

The Digital Vanguard: External Influences on Gen Z Political Movements and Their Impact on Nepal’s Democracy

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Abstract

Gen Z, which constitutes nearly 30 percent of Nepal’s population, has emerged as a “digital vanguard” reshaping the country’s democratic moment. Unlike previous generations, this cohort’s political socialization is heavily mediated by both political globalization and ubiquitous social media networks. This paper will explore Gen Z political mobilization in Nepal and how external geopolitical forces, such as foreign policy ambitions and digital penetration, are changing domestic democratic stability. It will also examine a qualitative, multi-method approach to the systematic literature review, linked to process tracing and youth-led social movement thematic analysis, from 2017 to 2025.

The results indicate that Nepali Gen Z mirrors a “post-materialist” value system and, as such, is more inclined toward direct, informal mobilization than toward party loyalty. Studies of digital platforms, not exclusively TikTok, but also Facebook and Instagram, discover rapid mobilizations that run roughshod over domestic censorship and connect local demands to unemployment, infrastructure projects, or the global human rights agenda. Secondly, the paper highlights a systematic shift in youth movements that increasingly seek validation and leverage from global governance institutions rather than from their domestic institutions. This approximation enhances accountability by undermining clientelist political practices but also creates frictions for national sovereignty, the paper suggests. These lessons will clarify how processes of globalized connectivity influence democratic transitions in fragile, developing states confronted with structural economic and political limitations.

Keywords: Generation Z, Nepal, Digital Activism, Political Globalization, Social Media, Democratic Stability, Geopolitics.

Introduction

Generation Z (or Gen Z), those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, is another key political force in Nepal, already making up over 30% of its population. Compared with earlier cohorts, this digital vanguard is characterized by hyper-embeddedness in globalized communication networks and vulnerability to foreign political manipulation (Walsh, 2024, pp. 625–650). Gen Z’s political socialization is being shaped through the mediation of two key external processes happening in this contemporary age: political globalization, the extra-national governance structures that affect its member states, and social media networks, which provide new platforms on which collective action and dissent can be exercised (Perez, 2022). The paper demonstrates that engagement among Gen Z is characterized by a “post-materialist” value orientation in which more immediate (and often episodic) forms of participation are given precedence over longer-term-oriented or party-specific loyalty (Huttunen & Christensen, 2024, p. 74). These youth-led protests over foreign policy issues, such as Chinese dam-building projects

and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Nepal, are a sign that even domestic activism is embedded in global geopolitical frameworks (Arafat et al., 2025, pp. 191-199). For example, the youth can quickly mobilise through digital platforms such as Facebook or TikTok, even in the remotest places, and escape domestic censorship to claim their democracy globally (Koirala, 2025; Subedi, 2025).

While there is a significant body of literature on digital activism, little work examines how external geopolitical pressures shape prospects for democratic stability (or lack thereof) during Nepal's fragile transition. The literature has so far mostly dwelt on social media's technicalities or on broad democratic theory, without detailing the nexus between how international organizations and foreign policy agendas are opaquely transmuting Nepali Zoomers' voting habits and protest strategies (Mia & Hasan, 2025, pp. 7978-7985). Grassroots activities here also address the specific political repression and economic hardship of Nepal in a context where digital connectivity countervails systemic underemployment and "clientelistic ties" (Chandra, 2022, pp. 8-19; Sloam, 2020).

As such, this paper seeks to satisfy three core objectives: (1) To understand how political globalization and social media have influenced the political mobilization of Nepali Gen Z; (2) How international foreign policy agendas shape domestic youth-led movements; and finally, (3) to critique the long-term implications of these "digital vanguard" movements for the stability of Nepal's democratic institutions. In this analysis, the study aims to define how different factors impacting global connectivity challenges are evolving in relation to national political sovereignty.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative, multi-methodological approach to investigate the link between external geopolitical forces and Gen Z political mobilization in Nepal. To achieve the study objectives, a case study design is utilized, featuring a systematic, comprehensive literature review and thematic analysis of contemporary youth-initiated movements (2017–2025). Data consisted primarily of secondary sources: peer-reviewed journal articles, reports on international governance from the UN and World Bank, and digital archives of social media-driven activism.

