



Open access article



Original Article

Youth Mobilization and Political Impact in Nepal: An Analysis of Gen Z Movement

Rudra Bahadur Shahi¹

¹Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mid-West University, Surkhet, Nepal

Abstract

The paper analyses the genesis, mechanisms of operation and political impact of the youth movement 'Gen Z' in Nepal during September 2025. It is operating a digitally organized, non-partisan and leaderless revolution. The revolution brought out thousands of youth from Nepal who have been protesting against corruption, economic sluggishness, political favoritism, ban of the social media and the digital censorship imposed by the State. This paper used a qualitative research design and a synthesis of the secondary literatures. It examines the issues, grievances, mobilizations and impacts transformed movement across the entire country in 48 hours. It is based on elements from Social Contract Theory, Connective Action Theory and Political Legitimacy Theory protectives. The issue has been related to legitimacy, social movement, digital activities and good governance of Nepal and it has young-led movement that driving the major political translation. The state-sponsored digital repression resulted in unintended solidarity among people of different classes and the weakness of the already existing political institutions. The lack of an organized political arm became a governance issue during the transitional period after the uprising to some extent addressed by appointment of an interim government and subsequent political developments. Finally, it outlines contemporary political transformation and concluded the informing impacts of uprising, public policy formulation, long-term democratic process and political stability in Nepal. The need for the improvement of institutional accountability, youth involvement and democratic responsive in order to address the people's grievances expressed through such protests.

Keywords: Digital movement, Gen Z, Political stability, Reform, Social media

Article Info.

Article History

Received: 5 June 2026

Revised: 5 July 2026

Accepted: 20 August 2026

Corresponding Author

Rudra Bahadur Shahi

: rudrashahi66@gmail.com

Copyright Information

Copyright 2025 © The author(s). This journal is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International \(CC BY 4.0\) License](#).

Publisher

Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Office of the Dean
Mid-West University
Birendranagar, Surkhet,
<https://muodgshss.edu.np>

Introduction

Youth mobilization has been played the important role in Nepali history to catalyzed the political transitions, having played a significant part in major socio-political developments like the 1990 *Jana Andolan* (people movement) and the 2006 democracy movement that toppled the monarchy (Bhattarai, 2022). Democracy is a political system where the best alternatives are democratically chosen. It consists of democratic ideas, institutions and practice. (Dreze & Sen 2010). Nepal has a Vast historical experience with major people's movements 2007, 2046, 062/063 driven by demands for the democracy or new political system change. Historically, the country was ruled under the autocratic by Rana oligarchy for 104 years. and followed by three decade ruled by the king at Panchayat. These are autocratic familyism and Non-democratic rule of governance system. So peoples changed it by the people movement. However, on September 8th, the Gen Z movement is different better than old movement. Its focus the digital or social media champion. Youth lead this movement but everyone people involved there.

Gen Z movement refers to the certain age group of generation that includes between 12 to 28 who born between 1997 to 2012 A.D. age blow the 28 years. Having an institutive relationship with digital technology. Zen Z think about the challenges and task the differently than earlier generation. The rise of Zen-z as a political force has started new academic discussions on civic engagement digital divide and relationship between the state and citizen in contemporary societies (Sapkota, 2026). The events that unfolded in September 2025 were fundamentally different from previous political dynamics of the country. It's different from the previous political movements organized and controlled by the student wings of existing political parties (like Nepal Student Union or All Nepal National Free Students Union). The 2025 protest movement was a spontaneous and decentralized movement initiated by Generation Z- people born between 1997 and 2012. It is decentralized using digital technologies like Discord, Instagram and encrypted communication networks. The movement successfully circumvented traditional party cadre structure. After the resignation of prime minster interim government under the leadership of Ex-Chief Justice Sushila Karki was formed. This study examines the structural

dynamic, digital tactics and the immediate political outcome of the Gen Z protests movement in Nepal. how to informal, decentralized youth mobilization reshaped established old powers. After uprising Its dynamics, accountability system, election dynamics of a young democracy and create the new political course of Nepal.

The rise up of the 2025 Gen Z uprising has been indicative of a fundamentally failure between the old model of traditional political participation of parties and the new model of non-hierarchical mobilization facilitated by technology. It has shown tremendous ability to bring about accountability in the state and make the existing government collapse within a few days. Next, its weaknesses have also come to light - there is no formal structure for hierarchical organization, ideological diversity among the participants and difficulty in translating the mobilization process into a policy-making or democratic institution-building process. The Scholars have examined youth politics in Nepal in terms of their party-aligned student's unions (student politics) and the digital activism in developing countries, there is no Zen z literatures addressing the relationship between digital native youth mobilization, government censorship. Literatures that analyzed the post-2025 Nepali political lack of systematic theoretical analysis on how Gen Z leaderless networks engage in power struggles with constitutional institutions, military and other independent political actors. The present research further extends the 'Logic of Connective Action' framework to the case of post-conflict democracies of the Global South, explaining how algorithm and encryption technology allows the emergence of civil resistance at risk in absence of any up-down leaderships. The research provides policy recommendation to be used by political scientist and researcher to tackle political reforms and youth voting patterns in a complex federal setting.

