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Generational Shift and the Appeal of New Political Forces in Nepalese Politics: An Analysis

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Abstract

The main objective of the present study is to analyze the underlying causes and effects of the generational shift and the growing public attraction towards new political forces in contemporary Nepali politics. This research has identified the alternative political wave, created by ideological inertia and the crisis of good governance within the established parties, as the main academic problem. Adopting a qualitative method based on secondary sources, this research has conducted an in-depth documentary analysis of academic journals, government reports, and Election Commission data. In particular, examining the voting patterns in recent elections using interpretive and analytical methods confirms that gerontocracy, internal factionalism, and leadership indifference to the issues facing the younger generation within traditional parties are the primary factors behind the rise of new forces. In addition, the expansion of information technology and the critical consciousness developed among the educated youth appear to have added a new dimension to the political mainstream, challenging the status quo. The study interprets the current political transformation not only as a change in leadership but also as a decisive turning point for agenda-centric politics in Nepali democracy, highlighting the potential to pressure traditional parties toward internal democratization and a people-oriented working style.

Keywords: generational shift, political disillusionment, populism, public appeal, status quo

Generational Shift and the Appeal of New Political Forces in Nepalese Politics: An Analysis

Nepal's politics is currently going through a historic transition, where the clash between traditional political forces and emerging alternative forces is evident. The extreme disillusionment among the public with the working style of long-established parties, rampant corruption, and the slow development process has increased the attraction to new and alternative-minded forces. The movements from 2007 BS to the drafting of the 2072 BS constitution were mainly focused on 'system change'. However, the debate on generational change in politics has intensified, as the 'condition' of the common citizen has not changed despite the change in the system.

Generational change is not just a change of age; it is also a new mindset, technology-friendly efficiency, and an unwavering commitment to good governance. This wave, which began with the 2079 elections, has reached a decisive turning point as it approaches the 2082 periodic elections. Young urban voters, in particular, are more inclined towards the 'delivery-based politics of new forces than the 'patronage politics of old parties'.

According to (Mainwaring, 2023), "When traditional parties fail to meet the changing aspirations of citizens and refuse to admit new faces to leadership, voters begin to look to 'populism' or new alternative forces that can undermine the established political structure" (p. 54). This statement perfectly matches the current political landscape in Nepal, where forces like the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) have achieved significant success in the 2082 elections, posing a strong challenge to established parties like the Nepali Congress, the CPN (UML), and the Nepali Communist Party.

Nepali politics has now shifted from armed struggle and street protests to an 'agenda' and 'results' focus. Acharya (2024) notes that "youth engagement in Nepal's political development has challenged traditional politics by using digital platforms" (pp. 1-13). The activism of a new generation, called 'Gen Z', has made the demand for ethics, transparency, and performance-based politics imperative. The increasing activism of a new generation in contemporary politics has reshaped the traditional relationship between citizens and the state, challenging the monopoly of established parties. According to Katz and Mair (1995), the tendency to form 'cartels' or 'parliamentary syndicates' between mainstream parties stifles political competition and paves the way for the emergence of new forces. In such a structure, when parties focus on

maintaining their dominance through control and consumption of state resources, internal democracy weakens, and new leadership is prevented from gaining a foothold. As a result, the younger generation has begun to prioritize contemporary good governance, policy clarity, and a future-oriented vision over the parties' past 'historical glory'.

In Nepal's contemporary politics, 'generational transition and the attraction of new power' has become an indispensable topic to understand the conflict between traditional power structures and new political emergence, the study of which guides the direction of the current political transformation. Although established parties have played a leading role in the democratic movement for decades, the ideological inertia and reluctance to transfer leadership within them in recent times have created a huge policy vacuum. In this context, the main premise of this research is that the public is increasingly attracted to alternative forces due to the heightened political awareness and high aspirations for good governance developed among the younger generation. The primary objective of this research is to objectively explore the reality of the difference between the opinion that the established parties should be reformed and the opinion that new forces are the alternative. The main reason for choosing this topic is to academically document the unprecedented demographic and ideological changes seen in Nepali politics after the 2082 elections. Qualitative research methods and documentary analysis have been chosen in this study because they help to explain the subtle dimensions of social and political change in depth based on objective data. This research has set a roadmap to achieve its goals through a synthetic analysis of various government reports, election data, and academic literature, which provides sufficient context and foundations for understanding Nepal's future democratic journey.