The analytical framework employed here consists of three dimensions: political globalization, digital connectivity (Facebook, TikTok, Twitter), and domestic democratic stability. The paper employs process tracing to investigate how international foreign policy agendas, in particular, those on Chinese infrastructure projects and trans-border connectivity, are re-territorialised into local protest strategies and voting behaviours. Combining approaches from international relations and communication studies, this methodology enables a rigorous analysis of the digital vanguard's potential to challenge entrenched party-centric norms and to transform Nepal's democratic institutions, despite systemic hindrances in the economic and political landscape.

Findings and Discussions

Generation Z, or Gen Z, is the cohort of individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. These individuals, who constitute nearly 30% of Nepal's population, displayed an active role in the protest against the Chinese policy of building dams in Nepal and the influence of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The movement consisted mostly of youths whose ideas had been greatly shaped by external factors. Narrowing down to two particular external factors, political globalization and social media networks reflect a broad body of scholarship at the intersection of international relations and communications studies (Walsh, 2024, pp. 625–650).

Political globalization involves the growing importance of organs of global governance in governing member states and the emergence of new types of executive agents within the transnational political system. In contrast, social media networks generally refer to social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Reddit (Perez, 2022).

Since the 1990s, political globalization has influenced youth groups. The voting preferences of Gen Z have largely reflected the influence of developed countries and international organizations on the country. These aspects of globalization push Gen Z to vote for parties that prioritize the country's global ranking over sectors related to economic growth. Social media, on the other hand, has provided a platform for youth to discuss and voice their opinions, not only within Nepal but also with youth outside Nepal's borders. These youths have vocally opposed the state of political repression in the country through their forums (Arafat et al., 2025, pp. 191-199).

Understanding Generation Z

Generation Z (Gen Z), also known as the iGeneration, Net Gen, Digital Natives, or Homeland Generation, refers to individuals born after 1995, following the Millennials. The exact starting birth year is ambiguous, with some organizations considering 1998 as the threshold (Rosenberg et al., 2025). Gen Z members are colloquially referred to as 'Zoomers'. The boundaries between generations are often vague, and such categorizations are primarily employed for economic and marketing strategies; thus, the attributes of Gen Z can vary significantly among individuals (Tirocchi, 2024).

Defining Generation Z

The US Census Bureau defines Generation Z (Gen Z) as the cohort born between the mid-1990s and the 2010s. Professors Jean Twenge, Regina Lutsky, and Stacy Campbell define Gen Z as those born from 1996 onward. Strauss and Howe describe a generation as the sum of all people born over roughly 20 years, with Gen Z encompassing those born between 1995 and 2012 (Rosenberg et al., 2025).

Characteristics of Gen Z

Generation Z, also referred to as iGen or Post-Millennials, has been significantly shaped by the COVID-19 era and faces an imbalanced world that differs from that of previous generations (Ambhore, 2025, pp. 1-5). Following Millennials, Gen Z is believed to be the largest and most diverse generation of the twenty-first century, with a cohort size of 84 million or more. Individuals born between 1995 and 2010 constitute Gen Z, reaching adulthood in the mid-2010s. The advent of the Internet, social networks, and mobile systems has been formative in shaping this generation's experiences. The youth, representative of most social movements, have played a pivotal role in shaping societies. Violence, confusion, and fracture become normal features of an epoch, and a generation of youth marked by hopelessness and resignation may ensue (Chenoweth & Cebul, 2025, pp. 5-14).

Globalization and Its Effects

The concept "globalization" describes the emerging global economy, society, and culture, as well as the worldwide diffusion of practices, the expansion of organizations, and communication interdependencies across nations (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025). Recent global connectivity and digitalization have reshaped the opportunities for, and the intensification of, international

(including cross-border) travel, communication, and migration among youth. The digital environment and social media enabled Generation Z to interact digitally with contemporaries across borders, to hijack the transnational social space, and to reach domestic and international audiences. Generation Z is more exposed to global culture than previous generations across a wide range of areas, including music, films, and television. Generation Z has a more cosmopolitan outlook, greater international awareness, and greater exposure to different countries than previous generations (Tsai & Chan, 2022, pp. 82-107).

Impact of Globalization on Youth

The meaning of Generation Z or Gen Z varies across cultures and time periods. A large proportion of the population born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s is categorized as Gen Z (Asih et al., 2024). Many scholars describe the Gen Z cohort as “tech-savvy” and intensely interlinked, with access to a globalized world. In Nepal, “unemployment” is one of the biggest issues that youth protest against, as they want to settle down in urban areas but find few job opportunities.