Objectives

The objectives of this paper are as follow:

- To identify the structural, socio-economics and digital drivers that catalysis the September 8-9, 2025 Gen Z movement in Nepal.
- To examine the organizationally strategies, digital tools and decentralized communication method using by Gen Z activist to bypass traditional party machinery.
- To evaluate the short-term political and governance impacts of the uprising.

Literature Review

This paper has been selected academic literatures surrounding youth mobilization and politically impacts of Nepal particularly the Sep. 2025 Gen Z Movement in Nepal. The scholarly literature that is available on the 2025 Gen-Z movement in Nepal discusses the youth mobilization and digital activism, politics and democracy in general term. There is an indication in the literature that the Gen-Z movement was more than just a street protests but rather an organized digital youth political mobilization which questioned political practices and leadership. The study of theme in the available literatures on the Gen-Z movement is youth political mobilization. The studies of the Gen-Z movement in Nepal highlights young people discontent with corruption, nepotism, political patronage and political leadership. Shrestha (2025) and Magar (2026), specifically describe the Gen-Z movement as a movement of political discontent, identity-based mobilization. Its study took place outside the conventional political organization. The literatures also align with the findings from previous research that indicates that interest in politics among Gen-Z does not equate to membership in the traditional political organizations. Robin et al. (2022), as well as Labolo (2022), also mention the shortcomings of political education and participation in traditional political parties and powers.

The second strand of literature emphasizes the role of digital activism and mobilization via network. According to Gyawali (2026), social media applications like TikTok, X and Discord contributed to decentralized communication, fast dissemination of information and mobilization for youth groups. Similarly, Hasan (2025) from the perspective of the Global South also notes that the digitally connected youth increasingly resist conventional mobilization via parties via peer to peer networking. The above literature suggestions that there has been decrease in reliance on organizational framework in youth movements through digital platforms. The literatures also state that digital mobilization alone is insufficient to account for political implication of the movements. Thirdly, there is a focus on the political and democratic implications of the youth movement. This includes the impact of the movement on political culture, leadership, legitimacy and politics after the movement according to Pulami Magar (2025), Sapkota (2026), Chaudhary (2026), and Timilsina (2026). This study focused the following question: the youth movement can bring about sustainable democratic and institutional change or it will lead to political and institutional instability. Dahal (2026) also makes a similar observation that only when the protest turns into an electoral, constitutional and institutional process does it become politically sustainable. Bartlett and Yemini (2026) offer a wider perspective by demonstrating how Gen-Z activism today can include both 'outside' protests and 'inside' politics.

However, even after making such contributions, the literatures that exist is relatively fragmented in nature. Some research papers focus more on providing explanations of the reasons. The nature of the Gen-Z movement. Others concentrate more on the topic of digital activism, political culture and impacts on democracy and constitutionality of the political transformation. The literatures on how youth mobilization using digital networks resulted in political implications in Nepal is rather limited. Specially, the impact of digital mobilizations and youth participations in politics on political transformation needs to be analyzed more systematically. The present paper aims at contributing to the existing literatures by analyzing the Gen-Z movement as youth political mobilizations.

Theoretical Framework of this Study

To analyze the structural causes, dynamics, implications of Gen Z movement, Political Impacts and youth mobilization in Nepal. This study synthesizes three core political and sociological theories. The integrated framework for analyzing Gen Z uprising- 2025 in Nepal by synthesized Social Contract Theory, Connective Action and Digital Mobilization Theory and Political Legitimacy Theory to explained its emergence, mobilization mechanisms and politically consequence. Social Contract Theory provided the foundation for interpreting systemic government failures, weakness and the resulting public frustration, dissatisfactions when state performance breaks down or focused the relation or contract with people and government. Connective Action and Digital Mobilization Theory then accounts for how these widespread grievances and issues are organized into decentralized, digitally mediated collective actions. Finally, Political Legitimacy Theory assesses how sustain mobilization directly challenges institutionally credibility, state authority and public trust. By used this tri-theoretical model, the paper structures its findings across four core analytical dimensions: the contextual drivers of political frustration, the specific issues and demands articulated by youth participants, the hybrid digital-offline channels of mobilization, impacts after movement and the broader institutional implication for political legitimacy and democratic governance in Nepal. These are:

Social Contract Theory (Locke, Rousseau)

