z" is far outpacing other names in people's searches for information. Mass protests the coup in Myanmar ensued, led by

Gen Z youths who shaped a values-based democratic revolutionary movement that in character is anti-military regime, anti-China influence, anti-authoritarian, anti-racist, and anti-sexist. Women and minorities have been at the forefront, organizing protests,

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shaping campaigns, and engaging sectors of society that in the past had been relegated to the periphery of national politics. The protests were broadcast to local and international audiences through social media. Jordt, I., Than, T., & Lin, S. Y. (2021).

Key characteristics and traits of Generation Z include the following:

- **Digital fluency:** Gen Z is highly adept at using technology. They spend significant time online for various activities including work, shopping, and socializing.
- **Diversity and inclusivity:** Almost 50% of Gen Zers are racial and ethnic minorities, making them the most diverse generation in American history. They also show higher rates of LGBTQ+ identification compared with previous generations.
- **Pragmatism and financial consciousness:** Having witnessed economic challenges like the

Great Recession, Gen Z tends to be more pragmatic and financially conservative.

- **Entrepreneurial spirit:** Gen Z exhibits strong entrepreneurial tendencies and values selfreliance.
- **Social consciousness:** This generation is deeply concerned about social issues, including climate change, and seeks to make a positive impact.
- **Collaborative nature:** Gen Z values teamwork and prefers nonhierarchical leadership structures.
- **Authenticity and individuality:** They prioritize self-expression and avoid labels, seeking authentic experiences and connections.

Source: Ita, D.-A. (2025, March 4). *Generation Z (Gen Z): Definition, birth years, and demographics*.

Generation Z: A Century in the Making offers insight into nearly every aspect of the lives of those in Generation Z, including a focus on their career aspirations, religious beliefs and practices, entertainment and hobbies, social concerns, relationships with friends and family, health and wellness, money management, civic engagement, communication styles, political ideologies, technology use, and educational preferences. Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. (2019). Generations are synonyms named by the nature of technological development, social changes, cultural diversification, political influences, fashion changes, territorial marginalization, globalization in education etc. Generation Z, which is pronounced as Gen Z in short, refers to those individuals born between 1995 A D and 2012 A D. Pew Research Center. (2019, May 2). The generation follows generation Y which is known as generation Millennials and precedes to generation Alpha. Gen z born with advance technological development and they belong to the age of digitalization. Smartphones, tablets, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube and other social platforms are their major sources of information. They earn and learn, they share and drive society through these social platforms. This generation expects themselves as driving force of the nation by innovating new ideas and changing the world in 21st century.

Generations and Their Characteristics

- **Traditionalists/ Silent Generation:** (born ~1925-1945): Experienced major historical events and are known for their face-to-face communication and engaged communities.
- **Baby Boomers:** (born ~1946-1964): A large generation following the traditionalists.
- **Generation X:** (born ~1965-1979): Witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the beginning of the internet.
- **Millennials/Gen Y:** (born ~1980-1994): Grew up with the internet and digital technology, experiencing economic recession.
- **Generation Z/iGen:** (born ~1995-2012): Digital natives, immersed in technology from birth.
- **Generation Alpha:** (born ~2013-2025): The generation following Gen Z, born into an increasingly digital world.
- **Generation Beta:** (born ~2025-2039): The generation after Alpha, expected to have AI and digital connectivity woven into their daily lives from the start.

Source: McCrindle Research. (2024). *The generations defined*. McCrindle. Retrieved from <https://www.mccrindle.com.au/article/topic/demographics/the-generations-defined/>

Young people who mostly engage in social media were frustrated due to corruption in government and unemployment found in the country and continuation of the same leaders in politics in Nepal though the several regimes' changes. Gen Z started social campaigns to protest peacefully against corruption and unemployment. Meanwhile the government banned 26 popular social media companies like Facebook, Messenger and so many others. Most of the young people were abroad for education as well as employment. Parents and guardians were disconnecting with their families some days. So, the sympathy of all the seniors goes to Gen Z for the protest. But they are not fully confident and sure about changing the regime rhetorically.

The administration of Kathmandu district undermining the announced protest and national security council had failed to read the adverse situation of the nation. When the protesters move ahead, they are not controlling themselves from destroying all the national as well as private property. Use of excessive force against Gen Z's protest cause 19 young and innocent unarmed people died with bullets on 8th September 2025. The next day Gen Z, full of anger and supported by parents and guardians, came into the street for their continuity of the protest in every corner of the country. The situation was uncontrol after that home minister Ramesh Lekhak and prime minister K P Oli resigned and moved away along with their top leaders and families through airlift to unknown place. The Gen Zs are not prepared for the ruling government and need parental support. On 12th September 2025, the first female former

chief justice Shushila Karki has been appointed as the first female prime minister of interim government of Nepal. Newly appointed prime minister Shushila Karki has decided to have a parliamentary election on 5th March 2026. The bottom-line demand of Gen Z is to dismiss the existing parliament and declare the date of election for next parliament with direct executive prime minister.