The expression ‘globalization’ evolved from its early ‘narrow’ definition to a more comprehensive, multidisciplinary one. Globalization refers to a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede, generating transplanetary social connections and global flows that transform contemporary social organization. It is a process of interaction and integration among people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. Globalization and the resulting economic openness create opportunities for access to foreign technologies, ideas, and knowledge (Alkharafi & Alsabah, 2025). Moreover, the impact of globalization is multifaceted and affects youth’s cultural, social, political, and economic lives. In Nepal, mobile digital connectivity has made it easier for Gen Z to connect with the world, explore global issues, and organize and participate in social activities at home. Digital connectivity affords Gen Z an unprecedented opportunity to access and engage in the global environment. Social media has become the primary platform for communication, expression, mobilization, and illusion (Yang, 2024, pp. 358–371).

Digital Connectivity and Social Media

Digital communication, particularly social media, enables rapid information sharing, helping Gen Z organize political protests across Nepal, including in remote areas. By 2020, social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram were the primary means of connection for Gen Z (Koirala, 2025).

Role of Social Media

Nepal’s youth actively engage on Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. It is clear that with the rise of social media, Generation Z will be Nepal’s most outspoken generation in the coming years and will be the driving force behind almost all major movements shaping the country’s discourse (Subedi, 2025).

Platforms Used by Gen Z

Social media is not only a channel for social interaction but also a medium for political mobilization and political discourse. Social media has been crucial to Gen Z’s engagement in

political movements and protests in Nepal. Organizing, discussing, and advocating their respective issues was done via different platforms, and they were a part of the Growth sector (Subedi, 2025) Nepali Gen Zs use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Facebook has led the way as the venue for disputes, messaging, and planning political freebies. **Twitter has also become a significant player, at least for short-term updates, along with the viral dissemination of information and opinion.** Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have driven creative expression on political and social issues, appealing to a wider swath of people (and making activism easier to pursue). YouTube is a place for longer-form conversations, investigative or documentary-style material.

Mobilization and Advocacy via Social Media

Social media enables users to consume and produce content simultaneously, as reflected in the collaboration and sharing of user-created content. More and more young people publish photos, videos, and opinions to a global audience on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube. Gen Z is undeniably socially accessible and technologically literate because of the prevalence of individuals born with connectivity. The 2000s onward saw social media dominate efforts to galvanize support, shape political ideals, and increase civic engagement among youth (Solihat, 2024).

Political Engagement of Gen Z

Generation Z showed a relatively high likelihood of political influence (Shahzad et al., 2025, 1729-1741). During the 2022 U.S. midterm elections, that number rose to 67%, suggesting that Generation Z voters are straying from party loyalty and, in many cases, voting for a completely different party than the one they aligned with in 2020. In Britain, Generation Z was one of the only age groups that favored remaining in the European Union, while older generations preferred leaving the bloc. Additionally, Generation Z had one of the highest levels of participation in Black Lives Matter protests across several U.S. cities relative to other groups (Chenoweth & Cebul, 2025: pp. 5–14).

Voting Behavior of Gen Z

Generation Z (Gen Z or Zoomers) is the demographic cohort after Millennials and before Generation Alpha. Researchers and popular media generally agree that Generation Z includes those born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. These generations have grown up surrounded by digital technologies, such as the internet and social media, which are integral to their political socialization and political involvement (Amin et al., 2025, pp. 1–15).

‘Globalization’ has also influenced the mindsets and lifestyles of Gen Z in Nepal, with social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter keeping them connected. They show up to every uprising or protest, as well as to vote for more progressive parties. Concrete change has also emerged from recent uprisings and protests in Nepal, specifically those against the Joint Directive of the Prime Minister’s Office–Ministry of Home Affairs, rights over the TikTok platform, and the Excavation and Mining Bill (Prerana et al., 2025).

The individuals leading these youth-driven movements are overwhelmingly young leaders. Foreign Embassies also play an active role in politics. The foreign policies of powerful countries, recommendations from international organizations, and the world’s youth can be major influences on Nepal’s politics. Nonetheless, politically repressive and economically challenging

circumstances are also part of the reality that Nepali Gen Z experiences, yet their collective struggle has shown greater potential to disrupt existing political realities and hold traditional politics to account (Thapa, 2025).