The Locke and Rousseau, the Social Contract Theory is applied as a theoretical tool for analyzing the interrelationship between the citizens and the state. The fundamental premise of the theory is that political authority rests on the normative legitimacy of the state. The Gen Z movement, its theory is useful for interpreting public dissatisfaction with corruption, Nepotism, poor governance, unemployment and perceived institutionally irresponsible as expression of a perceive breakdown in the relations between people's and the state or government. A general election was held in Nepal in 2079 BS, its terms was supposed to be till 2084 BS, but after the movement, an early election 2082 was held. The 5 yrs. Agreement between the Nepali people and the government was broken in the middle due to dissatisfactions and movement. It is determining by its capability to protects and govern the citizens' interest. Present context of Nepal, the recurring worries regarding corruption, unemployment, limited opportunities, failures in governance and lack of accountability can be seen as examples of failure of the state in meeting its obligations. It's mainly raised the causes of Zen Z movement 2025. The theory will be employed in analyzing the structural factors of youth issues and people's grievances. It should be noted that the study views those factors as perceived failures of the social contract.

Political Legitimacy Theory (Weber, Lipset)

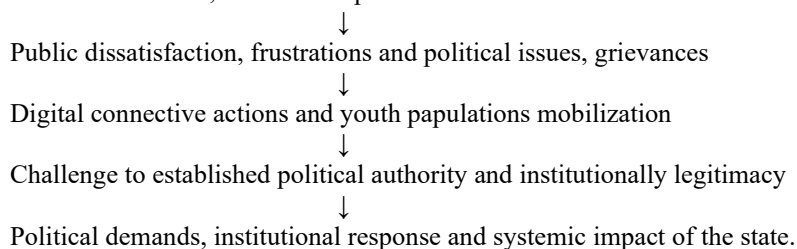
Weber and Lipsett's ideas, Theory of Political Legitimacy shows how political authority gets legitimacy and sustains in society. The formal legitimacy can come from constitutional and electoral processes; political authority can also depend on people's perception of government performance. This theory is particularly relevance to the movement because it helps describes how digital communication can transform individual issues and grievances into networks political participations. The platforms such as Discord, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other popular social medias can have facilitated rapid information dissemination, agenda formation, coordination and public visibility. The theory therefore provides an analytical basis for examining the relationship between digital social media networks and youth people's mobilization. Its accountability and responsiveness. This study, the theory can be used to study decreasing trust towards political institutions and government performance among youth. The Gen-Z movement will be analysis not only as opposition against the particular government but also as a movement challenging legitimacy and responsiveness of existing political institutions.

Connective Action and Digital Mobilization Theory (Bennett and Segerberg)

The concept by Bennett and Segerberg of studying the role of digital communication in modern mobilization. The Contrary to traditionally collective action that usually relies on formal organization and hierarchically leadership, connective action is based on personalized communications, digital network and flexible mobilization form. Gen Z movement in Nepal, legitimacy theory helps describes how dissatisfactions with political institutions, governance practice, corruption and political representation can weaken citizens' confidence in established institutions. The peoples perceived political institutions as ineffective or irresponsible, there political legitimacy may become contested. The movement can consequently be understood as an expression of demand for more credible, accountable, responsive political institutions and government. The relation Nepali Gen-Z movement, it will be possible to investigate the use of digital technology like TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Discord and others Social Media Plats forms as a means for spreading information, voicing grievance, coordinating action and engaging decentralized mobilization (Sharma & Bist, 2026).

Conceptual Relationship Among the Three Theories

The three theoretical perspectives form an interrelation, sequential frameworks that capture the movement full trajectory. Governance issues, failures and perceived breach of the social contract theory



In the framework, Social Contract Theory identify the root causes of dis-content when governance fails, Connective Action Theory focused how these issues and grievances are digitally organized into decentralized youth mobilization and Political Legitimacy Theory explain the resulting erosion of state authority and institutional trust. Finally, they are form an integrated analytical continuum linked the origin, mechanism and consequence of this movement.

Comparative analysis of Theoretical Synthesis

The three perspectives offer a sequential and complementary explanations of the Gen-Z mobilization in Nepal. The theory of social contract aid in understanding the roots of grievances among young individuals then the lens of inadequate governance, corruption, lack of opportunity and poor accountability. The theory of political legitimacy will help in explaining how such grievances may lead to loss of trust in the established political institutions and hence affect their legitimacy. Finally, the connective action theory will help in understanding how such digitally connected youth can transform individual grievances into collective action. The paper conceptualizes the Gen-Z movement not as an isolated event of protests but as a case of youth mobilization through the intersection of the factors of perceived governance failures, declining institutional trusts and politically digitally connected youth.