Generational Transition in Politics

Various studies have also shown that staying in the same position for a long time can negatively impact a person's productivity and creativity. As executives' tenure increases, their information-gathering capacity shrinks, and they tend to cling to established norms more than to embrace new changes (Hambrick & Fukutomi, 1991). Therefore, generational change is very necessary, but one should be aware that the wrong people will reach sensitive positions in the name of generational change. This generation cannot do it, the new generation should be given a chance. While saying this, it should also be understood that leadership is something that is born from a long process, struggle, and dynamism. In Nepal, even if secretaries do not reach the age

of majority, they must retire at a certain age. According to Northouse (2021), leadership is a process of influence, where the vision given to achieve a common goal is more important than age. Generational transition should be implemented in a way that gives positive results to the country based on our ground reality. “To change old structures and thinking, it is essential to have new energy and a bold agenda in leadership” (Kotter, 1996, p. 25). Although age is an important factor for successful leadership, it is not a decisive factor.

Why Did the Old Parties Shrink?

The people had been feeling betrayed by giving opportunities to the old political parties repeatedly. In the 2074 elections, the CPN (UML) and the CPN (Maoist Center) merged. Later, they united and formed the Nepal Communist Party. They resolved to ‘prosperous Nepal, happy Nepalis’. But even with two-thirds power, they were caught in internal conflict. The hope that the country would move towards prosperity after the constitution was made was betrayed. Democratic institutions became weak as Nepal’s political parties became more concerned with power balance and division of labor than with policy clarity. The old parties partisanized all institutions in the country. They were not serious about good governance. They showed a power-oriented character.

In contemporary Nepali politics, the younger generation expects effective service delivery and tangible results because dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of governance and service delivery is likely to increase citizens’ disillusionment with traditional parties (Sharma & Paudel, 2023). Such dissatisfaction is likely to increase attraction to alternative political forces, as distrust of the political system and poor performance are considered important foundations for the emergence of new parties. When mainstream parties fail to ensure public service delivery, good governance, and accountability, the potential for the emergence of ‘populist’ and new political forces increases, as such forces attempt to rally public support against traditional political elites (Thapa, 2025). In particular, corruption, weak accountability, and distrust of governance have created opportunities for new forces in democratic competition, drawing the younger generation towards alternative paths.

Gen-Z Movement

The Gen-Z movement in Nepal has emerged primarily as a result of extreme disillusionment with traditional political practices and a strong desire for structural change. Unlike past political movements, it has moved forward with an independent identity and a focus

on specific issues, rather than being confined to a particular party flag or ideology. The long-standing concentration of decision-making in a limited political elite, party monopoly, moral decline of leadership, and lack of transparency have increased frustration and discontent among the youth (Sapkota, 2026). In recent times, high unemployment, inequality of opportunity, and uncertainty about the future have driven the youth towards movement (Daha, 2026). The use of technology is a distinctive aspect of this movement. This generation, which grew up with the development of digital technology, has effectively used social media and online media to create a new participatory consciousness and a civilized political culture against corruption, economic inequality, and authoritarian rule (Magar, 2025). Overall, the emergence of the Gen-G movement in Nepal can be attributed to the collective activism of youth, along with the push for good governance, transparency, accountability, and innovative leadership.

The Rise of a New Political Force

This is not the first time that an alternative force has been sought in Nepali politics. Such a search has been taking place with every political change. At the beginning of change, great enthusiasm is generated among the people, but when those expectations are not fulfilled, then the ground for dissatisfaction and disappointment is prepared. The changes since 2007 are a vivid example of this. The recent emergence of new political forces in Nepal can be meaningfully analyzed through Paul Lucardie's 'Theory of the Emergence of New Parties'. According to Lucardie (2000), new parties emerge primarily in three roles: 'Prophets' who raise new issues, 'Purifiers' who challenge the deviations of established parties, and 'Prolocutors' who represent marginalized groups. In Nepal, new forces have emerged primarily as 'purifiers', filling the 'political vacuum' left by rampant corruption and inaction within traditional parties, instilling new hope among voters through good governance and transparency.