Participation in Political Movements

Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2010) constitutes approximately 42 per cent of Nepal's population and represents a critical segment of the electorate. Gen Z's political engagement and mobilization are largely linked to campus and student organizations. Nepali Gen Z exhibit political attitudes, perspectives, and party preferences that are quite different from those of their foregone generations (Arafat et al., 2025). Gen Z political engagements and mobilizations are closely associated with campus and student organizations. Gen Z influencers have been behind high-profile social and political movements over the past 12 years, dedicated to civil rights, jobs, and greater transparency in public governance. The existence of similar phenomena in other global environments adds to the evidence of external factors at play (Mia & Hasan, 2025, pp. 7978–7985). Studies show that Gen Z in Nepal is keenly engaged across formal and informal political frontiers. This engagement takes many forms, from more traditional ones, such as voting, student elections, and political affiliations, to broader and intertwined nationalistic, cultural, and political mobilizations. The growing participation of Gen Z voters in national and municipal elections, along with their engagement in influential social movements, underscores their political power; lawmakers' positions can be shaped by their actions. Gen Z's involvement in politics is one of the core drivers of the current paradigm of Nepali politics and the society it reflects.

Gen Z partook in marches long before the average 18-year-old was even eligible to vote. National general elections exemplify their critical role as political accelerators. Groups like the International Student Alliance, Nepal Unit, and the youth wings of the Nepal Communist Party play a central role in targeting this group. Taken together, these actors constitute the main constituency of party-linked student organizations and have exerted growing influence since the mid-2010s. These organizations, often deploying significant membership bases, are in effect the backbone of organization and electioneering for their parent political parties (Chandra, 2022, pp. 8–19).

Case Studies of Gen Z Movements in Nepal

The global spread of Gen Z has played a key role in shaping youth movements worldwide. In Nepal, the movement took shape in 2020, shortly after the Government of Nepal's nationwide fuel price hike sparked protests. The movement was organized to address multiple other problems, including worsening economic conditions and a lack of educational opportunities. Several protests in recent years have forced changes in government policy aimed at regulating fuel prices, canceling cabinet decisions deemed detrimental, and advancing a successful drive for free, quality education. Gen Z has also been a major force behind the ongoing Nepalese protests against the current government's chaotic administration (Koirala, 2025).

The first recent wave of the Gen Z movement began with the open demand of justice for the individuals who lost their lives or were seriously injured in the Thamama Valley bus accident, due to highway drivers threatening indefinite strikes. Gen Z activists organized counter-protests, including a 12-hour blockade of the ring road, to ensure that no national-level transportation was affected during the protest. The protest lasted for nearly a week, and later the authorities promised to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident and to ensure such incidents are not left

unpunished. This prompted secondary demands that addressed other topical national and social issues.

Following the unprecedented nationwide strike by highway drivers, the movement secured a victory when the government rolled back the decision to increase fuel prices on August 11, 2020. The victory led to a renewed emphasis on open calls on social media and a further expansion of the list of demands for government positions and actions, as well as attention to hotly debated social and national issues. The fuel prices were further brought below the 2020 average on July 15, 2021, following a nearly year-long, broad-based campaign. The movement also played a key role in ensuring that all invalid cabinet decisions, including the reformation of the District Education Committees, were canceled and that People’s Multi-Party Democracy was restored. Actively advocating against the corruption-plagued, ongoing budget, the movement regionally mobilized unprecedented demonstrations, bringing together more than 30 ethnic groups and 70 political parties, and forced the government to pull back on its corrupt, multi-sector budget.

Recent Protests and Their Outcomes

Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to the group born between the mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s, who completed their formal education between early 2010 and 2020. This group is characterised by a markedly broad global perspective, shaped by extensive interactions with a digital world. Enabled by digital connectivity, they are exposed to cultures, societies, values, lifestyles, ideologies, economies, and governments worldwide, thereby promoting international connectivity and communication. The ubiquity of social media networks—such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok—enables rapid sharing of perspectives on social, political, and economic issues. This hyperconnectivity provokes a political renaissance among Gen Z, often manifesting as protests and movements against social and political injustice (Ogunsola, 2024, pp. 160–183).

