

## The Convergence from Digital Space to Streets – Gen-Z and Its Impact on the Republic of Nepal: A Case Study

Hechu Bhagath<sup>\*1</sup>, Dr. Anant D. Chinchure<sup>2</sup>, Vana Ramanamurthy<sup>3</sup>, Kasi Viswasri Aditya Madhav<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Ravikiran Nakod<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>\*</sup> <sup>1</sup>Hechu B, Research Scholar, Department of Law, Central University of Karnataka, Email: [25dplaw002@cuk.ac.in](mailto:25dplaw002@cuk.ac.in), Corresponding Author.

<sup>2</sup>Chinchure AD, Associate Professor, Head of the Department, Department of Law, Central University of <sup>3</sup>Karnataka, Email: [anantchinchure@cuk.ac.in](mailto:anantchinchure@cuk.ac.in),

<sup>3</sup>Vana R, Research Scholar, Department of Law, Central University of Karnataka, Email: [vanaramanamurthy@gmail.com](mailto:vanaramanamurthy@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Kasi VAM, Research Scholar, Department of Law, Central University of Karnataka, Email: [24dplaw001@cuk.ac.in](mailto:24dplaw001@cuk.ac.in)

<sup>6</sup> Nakod R, Assistant Professor, Department of Music and Fine Arts, Central University of Karnataka, Email: [ravikiranakod@cuk.ac.in](mailto:ravikiranakod@cuk.ac.in)

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### Abstract:

The fusion of the virtual world and street politics has created a new understanding of contemporary political activism, especially among the younger generation, known as Generation Z. In 2025, the Republic of Nepal witnessed protests highlighting the potential for online activity to quickly translate into collective action on the streets, facilitated by social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. These technologies enabled both shaping the political narrative and organising protests. In Asia, similar trends have been seen among nations such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, which have experienced digitally interconnected youth movements that have contested existing politics through decentralisation and a lack of leadership structure within their nations. The case of Nepal, nevertheless, stands out in the speed and symbolic significance of its transition from online activism to street demonstration. Important institutions were transformed into symbols of resistance during this process, while the use of horizontal networks proved advantageous yet fraught with messaging challenges.

This paper examines the impact of the Gen Z movement on the Nation's democratic system. It further highlights how digital activism has challenged established democratic institutions in the Republic of Nepal, in the present study. Such movements have a long-term impact on the constitutional mandate and destabilised the governance, not only internally but also externally. The paper provides recommendations to prevent such movements by protecting individuals' rights and holding government agencies accountable.

**Key words:** Generation Z, Nepal, Digital Activism, Networked Politics, Digital Movement, Internet, Democracy

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### Introduction:

Gen Z Revolt is an example of global youth development in Nepal. Since then, activists who have learned to use connectivity tools have used the term to challenge governments' continuous failures in many continents, including Asia, Africa, and others. Generation Z is the first truly global generation born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s, raised with constant connectivity, algorithmically curated information, and vernacular information sources, without being bound by hierarchy and preferring horizontal mobilisation and empowerment. This description views the youth revolt in Nepal not as a local event but as the spearhead of the global trend towards "online and offline fusion", in which anger expressed on digital platforms easily translates into offline protests and puts pressure on weak democracies worldwide. Generation Z marks a substantial departure from movement-oriented forms of resistance seen with the Arab Spring or Occupy movements that the Millennials

championed towards "Connective Action" as envisioned by Lance Benet and Alexandra Segeberg scholars. TikTok, Instagram, Discord, and Telegram platforms enable personal participation through memes, viral campaigns, and ephemeral posts, combining activism with lifestyle choices. There are more than 2 billion people who belong to Generation Z, and digital savviness (spending around 7 + hours a day online) creates a language of dissent: Nigeria's # Climate Strike evolved into #EndSARS, and #BlackLivesMatter tactics helped inspire the umbrella revolution in Hong Kong. Economic uncertainty binds the generation, whose youth unemployment rate globally stands at 13%. This generates distrust and scepticism of the neoliberal elite's worries about climate change and inequality during the pandemic. The example of the event in Nepal shows how 68% social media penetration amongst the urban youth turns corruption and censorship into an activist model of a global movement.