Literature review

In reviewing the literature on 'generational transition and attraction to new political forces' in the contemporary political context of Nepal, it seems desirable to make the structural inertia of traditional political forces and the resulting public disenchantment as the main point of departure. In particular, focusing on the incompetence of the parties established after the historic mass movement and the alternative political consciousness that has emerged in recent years, this study has been categorized and analyzed into the following two major ideological dimensions:

Political Socialization Theory

Political socialization is the ongoing process by which individuals develop their perceptions and values about the political system. Almond and Verba (1963) in their work *The Civic Culture* focused on the role of socialization in the formation of political culture. Analyzing this theory in the context of Nepal, we see a struggle between two different 'socialization agents'. The political socialization of the older generation was through 'party loyalty', 'armed struggle', and 'party schooling'. However, the sources of socialization of the current younger generation have changed. According to Dalton (2014), the generation that grew up in the information technology era is more likely to be 'issue-based intervention' than 'party membership'. In Nepal, social media (Facebook, TikTok, X) has socialized the political consciousness of the youth beyond the traditional party structure. Due to this, they have high 'Cognitive Mobilization,' and they have emerged as 'independent and conscious voters' instead of being 'permanent voters' of the old parties.

Theory of Elite Circulation

Developed by the Italian sociologist (Pareto, 1935), this theory argues that power in any society does not always reside in one group. According to him, there are two types of elites in society: 'Lions' who are strong and status quo-oriented, and 'Foxes' who are clever and change-makers. In the context of Nepali politics, the top leaders of traditional parties that have been ruling for a long time can be considered 'Governing Elites'. When these ruling elites lose their effectiveness and cannot address new aspirations, 'Non-governing Elites' emerge in society. Linking to Mosca's (1939) concept of 'The Ruling Class', the current attraction of new power in Nepal is an attempt by the 'Counter-Elite' to fill the vacuum created by the failure of the old 'elite class'. The 2082 election results can be seen as an initial stage of this 'elite movement', in which the established power structure is being challenged by a new, dynamic group.

A well-organized cycle of generational succession within a party helps to maintain political stability and adapt the party to the times (Meyer et al., 2016). In the context of Nepal, this presents a deeply paradoxical situation. This process is hampered by 'structural inertia' and centralization of leadership in traditional parties. In Nepal, the tendency among older leaders not to step down (gerontocracy) is preventing qualified new personnel from entering the party. As a result, rather than the 'circulation' within the party discussed by Meyer et al. (2016), new political forces are emerging in Nepal 'out-of-system'. In China, institutional reform appears to

have saved the system, while in Nepal, the lack of institutional reform has led to a decline in the attraction of traditional forces and an increase in the attraction of new, post-ideological forces.

While the values and political beliefs of citizens should be built through traditional institutions, the 'moral and ideological erosion' of established parties in Nepal's current context has led to a tendency among the new generation to make independent and conscious political choices outside the traditional party circles. This has given a new dimension to the dynamics of the natural power cycle. Where the old 'Lions', according to Pareto's principle, have shown leniency in the transfer of power, 'Foxes' or new forces with innovative skills have been forced to emerge as rebels from outside the political system, rather than adapting within it. Therefore, there does not appear to be sufficient research in the existing literature on why and how new forces are filling the political vacuum in Nepal through 'post-ideological populism', as opposed to systematic institutional selection and classical elite rotation. The present research attempts to bridge this academic void and shed light on the changing nature of power structures.

Methodology

The present study has adopted a descriptive and analytical design under the qualitative research methodology to conduct a detailed analysis of Nepal's transitional and dynamic political landscape. To ensure the objectivity and authenticity of the study, facts obtained mainly from secondary sources have been considered as the basis. Under this, official reports of the Election Commission, peer-reviewed academic journals, and works of classical and modern political philosophy have been intensively examined through the method of 'Critical Content Analysis'. In particular, the mandate obtained from the periodic elections of BS 2082, the emerging new power, and the 'Gen-Z' movement have been adopted as a specific 'Instrumental Case Study'. For the theoretical input of the collected data, Vilfredo Pareto's 'Circulation of Elites' and Russell Dalton's 'Cognitive Mobilization' theories have been considered as the cornerstones, which help in scientifically explaining the changes in the balance of power.