The Gen Z movement redefined Nepal's political reality. With former Chief Justice Sushila Karki becoming the prime minister, and the consequent dissolution of Parliament and pragmatic appointment of ministers, the aspirations of the youth who took to the streets during the Gen Z revolution seem to have been realized. But while there is now a respite from the endless cycle of corrupt and incompetent leaders taking turns to rule the country, the revolution is not over; in fact, it has just started.

The immediate agenda of overthrowing KP Sharma Oli has been realized. But the main goal of rooting out corruption and establishing accountable governance so that the country can march ahead on the path of peace and prosperity remains incomplete. <https://kathmandupost.com/editorial/2025/09/16/keep-the-flame-burning>.

In June 2024, widespread nationwide protests, led primarily by students, broke out in

Bangladesh. The protests were triggered by a Supreme Court of Bangladesh decision to reinstate a controversial quota system that allowed 30% of civil service jobs to be reserved for descendants of the Mukti Bahini, members of the resistance movement that won Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan in 1971. Zheng, B. (2024).

In recent years, Americans, Europeans, Australians and South Asian young people led protests that have upended long standing political orders and forced major regime changes. Bangladeshi youth came into protest for the nepotism and authoritarian streaks and Nepali Gen Z triggered by social media ban, many young people across the region have channeled their deep-seated frustrations over economic stagnation, corruption, lack of opportunities and political exclusion.

These movements might echo the spirit of the Arab Spring of 2010–2011, when youth-driven pro-democracy uprisings swept across the Middle East and North Africa that led to the collapse of many authoritarian regimes and raised hope for major changes. Lynch, M. (2013).

However, South Asia's youth protests unfold within unique political, social and economic contexts. They are certainly interconnected through social platforms, face powerful political dynasties and entrenched elites with stranglehold in their societies.

While Bangladesh and Nepal have seen direct regime impacts, there would be certain ripple effects in other countries in the region with similar socio-economic conditions.

Gen Z protest occurred in Kenya too in 2024 for the rejection of the finance bill. The youth were against tax increases proposed by the government of Kenya in the finance bill 2024. President William Ruto rejected the bill on 28th June. In May 2024, the proposed tax increases were heavily criticized by younger Kenyans who spearheaded the protests. They mobilized using social media platforms like X, TikTok and Instagram. Peaceful protests began on 18 June in Nairobi, spreading to other parts of the country. However, the bill was passed the next day, leading to nationwide protests and heavy clashes with security forces. On 25 June protesters stormed the Parliament buildings, leading to clashes with police that resulted in at least 22 deaths and numerous injuries. On 26 June, President Ruto held a press conference and decided to withhold the signing of the bill due to its unpopularity. BBC News. (2024, June 18).

The hundreds of youth-inspired mass protests staged in Thailand during 2020. It argues that while calling for reforms and flirting with revolutionary rhetoric, the protestors lacked a clear programmatic agenda and were primarily engaged in disrupting dominant narratives about the country's politics, especially in relation to the previously taboo question of the political role of the monarchy. Despite the ad hoc and sometimes incoherent nature of the protests, the students mounted a dramatic challenge to Thailand's ruling elite. Ultimately, the conflict exemplified a generational divide: people from Generation Z, aged under 25, have radically different understandings of power, difference and legitimacy from older population groups. Whatever happens to the protest movement in the short term, the demonstrators have made a decisive break with the old social consensus that existed during the long reign of the late King Bhumibol (1946–2016). McCargo, D. (2021).

The recent protests in Iran were characterized by the participation of a significant number of so-called Generation Z or Zoomers born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s. This demographic utilizes Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok and WhatsApp to coordinate their activities and communicate their messages and opinions. Generation Z utilized social media tools to disseminate information as well as to organize protests. They also shared videos of police brutality, which helped to bring international attention to the situation in Iran and increase awareness. Their ability to harness technology to put pressure on the Iranian government is indicative of the important role they will play in shaping Iran's future. McKinsey & Company. (2023, March). Amel Viaud, a 21-year-old organizer of the Black Boston 2020 march after the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, said: "I think young people today are trying to break generational problems, and systemic issues that are going on in their environment" (Moore 2020). Laurie Rice, Kenneth Moffett, 2021 *The Political Voices of Generation Z*

