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Gen Z Movement 2025 in Nepal: Agendas, Implications and Unsettled Issues

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Abstract

This paper seeks to discuss agendas, implications and contestations of Generation Z Movement 2025 in Nepal. Drawing on various theoretical perspectives in political science, it situates Gen Z mobilization within the context of global activism and examines how phenomena such as the digital divide and postmodern transformation shape youth alienation, activism and demonstrations. The study follows a systematic review and a critical paradigm to examine Gen Z's dissatisfaction with corruption, impunity and institutional unresponsiveness in Nepal. These issues have been linked to broader concerns about legitimacy, social contracts, social movements, post-democratic criticism, digital activism, and the alienation of youth. Research evidence shows that the lack of governance in the country has eroded Gen Z's trust, sparking a widespread young-led revolution that is driving a major political transformation. The Gen Z Movement 2025 is not a one-point campaign; it summarizes several developmental and leadership crises in Nepal. The movement, as a causal construct, has revealed the depth of problems, including failures to provide leadership, the decay of traditional political authorities, and disrespect for the agenda of structural reforms. Yet, the violence and vandalism of the movement should be condemned which contests with the characteristics of social movement in general and peaceful culture of Nepalese people in particular. The paper concludes that issues and agendas of Gen Z movement is not purely an age-cohort specific; rather they are intergenerational and multidimensional. The paper, therefore, recommends that such issues and the lack of democratic consolidation in post-Gen Z Nepal can only be resolved through inclusive reforms, transformational leadership, improved governance and increased civic literacy.

Keywords: *Digital mobilization, democratic reform, Gen Z Movement, legitimacy crisis, Nepal, youth activism*

Introduction

Democracy is a political system where the best alternatives are democratically chosen. It consists of democratic ideals, institutions, and practices (Dreze & Sen, 2010). It is therefore a cultural and institutional construction in which consensus and dissenting voices, ruling parties and ruled subjects, both exist under a defined rule of law. The ruling elites are chosen by citizens, through democratic means, in the common good of the citizens. The nature of democracy is that it has a weakness that is widely exploited by elected elites. Bartels (2024) explains that the primary factor leading to the erosion of democracy in Europe is not the behaviour of others but rather the elite's behaviour. Therefore, French scholar Tocqueville argues that building and maintaining democracy requires political culture, which he defines as 'cultural mores' (Tocqueville, 2010). On the same note, Diamond et al. (1999) believe that a pro-democratic political culture enables sustained pressure for the return of democracy. The social and political instability in the transforming societies is an order of the day once the elected elites are no longer practicing the 'Dharma' - the proclaimed duties and responsibilities. In this context, Buddha's teaching also refers to 'non-self-leadership'. The causes of social and political order are inequality, power-sharing, exploitation, unequal distribution of resources, and conflicting values, such as elite beliefs and values with democratic values. One glimpse into the generational sub-political culture is a new international political culture, also called generational inequality in the post-crisis era, which has propagated across the world (Braungart & Braungart, 2023). It creates political agitation and a threat to political elites, leading to the emergence of a social movement society, along with the rise of critical masses and a variety of alternatives with postmodern values and norms.

Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to an age group involving the individuals born between 1997 and 2012 and are aged below 28 years. Having an instinctive relationship with digital technology, Gen Z thinks about the challenges and tasks differently than the earlier generations. The rise of Gen Z as a political force has started new academic discussions on civic engagement, digital divide, and relationships between the state and citizens in contemporary societies. Studies found that growing up with digital technology, being connected globally, and a strong sense of justice and accountability shape Gen Z's political actions, consciousness and aspirations (Magar, 2025; Twenge, 2017; Bennett & Segerberg, 2023; Waligóra & Górska, 2025). Examples include the climate strikes in Europe, the democracy movements in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and anti-corruption movements in Sub-Saharan Africa, all led by young people. These show how Gen Z challenges traditional politics through flexible, networked, and issue-focused movements (Castells, 2015; Salihu, 2022). These changes show the world is being reshaped by online activism which seems a fast but flat and loose ways of political organization, where legitimacy of conventional political order is questioned in digital spaces.

On September 8-9, 2025, Nepal witnessed a massive youth movement widely known as the Gen Z Movement. While similar to earlier global youth uprisings, this movement may have

arisen from political-economic factors interwoven with a paradigmatic crisis of ideology, moral values, leadership and governance in Nepal. To fully understand the reasons and effects of the movement, it should be critically examined alongside various scientific studies (Teekah, 2025). After the first day of violence instigated by the state side, which resulted in the death of young demonstrators including students, the movement rapidly spread to various regions of the country the following day. The events led to short-term closures of government facilities and significant delays in service delivery (Beech, 2025; Sen & Tuladhar, 2025). Some government offices were damaged and digital systems disrupted which directly affected the work of key service delivery systems, including judicial and legal services. It halted administrative activities in some government bodies as well as private firms and trade and business sectors.

Building on this, the Gen Z Movement in Nepal in September 2025 can be seen as part of broader global trend of social movement. However, it is not entirely new to Nepal, as the country has a long tradition of youth-led struggles in different political junctures and regimes, including the Student's Movement in 1979 and the People's Movements in 1990 and 2006 (Baral, 2012). Although youths have always been at the center of democratic changes in Nepal as a part of broader movement of political parties, Gen Z is the generation shaped by institutional changes along with the post conflict era (with the end of 10 year's Maoist insurgency and eradication of constitutional monarchy) and post constitutional promulgation (state structuring and federal delineation), and by citizens growing tired of corruption, political instability, intensive brain drain and age-old leadership (Devkota, 2025; Dhakal, 2020). The mobilization reflects a growing legitimacy gap between citizens and the state, a gap now exacerbated by digital spaces that magnify complaints, disagreements and dissenting critical voices enabling a rapid organization and mobilization. The protests of 2025 thus mark the emergence of new political subjectivities among Nepalese youth which could be defined by mistrust of party elites, increased civic awareness, and a desire for responsible governance. In this context, the paper aims to analyze how the movement has offered a critical empirical context to youth agency, legitimacy crises, and changing state-society relations in modern Nepal in terms of agendas, implications and unsettled issues. The theoretical relevance of this study of Generation Z lies in its role in reshaping political legitimacy, rethinking the social contract, challenging established ideologies, and exposing contradictions between democratic desires and rules.

Literature Review

The main objective of this section is to examine the concepts, theoretical frameworks, and empirical issues related to social movements in general and the Gen Z movement in particular. Accordingly, the literature review is divided into two parts: a theoretical review and an empirical review, as discussed below in different thematic headings.

Global Wave of Social Movements and the Rise of Gen Z

Theories of classical political movement and social movement scholarship have long considered the mobilization of youth, their agitation, and collective action to bring about the political transformation (Calderón, et al., 2018; Sapkota, 2021). Social movement

investigation cannot be limited to the conventional perspective of political science, but has instead developed into a transdisciplinary discourse facing a spectrum of issues including social, political, economical, cultural, ecological and technological aspects (Tarrow, 2022; Tilly, 2004; Tilly and Wood, 2013). In this context, Tilly and Tarrow (2015) critically observe that the study of social movement has been a part of contentious politics patricianly with the rise of postmodern and postindustrial social changes which characterize the society as ‘social movement society’. Since the classical movement theories up to the resource mobilization, network, critical-mass, collective-behaviour, and identity-based movement theories, scholars make conflicting claims to the antecedents, outcomes, leadership patterns and organizational modes of social movements (Sapkota, 2021; Muxel, 2020). Social movements have been furhter aligned with the rise of diverse political orders and global wave of democracy in this era of rapidly globalized world (Diamond, 2020; Fukuyama, 2014).