In this study, the available data have been intensively interpreted and analyzed to ensure the validity and reliability of the information. Under this process, the information collected has been tested in the context of various academic perspectives, official documents of political parties, and contemporary developments, and the conclusions have been substantiated. This research has explored the underlying socio-psychological foundations and structural causes of the vocal generational demands and emergence of alternative forces in Nepali politics, rather

than simply seeing them as mathematical outcomes. The scope of the study is specifically focused on the emergence of new political forces created by the 'Gen-G' movement and the subsequent elections. Based on available published materials and recent electoral trends, this research not only provides a realistic portrayal of contemporary politics but also presents academic relevance for guiding future political directions by highlighting the process of overthrowing traditional powers and gaining power by new forces.

Results and Discussion

The House of Representatives elections held in Nepal on 21 Falgun 2082 have ushered in a radical change in Nepal's traditional political structure. This section provides a detailed analysis of the election results and the new political dimensions they signal.

The 2082 elections have proven to be a significant departure point in Nepal's contemporary political history. As per the provisions of Article 84 of the Constitution of Nepal, 165 members have been elected through the first past the post (direct) system and 110 through the proportional system for the total 275-member House of Representatives. The results of this election appear to have brought about a major shift in the country's existing balance of power. In particular, this election has established a 'new force' at the center of power, challenging the decades-long dominance of traditional political parties.

According to the Election Commission report, a total of 114 political parties contested the elections. A total of 1,89,03,689 voters were registered across the country for this election. In terms of candidacy, the final list of candidates was prepared for 3,406 candidates for the first past the post (direct) system and 3,135 candidates for the proportional representation system. Looking at the voting participation:

For the first-past-the-post system: 11,168,032 people voted.

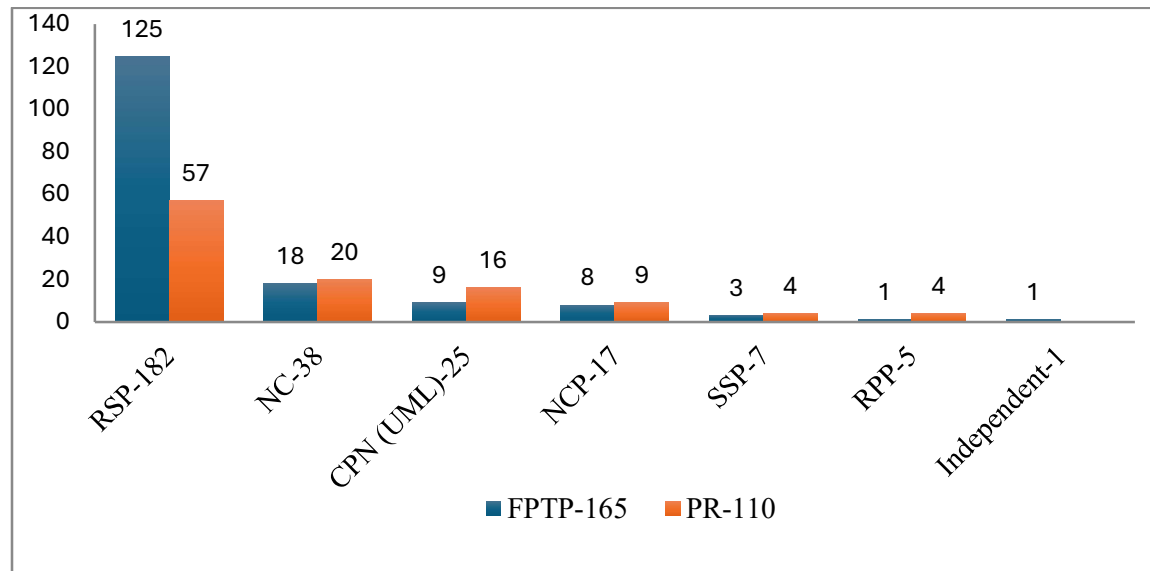
For the proportional representation system, 11,280,817 people exercised their right to vote.

The election results have had an unexpected and far-reaching impact on Nepali politics, with the RSP (RSP) emerging as the country's largest political force. The election clearly shows a shift in public opinion, with the RSP taking first place, followed by the Nepali Congress (NC), the CPN (UML), the Nepali Communist Party (NCP), the Shram Sanskriti Party (SSP), and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). The popularity of established and old political parties, which

have dominated Nepali politics for decades, has been declining this time, while voters' trust in new and emerging forces has increased. This is stated as follows:

Figure1

House of Representatives Election Results – 2082



Source: Election Commission

- **Historic Majority:** The Rastriya Swatantra Party has secured a close to two-thirds majority, winning about 66% of the total seats (182 seats). This is the largest first-time majority ever won by a new party in Nepal's parliamentary history.
- **Shrinkage of old parties:** The shrinking of established parties like the Nepali Congress, CPN (UML), and Nepali Communist Party to a total of 80 seats signals the end of 'Legacy Politics'.
- **Threshold and National Parties:** This time, only six parties have achieved national party recognition by crossing the 3 percent threshold, further clarifying political polarization.