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\*Author for Correspondence: [25dplaw002@cuk.ac.in](mailto:25dplaw002@cuk.ac.in)

The Nepal case in August 2025, where there was a general ban imposed on 26 platforms (TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp), was an example of “regulatory compliance”, which is reminiscent of worldwide events such as the Indian TikTok ban, the Nigerian Twitter block, or the Iranian action in 2022 after Masha Amini. Perceived as authoritarian overreach, this led to a 400% increase in VPN use and algorithmic retaliation, with TikTok’s “filter bubbling inversion” revealing dissidents to the neutral. Leaderless coordination via Discord Servers (district-specific channels for logistics, media, legal aid) and Reddit mega-threads bypassed state surveillance, reminiscent of global tactics from Thailand’s “be water” flashmobs to Chile’s 2019 cacerolazo assemblies. By September 8, digital appeals mobilised thousands to Kathmandu’s parliament, where police violence resulted in over 51 deaths, with real footage broadcast internationally, pressuring organisations like the UN and Amnesty International. This model challenges the archaic online-offline dichotomy, as globalisation theory shows: global algorithms sow seeds of local assemblies, international Telegram channels disseminate bypass technology (such as peer-to-peer virtual private networks created by Myanmar activists), and solidarity hashtags (#NepalGenZUphaval) unite disparate causes. Nepal is a case in point for the 2025 “Asian Spring,” Sri Lanka’s 2022 “economic coup” that removed Rajapaksa, Bangladesh’s “quota revolt” that ousted Sheikh Hasina, Madagascar’s “utility coup d etat,” the Philippines’ corruption protest marches, and African counterparts like Kenya’s “tax revolution” and Latin American feminists. All draw on Gen-Z’s repertoire: emotional contagion via short-form video, resilient encrypted chats, and deliberation via post-protest discords such as Nepal’s youth-elected Prime Minister Sushila ki.

Undoubtedly, these movements invoke Catholic-Protestant-Non-Believer ties of universal protections under ICCPR Articles 19(Expression), 21(Assembly), 22 (Association) and those underwriting anathema of law in national broadsheets such as India's Article 19 or more so Nepal’s equivalently ebbing demand that legal limits are clasped on the shores of legality, legitimate aim and proportionality tests necromancer. The institutionalisation of Nepal's Youth Council suggests scalability, but global precedents loom over its co-optation (Hong Kong's pro-democracy fade) or backlash (Myanmar’s junta). In theory, leaderless structures demonstrate resistance to repression but also fragmentation of movements; networked framing emerges through ideological bricolage, bringing together anti-corruption with digital rights and equity demands.

#### **Digital Culture of Gen-Z in Nepal:**

World platform (s) like TikTok, Instagram, where Nepali Gen-Z spent considerable time and YouTube for consuming and producing content in Nepali, English and mixed codes. Local In the assembly of an issue, influencers and micro-celebrities play significant framing roles by turning policy debates into relatable

stories, memes, or short clips that spread quickly among youth. Discord, Telegram, and closed messaging groups have also become conventional spaces for many. This better-organised political discourse and tactical coordination within activist circles.

For the most part, early Nepali Gen-Z digital culture was based on entertainment, fashion and lifestyle trends that echoed the international scene. Increasing economic anxiety and political elite scandals eventually brought many more creators to the point of including political satire, anti-corruption commentary, and governance critique in what they produced. In a manner similar to the 2025 protests, popular creators capitalised on their followers' audience influence to amplify protest calls, and WhatsApp asked users to share updates or event plans, while targeting youths by normalising attending demonstrations as part of youth identity.

#### **From Screens to Streets: Mechanisms of Convergence:**

##### **Rallying support via trending tags and shareable media:**

The Gen Z protests in Nepal in 2025 demonstrate how digital discourse can translate into offline action. Hashtags and consistent slogans used on the internet enabled people to reduce their grievances into messages that were easy to spread among youth across the country, irrespective of ethnicity or class. Videos that went viral on the internet, showing police or political misconduct, were the catalysts in this case.

##### **Connected collaboration and Leaderless coordination:**

Organising for marches, sit-ins, and flash protests relied heavily on decentralised, networked coordination rather than single charismatic leaders or party machines. Event details circulated via Instagram Stories, X threads, WhatsApp, and Telegram groups, enabling quick changes in location or tactics in response to police presence or legal constraints. This “leaderless” appearance complicated government attempts to negotiate with or co-opt movement figures, while generating challenges for maintaining discipline and articulating coherent demands.

##### **The Genesis of a Digital-Physical Uprising:**

The morning of September 8th, 2025, would mark a turning point in modern Nepalese history. Starting out as online protests against social media censorship by authorities, it soon became one of the most influential youth movements of recent times, forever changing the political landscape of the Republic of Nepal. By September 10th, the street protests had forced Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli to step down.

