



Editorial: Gen Z Movement in Nepal: Reshaping the New Political Landscape

Deepak Chaudhary, PhD

Email: dipak10@gmail.com/ Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2233-8438>

Journey for Sustainable Development and Peace Journal

Lecturer, K & K International College, TU Affiliation, Kathmandu

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jsdpj.v4i1.92166>

Abstract

The Zen Z movement, characterized as a digital-first mobilization in Nepal, prioritizes issue-based activism over traditional party politics. It focuses heavily on governance matters such as corruption, unemployment, inequality, and a lack of accountability. Zen Z is reshaping the political environment in Nepal and is anticipated to play a crucial role in future governance, youth engagement, and the emergence of individual professional leaders.

Keywords: Leadership, Zen Z movement, digital-first mobilization, traditional party politics, Balen Shah

Introduction

The Zen Z movement, occurring on the 8th and 9th of September 2025 in Nepal, generated global attention and transformed the landscape of national politics. The emergence of the Zen Z movement commenced with the rise of conversation platforms on social media, which proliferated globally. Nepal could not be an exception. It resembled an activist movement that opposed corruption, advocated for employment, and aimed to guarantee fair service delivery. The Zen Z movement not only dismantled the old

Copyright (c) 2025 by [Journey for Sustainable Development and Peace Journal](#). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).



To Cite this article:

Chaudhary, D. (2026). Editorial: Gen Z Movement in Nepal: Reshaping the New Political Landscape. *Journey for Sustainable Development and Peace Journal*, 4(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jsdpj.v4i1.92166>

regime but also laid the foundation for new and youthful political dynamics.

Over the past ten years, Gen Z has become increasingly prominent, particularly in relation to governance, leadership, and political reforms worldwide, and especially in developing nations, as more than one-third of the population encompasses Gen Z groups. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss its causes and consequences.

Generational gaps and the Gen Z Movement history

The scholars classify generations into six categories, like the Greatest Generation(before World War I), the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers(1945-1965), Generation X(1965-80), Generation Y, and Generation Z(after 1997) (Allison, 2013). The Generation Z(1997-2012)—also known as the Internet Generation—follows the Millennials. It can be said that the generational shift is a result of the development process. Generation Z distinguishes itself from previous generations in terms of its values, attitudes, and behaviors. It represents 30% of the total global population (OECD, 2021). The study shows that generations X, Y, and Z share similarities and differences in work values and career preferences(Mahapatra et al., 2022). Erickson (2009) identifies generational differences among Gen Z between India and the US in the context of work values and career preferences. The evidence that technology-using behaviors are altering the way the brain works is being debated by scientists.

Youth-led activism has gained prominence in various sectors globally since approximately 2022. One of the earliest ‘successful’ Gen Z revolutions in Asia occurred with the student-youth movement in Bangladesh in 2024. In Africa, particularly in Kenya, young individuals mobilized against taxation, rising living costs, and inadequate public services. Furthermore, youth activism has surfaced in Latin American movements advocating for constitutional changes, healthcare, and education in countries such as Chile and Peru. In a similar vein, the protests in Iran following Mahsa Amini's death in 2022 illustrated how Gen Z orchestrated large-scale demonstrations through digital platforms.

Causes and Consequences

A question has been posed regarding why this movement burst like a volcano. The Zen Z movement in Nepal emerged when the government banned social media without any alternatives in September 2026. Whereas a large number of youth have been dependent on social media for business, education, and communication, etc., purposes. During the protest against the banning of social media on 8th September, over two dozen students were killed instantly by the security personnel. Consequently, on September 9th, the protests were marked by anger, resulting in the occupation of nearly all government offices, with many being set ablaze. A near two-thirds majority government was thrown by the movement. The interim government under Nepal's first lady Prime Minister Sushila Karki was formed to tackle the country and prepare for the election.

The literature and observation showed that consistent corruption and an unemployment situation within the country were major factors that ignited youth against the government and established political leaders. The political leadership failed to comprehend the issues faced by the youth; rather, the luxurious lifestyles of their children were highlighted on social media. This gave rise to the slogans concerning 'nepobabies' and 'nepokids'. Corruption was widespread, and the response to it was feeble, as it made people angry towards leaders.