Methodology

Research Design

The research used a qualitative research design and theoretically reviewed and analyzed the secondary literatures to examine the genesis, mobilization mechanisms and political impacts of the Gen Z uprising in 2025 in Nepal. The study focuses on understanding the relationship between youth activism, digital mobilization, political legitimacy and governance. A qualitative approach was adopted to interpret political narratives, demands, mobilization practices and institutional responses.

Data Sources

The paper relied on secondary data obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books and institutional documents, credible news reports and publicly available digital material related to the Gen Z uprising in Nepal.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study was Data were collected by search of Google Scholar, JSTOR, ResearchGate, relevant government websites and media archives. The search focused on literatures and documentary materials related to youth mobilization, social movements, digital activism, political legitimacy, governance and the Gen Z movement 2025. Materials were screened according to their relevance's to the research objectives, source credibility, temporal relevance, and contribution to the study arguments. Irrelevant, repetitive or insufficiently documented materials were excluded.

The collected materials or literatures were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, relevant materials were organized according to the research objectives. Second, recurring ideas and patterns were identified and coded. Third, related codes were grouped into broader themes, including political grievances, core demands, digital mobilization, youth participation, political legitimacy, good governance and institutionally responses. Finally, the theme was interpreted in relation to the theoretical frameworks and compared across sources to identify common and contrasting patterns.

Ethical Issues

This paper used only secondary literatures and digital sources, no human participants are involved in the research. Ethical considerations in this regard included proper academic citations and credits are maintained for all references, neutral analysis of politically delicate issues and respect to the intellectual property rules, news sources plagiarism and respect copyright boundaries and patient.

Results and Discussion

Youth Grievances and Structural Drivers of Mobilization

The start of the uprising on 8th to 9th Sept. 2025 was catalyzed by deep-based problems within the economy and politics including high unemployment among the young people papulation against corruption, patronage politics, poor governances and lack of state accountability. The theory behind this lie in Social Contract Theory as espoused by Locke (1689/1988) and Rousseau (1762/1968). Such consistent failures constitute a violation of the essential relation between government and people. Digital claims through different reasons or campaigns have taken personal socio-economic exclusion to public critique of elite-controlled governance systems, much as was observed before the movement. The issues, agenda and grievances formed the necessary social, economic and political environments for youth mobilization. The Gen Z movement that took place in Nepal were triggered by structural, economic and digital catalysts.

Structure and Socio-Economic Drivers: Anti- corruption movement or good governance, Youth unemployment levels exceeding and migration were among the structural drivers that triggered people dissatisfaction and frustrations. The socio-economic catalysts included political corruption and wealth disparity which were highlighted the online campaigns such as #NepoBaby #NepoKids #Enough is Enough and #No not again popularized critically of dynastic political elite (Acharya, 2020; Koirala, 2025). The uprising has been fueled due to issues and unsatisfied like ban on social media,

corruption, high unemployment rate among youth, economic problems, poor governance and inequality in everywhere system between different socio-economic segment.

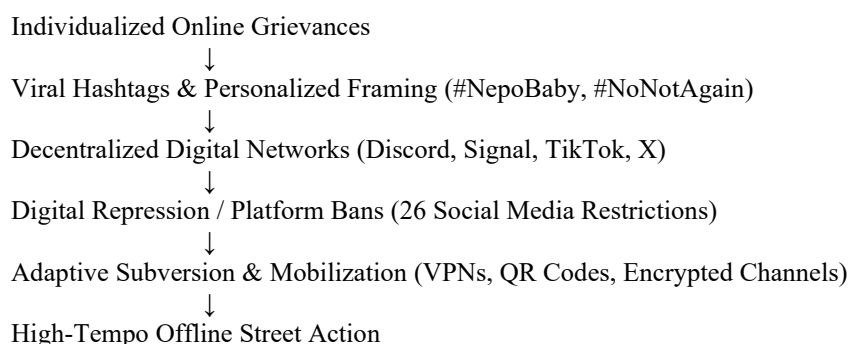
Digital Catalyst: In 2025, the Nepali government prohibited use of 26 popular digital media platforms including YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, X and Instagram for not adhering to the government's policy regarding for registration with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. It's a one major element of the protest of Sep. in Nepal, (Koirala, 2025). Rather than stifling dissent, this intervention disrupts the youth micro-economics and communication infrastructures, consolidating cross-class opposition (Acharya, 2020; Hasan, 2025). Now, the globalization supported the understanding of the world wisely. The Nepali youth started comparing their governance and development with global technocratic trends and standards rather than ideology, thus resulting in a great political decline for leftist political parties.

The theoretical lens of Social Contract Theory, these systemic economic and governance failures signify a profound breakdown in the implicit reciprocal agreement between the state and its citizens. From a Lockean perspective, political authority loses its moral justification when the state continuously unsuccessful to protects people's welfare, ensured fair opportunity and maintained institutionally accountability. Complementarily, Political Legitimacy Theory interprets this structural breakdown as an acute crisis of public authority, wherein the state's inability to remain responsive, equitable and effective lead to a severe erosion of public trust and institutional legitimacy.