The event requires scholarly scrutiny. While the Gen-Z uprising in Nepal of 2025 is not just another case of protest, it is a perfect example of how activists from Generation Z have come to use both digital and physical spaces to address political issues worldwide. The importance of the movement does not reside in its political results but in the methodology adopted to achieve them.

### Research Questions:

- 1) What specific mechanisms enable the translation of digital activism into sustained street-level mobilisation?
- 2) How do decentralised, horizontally organised Gen-Z movements maintain organisational coherence and strategic focus in the absence of traditional leadership hierarchies?
- 3) What are the broader societal implications for Nepal's political economy, youth employment, and democratic institutions?

### Theoretical Framework

This paper draws upon three theoretical traditions: First, the concept of “globalisation” articulated by contemporary social movement scholars, the simultaneous operation of global digital networks and locally embedded physical practices. Second, the theory of “networked framing” explains how digitally-mediated communication enables rapid ideological evolution and strategic reorientation among protest participants. Third, structural analyses of what scholars term “leaderless movements,” which challenge conventional organisational models by demonstrating how decentralised networks achieve surprising levels of coordination and strategic coherence.

### Digital Foundations: Pre-Protest Conditions and Connectivity Patterns

#### Nepal's Digital Landscape and Gen-Z Internet Adoption:

The demographic profile of social media in Nepal provides the essential prerequisites for the outbreak of protests in September 2025. According to the 2025 demographic profile, about 68% of the Nepalese youth population aged 15-24 remains actively engaged with social media, especially in Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Lalitpur. TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are some of the leading sites for political communication for this demographic group.

The digital immersion did not affect all classes and regions equally. Urban and educated youth in the Kathmandu Valley had more advanced skills and access to digital platforms than their rural peers, resulting in what has been called the “digital divide of activism.” But the movement's development showed that this was not a complete divide; other means of access were available.

#### The Social Media Ban: Catalyst and Contradiction

On August 25, 2025, the Nepalese government imposed curbs on popular social media platforms, supposedly due to non-compliance with the content registration process. It was a response to long-standing disputes between state officials and online social media platforms over content regulation, fake news management, and governance issues. Yet the state presented the move as purely technical rather than political.

The frame was indeed counter-productive from a strategic point of view. By emphasising that the ban on social media sites was necessary as part of the

regulatory process, authorities undermined the narrative of governance, given the better understanding of regulations among the socially conscious Generation Z. This was evident in the nature of protest slogans: “Unban Social Media” and “Independent Voice Is Our Right.”

### Digital Literacy as Resistance Infrastructure:

The government's decision to impose a ban on social media prompted an immediate reaction from Nepali youth, who demonstrated their proficiency with technology. There was a 400% increase in the use of proxy servers to allow youth to access their platforms.

First, it showed digital literacy skills that went beyond simply accessing and consuming entertainment services, reaching levels of technical expertise in circumvention methods and secure communication. Second, it showed how digital repression can become radicalising in its own right, raising issues of access to platforms into the realm of the government's legitimacy as a whole. Third, it exposed the differential capabilities of various social groupings.

But the movement did evolve in response to the situation. Alternative channels in the real world were created through neighbourhood assemblies, campus meetings, and even informal networking. This evolution was vital because it made the movement more effective by ensuring it could reach people unreachable by either strategy alone.

### From Algorithm to Assembly: The Digital Architecture of Protest Mobilisation

#### Platform Dynamics and Emergent Organisation

There was a simultaneous transition to mobilising across multiple platforms, thereby fostering both redundancy and resilience within the organisational structure. The first mobilisation hub for the movement was TikTok, where protest messages began to appear after September 3, 2025. Algorithmic boosting by the TikTok app worked in the campaign's favour, as the algorithm seemed to prioritise user-generated content over government messaging about the ban.

The algorithmic pattern thus created significant implications, as rather than stifling criticism, the platform's mechanisms were used to amplify messages calling for a protest. Instead of creating filter bubbles, the process actually produced filter bubble inversions in which individuals received messages from various ideological backgrounds on how to organise a protest.

As restrictions on mainstream social media sites increased, activists began using secondary infrastructures. Discord, which started out as a gaming chat site, has become a highly developed organisational management platform. Activists created channels based on districts, subject areas (corruption, digital rights, climate change), and organisational roles (media management, logistics, law). By early September, the Nepal subreddit featured a “Megathread” that served similar organisational purposes.