Nevertheless, these theories have mostly treated youth as a category in sociology, rather than theorizing age-cohort-specific movements of Gen X, Gen Y, or Gen Z as political formations influenced by particular historical, technological and socio-economic contradictions. Consequently, the generational movements, such as Gen Z, are under-theorized and thus demand an analytical lens that merges the generational theory with the modern-day social movement processes. To better understand Gen Z's political formation, it is crucial to examine the pathways that translate shared experiences and grievances into a collective identity. The collective identity in different stratum of society induces collective behavior, which if networked, can form a social movement. Changing nature of education systems, paradigm shifting of conventional livelihood systems or economic productions and impacts of modernity in social norms have increasingly emphasize critical thinking and public awareness. In consequence, they play a significant role in shaping young minds to question the status quo and demand change along with the rejection of traditional political order in society. In Gramscian terms, this is a part of counter hegemonic awareness. Additionally, the influence of global media flows introduces Gen Z to diverse political ideologies and practices worldwide, which have fostered a sense of global citizenship that enhances their collective identity and activism (Earl et al., 2017).

Gen Z is shaped by the digital age and has been a witness of digital divide and AI technology. The socio-political construction of this generation is aligned with global trends and new political thinking against the mainstream discourse or dominant paradigm in politics, ideology, economics and public spheres. The activism of the youth who entered this world in the digital age and are sensitive to what is happening on the other side of the world is making it possible to facilitate a change toward a more ethical, rational and accountable democracy in Nepal as it confronts the traditional politics and the traditional relationship between the state and the citizenry. Unlike previous youth movements like the 1990 People's Movement that demanded liberal multiparty system or the 2006 People's Movement that resisted undemocratic practices promoted by the former monarchy and political parties and Maoist movement, Gen Z and younger Nepalese youth want not only policy changes but also a significant change towards people-led democracy or a complete change of the political mainstream (Gupta et al., 2025; Pathak, 2025). Later efforts, such as

‘Enough is Enough’, ‘No Not Again’ and the ‘Nepobaby/ Nepokids’ slogan and the involvement of the youth in civic agendas have tested the very ethics and morals of the incumbent politicians. One of the major changes is the use of social media like Facebook, Discord, TikTok, and Instagram among Gen Z; features like TikTok duets and Instagram stories are spreading news faster to the public mass. It allows individuals to share their stories and creates viral trends that shape public opinion. Notably, hashtag storms have led to real-world protests against corruption, unscrupulous politics and poor governance.

The global trend of Gen Z mobilization shows how digital technology and networked communication can drive a new wave of social movements. It is characterized by horizontal forms (rather than vertical) and strong civic engagement (with digital engagement). The activism is marked by moral urgency, data-driven decisions, rapid online-to-street action and distrust of elites. These traits distinguish Gen Z from earlier movements yet also echo periods when political agency addressed systemic grievances and improved communication (Goldstone, 2016; Mason, 2012; Skocpol, 1979). Viral protests, hashtag campaigns, and decentralized organizing drive this trend in particular context of the post-Arab Springs (Castells, 2015; Tufekci, 2017). Climate strikes, Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, Black Lives Matter, Chile's constitutional protests, and Nigeria's #EndSARS exemplify Gen Z's role in shaping a new, digitally powered global phenomenon. In European countries including France and Germany, it led to the rise of populism and alternative politics. From historical material perspective, a political scientist should not deny the rise of different framing and alternatives of the movements, despite the fact that some of such movements, may turn into anarchism and violent agitations.

The main antithesis of the status quo is that unfair institutions, corruption and elite control over the mainstream political economy. It creates legitimacy crises that prompt Gen Z to act. This connects youth movements to broader debates in political science about why countries struggle and how bad governance breeds grievances and mobilization (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Silwal, 2024). Gen Z activism targets issues like democratic decline, inequality, impunity and unmet expectations. Globally, Gen Z responds to weak policies, structural problems, lack of accountability, and ongoing elite dominance (Schmidt-Gleim, 2021). Consequently, Gen Z adapts established movement strategies for the digital age, new values and networked activism. Nepal is not an exception to this possibility as a part of global phenomenological construct.

Population Generations and Gen Z in Nepal

Generational cohorts reflect the prevailing social and cultural conditions of their formative years. Various scholars outline the generations in different perspectives (Garaganov, 2022; King, 2022; Scardovi, 2022). While the Silent Generation (circa 1928-1945) adopted more conservative values, a response to war and economic hardship, Baby Boomers (circa 1946-1964) experienced postwar prosperity that fostered optimism and ambition. Independence and innovation were developed by Generation X (around 1965 -1980) who grew up when modernization was happening at a very fast pace and technology was active. Nevertheless, Millennials (1981-1996) are technologically adept and typically socially conscious and team-players. In the meantime, the so-called Generation Z (around 1997-2012) is

characterized by digital fluency, the ability to connect globally, entrepreneurial nature and individual well-being. The generation alpha (around 2013-2025) is coming out of an artificial intelligence and ubiquitous digital technology. Despite this categorical division of the generations, a sociological interpretation should be given to the overlapping of these generations, as they have grown up in a continuum. It should not be treated as a purely technical categorization. For example, the present generation does not have a single drive of Gen Z; rather, it is a combination of other generations, from the elders to the present Alpha. Nepalese society bears a same character where grandparent generation also tend to use smartphones along with the grandchild generation though the nature and purpose of implications in using such technologies are different for both.

In Nepal, out of a total population of 29,164,578, there are 9,001,866 Gen Z individuals, according to the 2021 Census (NSO, 2023). For this context, Gen Z refers to individuals born roughly between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. This is a 30.9 percent share, though this figure may have changed slightly over the last four years. In 2021, those aged 14 and below accounted for 27.83 percent, 61.96 percent were in the 15–59 age group, while those aged 60 and above accounted for 10.21 percent. It is also important to note that, as per Nepal's new National Youth Policy (2082 BS/2025 AD), youth are defined as individuals aged 18 to 35 years. This is a change from the previous 16-40 age limit to align with the Children's Act (defined as under 18).

The Government of Nepal has authorized its citizens to work in 111 countries. Since 2008, 7,636,825 labor permits have been issued, and currently 3,017,000 Nepalese are employed abroad, including 1,088,371 in India. In FY 2024/25, 839,266 individuals received work permits (Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, 2025). Although higher education is accessible within Nepal, high youth unemployment and low-paying jobs drive many to seek employment overseas. This trend is reflected in the rising number of young people expressing concern over limited prospects at home. Official records show that 543,833 Nepalese students obtained a No Objection Certificate for foreign study between FY 2018/19 and mid-March 2024/25, excluding India, resulting in an expenditure of approximately Rs 500 billion on higher education abroad (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2025). This indicates that both employment and educational opportunities in Nepal are perceived as insufficient, which motivates young people to migrate in search of better prospects. It has contributed to adding critical youth mass in Nepalese society.