Digital Networks and Decentralized Mobilization

Secondly, a significant is that digitally communications technology was not just used as mere information distribution mechanisms. They constituted the organized platforms that fueled the Gen Z activisms in Nepal. Shows a clear shift from online anger to offline street activism, the young activists made use of Facebook, TikTok, X (Twitter) and Instagram to share information (Kandel & Bist, 2026) about what was happening, achieve consensus and organized nation-widely collected action in a swift way. One of the key elements of this digital platform was the effective use of virality and hashtag campaigns, including such slogans as Like: “#NepoBaby”, “#NepoKids”, “#EnoughIsEnough” and “#NoNotAgain”. These hashtags enabled aggregation of individual experiences of economic precariousness into a single criticism of systematic political exclusion. Typically, the uprising operated completely independent of traditional political parties, values trade unions and civic organizations.

By figure:



Youth protesters avoided conventional political party organization entirely, using decentralized communication systems for their coordination. They are announcing and preparing after some month ago by social media of Sep. 8. So Zen Z generation has been believed the transformation the old cultures of the state. Defying the Ban: Protesters used the Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), encryption software (Signal) as well as physical fliers with QR codes linking to secret Discord server. (Koirala, 2025). Leaderless /Decentralized Organization: Historically, Short time uprising, the mobilization efforts were unstructured and non-hierarchical. It's without a centralized party structure or single leader, employing online or use social media consensus building for organizing quick movement and providing medical support, (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Hasan, 2025)

This practice thus offer support to the Connective Action Theory proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2012). While collective action as described traditionally required extensive reliance on organizational leadership, membership and ideological doctrines, (Olson, 1965; Tarrow, 2011). The connective action based on digital media utilized personal action frame and digital networks. The case of Nepal explains the ability of digital media to facilitate the process by which individual self-motivation led to the creation and personalization of political claims via dispersed network without the need for central control system. Additionally, the research find that digital communication method replaced organizational asset effectively, reducing the transaction costs of mobilization and enabling young people to quickly translate online anger into coordinated demonstration, (Shirky, 2008; Earl & Kimport, 2011).

A main theoretical implication is drawn from the government authoritarian effort to suppress mobilization by means of digital repression. State intervention, which imposed a ban on 26 key digital platforms, was self-defeating; instead of destroying the protest campaign, the ban interfered with the normal functioning of young protesters' digital economy and everyday digital communications, thus effectively turning digital censorship into a second grievance (Howard et al., 2011; Roberts, 2018). Protesters has been used quickly, managing to bypass government-level firewalls by using Virtual

Private Networks (VPNs), encrypted communication applications like Signal, decentralized Discord servers and QR-code-based information sheets, (Koirala 2025). This example demonstrates that an attempt at digital repression by the state can actually serve as a means to connective mobilization through driving participants to more robust and more covert digital environments. These results demonstrate how the Connective Action Theory applies to the Global South setting, showing that decentralized digital networks have maintained high-speed political mobilizations without any conventional political organizations at all.

Political Disruption and Institutional Legitimacy

The Gen Z movement 2025 transcended single-issue opposition to evolve into a systemic challenge against established political authority and state institutions. The finding indicated that youth and people's dissatisfaction shifted rapidly from criticizing specific policy failures, (such as digital restrictions and corruption) to mainly questioning is the accountability, responsible and normative authority of the ruling political elites. Within a radical changes 48-hour window from 8th to 9th Sept. 2025, the uprising transformed from a localized youth demonstration into an acute political crisis, exposing a profound legitimacy deficit within Nepali democratic institutions.

This trajectory finding strongly analytical resonance in Political Legitimacy Theory. Max Weber (1978) conceptualized legitimacy as the societal trust that political authority is exercised rightly and lawfully, whereas Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) explains it as the degree to which a political system maintained the conviction that its existing institutions are proper and effective. In Nepal, the protest expressed a systemic collapsed of what Lipset terms system performance and effectiveness. The state institutions are perceived as vehicles for elite patronage, nepotism, and entrenched impunity, their claim to legitimate authority decays. Consequently, youth participants rejected not merely individual policies but the basic legitimacy of the traditional political order and value. The severity of this legitimacy crisis is reflected in the quickly structural disruptions and signifies human and economic costs, these are: Executive Collapse and Political Transition: Escalating street mobilizations led directly to the resignation of PM KP Sharma Oli on 9 Sept. 2025. Following an explain security intervention by the military, the President dissolved the House of Representatives to make way for transitional arrangement, (Adhikari, 2026; Dahal, 2026). Human Casualties and Material Losses: Investigations by the high-level Karki Inquiry Commission (2026) confirmed 76 to 78 fatalities (comprising protesters, bystanders and security personnel) and over 2,500 injured. The destruction of state infrastructure, public properties and private assets was estimated between NRs 84.45 billion and NRs 100 billion, (US \$630M–\$750M).