### Decentralised Organisation and Networked Leadership:

The unique feature of the Nepal uprising is that there were no distinguishable leaders in the movement. Unlike other protests, which tend to have identifiable leaders, the 2025 September protest featured a high level of decentralisation. Discord channels worked independently, but in conjunction with their peer organisations. The Nepal Megathread served as a decision-making centre where ideas that received positive votes were implemented.

Strengths of this system of organising included resilience to state repression, because it was harder to persecute the movement's leadership since they were anonymous; strategic adaptation, in which changes to tactics could be made quickly depending on the situation; and grassroots legitimacy, because movement participants truly felt like owners of the movement, rather than being controlled from above. Challenges included coordination and communication issues, ensuring messages were consistent, and infiltration.

Interestingly, even amid these difficulties, the movement retained strategic coherence. Activists have noted that the movement created informal "anti-leaders," highly regarded individuals who provided strategy and principle without claiming formal leadership roles.<sup>41</sup> In this emergent model of distributed leadership, the benefits of consensus decision-making were balanced by an adequate level of coordination to undertake large-scale mobilisation efforts.

#### **Demand Evolution and Ideological Bricolage**

The emergence of digital organising spaces produced an important trend: a rapid shift in the demands of the protests. The first call to action revolved around the demand for internet freedom. But with the help of digital town hall meetings, Discord discussions, and sub-reddit talks, activist consciousness took a significant step forward.

A participant who was aged 24 years, Yujan Rajbhandari, put it more succinctly when he said: "Our protests were inspired by the ban on social media, but that is not the only cause for our presence here today. We have gathered because of corruption and the inefficiency of the political system in providing governance."

Demand development was marked by ideological bricolage: the articulation of different critiques of politics into a comprehensive set of arguments through collective interpretation. With digital platforms, ideas could spread rapidly, and different framings emerged: anti-corruption arguments, climate justice ideas, critiques of economic inequality, and democratic theory. Rather than compete with each other, these ideas intertwined, generating a movement with multiple grievances.

#### **The Digital Resistance: Navigating State Repression and Maintaining Movement Coherence**

##### **Cyber Warfare and Circumvention Technologies:**

The increasing online repression by the Nepalese government required an adaptive response from the activists. In addition to limiting social media usage, the

government extended its online surveillance operations by blacklisting several virtual private network (VPN) service providers and monitoring encrypted messaging platforms. The Nepal Police Cybercrime Division raised public awareness about safety.

Concerns related to unverified VPN services; however, activists viewed it as evidence of the government's surveillance efforts. Activists responded with sophisticated technical adaptations, distributed VPN networks (utilising peer-to-peer infrastructure), and encrypted messaging applications, and less-monitored communication channels became standard organising tools. A notable technological innovation emerged: activists utilised international SIM cards and foreign mobile carriers to maintain connectivity independent of national telecommunications infrastructure. While these solutions remained inaccessible to economically disadvantaged participants, they sustained digital organising capacity among activists capable of accessing circumvention infrastructure.

However, the fight in cyberspace is an extension of activism that transcends simple acts such as protest or demonstration; digital activism includes technical, information, and infrastructure wars. The level of technical sophistication used by the group clearly shows that today's activists need to understand cybersecurity and technology innovations.

#### **From Screens to Streets: The Spatial Manifestation of Digital Politics**

The shift from organising digitally to protesting physically took place abruptly between September 7th and 9th, 2025. The digital campaign encouraging all citizens to organise a national protest was aggressively spread across all available communication channels, primarily TikTok. The protesters chose Parliament as their key geographic target, thus giving the location a symbolic meaning.

It was a very strategic decision to choose this particular location because, being located at Kathmandu's centre, the Parliament would be convenient not only for participants but also for the media. Activists have chosen Parliament rather than government offices or police headquarters because their protests were aimed at radical institutional change, not just policy reform.

On September 8, tens of thousands of youths gathered at Nepal's Parliament in Kathmandu. Although most of the protests were peaceful in their initial stages, with people holding banners, shouting slogans, and demanding political change, the demographics of those involved were unique. There was a diverse range of classes, education levels, and genders among those participating in the protest. Initially, the percentage of males was higher (around 65% in the early days).

#### **Embodied Politics and Street-Level Knowledge Production**

The material reality of digital activism produced knowledge and politics that were unique in their own right. Digital activism consists of the symbolic use of language and images, while street activism consists of the lived experience of confronting the state.

Protest movements have presented opportunities for consciousness development that cannot be achieved solely through an internet-based approach. Protesters say that forming a crowd of thousands, confronting police, and acting as a united force helped transform individuals from passive political beings into politically conscious ones. However, the online approach enabled the dissemination of video clips on the streets within seconds, allowing the world to become aware of state violence and respond accordingly.