Instead of the government's focus on controlling corruption, addressing the irresponsiveness of the ruling caste/class, and tackling unemployment, its efforts to suppress and regulate social media without offering alternatives have incited youth resistance against the government. The COVID-19 pandemic had already placed Generation Z in a state of anxiety regarding their success and safety (Sakdiyakorn, 2021). However, Generation Z has been putting pressure on change. Nepal could not be an exception. In Nepal, the population aged 15- 28 years covers around 25 % of the total population.

The massive usage of technology, trends of global exposure, and remittance migrations have largely influenced the present generation. In the changing context, a dynamic, social, emotional, and parental element converges in a rapidly shifting sociocultural context to shape Generation Z's emerging identity(Ghodke et al., 2025). It gained momentum after public discontent with corruption scandals and leadership behaviors—

especially among parties that had long dominated Nepal's politics since the 1990s. The irresponsibility of decision-makers, political mess, economic stagnation, and the leader's vulgar lifestyle have led to a sense of dissatisfaction among the youth. Corruption, nepotism, and favoritism have been the common features of Nepali socio-political life. The Zen Z generations seem to be against any corruption and delays in work. They seek to earn a livelihood based on their individual skills and capabilities. They are averse to living in accordance with others or serving them. It is natural for them to feel discontent towards leaders when they are not provided with a conducive environment. Moreover, the extensive application of social media platforms has heightened political consciousness and engagement among the youth. Additionally, the emergence of new leadership, like Balen Shah's rise, motivated Generation Z to advocate for independent and reform-driven political initiatives.

In the Zen Z Movement of Nepal, the name of Balen Shah, the mayor of Kathmandu, has come automatically as his indirect influence significantly impacted the Gen Z movement, and he generated a constructive and advantageous momentum during the elections, ultimately securing the position of prime minister with almost a two-thirds majority. His momentum significantly outperformed many of the veteran leaders from the established parties. The former Prime Minister KP Oli, who held power during the repression of the Zen movement, was decisively defeated by Balen Shah. During his tenure as Mayor in Kathmandu, he fought alone with the traditional party, as established parties did not support him. However, during his tenure as Mayor, some of his activities and works sparked controversy; however, he maintained the trust of the youth. Balen approached his leadership in a manner distinct from conventional party leadership, emphasizing good governance and opposing the politicization of public and governmental institutions, unlike his predecessors and established parties.

The increasing attraction of independent leader Balen Shah indicates a transition from party-focused politics to a system based on performance legitimacy. Balen has already demonstrated his capabilities in Kathmandu, where the system had collapsed. The growing appeal of independent and reform-oriented leaders like Balen Shah signifies a shift

from party-centric politics to a system grounded in performance legitimacy.

This can be explained through the lens of a leadership perspective. After the Balen, the ascent of leaders like Rabi Lammichhane and Harka Sampang suggests that the people are looking for fresh transformational typology leadership that can produce results. The 'Post-Balen Politics' scenario, which links to empirical political occurrences, can explain the shifting political and leadership climate.

Conclusion:

The Gen Z movement is fundamentally defined by its digital-first mobilization via platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter, emphasizing issue-based activism over traditional party politics. In Nepal, the Gen Z movement exhibits similar trends but places greater emphasis on governance matters, including corruption, unemployment, inequity, social discrimination, and lack of accountability in political elites. Gen Z activism indicates a transition towards increased transparency, youth-led initiatives, and unconventional political participation. It signifies a notable shift in the nation's political landscape, indicating the emergence of a generation that is digitally engaged, politically conscious, and focused on reform, aiming to alter governance and leadership practices. Gen Z could be instrumental in redefining youth engagement in politics and responsibility in the future of Nepal. Let us see how the Zen Z-led government can bring about transformations in Nepali politics.

Referenece

- Mahapatra, G. P., Bhullar, N., & Gupta, P. (2022). *Gen Z: An emerging phenomenon*. *NHRD Network Journal*, 15(2), 246–256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/26314541221077137>
- Sakdiyakorn, M., Golubovskaya, M., & Solnet, D. (2021). *Understanding Generation Z through collective consciousness: Impacts for hospitality work and employment*. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102822. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102822>
- Ghodke, J., Gupta, A., Shah, I., & Singh, Y. (2025). *Psychosocial aspects of Generation Z: A review*. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), Article 397. <https://doi.org/10.25215/1303.397>