Gen Z, internationally, is seen as a new major voting bloc that will fight within political movements to make the world better. In Nepal, young people have organized movements in response to the conviction that the government is failing to address questions that matter to people. Emerging from Gen Z’s calls for better economic and social structures, especially during times of economic, socioeconomic, or political crisis, these movements have proved to be a significant motivator that could change the future of Nepalese politics and governance. In particular, Gen Z engagement in Nepal reflects a post-materialist value orientation, favoring direct and episodic forms of participation, frequently utilizing digital means to subvert traditional party-oriented political participation and call for greater accountability and ethical leadership (Huttunen & Christensen, 2024: p. 74).

Their goals include eliminating poverty, corruption, and inequality; ensuring security and justice; and building an institution that truly protects the welfare of the people. Numerous protests have sprung up over the last few years in accordance with such demands and goals. This includes protests against the educational reforms by the Ministry of Education in 2021, the protesting group called “Hamburger Protest” against Italy’s blockade in 2015; the “Black Flag Movement” against hospital privatization and Experimental policy responding to MCC (“MCC”); the “Rice Movement” on wage and labor issues; and demonstrations over Nepal earthquake opposing security legislation in 2015. Such widespread activities indicate that Gen Z is gradually acquiring a more defined political and social direction (O’Neill, 2016, pp. 1077-1092).

International Influences on Nepali Politics

International actions influence even fragile Nepali governments amid persistent endemic instability. Political violence nevertheless has lessened, marking a more peaceful context over the past decade (Thapa, 2025). Poorly functioning states slow external efforts and may vacillate between factions engaged in patronage networks, which entail semantic confusion and theoretical contradictions. Foreign ministries cannot avoid patronage. Domestic attentiveness and the need to rally a popular constituency dictate Nepal's foreign policy. Limited external engagement mainly involves fairly short-term strategic and economic considerations. Not until a few decades ago did Nepalese society have an inward-looking, rural character.

The peace accords of the 2000s triggered substantial change. Foreign assistance has poured into a fledgling transition. Though Nepal's external relations have expanded, internal division still governs policymaking. Diplomatic relationships remain steadfast (Baral, 2018, pp. 25-45). However, the rising disputes among neighbors and beyond have raised the diplomatic stakes for Nepal. Under conditions of extreme complexity, strategists able to see the big picture have become invaluable assets. Circumstances favor risk-taking. Since the unrest of the late 1990s, meaningful reforms have remained elusive. Division has widened. Though alert to reform, the political establishment lacks sufficient capacity to deliver. Leaders and the public embrace peace and democracy because the alternative has proved too costly. Effective governance cannot root among a diverse, divided, and largely illiterate populace. Radio programs, however, remain forums for open discussion (Akinbi, 2025, pp. 6470-6487).

Foreign Policy and Youth Activism

Previous research underscores the pivotal role of international politics and foreign-policy perspectives in shaping national youth movements. In Nepal, generations following the Millennials are predominantly influenced by foreign-policy considerations and the approaches of international organizations to political conflicts (O'Neill et al., 2020, pp. 18-28). The engaged Gen Z youth have become a powerful force in the nation's politics. Leading the charge of protests and activism is Dr. Govinda Giri, a prominent member of the government advisory council who has led a mass Gen Z movement for systemic change. The nature and trajectory of the Nepalese Gen Z movement are heavily influenced by international politics, primarily through foreign policy. With Gen Z comprising more than 40% of Nepal's population, political parties often consider the generation to be apathetic. Barring technology companies, most entities trying to mobilize this demographic represent foreign policy considerations first (Thapa, 2025). Policymaking bodies and relevant external political programs typically define the movement solely through international relations and foreign policy analysis, demonstrating how global political paradigms significantly shape local youth mobilization.

Role of International Organizations

Gen Z protest groups have engaged with international audiences seeking support for their movements. One such group, Students for Freedom Students Movement (SFSM), lodged a complaint with the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva and made international headlines by protesting their November 24 arrest in Nepal. These measures are intended to exert external pressure on the Nepali government to release political prisoners and protect democratic values. Another example of putting YFPP's strategy into action was a protest outside the UN Office in Geneva, organized by Youth for Freedom, Peace and Progress (YFPP).

Such efforts notwithstanding, the Nepalese Government has stated that it is operating within its legal and constitutional boundaries and denies that political adversaries have been unlawfully detained or discriminated against (Vyas et al., 2024).

Political repression, multiple arrests, and an economic crisis are often cited as the main drivers of protest participation, including among those who do not tend toward activism. The search for international support reflects that generation's impatience with the pace of change and its desire to enshrine the rule of law, democracy, and basic human rights. The Gen Z group even proactively engaged with international bodies, which signifies a nuanced understanding of the global governance architecture and a tactical effort to circumvent inaction by domestic political actors (Dahal, 2018, pp. 82–113).