Not exceptional to Nepalese society, the younger generation is mainly made up of Gen Z. It grew up in the digital era and is therefore more globally aware than previous generations. These people use smartphones and could view counterparts around the world who are also calling for improved governance, quality deliverables, and scientific innovation. Therefore, they expect similar efforts from governments to ensure quality education, health, freedom of expression, political representation, media access, and employment opportunities (Devkota, 2025). Quite on the contrary, a significant part of this generation is forced to follow the already beaten path of foreign labour migration or students' brain drain. There is an increasing trend of going abroad to externalize employment opportunities, while domestic issues such as nepotism and managerial inefficiency continue.

Theoretical Debates on Nepal's Zen Z Movement

In Nepal, the Gen Z movement has radically changed the conceptualization and the empirical contexts of democratic legitimacy. It draws an alternative shift in the assertion and challenge of conventional legitimacy. This is the main argument that preconditions the discussion of various theoretical frameworks that explain the recent youth-led movements in Nepal. In the last ten years, a new generation of politically active Gen Z has grown, with new types of interaction, demands, and protest mechanisms. Cyber-connectedness, steady political change, economic turmoil, and generalized discontent with established institutions and traditional forms of leadership have led these youths to question established institutions and normative forms of leadership. Theoretical approaches explain youth-led protests not just as a short-lived manifestation, but as situated within broader discussions of legitimacy, democracy, state regulation, and social transformation (Dahal, 2025b).

The legitimacy theory identifies procedural and substantive legitimacy in a democratic system. The electoral process confers formal legitimacy, but it can also fail to meet people's expectations amid widespread corruption. Post democratic critique is that only elections (and its means) cannot define the public legitimacy forever. Legitimacy has become both legal and extra-legal in contemporary societies. Public are sovereign at all the times, not only at the time of election. Legitimacy encompasses accountability and good governance, as well as trust between those who rule and those who are being ruled (Lipset, 1981; Beetham, 2013). In this context, performance legitimacy is also critical. It is the ability of the institutions of governance to provide the citizens with the services and meet the demands of the citizens. In turn, public legitimacy is empowered with the performance legitimacy. It is also the legitimacy of a regime and of political interactions which is grounded in the principles of governance and democratic rules (Diamond, 1999; Hobsbawm, 1962). The protests of Gen Z reveal their disappointment with the outcomes of democracy and stress that democracy can be considered legitimate only when elections are free of corruption, transparent, and people trust the election outcomes. In turn, youth mobilization signals a legitimacy crisis stemming from governance failure.

In the context of the social contract theory, this framework allows for evaluating the sources of the movement. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau were classical theorists who related political power to mutual obligations between citizens and the state. They have advocated contractual legitimacy. Modern theorists further argue that citizens can renegotiate or contest this contract when the state fails to deliver security, fairness and equality (Klosko, 2025; Muldoon, 2016). This contract is perceived to have been violated by the rulers' side in Nepal due to rampant corruption, elite dominance and poor leadership. Political parties did not follow their election manifestos; rather, they attempted to hold the power and lead the government at any cost even making unjustified alliances. In consequence, political instability became a characteristic to define Nepal's politics. As such, youth protests can be seen as organized actions to reassert control and to reinvent citizenship and responsibility. This feeling of violation of the contract becomes part of a wider ideological critique that now defines Gen Z activism.

In Nepal, GenZ activism is characterized by deep ideological disappointment in the liberal-leftist political elites in the country. There is a new vagueness on the difference between liberal and left-wing parties and their performance; and on the other hand, a more distinct axiom is developing on the right-wing politics. At the same time, a conjuncture of political propaganda, an ideological vacuum, flaws in the electoral regime, and a crisis of leadership is a scenario that can lead to new rebellions, as Saatchi (2024) and Ochieng (2025) postulated in the international context. The liberal-left is thought to be stagnant, self-interested and unable to bring substantive change despite their advocacy of inclusion, social justice and reform. This disappointment is related to critiques of liberal institutionalism worldwide, which indicate that progressive rhetoric becomes increasingly detached from people's trust and actual outcomes (Earl et al., 2022; Fraser, 2019). In the case of Gen Z, it creates mistrust of elite-led reform and favors more genuine and responsible options, while the orthodoxy of the right is being challenged by the same generation of youth.

The Gen Z movement is also formed by a concurrent crisis in right-wing orthodoxy. Right-wing populism has been spreading all over the world, which affects Nepalese politics, especially among the youth who do not endorse authoritarian tendencies as retrogressive and undemocratic. Based on evidence provided around the world, scholars observe that modern youth movements undermine established liberalism and right-wing populism (Castelli Gattinara and Pirro, 2019; Mudde, 2019). The Gen Z movement, therefore, contradicts traditional ideological categories by supporting accountability and institutional reform.

The increasing role of the non-state actors is another hallmark of the movement. Demonstrations organized by Nepalese youth leaders are an example of legitimacy and mobilizing power being located outside of the established political parties and formal organizations. In the past, party cadres and active members were the channels through which political legitimacy was made. However, social media forums, including those on Facebook, Discord, and TikTok now have become new players of the legitimacy. Such online communities, as well as civil society networks and informal groups, are growing into spaces that influence the political discourse and political action (Keck & Sikkink, 2014). Thus, the center of this change is in digital activism. The protests spread quickly online and enabled the identification and sharing of the message across borders. But Doctorow (2023) warns that digitally networked movements can be poorly organized and short-term in strategy. A case in point of the idea of connective action by Bennett and Segerberg (2023) is Nepalese Gen. It is a movement that emphasizes personalized online communication and does not require formalization, which promotes inclusivity and acceleration while also questioning its longer-term effectiveness. This digital movement cuts across structural critiques of democracy and situates Gen-Z activism within the wider debate on institutional legitimacy.

Post-democratic criticisms also put the movement's motives into perspective. According to Crouch (2004), post-democracy is a system in which democratic institutions remain intact, but decision-making is dominated by elites. With this perspective, Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) argue that the modern breakdown of democratic governments is often characterized by a long-term process of institutional and normative degradation by elected leaders, rather

than a military coup, with a political elite acting as a key factor in advancing or hindering this process.

Similarly, the continued existence of sustainable development and political stability depends on the existence of inclusive political and economic institutions. On the other hand, extractive institutions combine power and resources eventually creating inequality, instability and state failure (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Nepalese Gen Z activists see democratic institutions as hollowed out by party politics, patronage, and exclusion, leading them to target symbolic representation. Alongside concerns about representation and tangible socioeconomic consequences drive much of the frustration and anxiety fueling this movement.

Next, economic and developmental frustrations drive the movement. Unemployment, labor migration and uneven growth intensify youth discontent. Scholars describe these as a development crisis stemming from governance and policy failures, rather than solely from economic limitations, including unemployment and alienation of the youths (Aryal et al., 2024; Sharma, 2024). Gen Z activism views livelihood insecurity as a political problem has tied to ineffective institutions and a lack of visionary leadership in the country.