CONCLUSION

The voice of Gen Z in the protest in Nepal 2025 is to abolish corruption, transparency, nepotism, unemployment and flow of youth to abroad either for education or for employment. The youth who are active in social platform discord about the issue and gather for protest. The government immediately triggers restrictions the social media, but the entire society is not pleased with censorship of social platform in this digitalized age. Tactically, protesters fused online and offline mobilization. Social platforms and hashtag campaigns provided horizontal networks for rapid coordination, narrative framing, and trans local solidarity. The immediate political effects were significant, that the social-media restrictions were reversed and the sitting administration collapsed, producing an interim government that signaled both symbolic and concrete openings for reform. The chronic frustration over corruption, perceived nepotism among political elites, economic insecurity among youth, wide unemployment, and limited opportunities domestically are the major causes of Gen Z protest in Nepal 2025. Strategically, the movement combined digital activism with street protests. Social media served multiple functions: exposing elite excesses through viral disclosures (e.g. the “Nepo Kids” discourse), organizing quickly under conditions of censorship, amplifying voices and narratives across disparate geographies, and bypassing traditional party-based political channels. Once the government restricted digital spaces (via bans/registration demands), that itself catalyzed broader mobilization. [The Diplomat](#)+4[Foreign Affairs Forum](#)+4[Encyclopedia Britannica](#)+4 Street actions sometimes escalated into vandalism and confrontation, which, despite costs in human lives and infrastructure damage, significantly pressured ruling elites. [Global Water](#)

[Partnership](#)+2[Encyclopedia Britannica](#)+2

In terms of impact, the Gen Z movement achieved several substantial outcomes:

- The social media ban was reversed. [Reuters](#)+2[Encyclopedia Britannica](#)+2
- Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli resigned. [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)+2[Asia Times](#)+2
- Appointment of an interim government led by former Chief Justice Sushila Karki—Nepal’s first female prime minister—highlighted both symbolic and substantive shifts in political leadership. [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)+3[Politico](#)+3[Global Water Partnership](#)+3
- Broadening of political discourse: issues like digital rights, transparency, youth unemployment, and elite accountability have moved much more prominently into public and policy debates. [IMNepal](#)+2[Foreign Affairs Forum](#)+2

In sum, the 2025 Gen Z protests in Nepal are not just episodic dissent but reflect a deeper generational fracture: young people demanding a more transparent, equitable, and responsive political order. Whether the momentum sustains into institutional reforms will depend on how the interim authorities respond, whether existing political parties adapt, and whether civil society and youth groups can sustain pressure not just in protest, but in policy and governance spheres.

In glance, Shah dynasty had ruled Nepal for more than 240 years. All the political parties were not allowed to activate their performances in the government and the society. People were slowly involved in different political activities against the monarchy and the political system of Nepal. Democratic movement was slowly undertaken by political parties of Nepal. Mainly Nepal Praja Parisad, Nepal Rastriya Congress (NRC) and communist party of Nepal were the mainstream of political wings involved in the history of democratization of Nepal.

The common features of political parties and its leaders of Nepal were not charismatic in character. Party division, re-union and unfair competition of leading the party by its leaders were not professional and not responsible towards the people of the state. Though some exceptions we find in the party and its leader.

Few dozens of party leaders conducting limited number of political parties since the formation of Nepalese political parties till now, either we talk about Nepali Congress or Nepal communist parties. They are not ready to accept the talent of youth for party leadership. Due to hegemonical character of senior leadership, second generation could develop the leadership personality in Nepalese political circumstances.

The Maoist conflict began on 13 February 1996, when the CPN (Maoist) initiated an insurgency with the stated purpose of overthrowing the Nepali monarchy and establishing a people's republic; it ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord on 21 November 2006. Top political leaders and their followers after the regime change in Maoist insurgency could not fulfill the demand of Nepali people in the context of development, employment and peace process.

On May 28, 2008, the newly elected Constituent Assembly declared Nepal a Federal Democratic Republic, abolishing the 240-year-old monarchy. The motion for abolition of monarchy was carried by a huge majority; out of 564 members present in the assembly, 560 voted for the motion while 4 members voted against it. Finally, on June 11, 2008, ex-king Gyanendra left the palace. Ram Baran Yadav of the Nepali Congress became the first president of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal on July 23, 2008. Similarly, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, popularly known as Prachanda, of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was elected as the first Prime Minister on August 15, 2008, defeating Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress Party.

In the history of Nepal, the contribution of political party and its leaders in the political change were highly remarkable. Though the leaders who led the Nepal in Panchayat system, democracy and even now in Federal Democratic Republic are the same. Every political system of Nepal changes by contributing people’s huge scarifying their life and property but the people’s expectation by

the change in regime remains same. So, we feel and see the result of local election 2079, in which people support youth, energetic leaders.

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