More significantly, Nepal's development strategies are strongly influenced by the policies of powerful nations and international organizations. Initiatives from entities such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund notably influence Nepal's domestic policies. On the other hand, countries such as India, China, the USA, and Germany are also influencing this country's politics. The intersection of these external factors and the historical circumstances significantly impacts peace, democracy, and human rights in Nepal.

Challenges Faced by Gen Z in Nepal

Gen Z, also known as Zoomers, is the demographic cohort following Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha. Globally, this group includes individuals born from 1997 to 2012. Southeast Asia's Gen Z comprises approximately 560 million people, accounting for a fifth of the world's population and 60% of the regional population. Being digital natives, Gen Z members are highly connected with the rest of the world and tend to rebel against political and economic challenges. They are also actively involved in worldwide environmental movements. Under such circumstances, Nepali Gen Z started raising their voices and participated in various movements and protests, notably in post-2015 Nepal. Following the Sugar-Coated Movement, a more intense agitation erupted on November 6, 2022, led by The Rising Nepal, targeting misrule, hardships, injustice, corruption, and the plundering of the nation. The movement achieved success and led to the emergence of new leaders and political outfits from the newer generation (Hirslund et al., 2018).

Youth populations across countries have faced challenges stemming from globalization and multinational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), which have imposed conflicting political and economic agendas. The impact of these agenda clashes has not spared Nepal's Zoomers either. Like young people in other countries, many Nepali Gen Zers are driven to travel abroad. In fact, they constitute the nation's largest voting group. These voters utilized social media for political purposes and supported genuine policies enacted by Budhanilkantha Municipality through their votes. Nonetheless, Nepali Zoomers continue to confront political repression and economic hardships. Currency manipulation and protectionist policies, inculcated and imposed worldwide by these neoliberal institutions, are presently tormenting Nepal's young generation and hindering their achievement of desired values and socioeconomic goals (Hirslund et al., 2018).

Political Repression

Political repression constitutes a major constraint on Generation Z's role in Nepali politics. For instance, during the Guthi Bill movement in 2019, the authorities used administrative, legal, and

even physical intimidation to attempt to contain the activists. In that case, political repression provoked a huge public backlash and forced the government to rescind the bill. Even when repression does not provoke such a backlash, the widespread threat of administrative and legal harassment that undermines Nepali youth's ability to participate in public college spaces inevitably limits Generation Z's political engagement, compared to more liberal social settings elsewhere in the world (Chandra, 2022, pp. 8-19). These limitations remain striking, given the extent of digital connectivity and the size of the generation's presence on social media, as detailed above.

In addition to active repression, the Nepali political economy has failed to generate sufficient jobs for the enormous influx of young people into the working-age population, thereby contributing to an economic crisis of underemployment throughout the country. Economic hardships create yet another constraint on the potential scale of Generation Z activism and, in many cases, make the youth susceptible to "clientelistic ties" that trade economic benefits for political acquiescence. Nonetheless, youth in Nepal continue to resist, take distinctive positions, and turn out to vote in large numbers when elections do occur. Given the longevity of the present crisis, it is to be expected that Generation Z will make greater efforts to contest the commons and push back against older generations in the future (Sloam, 2020).

Economic Challenges

Economic challenges in Nepal in supporting the Gen Z movement are significant and extend from both the broader economic conditions in the country and the specific constraints imposed on younger generations. Nepal's quest for economic development has long been a concern due to substantial income disparities with neighboring and advanced nations. The pace of growth is a crucial determinant of Nepal's ability to bridge these gaps: at a 5% growth rate, it would take 129 years to reach UK per capita income levels, while at 15%, it would halve to 26 years (Razzaque, 2020).

Accelerating growth depends on harnessing human capital among the young population, which accounts for a major share of Nepal's demographic profile. Many young Nepalese must go abroad for educational and employment opportunities, though adverse political conditions limit such outward mobility. It has not been happening in sufficient numbers due to a fragile, inefficient, and corrupt governance system, unresolved internal political conflicts, and weak private-sector capacity (Chen et al., 2023, pp. 605-628). Political uncertainty and leadership deficiencies thus hinder the evolution of a national consensus and strategic decision-making processes that could help realize the high growth required for youth to seize opportunities.