A leadership crisis further intensifies youth frustration in Nepal's political culture. Long-serving party leaders block generational renewal and impede policy innovation. It might be a turn toward demagoguery, in which populist rhetoric overtakes substantive policy, though some scholars (e.g. Bhattarai, 2025) argue that demagoguery is a historical product of Nepal's polity under the power elites. Among Ge Z, established leadership increases feelings of disenchantment. The events of the Gen Z protests illustrate the dynamics of critical mass and threshold mobilization in the social movement. Simmons (2021) shows that grievances at the individual level may combine into collective action when a certain level of criticality is attained. Electronic networks enhance this among young people. In that regard, the active disengagement of Gen Z can be explained through the alienation theory (Zolfaghari & Ashayeri, 2021). The theory was based on the Marxist tradition, which prefigures a radical alienation of youths from the dominant paradigm. The trends are also influenced by rising expectations across generations.

The Gen Z movement can also be seen as a response to the increased demands placed on young people in Nepal. According to Inglehart (2020), new generations form when aspirations shaped by education, the media, and globalization exceed the power of an institution. The two crises that Gen Z faces are material (employment, security) and post-material (dignity, rights, participation), which explain the breadth of its demands and its significant impact on the Nepalese sociopolitical environment. To predict how these dynamics may develop, we focus on future research directions. Therefore, in the future, several research paths can help clarify the evolving role of the Gen Z movement in institutional reform. One of the most appropriate questions to ask is: What specific institutional reforms do Nepalese youths deem necessary to overcome both the material and post-material crises they are facing? In addition, what can be done to these existing governance structures to facilitate the transformative representation of this generation within the mainstream political economy? Answering these questions might provide policymakers

and other scholars interested in understanding and leveraging the transformative potential of the Gen Z movement in Nepal with useful information.

Methodology

The methodological approach of this paper is a systematic review-based, critical, and synthesis-oriented approach to the study. Ontologically, it is post positivist standpoint while laying the critical observations and skeptical questions upon the objective reality incubated with the Gen Z movement. It draws on primary literature in political science on youth activism, social movements, legitimacy theory, digital mobilization and post-transition governance. The analysis involves no primary data, rather, it is a synthesis of the existing scholarly materials, media archives, policy documents, and theoretical contributions to explain the Gen Z Movement through the conceptual frames of networked activism (Bennett & Segerberg, 2023; Shirky, 2011; Solihat, 2024), controversial politics of the digital era (Marres, 2021), and the issue of legitimacy crisis in transitional democracies (Lipset, 1981; Merkel, 2018; O'Donnell, 1994). This methodology is intended to elicit conceptual insights and theoretical connections rather than making generalizations on empirical grounds, and therefore provides a critical interpretive reading of the Gen Z mobilization in Nepal. For the systematic review method, following major dimensions of the PRISM model as further attributed by Martinez et al. (2023), first I consulted 148 scientific readings including 15 media reports and news and 28 classical works of the theories. After screening the scope and contribution of the readings, 114 selected for the final review, synthesis and argumentation

Results and Findings in Empirical Context

This section argues that Gen Z activism is defined by its contextual orientation, stated agendas, and complex losses and gains of mobilization. It contends that the disorganized, leaderless structure of Gen Z activism, amid post-Gen Z dilemmas and a crisis of state legitimacy, poses significant challenges for political management—especially in the debate over early elections.

Context and Agendas of the Gen Z Movement

The 2025 Gen Z protests did not occur in isolation and all of sudden. The causes were historically produced and accompanied over the last three decades. Nepal missed a leadership which would stand along with the rapidly changing global waves of development and democracy. Instead, this crisis reflected a deep socio-political vacuum though the aspirations for the changes across Nepal were already globalized since 1990s. A growing number of educated youths often utilize digital devices and communication apps. The technological use and dependence has been an avoidable basic needs and fundamental aspiration of the present generation. Amid general alienation, many youths were frustrated with limited job prospects and failures of governance (Magar, 2025). The Gen Z movement in Nepal mirrors global trends but also responds to the country's unique political context. Nepalese youth have long participated in transformative politics and the anti-regression protests. However, Gen Z forms a new type of political identity.

Unlike older generations, Gen Z's political subjectivity is strongly influenced by digital platforms and global ideas. Increased access to information and communication technology has shaped their perspective. In the past, political involvement often occurred through traditional, hierarchical structures. Gen Z now values decentralized action and favors grassroots activism over hierarchy. There is a clear rejection to the idea of feudal leadership and hegemonic construction. Youths prioritize digital freedom. They bear an intensive hope of peace, sustainability, stability, economic reforms and political transformation, but even the post-constitution period and the major political parties could not handle the situation into the transformative path. All of this has created dissatisfaction and frustration with governance and systemic order of the mainstream polity (Dahal, 2025a; Karki, 2025). Amidst this, the 2025 Zen Z protests brought together diverse agendas and exposed deep structural tensions in Nepalese society.

The hidden agendas, less obvious yet are equally important. They include demands for freedom of expression on social media and its regulatory mechanisms which would secure liberties in the digital sphere. As surveillance and online harassment have increased in recent days, and government of Nepal has tried to monitor or censor dissent, youth activists are aligned to digital autonomy as part of democratic participation (Budhathoki, 2025; Sainz & Hanna, 2023). The movement also aired fears about Nepal's development path, leadership crisis, and perceived stagnation in state performance. This aligns with the new social movement's theory, which suggests that contemporary movements often address issues of identity, quality of life and democratic participation rather than traditional economic concerns. Contemporary social movements reveal different kinds of leadership pattern, digital activism and organizational strategy (Shirky, 2008; Travkina, 2022). Additionally, the decentralized, leaderless nature of the Gen Z movement fits the network-based structures of resource mobilization theory, as movements organize and rally support digitally without a centralized hierarchy. The protest became an outlet for generational disillusionment. It amplified the gap between youthful desires and the state's perceived inability to provide opportunities, justice, service delivery, and dignity within the country.

Despite the fact that the Gen Z movement in Nepal has never put its claims into a single, formative manifesto or an organizationally cohesive platform, one can outline a list of recurring agendas in street protests, online campaigns, the organization's statements and the wider civic discourse. These agendas have grown out of the lived experiences of young citizens who face political marginalization, failures of governance, economic insecurity, and long-term stagnation in democracy. They are not programmatic demands in the traditional party-political sense of the term, but rather normative expectations and reform-based ambitions that, when summed up, express a generational critique of Nepal's current political, institutional, and social organization. From global perspective, it is how youth agitations become often context-specific and digitally active in contemporary societies (Inglehart, 1997; Bennett & Segerberg, 2023).

The political agendas promoted by Gen Z are influenced by the nation's local politics and global youth political movements that prioritize accountability, inclusion and democratic renewal. They indicate a decline in ideology-based politics in favor of issue-based, values-based, and demand-driven politics focused on transparency, meritocracy, participation and

dignity. The mainstream political parties and their alliances were not aware of the youth concerns nor became they updated with the social changes. Instead, they undermined and insulted the alternative and critical voices within the party and beyond. ‘Anarchists’, ‘populists’ and ‘pseudo-intellectuals’ were the buzzing nomenclatures to accuse the dissenting voices in societies. Amidst this, the agenda-setting role of Gen Z is not as focused on direct policy seizure as on rewriting the moral and institutional principles of government, political parties and sustainable development (Crouch, 2004; Fraser, 2019). Table 1 summarizes the main agendas and core concerns of the movement.