In Nepali politics, old parties accuse new political parties of being populist and immature. Their argument is that governing requires experience and institutional mechanisms that the new ones lack. New populist forces rise on the strength of popular anger, branding established parties as corrupt elites, while old forces shrink due to institutional inertia (Weyland, 2020, pp.389-406). On the other hand, the new forces consider the old parties as syndicates and 'roots of discord'. Their claim is that the old experience has led the country further downhill, and now

innovation is needed. This conflict between the traditional and new forces is actually the filtration process of Nepal's democracy. The old parties have experience and history but lack energy and innovation. The new parties have energy and mass appeal but lack organizational stability and experience.

Table 1

Analysis of Aspects of Voter Psychology

Comparative Aspects of Voter Psychology Dimensions of Analysis	Old political power	New political power	Core Insight
Voter nature	Aligned: ideological and family heritage	De-aligned: issue and result	Conversion to the issue rather than 'party loyalty
Socialization	Physical: Party structure, fraternal organizations, and door-to-door outreach.	Digital: Social media and 'virtual' networks.	From 'party office' to 'mobile screen
Motivation	Legacy: A testament to movement and regime change.	Vision: Good Governance, Technology and 'Delivery'	Past debt versus 'future investment
Communication style	Mass: General assembly and formal communication.	Micro: Digital dialogue and 'algorithm' based.	The dominance of a new power in the 'attention economy
The focal point	Rural: Traditional social networks are strong.	Urban/Diaspora: High impact of information and awareness.	Urban rebellion against 'syndicate politics

Source: Author

In Nepal's current political landscape, there is a growing trend toward seeking alternatives to traditional forces and toward the intervention of a new generation. Its six main dimensions have been analyzed as follows:

Crisis in Service Delivery

Despite the abundance of policies and plans in Nepal, their weak implementation has led to a 'delivery crisis'. According to the World Bank (2020), the lack of institutional capacity in developing countries widens the gap between citizens and the state. In Nepal, the public is losing faith in the old state institutions due to the slowness and inefficiency seen in education, health, and public administration, which has prepared fertile ground for alternative leadership.

The ‘delivery crisis’ has emerged as a key structural link in explaining the generational transition and emergence of new political forces in contemporary Nepali politics. Despite the abundance of reform plans and programs at the policy level in Nepal, serious institutional weaknesses and administrative laxity in their effective implementation have hampered service delivery, thereby reducing the efficiency of the state and creating a gap of distrust between citizens and the state. According to Grindle (2007), when governance fails to deliver minimum services, the legitimacy of democratic institutions weakens, and public opinion is drawn towards alternative forces. Nepali voters are now seeking ‘results-oriented governance’ and ‘transparent leadership’, which have created a favorable environment for a new political wave to replace the traditional forces, due to the extreme frustration created by the rampant laxity and lack of accountability in education, health and public administration.

Lack of Good Governance and Corruption

Another important factor accelerating the generational transition and attraction of new political forces in Nepali politics is the lack of good governance and widespread corruption. In recent years, public perception of the involvement of high-level leaders of established parties in major corruption scandals has become stronger, raising serious questions about the credibility of democratic institutions. This situation seems to have increased political disillusionment and distrust among citizens, creating an attraction to alternative political forces.

According to Rothstein and Teorell (2008), Widespread corruption and weak governance undermine the legitimacy of the state and orient citizens towards new and responsible leadership. In the Nepali context, too, corruption has eroded trust in traditional political parties and created an environment conducive to the emergence of new political forces that prioritize transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership.

The Quest for New Leadership

Voters who have concluded that change is not possible from leaders who have been tested for decades have become increasingly attracted to new faces. For example,

Balendra Sah

Balendra Sah, who has an engineering background and effective communication skills in rap music, was able to set the foundation for his journey to Singha Durbar with his courageous work style as the mayor of Kathmandu. His success in challenging the traditional political syndicate instilled strong confidence among common Nepalis that ‘change is possible’.