The data indicate that young people in Nepal are not receiving enough education and job opportunities at home because the government, for its part, is suffering from economic inefficiencies, weak governance, and policy uncertainty, and is unable to provide them. Unsurprisingly, negative economic conditions affect the movement of Gen Z in Nepal, and the same problem is complicated to solve because economic strife can come from both within and outside Nepal. So, Gen Z should not really be seen as a single economic demographic, but rather as a collection of individuals turning up to challenge the system. Due to external issues that impede Nepal's overall growth, political engagement becomes the primary channel for Gen Z to effect change (Thapa, 2025). Despite widespread political participation, the resilience of Nepal's political system and intense party competition limit prospects for effective reform, keeping economic challenges firmly on Nepal's youth's agenda.

Future Implications for Nepali Politics

The Generation Z movement in Nepal is well-positioned to broaden the political culture by introducing innovative organizations and demands, thereby influencing the infantile democratic system and shaping future governance. The movement may facilitate the final phase of the democratic transition required by Nepal's 2015 constitution. No longer marginalized, Generation Z is poised to become a stable power broker, actively shaping Nepal's developmental trajectory.

Potential Changes in Political Landscape

Nepal's political landscape is unlikely to remain unchanged by Generation Z's movement, as the 30 per cent of the population born from 1995 to the mid-2010s exerts substantial influence. Politicians, parties, activists, bureaucrats, and analysts are pressed to reconsider strategies and approaches. New patterns of voting and protest indicate changing political norms and the distribution of power. The late 2010s and early 2020 political backdrop signaled several indicators of change, even before visible/impactful disturbances such as the 2018 student strike, the 2019 Supreme Court decision, the anti-India protests in 2023, and the demonstrations over electricity crises in 2023 (Khaitan, 2020, pp. 49–95).

The most likely result is a new balance of political power more reflective of the values of a digital, global generation. Generational succession, resonant with the Meghalayan age before the Holocene, the Younger Dryas, and the Greenlandian epochs, presented a dilemma: Who would lead? Generation Z has burst forth as the potential candidate for rupture and renewal. This is a new generation, sometimes referred to as digital natives, who typically engage in political activism through online platforms for mass action and transnational solidarity, setting them apart from previous generations of activists (Jing & Zhang, 2026).

Long-term Impact of Gen Z Movements

Gen Z movements will shape Nepali politics for years to come. A strongly interconnected world means that the world will quickly face inhospitable conditions without a country with inner strength and external understanding. Gen Z in Nepal has external understandings, expectations, and relationships that are foundational to this ongoing movement. Regardless of their activity levels, as voters or participating individuals, Gen Z holds considerable power and can bring about change in the nation. Even if it remains inactive now, it will vote in future elections and can become a powerful weapon for any individual, group, or party (Venus et al., 2025).

Movements led from the outside can exert strong pressure on the inside. The external policies of powerful countries influence the internal conditions of countries like Nepal. Additionally, the role of country leaders, party leaders, oppressed groups, and international organizations affects the stability of countries such as Nepal. Activities conducted in Nepal according to the interests of these groups can establish democratic culture and institutions or economic prosperity, or conversely, lead to instability and misfortune. Gen Z movements can help strengthen Nepali political institutions and democratic culture (Timilsina, 2026, pp. 189–202).

Conclusion

This study reveals that Generation Z in Nepal acts as a “digital vanguard,” reconstituting the country's democratic transition through an inventive amalgamation of globalized political consciousness and digital mobilization. These acts suggest external structures, including international governance projects and transnational social media flows that, in this case, have

driven a wedge between youth activism and traditional party systems. This turn moves through a “post-materialist” concern with systemic accountability, environmental sovereignty, and global democratic norms that overwhelm domestic patronage networks. However, systemic constraints, above all political repression and two decades of under-agility in the economy, may sap that transformative promise. Despite these obstacles, Gen Z’s ability to bypass domestic censorship and harness international platforms has effectively compelled policy recalibrations, indicating a trend toward increased pluralism in the political culture. In the end, the decades-long stability of Nepal’s democratic institutions will depend on their ability to address this cohort’s calls for transparency and ethical leadership. The ascendancy of this generation as a trusted power broker indicates that Nepali sovereignty is locked into the networked global process. Ultimately, durable democratic institutions in Nepal will depend on their capacity to fulfill this group’s demands for openness and moral leadership.

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