Table 1

Key Agendas of the Gen Z Movement in Nepal

| Agendas | Core concerns |
|--|--|
| Social media freedom and right to expression | Apprehension of censorship, surveillance, oppressive computer legislation, and informal pressures that deprive online opposition and alternative accounts. |
| Leadership transformation within political parties (“No, not again”; “Enough is enough”) | Challenge to the long-term rule of political elites who contributed to political instability, elite syndication, and hegemonic control of the state power |
| Strong action against corruption and reform of anti-corruption mechanisms | Vigorous intervention on the issue of corruption by having independent, autonomous and empowered oversight institutions, including the reformation of the Commission of the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA) |
| End to nepotism and favoritism; promotion of transparency and meritocracy | Opposition to the patronage-driven hiring in political and administrative organizations; values of equal opportunity towards regaining the social confidence of people in the governance system and public services. |
| Institutional reform in judiciary, education, and political appointments | Calling to bring structural changes in the major institutions which are seen as being politicized, ineffective and prone to partisan politics. |
| Youth-targeted programs addressing alienation and migration | Specific policies that can solve the problem of youth unemployment, underemployment, political alienation, and mass immigrant labor migration and brain drain. |
| Resistance to suppression of alternative voices and subaltern groups | Concerns non-coercive democratic environments in which dissent, minority voices as well as non-mainstream political opinions are aired without fear or ostracism. |

These issues are interdependent and mutually supporting beyond the agenda items of an individual. Social media is used not just as a means of expression but also to expose corruption, organize opposition to nepotism, and give voice to the marginalized. For example, Nepalese youths succeeded in their online campaign #NoMoreCorruption since last two years even before the Zen Z movement explored. The campaign had used social platforms to demand transparency from all tiers of government and public institutions. It is a tragic story that Nepal has been ranked in 107th position (with 34 points out of 100) out of 180 countries and territories in the Corruption Perceptions Index of 2023 (Transparency International, 2025).

This example of a digital campaign shows the potential for systemic change through unified youth action. There is an obvious question commonly raised in Nepal: why this country cannot be developed despite having an abundant natural resource and a long history of glory and pride. In this context, claims of leadership transformation and good governance depend on institutional reform and meritocracy. Elite dominance is both a root and a symptom of governance failure.

Introducing open budgeting portals and other recruitment systems may increase transparency and accountability. It can demonstrate that the concept of meritocracy can replace the dominance of elites. Despite this, little research and critical studies have been done on youth-oriented programs, making it difficult to break the vicious cycle of politically connected benefactors. To counter such anxieties, policies and strategies have to be developed with close supervision, and their long-term effects on patronage have to be monitored. In addition, fostering a culture of accountability and transparency can help reduce these risks. After the promulgation of new Constitution in 2015 that also adhered federal system in Nepal, the development programs aimed at the youth were expected to be an economic intervention program as well as to restore dignity, reduce forced migration, and rebuild trust between citizens (youth in particular) and the state.

Such anxieties of Nepalese younger generation could have been reflected with the influences of Gen Z around the world. The Gen Z demands, such as climate action in the West, racial equality in the United States, and democratic reforms in Asian nations, including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, demonstrate a similarity that makes the Gen Z in Nepal part of a broader global youth movement towards revolutionary change. As it has been described before, the mentioned agendas presuppose an even smaller emphasis on immediate policy compromises in favor of the process of changing well-established trends of the political culture and the government organization. In normal life, this is being reflected in the issues with traditional hierarchies. The current focus on transparency, inclusiveness, meritocratic values, and expressive freedom represents an intergenerational motivation to rebalance institutional structures to align with democratic principles rather than simply replacing individual political agents. As such, Gen Z is not so much a classical pressure system as a normative political will to redefine citizen expectations vis-à-vis the state, political parties, and the public institutions.

Losses and Gains of the Movement

In the post-Gen Z movement phase, impact analysis on Nepal's political and economic dynamics has just started though there is a notable lack of systematic and scientific studies (Barma & Thapa, 2025; Pandey & Gautam, 2025; Odira, 2025). On December 8, 2025, the Office of the Prime Minister received a report on the Gen Z movement which was accompanied by the National Planning Commission of Nepal. It reported that 77 people died in total including 20 on September 8, 37 on September 9, and 20 in the days after. Of the 2,429 injured, 17 were under 13 and another 1,433 were aged 13 to 28 (NPC, 2025). So, younger people were affected more which is might be due to their massive participation in the demonstration.

The report estimates total damages in the public and private sectors at NPR 84 billion, 45 crore, 77 lakh. Of this, the government sector suffered a loss of NPR 44 billion, 93 crore, 73 lakh. The private sector lost NPR 33 billion, 54 crore, 87 lakh. The community sector accounted for the remaining losses. Damage under the Gen Z movement occurred in 54 districts across all seven provinces and 262 levels. To make these numbers relatable, estimated losses amount to about NPR 30,000 per household in affected regions. Nepal's approximate household count provides this context. With an average per capita (GDP) of \$ 1447 USD in Nepal, this loss is a heavy economic burden. For reconstruction and recovery, the National Planning Commission estimates a budget of NPR 36 billion, 30 crore, 21 lakh (NPC, 2025).

During the second day of the movement, the then Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli resigned and was airlifted by the Nepal Army to its one of the barracks. Senior leaders of major political parties were also kept under security surveillance. After the formation of the interim government with an electoral mandate, the new government formed a three-member High-Level Investigation Commission on September 21, 2025, headed by former justice Gauri Bahadur Karki. The commission was formed on September 21 with a three-month deadline (Nepal Khabar, 2025). The deadline has been extended to 30 days, as the investigation could not be completed within the given time. The commission has been given authority to conduct investigations into allegations of human rights violations—including extrajudicial killings—arising from the excessive use of force during the demonstrations, to ascertain facts, and to recommend criminal accountability.

Contestation is how the report of this committee is produced and documented, and what kinds of recommendations will be offered. The commission was not questioned by most stakeholders and the public, but the question is whether there was a clear, legal implementation of such reports in previous incidents, including the People's Movement, the Madhesh movement and the Tikapur incident. Besides refusing to take moral responsibility for the deaths and destruction, Oli and his party have repeatedly challenged the Karki commission as 'unconstitutional and illegal. However, the commission has conducted various field observations and collected various records and damage reports. It took statements from police commanders, including the then chief district officer, security officials, the Home Secretary, the chief of the Nepal Army, then Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, and former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

Aside from the direct physical and material losses, the Gen Z movement's outcomes and impacts are mixed. Very rare studies have been done how it would affect in trade, business, international relations, tourism and political transformation (Gautam et al., 2025; Gyawali, 2025; Win, 2025). It presents both opportunities and serious threats to Nepal's political economy. Reconstruction can boost the economy in the short-term demotivating the heavy investment firms and foreign direct investments. Job creation, government spending, and repairs in affected areas have been gradually started. However, restoration of overall politics, economy and infrastructural development is very expensive. It can lead to higher government debt, divert resources from development, and increase budget deficits. Political polarization among old and new political parties, mainstream and alternative forces and old generations and young generation has also started to come into the surface, sometimes being unhealthy claims, counter claims, propagandas and hate speeches. These problems come during an already weak economy. Continued political instability could deepen the economic downturn. It may reduce investor confidence, affect tourism recovery, and slow foreign aid and investment. If transformation is not open and does not improve governance and institutions, the situation will worsen further. The risks may outweigh the benefits undermining the great sacrifice of Gen Z in the movement.