Establishment of Interim Governance: Gen Z were used the digital direct democracy and political transition, youth activists carried out digital voting on platforms such as Discord to select the former Chief Justice Sushila Karki through a process of reaching a consensus. Karki was sworn in on 12 Sept. 2025, becoming Nepali first ever woman PM, leading an interim government responsible for keeping the state function as it was preparing for snap parliamentary election in March 2026 (Devkota, 2025); Britannica, 2025). State Accountability and Governance Restored: To try restored public trust and the state back on track from movement. The interim government quickly restored access to the digital world, initiated a judicial inquiry into state-sponsored violence, frizzed the passports of officials, ensured that young people were encouraged to vote and introduced electoral reform, (Adhikari, 2026). The interim administration demonstrates the theoretical link between an acute legitimacy crisis and institutional reconstruction. The traditional political networks loosed democratic credibility, political system must enact transitionally, mostly credible mechanisms to restored institutionally stability, uphold legal continuity and regain the public trust.

Electoral Realignment, Political Stability and Democratic Reform

This research paper explains the impacts that the movement had on politics, with a focus on issues such as electoral realignment, reconfiguration of state stability and the democratic reforms following the movement. After the Sept. protests, Nepal faced a serious constitutional crisis, whereby the non-traditional selected of the ex- Chief Justice Sushila Karki as Interim PM on Sept. 12, 2025 was crucial for executive continuity but ignited constitutional article no.132(2) controversies on article-level disallowance of former judicial head occupying executive post. To addressed this institutionally impasse, President R. C. Paudel dissolved the 275-member House of Representative to hold snap parliamentary elections on 5 March 2026.

The general election of 5th March 2026, compared over 18.9 million registered voters and 3,400 candidates representing 68 party, witnessed a monumental shift within the new political scene in that it translated the political rage on the street into an electoral realignment, (Chaudhary, 2026). The alternates political party, (RSP) lead by Balen Shah, secured a magical victory by earning near two-third supermajority of 182 out of 275 seat with a 47.8% popular vote. (Chaudhary, 2026). The existing or established political parties recorded huge losses, with the NC bagging 38 seats (19% popular vote), CPN-UML dropping to 25 seats (17.7% popular vote), NCP getting 17 seats (9% popular vote), the new Shram Sanskriti Party winning 7 seats (3.56% popular vote) and the (RPP) taking 5 seats (3.05% popular vote).

It is noteworthy that the sweeping rejection of the conventional left-wing political parties (CPN-UML and NCP) indicated a generational move away from class struggle politics of the twentieth century, (Chaudhary, 2026; Dahal, 2026). In present time, the youth voters favored international standards of technological efficiency, good governance, transparency and meritocracy over old-style ideological belief, (Canditao, 2025; Bartlett & Yem, 2026). Analyzed perspectives Social Contract Theory, this electoral shift represented a formal mechanism through which peoples recalibrate their consent to be governed. The traditional ruling elites or powers consistently failed to deliver basic socio-economic security, youth

employment and systemic integrity, publics exercise their sovereign electoral prerogative to void the existing political arrangement and established a new compact with alternative political actors. Political Legitimacy Theory provided an important framework for describes how this democratic transition institutionalized street contention. Its resulting in prolonged political violence, the uprising successfully redirected street-level discontent into democratic networks, used the electoral realignment as a peaceful instrument to strip traditional elites of authority and bestow legitimacy new emerge leadership, (Lipset, 1959; Gilley, 2006).

This Realignment Carries Major Implications for State Stability and Governance

Transition to Single-Party Stability: For decades, Nepali political landscape was defined by volatile or not full phase government, short-lived coalition governments. The RSP near 2/3 majority braked this election history in parliament, offering unprecedented legislative stability and mitigated cabinet-level clientelism, (Devkota, 2025; Timilsina, 2026). **Institutionalized, Leadership and Centered Governance:** The electoral mandate reflects an explicit demand to transition from personalized elite's politics to rule of law and wished the good governance. This required build resilient institutionally framework priority anti-corruption, meritocratic public administration and horizontal accountability over party patronage politics, (Drèze & Sen, 2010; Labolo, 2022).

Digital Campaigns and Horizontal Accountability: The decentralized digital networks established the during this protests, (Discord, X, TikTok). The general election 2026 confirmed that digital communication networks can influences or successfully displaced traditional rally-based campaigning, enabling direct, unmediated candidate-voter engagement across domestic and diaspora youth networks, (Bennett, 2026; Gnawali, 2026). **Mandate for Socio-Economic and Constitutional Reform:** The demands extend traditional leaderships replacement to encompass core structural reforms in political parties and government institutions, demand employment, equality in Socio-economic and opportunities, innovation of science and technology, focused the constitutionally and systematic stability, (Dahal, 2026; Sapkota, 2026).