Ravi Lamichhane

When analyzing Ravi Lamichhane's political rise based on 'generational shift' theory, (Inglehart, 1977, p. 482) it represents a new generation in Nepali politics that is rising above material needs (survival) and seeking 'good governance' and 'quality of life'. This generation, raised on a foundation of economic stability, is rejecting old power structures and demanding participatory and accountable systems. The 'action-oriented' image created by Lamichhane's television appearances seems to establish a politics focused on performance rather than traditional ideology.

Gen Z's Digital Activism

The rise of the Gen Z generation in Nepali politics has changed the grammar of political participation. According to a study by (Auxier & Anderson, 2021), this generation has made social media not just for entertainment but also as a major tool for political expression and public opinion formation. Due to rapid access to information, this generation has freed itself from the old 'vote bank' politics and focused on agenda-based politics. The Gen Z movement that took place in Nepal on Bhadra 23 and 24, 2082, caused a huge loss of property and life. On the strength of which movement, a new government has been formed today.

Quest for Novelty

The status quo of traditional political parties and their apathy towards modern technology have created deep despair and distrust among the Nepali youth. According to a sociologist, Mannheim (1952), the common experiences and challenges faced by people born in the same historical period create a unique 'social consciousness'. In the Nepali context, the current generation of young people, connected to the development of information technology and global consciousness, is rejecting the slow and opaque mechanisms of the old parties and seeking technology-based, transparent governance and quick results. It is this collective desire and the pressure of 'youth consciousness' that have created fertile ground for the emergence of forces with innovative thinking as an alternative to traditional politics, which have prioritized performance and modernity over old heritage.

The Impact of the Diaspora

Millions of Nepalis (diaspora) scattered around the world in pursuit of foreign employment and education have become a decisive force in Nepal's political transformation, both economically and ideologically. According to the (IOM, 2019), the diaspora plays an

effective role as a 'soft power' in political reform at home. These Nepalis, who have experienced development, rule of law, and systemic stability abroad, are demanding similar good governance and change in Nepal through their families and social networks. As a result, this conscious pressure and ideological intervention from the diaspora are creating a stir in Nepal's traditional political circles and adding significant energy to the emergence and expansion of new alternative forces.

The recent decline in the influence of established old parties in Nepali politics and the emergence of new forces have been viewed by the international community as 'institutional decay'. The new forces have made the disappointment that the old parties have failed to meet people's expectations their main political capital. However, even if they manage to sway the election results in their favor, the biggest challenge for these new parties is to translate their 'populist' slogans into practical policies and good governance. This new political wave has dealt a strong blow to the old power structures, but without the rule of law and a strong institutional foundation, it is doubtful that this change will be sustainable. If the new forces fail to link their agendas to systemic reforms, there is a risk that this wave will be limited to a momentary expression of public discontent.

Conclusion

The tide of generational transition and the emergence of new political forces seen in contemporary Nepali politics confirm that it is not just a momentary electoral impulse, but rather the result of a profound 'structural transformation' and 'renaissance of consciousness' in Nepali society. The vacuum created by the gerontocracy, policy inertia, and governance crisis within traditional parties has been replaced by the digital literacy and issue-based cognitive mobilization of Gen Z, fully endorsed by the 2082 election results. In line with Pareto's 'Elite Circulation' principle, the failure of established 'governing elites' to address the changing aspirations of the masses and the pace of information technology has seen the emergence of new forces as the 'counter-elite' sought by society. From an academic and policy perspective, this study has established a new narrative of 'party decline' and 'alternative politics' in democracy, which has created compelling pressure on traditional power structures to engage in internal democratization and policy innovation to preserve their existence. At the policy level, this finding indicates that a combination of expertise and youthful energy in state institutions is indispensable.

In this context, it seems that the old parties should immediately strengthen their 'exit policy' and internal democracy, and the new forces should rise above populism and emphasize ideological and organizational institutionalization. Although the present study logically explains the emergence of new forces, the aspects of 'actual efficiency of power operation' and 'ideological stability' of these forces remain open areas for future research. Ultimately, this new dimension of generational change is certain to play a decisive role in the long-term democratic consolidation of the federal democratic republic, making Nepali politics more competitive and transparent.

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