In the eyes of the classical social movement theory, burning down of public property, violent acts against civilians, looting, disarmament or punishment of security agents, and mass vandalism are often thought of as uncharacteristic means of collective action. However, in Nepal, the Gen Z movement used this kind of practice sporadically. This is contrary to Nepal's social nature, which has been characterized by a history of relative tolerance, harmony and non-violent political activity. The sudden outbreak of violent protests in the name of youth activism is a significant departure from traditional protest patterns.

All these events added to a broader sense of a climate of fear and insecurity, not limited to the mobilization period. Simultaneously, other explanations have been spread in society. One interpretation is the potential contribution of dissatisfied cadres of mainstream political parties, which has been exaggerated by social media stories. The other line of interpretation extends the conspiracy theory approach to reading, according to which the movement can be seen as a color revolution orchestrated by outsiders, external forces and non-state actors. It has been stated that there are elements concerning deep-state and micro-managerial influences on the Gen Z movement and its post-movement politics that could be brought up, but they cannot be dismissed or accepted without credible evidences. Such arguments have not been empirically substantiated, but they cannot be dismissed in a geopolitical environment where Nepal remains strategically vulnerable. Based on these rival accounts, one can appreciate the importance of careful, evidence-based analysis of the nature and effects of the current youth-led movements.

Post-Gen Z Dilemmas

The legacies of the Gen Z Movement in Nepal have created a predictably difficult in terms of political, institutional and sociological quandary. This will define the future course of Nepal's democracy. The movement transformed the political status quo and forced the state

to address youth grievances. However, it also revealed contradictions in power, legitimacy and future avenues of governance. These crises symbolize youth-based movements worldwide. In most cases, impulsive mobilization clashes with the institutional inflexibility of the official establishment and mainstream paradigm of the politics (Tufekci, 2017; Castells, 2015). In Nepal's context, it is contentious how the Zen Z movement situates and proceeds in future days to settle the political crisis. This paper argues that the crises are manifested in three dimensions which have surfaced as post-Gen Z dilemmas.

Crisis of Government: A Non-Constitutional Yet Non-Revolutionary Moment

The political crisis in Nepal following protests organized by Gen Z is a liminal moment that is neither fully constitutional nor purely revolutionary. On the one hand, the formal government still has its legal-electoral legitimacy, but its power has been considerably undermined by a long period of corruption, impunity, and allegations of administrative stalemate. This would not qualify as the classical revolution of overthrowing an institution, having a consistent ideology, and having a coherent leadership and motivation towards democratic system (Hobsbawm, 1962; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Skocpol, 1979). Instead, it is an illustration of what scholars term the grey zone of a democratic crisis, a situation in which legality exists but moral, performative, and even societal legitimacy fail (Beetham, 2013; Habermas, 1984). Moral legitimacy refers to the ethical justification the public grants its leaders; performative legitimacy concerns the government's capacity to deliver effective governance and services; while societal legitimacy concerns the extent to which the population feels represented and involved in sociopolitical processes.

This ambiguity raises big questions about political authority and legitimacy after the protests. The formation of a government led by Prime Minister Shushila Karki, a former Chief Justice, sparked debate among the people. There are concerns about whether the government's creation was proper and legitimate under the Constitution. Article 132, Clauses 1 and 2 of Nepal's Constitution state that a retired justice cannot serve in any kinds of executive positions and political appointments (except the judiciary proposes, including Human Rights) (Constitution of Nepal 2015). Proponents and most of the Zen Z groups claim such leadership is necessary due to unusual circumstances as per the theory of necessity. The modern Gen Z organization is a new form of legitimacy. It is grounded not in official legal action but in popular moral sensibility and social approval. Another similarly developed crisis occurred in Bolivia when President Evo Morales stepped down in 2019, sparking controversy over the legitimacy and constitutionality of the resulting interim government. All these cases shed some light on a larger global problem, i.e., the need to reconcile statutory failings with the changing demands of moral authority and the mobilization of social movements.

Even though it is constitutionally valid, the state suffers from significant representational deficiencies, especially among younger generations. This alienation reflects general post-democratic tendencies in which formal electoral processes exist but are drained by elite control and institutional corruption, as Crouch (2004) and Diamond (1999) extensively report. This has placed the state in a legitimacy without authority status, which makes it unable to exercise effective control, yet does not allow a protest movement to

institutionalize dissent into meaningful political change. Such a paradox highlights a structural governance dilemma: how to control strong societal discontent without triggering authoritarian consolidation or systemic breakdown.

Based on the above reflections, several possible future paths can become critical for Nepal's democratic polity. The likely consequence is the intensification of grassroots political movements struggling to fill the gap left by incumbent parties, thereby ushering in an emergent wave of participatory accountability. Alternatively, reform may be a gradual process within existing institutions, driven by internal or external needs and geared towards bringing statutes back in line with emerging expectations of the population. Another danger scenario is the dominance of authoritarian instincts in the event that the democratic system has remained refractory, leading the state to increase its coercion in response to civil disturbances. In all possible developments, aligning Nepal's legal structure with dynamic social needs is essential. It is on the basis of these possible scenarios that initial stimuli is given to intense reflection over the need for institutional flexibility and the need to align political power with the moral and social demands of citizens.

Fragmentation, Plurality, and Leaderless Mobilization in Gen Z

A second main dilemma is the lack of internal cohesion and unity that characterizes the representation of the Gen Z movement in Nepal. The given issue raises a very important question: how can Nepalese democracy respond to a movement that is neither centralized nor organized in the traditional way, but rather disintegrated? The movement can present itself as having outward unity, but in fact is highly fragmented. Numerous informal groups, online communities, influencers, activists issue-based networks, and ad hoc protest organizers operate simultaneously.

Gen Z Nepal is quite diverse in its political views. It is possible to mainly distinguish between five categories of this cohort: (1) pro-electoral reformists and safeguarding the Gen Z movement (e.g., the Gen Z Movement Alliance); (2) those who want the significant changes in the functioning of the whole system, having contrasting claims, e.g. introduction of a new constitution, revisit of federalism and parliamentary system, provision of direct elected prime minister (and a few also raise the voice of reinstate of the monarchy); (3) digital activists who use such a platform as Discord (an example is Hami Nepal); and (4) the group who cares more about anti-corruption and employment issues, as characterized by Nepokids campaigner. Fifth, some activists also reject the electoral process in the present conditions, without reforming the election act and forming a new government that includes all stakeholders. More often than not, the interest of these different groups not only clash but also elicit a head-on collision and debate within the open arenas and formal places. This heterogeneity highlights the decentralized character of modern youth mobilization, in which inclusivity and rapid coordination are valued over hierarchical forms.