The Gen Z movement was not simply a one-time change in leadership; it marked a basically restructuring of the structures itself. Having shifted from coalition to a definitive majority in Parliament, Nepal now has an opportunity in history to move from negotiation-based politics to governance based on services. It is going to be determined in the long run by the ability of the new government to exercise democratic responsibility and manage geopolitical realities while meeting the demands of youth.

Youth Mobilization, Digital Activism and the Crisis of Political Legitimacy in Nepal

The Gen Z uprising in Nepal was carried about by socio-economic issues, agenda, poor governance, distrust in the politics and politics of representation. Such issues are included corruptions, unemployment, inequality, migration, political patronage and lack of the accountability creating a large gap between expectation of peoples and performance of the state. In the relation to Social Contract Theory, the above-mentioned grievances can be seen as a sign of the poring of the relationship between peoples and the government. According to the Locke and Rousseau, legitimate government is one which protects citizens' rights, served their interests and represents the general will of the society. The demands for good governance, employment, transparency, equality and accountability is an attempts to restored the social contract.

Digital technology helped to turn the above grievances into political action. Social media, hashtags, digital networks and de-centralized communication enabled youth populations to mobilized themselves without relying much on political parties or centralized organizations. It demonstrated the theory of connective action develop by Bennett and Segerberg. The theory state how personalize digital communication makes large-scale collective action possible. The social and political grievances provided the "why," whereas digital connectivity provided the, "how" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). It was also the political legitimacy of the existing institutions. As mentioned above, Weber argue that political legitimacy is needed along with legal power for political authority to exist, and Lipset (1959) linked political stability and legitimacy with the effectiveness of the institutions. It is, however, described based on the observers' response. Thus, issues related to corruption, poor governance, lack of accountability and poor representation have grown from being issues of ineffective government into questions of legitimacy of political institutions.

The relations among the three theories can therefore be summarised as follows:

Structural grievances → Perceived social-contract failure → Declining political legitimacy → Digital connective mobilization → Political disruption → Electoral realignment → Institutional reforms. In summary, the Gen Z uprising has proved to be a remarkable shift in youth political engagement and mobilization in Nepal. The importance of the Gen Z Aandolan is not only in the street demonstrations but rather in its ability to challenge the traditional forms of political leadership, demand for accountability, transparency, jobs, effective governance, digital engagements and representations. The future importance of this movement will be in terms of whether these demand will lead to sustainable reforms and restoration of public trust.

Finally, the three theories have been complementary to each other, as the Social Contract Theory explain why young people were dissatisfied; Connective Action Theory explains how the youth organized themselves and Political Legitimacy Theory explain how the mobilization of the youth challenge the political institution and authority. Therefore, the main argument of this paper is that the Gen Z movement must be regarded not just as a youth revolution, which was temporary. It is a remarkable shift in the youth participation in Nepal in terms of the mode, motivation, and political consequences of such participation.

Conclusion

This study argues that Gen Z movement in Nepal represent a direct reaction against socio-political grievances, weak governance, corruption, youth unemployment, political accountability issue and institutionalize misrepresentation. The help of digital tools and networks, young people have managed to transformed personal grievances into political activism, thus staying outside the traditional party-political system. This is why the studied phenomenon can be considered not only as the expression of public discontent, but also as the paradigmatic change in the way youth political activism takes place in modern Nepal. The theoretical importance of the study in question is in the integration of various theories into one analytical model. by combining Social Contract Theory (Locke, 1988; Rousseau, 1997), Connective Action Theory (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) and Political Legitimacy Theory (Weber, 1978; Lipset, 1959). The author proposes a comprehensive view on the role of socio-economic grievances and digital networks mobilization in challenging the legitimacy of state institution. Social Contract Theory draw attention to the growing gaps between citizen demand and state performance, connective action theory explain how digital platforms make possible quick mobilization without leaders and Political Legitimacy Theory proved how poor performance lead to institutional de-legitimation.

The wider implication that arise from these research finding have more to do with the long-term democratic stability of Nepal rather than the current street protest. The movement shows that there is a need to have transparent governance, inclusive of the youth, political accountability, and job creation for employment. In order to re-establish political legitimacy, it is important for both the state actors and political parties to change from reactive approach to structural reform that incorporate technological innovation into the political process. However, this paper is limited in some aspects. First of all, the Gen Z movement is an evolving phenomenon, therefore, long-term structural effects of the movement cannot be evaluated right now. Secondly, the social desirability bias may affect the results of this study and it will limit the investigation of some informal mechanisms of resource distribution. Thus, it can be said that this study presents a political transformation analysis rather than a long-term causal impact investigation.