The lack of centralized leadership has enabled the movement to be flexible and resilient in its mobilization. This decentralized structure, however, is now posing significant challenges in how they relate to the state, policy demands, and the negotiation of reforms. Lack of clarity on representative authority will make it hard to develop a consistent position for

Gen Z and create a grounded change. Although these have been the challenges, the movement has a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, ideological stands, and political ambitions. Ordinary complaints, corruption, unemployment, and governance failures provide a common reference point to mobilization. However, participants also express various, sometimes discrepant demands. This plethora of claims makes it difficult to develop a single agenda, thereby raising questions about internal solidarity and orientation. Without any means to achieve aggregation and deliberation, pluralism may fragment rather than generate reforms in democratic processes or change the political landscape.

These patterns reflect global developments, as seen in digitally organized youth movements such as the Occupy Movement, the Arab Spring, and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement. Decentralization helps mobilize and engage on a vast scale, but it also reveals the limitations of creating long-term change due to organizational weaknesses and blurred representation (Cammaerts, 2021; Tufekci, 2017). The example of the Gen Z movement in Nepal demonstrates a key paradox in the modern politics of the young generation: how to turn the idea of decentralized, networked protest into a lasting political force without losing the horizontal values that are at its essence.

Political Management and the Early Elections Dilemma

The government's proposal to move national elections from 2084 (as scheduled for 2027 with the regular succession of the parliamentary tenure) to 2082 (now scheduled for 4 March 2026 due to the Zen Z movement) raises a key question in Nepal's post-movement politics. Do early election truly resolve the legitimacy crisis, addresses the concerns of Gen Z movement or is it simply a quick reaction to settle down the pressure? Electoral theory in democratic systems suggests that early elections are only helpful when there is public trust, credible alternatives, and strong institutions (Bernauer & Vatter, 2024; Lijphart, 1999; Norris, 2011). Without these, early elections could just repeat the usual power structures and conventional hegemony of the elites. Only the circulation of elites in a row cannot resolve the problems embedded with Nepal's political economy. Right now, it is unclear if Nepal meets these requirements.

A major worry is whether early elections would really fix the legitimacy gap that Gen Z protesters point out. Without real changes in governance, reformation in the leadership pattern, stronger accountability and more inclusion, the proposed election in March 2026 could seem like just another round of elite control. Young people may see them as empty rituals rather than real change. Early elections could quiet street protests for a time, but fail to fix deep political alienation particularly among the youths. This is not only the concerns of independent youths (participants in the Zen Z protest) but also many youths who belong to the different political parties and raise their critical voices. As critics of post-democracy say, election timing alone cannot restore legitimacy. Institutions must work better and represent the people and the movement groups fairly.

Another question is whether political parties can meet Gen Z demands. Nepal's main parties still have older leaders, patronage networks and little internal democracy. These traits make it tough for new voices to join in. This has been a part of governance discourse in Nepal

though it can be apparent in measurement and scaling which also couple with the agenda of reformation in political parties and their leadership (Baral & Khadga, 2023; Hachhethu, 2025; KC & Dahal, 2024; Sharma, 2012). Even if elections happen sooner, party structures may not change or it becomes complicated.

For example, despite being one of the oldest and largest political parties, the Nepali Congress was unable to hold its long-demanded general convention. Instead, a dissenting group within the party held a ‘special convention’, which initiated a factional split that became formalized in January 2026. Similarly, the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) repeated a similar pattern of leadership and unchanged party policies during its 11th General Convention in December 2025. Meanwhile, smaller political parties that previously held parliamentary seats are actively seeking alliances and negotiating unification agreements. However, these attempts generally lack a strong ideological foundation and a coherent theoretical justification. As a result, the democratic principle of providing true alternatives remains critically challenged and highly contested. This simply gives indications that youth involvement and party reformations are not easy tasks. Following this, early elections may simply repeat the current power structure and political culture rather than bring renewal.

It is also important to ask if Gen Z can quickly form real alternatives with a clear agenda, leadership and organizational pattern. As discussed earlier, the movement is decentralized, fragmented, and mostly leaderless. Turning protest energy into organized competition by the upcoming elections will be hard. Some new public figures, mayors, and leaders on issues have inspired people, but their proper dialogue with the dissenting groups and with the public mass is still in a question. Only popular voices and agitations could not solidify the matter. But making alliances and clear plans is yet uncertain. There is also a risk of developing fragmentation and polarization in one hand and rising ultra-rightist forces, identity politics and political extremism on the other hand. Focusing on individuals rather than group agendas may make genuine Gen Z alternatives harder to develop and institutionalize.

Institutional readiness is also vital. Elections need strong preparation from election bodies, parties, and local governments. After protests and amid low trust, any problems in election management or transparency could further damage confidence. Early elections without stronger institutions might hurt, not help, legitimacy. Nevertheless, on the basis of previous trends of elections, the upcoming elections can deviate the voting culture of Nepal giving a room of alternative politics along with regional voices, caste/ ethnic swings, gender-biased flows, party preferences and youth-led politics. This is somehow indicated by the studies of Karki et al. (2025), Dahal (2025c) and Sapkota (2024).

All of these factors suggest that holding elections in March 2026 may manage politics for now, but it is not a true fix for Nepal’s democracy. The discourse and practice of democracy in Nepal was long waited for the revision and reconsideration from good governance perspective (Dahal, 2020; Sapkota, 2023). It was restricted with the bureaucratic romanticism from ‘election to election’. Early elections might lower tension for a while, but they won’t solve problems like weak government, youth alienation and fragile institutions

without real reforms. In this context, needed reforms and interventions include greater transparency, party democracy, stronger anti-corruption measures and youth representation in political spheres. Without these steps, election timing may matter less than fixing Nepal's basic democratic problems and institutional deficits.

Discussion of the Contested Issues and Ways Forward

The central question is whether age-driven mobilization can alter Nepal's political and economic trajectory. Major public investment is required for widespread restoration, but following the Gen Z movement, Nepal faces acute economic losses and heightened financial strain. These factors raise the risk of a deepening crisis, particularly in the absence of new foreign investment, steady trade, and returning investor confidence. Despite rising public expectations though the movement, the newly formed government could not follow robust governance efforts and active anti-corruption measures; and they are yet to be institutionalized. Meaningful reform within traditional political parties, especially regarding internal democracy and leadership renewal, also remains elusive (Gupta et al., 2025). This is what immensely discussed in the readings of state formation, capability of the citizens and sustainability of democracy (Andrews et al., 2017; Appadurai, 2013; Mersel, 2006).

Moreover, the makeup of the government formed after the movement points to continuity rather than change. Nearly all cabinet members, including the Prime Minister, are older than 50 years old and outside the Gen Z age range. Most of the senior leaders of major political parties are over 50. The officials of constitutional bodies and major public institutions also represent the older generations; some being retired from their former professional job and now just granted the opportunities to join the new responsibility in the name of 'experience' rather than 'merit, expertise and professional ethics'. Political appointments have generally followed known patterns, therefore emphasizing perceptions of elite continuity rather than generational inclusion. Moreover, while current electoral legislation continues to create procedural and structural obstacles, promises of inclusion for all qualified voters—especially those living overseas—remain insufficient. The high cost of elections and the distortions in the way that proportional representation is used further push poor and underprivileged groups to the sidelines. These groups already have a rare access getting to elections because they don't have enough money and power negotiations while the electoral contest is expensive. Nevertheless, the critique of democracy and elections remain an unsettled issue in contemporary societies (Chitlaoarporn, 2015; Kahn, 2025).