About Author

Rudra Bahadur Shahi is an MPhil-leading PhD scholar at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mid-West University

Disclosure Statements

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s). The authors read and reviewed the final version and agreed to consent for publication. All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

References

- Acharya, S. (2020). Social media, political discourse, and youth engagement in contemporary Nepal. *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 13(2), 145-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17516234.2020.1732560>
- Adhikari, B. (2026, January 21). *Nepal's Gen Z movement and constitutional crisis*. ConstitutionNet, International IDEA. <https://constitutionnet.org/news/voices/nepals-gen-z-movement-and-constitutional-crisis>
- Bartlett, T., & Yemini, M. (2026). From protest to politics: Gen Z's inside-outside activism and political efficacy. *Young*, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11033088261444933>
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739-768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.679670>
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. (2025, September 8). 2025 Nepalese Gen Z protests. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/2025-Nepalese-Gen-Z-Protests>
- Chaudhary, D. (2026). Gen Z movement in Nepal: Reshaping the new political landscape. *Journey for Sustainable Development and Peace Journal*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.3126/jsdpj.v4i1.92166>
- Dahal, G. (2026). Gen Z protest and its prospects in strengthening democracy in Nepal. *Journal of Political Science*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v26.i1.90796>
- Dahal, S. (2026). The collapse of traditional left hegemony in Nepal's 2026 general election. *South Asian Democratic Monitor*, 11(2), 89-114.
- Dahal, S. (2026). The fall of traditional leadership: Analyzing the 48-hour political shift in Nepal. *Journal of South Asian Contentious Politics*, 14(1), 45-68.
- Devkota, B. (2025). Political economy of post-federal Nepal: Institutional governance and public trust. *South Asian Studies Quarterly*, 40(1), 88-112.
- Devkota, K. L. (2025). From coalition instability to single-party dominance: Structural shifts in Nepalese parliamentary. *Nepal Journal of Public Policy*, 14(3), 55-72.
- Drèze, J., & Sen, A. (2010). *India: Development and participation* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Eurasia Review. (2026, March 11). *Rapid rebooting of democracy: Nepal's election 2026 and the rise of RSP*. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/11032026-rapid-rebooting-of-democracy-nepals-election-2026-and-the-rise-of-rsp-analysis/>
- Gilley, B. (2006). The meaning and measure of state legitimacy: Results for 72 countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45(3), 499-525. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00307.x>
- Gnawali, B. (2026). Social media mobilization and diaspora voter influence in Nepal's 2026 election. *Media, Culture & Society*, 48(1), 77-96.

- Gnawali, S. D. (2026). The Gen Z rebellion in Nepal: Digital activism, social transformation and political renewal. *The Harvest Journal*, 5(1).
- Kandel, R. K., & Bist, R. B. (2026). Preservice teachers' experiences of using ICT in English education programmes at Nepali universities. *Cogent Education*, 13(1), Article 2731678. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2026.2731678>
- Labolo, M. (2022). *Institutionalizing good governance: Theories and administrative practices*. Routledge.
- Lipset, S. M. (1959). Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy. *American Political Science Review*, 53(1), 69-105. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1951731>
- Magar, D. P. (2026). The Gen Z activism in Nepal: A new social movement perspective. *Bagiswori Journal*, 5(1), 85–102. <https://doi.org/10.3126/bagisworij.v5i1.93466>
- Nepalkhabar. (2025, September 25). *Inquiry commission begins work on "Gen Z" protest damage*. <https://en.nepalkhabar.com/news/detail/15509/>
- Pulami Magar, R. B. (2025). Political culture and democratic transition after Gen Z movement in Nepal. *Rajarshi Janak University Research Journal*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.3126/rjurj.v3i2.88045>
- Rousseau, J.-J. (1997). *The social contract and other later political writings* (V. Gourevitch, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1762)
- Sapkota, M. (2026). Gen Z movement 2025 in Nepal: Agendas, implications and unsettled issues. *Journal of Political Science*, 26. <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/JPS>
- Sharma, R. K. & Bist, R. B. (2026). Online learning community: University English teachers' engagement in using Facebook page. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science (IJTES)*, 10(2), 328-343. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijtes.5466>
- Shrestha, D. (2025). Generation Z's protest and political transformation in Nepal-2025 AD. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Innovative Research*, 2(10), 293-299. <https://doi.org/10.58806/ijmir.2025.v2i10n02>
- Timilsina, K. P. (2026). Nepal's political trajectory and challenges to democratic stability. *Journal of Political Science*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v26.i1.90796>
- Timilsina, P. (2026). Systemic stability and parliamentary dynamics after the 2026 electoral mandate. *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 64(2), 201-222.