Such situations raise serious questions about the suggestion that elections can only solve the democratic and governance issues being experienced in Nepal. A democratic practice of election-by-election, marked by the lack of substantive institutional changes, accountability institutions, and inclusiveness, may not be enough to address the grievances expressed more broadly during the Gen Z movement. Splits and fragmentation among Gen -Z communities will weaken the ability to sustain a strategic union and bargaining, lowering the chances of a lasting political impact. In addition, there have been accounts that the movement is externally driven, thus undermining its claim to be an authentic youth expression and plight. However, it is also worth noting that the Gen Z movement has not reached the philosophical passivity, the level of organization, or the impact on the structure that the legendary popular

movements of 1990 and 2006 did. Thus, the main question is whether the Gen Z movement will become a political revolution or a short-term burst of instability, which is equally important for Nepal's democratic future.

The formation of a political settlement and the peaceful transition of the movement toward sustainable peace and stability have been integrated into the movement's discourse. These are the views of elites and institutional and non-institutional actors, such as political parties and civil society actors (Kelsall, 2016; Kelsall et al., 2022; Pospisil & Rocha Menocal, 2017). The political economy in Nepal has been a source of continued conflict, thus giving a conspicuous dilemma and paradox. The state's resource allocation and operations are influenced by political patronage, rent-seeking behavior, informal networks, and elite capture. Nepal will need to implement a systematic series of reforms across four areas to overcome cyclical crises. To begin with, there is a need to depoliticize public administration, institutions, and service delivery; this necessitates separating political interference from hiring and decision-making, and adopting professional, merit-based policies. Second, supervisory agencies should be tightened. These changes will be maintained by improving transparency and accountability through good governance principles. Third, it is vital to ensure that the judiciary is independent; the courts must be free of outside interference to enforce the rule of law. Lastly, there should be overall strategic reforms in education, health and the economic sector, coupled with integrated development of the leading sectors of the economy. By going through the reforms in the specified order, the post-Gen Z movement pathway seems implementable in real life rather than idealizing the movement. Similar political concerns regarding Africa are also outlined by Khan (2018).

To counter such issues, politicians, civil society leaders, teachers and other community members need to enhance civic awareness. Nepal can enhance citizens' ability to analyze policies, understand their rights, and fight manipulation only through coordinated effort. The leaders of every sphere are also expected to shed light on democratic activities, accomplishments, and community strength in Nepal, and to motivate the younger generations. In order to explain, the Gen Z movement in Nepal could take certain actions: (1) convene and build networks among various groups, such as youth, dissenting opinions, and marginalized groups, such as women, Dalits, Madhesis, indigenous people, rural young people, and queers; (2) cultivate inclusive leadership and representation; and (3) mobilize civic energy into long-term and organized political action. These must be done to ensure that the movement remains a permanent political force and does not die out as intermittent protests. By spreading optimistic and thoughtful stories that glorify history, civilization, and culture, Nepal may reinforce democracy and combat apathy. The generation of poverty, dependency and inequality, as well as the political elite, cannot maintain democracy's commitments in the rapidly globalized world.

Conclusion

The Gen Z movement in Nepal represents a major turning point in the country's democratic trajectory. It has come with the dialectics of opportunities and challenges, reflecting generational awakening and a lack of public legitimacy. It was in harmony with a world

youth movement that revolted in different countries against maladministration and demanded structural changes. The decentralized and digitally mediated features of the movement shed light on the shifting nature of 21st-century political participation and of new social movements. The established party systems and institutional forms face tremendous challenges in incorporating new civil energies and demands in the post-modern, identity-based era where micro narratives, alternative politics and multi-real contexts exist.

The Gen Z movement can serve as a diagnostic tool to illustrate structural issues in Nepal's political culture and democratic processes. It is much more than a protest event because Nepal is situated within a broader framework of stronger protests and hope that adds significance on the global scene. However, violation and vandalism of the movement should be criticized that diluted the beauty of the movement and intensified anarchist forces in the country. Other contentious issues that emerge from the movement include the establishment of a post-democratic government, the question of whether the people have the right to legitimacy, the issue of renegotiating the social contract, and the rise of new political identities among youths. These deliberations focus on the roles of tangible outcomes, trust and morality in determining the legitimacy of democratic governance. When there is no ethical leadership, a lack of trust in the people, and tangible results, Electoral validity becomes invalid. The movement of Gen Z has not been easily classified as a reformist push, a social movement, or a proto-revolution; instead, its true meaning is manifested in moments when grievances unite to form mass action.

In this context, the major arguments can be seen in the role of inter-group relationships among Gen Z as a brokerage, in the flow of ideas through digital media, and in the alignment of frames that gather different perspectives on shared values. These controversial matters are further revealed by uncertainties surrounding Gen Z internal conflicts and doubts about the process, method and possible outcomes of the early 2082 BS (March 2026) elections. This is further complicated by governmental sluggishness in reform, corruption, and leadership change.

Despite Gen Z being the driving force of the movement to a large extent, the concerns are similar to those raised by all age groups, a fact that cannot be ignored. People are affected by many issues, including financial insecurity, political exclusion, administrative failure, and corruption, regardless of their age. An explicitly generational or discriminatory one, in this regard, may prove ineffective, as it may hamper the movement's broader public appeal and, therefore, reduce its revolutionary capacity. This means that a more inclusive approach to politics ought to be adopted, respecting generational leadership in solving common problems that affect all citizens. Leaders and advocates should strategically consider inclusive participation and cross-generational coalition, and purposefully seek contributions from all affected groups to gain as much power as possible and bring about transformative change.

The society in Nepal consists of different age groups, social classes, and castes, ethnic, and religious groups across the country. Sustainable political change requires actively encouraging cooperation between these divisions rather than fostering generational polarization. Although the interests and weaknesses of younger generations should be given

special consideration, their greater alienation and demographic weight prompt Nepalese leaders and society to establish an all-inclusive framework that accounts for the interdependence of all social groups within the national polity. The achievement of genuine democratic renewal is only possible through conscious collective participation.

The post-Gen Z politics reveal the long-term issues Nepal must address to transform political consciousness and foster democratic revival. Delegitimacy, institutional reforms, and heightened institutional fragmentation limit the prospects of revolution. The dilemma facing movement leaders exists between strategic decisions and balancing institutional participation with the mass demonstrations. This ambiguity further reinforces existing barriers, such as patronage networks, elite capture, poor civic education and a discriminatory political system. Devoid of strong leadership and clearly spelled strategies, it is likely to be the same situation with intermittent mobilization, and it may fade without creating any systemic change. The success of Nepal in the challenge will decide whether the Gen Z movement can bring lasting democratic transformation or will be a fad of protest. These are high stakes: the future of the Nepal response will not only determine the course of the young generation but also determine the future success or failure of democracy in the generations to come.

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