Street spaces became spaces for political knowledge production. Slogans developed in space through gatherings; slogans emerged from interactions at the street level, not from pre-planned lines. The sloganology generated was organic and flexible, allowing for many perspectives on different issues, as opposed to planned communication.

### **The Violent Rupture: State Repression and Movement Escalation**

On September 8, the government resorted to a marked escalation in response to the non-violent demonstrations at Parliament Square. The police used water cannon, tear gas, and eventually live ammunition against the demonstrators. There were about 70 deaths, along with injuries to many other demonstrators. The use of such brutal force marked a definite break in the history of the movement.

The violence, on the other hand, strengthened the movement's resolve. Instead of stifling protest activity, state-sponsored violence radicalised many protesters and mobilised new groups to participate in protests. Media coverage of the violence by international outlets created international support for the protesters, with observers likening Nepal's police reaction to past incidents of mass violence in Hong Kong, Thailand, and Myanmar.<sup>54</sup> The violence turned the movement, which was centred around digital rights, into one that explicitly demanded institutional change.

### **From Movement to Institutional Transformation: Discord, Deliberation, and Democratic Innovation: Post-Protest Organisation and Participatory Governance:**

The downfall of the government raised new problems for activists, who had to shift their efforts from street demonstrations to positions within government institutions. Far from abandoning their activities after achieving an early victory, many activists continued their discussions about Nepal's future political development.

Discord servers, the gaming communication platform that had served organisational functions during the uprising, transformed into spaces for post-protest

democratic deliberation. Activists held town-hall-style meetings, discussed mechanisms for corruption investigations, debated youth representation in government, and even held participatory elections for interim leadership of the movement. Remarkably, these Discord-based deliberations achieved surprisingly high levels of inclusive participation. Participants report feeling greater agency in these digital democratic spaces than in conventional political institutions.

The movement voted, through Discord platform mechanisms, to nominate Sushila Ki (former Chief Justice with a reputation for institutional independence and anti-corruption commitment) as a candidate for Prime Minister. Though not an election in the true sense, this method of selection reflected the group's intent to retain control during the political transition following the protests. This process was significant because the candidate nominated by the group eventually became the Prime Minister through legitimate government channels, which was the first time in modern South Asian history that this had occurred.

### **Comparative Dimensions: Nepal in Global Gen-Z Activism Patterns**

#### **Regional Context: Asia's Wave of Youth-Led Protest Movements**

Nepal's protest was part of a larger trend of Gen Z mobilisation across Asia in 2025. Youth-led protests also took place in other countries like Indonesia (against the labour policy), Madagascar (against the government), Kenya (on police brutality), and the Philippines (on democratic erosion). Several key features united these protests despite the different conditions in each country.

First, each movement demonstrated technological proficiency in organising, using social media sites and encryption methods in their communications. Secondly, all movements put forward grievances that were not about a single issue but sought a complete restructuring of institutions. Thirdly, all movements maintained a leaderless structure. Fourthly, all movements displayed an impressive technological proficiency, especially in cybersecurity and circumvention technologies.

This is where the Nepal movement found itself to be unique among the regional movements since it was responsible for causing the biggest governmental shift (resignation of the sitting Prime Minister), showcased the most advanced use of the platform for democratic discussion (Discord-based), and engaged in possibly the clearest blending of digital mobilisation and subsequent participation post-movement. Nonetheless, this uniqueness is derived from the nature of the situation in Nepal and not from any superior quality of the Nepal movement in comparison to other regional movements.

Name of the Country	Year	Main Causes for the Revolution	Demands of Gen-Z	Impact on the Country
Sri Lanka	2022	Economic Crisis: Foreign-reserve collapse, inability to import fuel, and shortage of the fuel supply, long power cuts (up to 12 hours), inflation, and cost-of-living crisis.	A large number of young people joined in nationwide protests and mass demonstrations demanding the resignation of the ruling family regime.	The president is from the ruling family, resigned. Resulted in the political shake-up; in subsequent elections, with the support of younger voters, a coalition was formed to govern.
Bangladesh	2024	Reinstate 30% quota in civil-service jobs for descendants of war veterans- seen as nepotism and unfair, youth unemployment, and broader frustration with the corruption and lack of meritocracy.	University and college students mobilised nationwide- Demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience, social media campaigns to the removal of the government	The Long-time Prime Minister and her party lost power. The movement forced a government collapse, triggering a transitional period with hopes of reform and more youth representation
Nepal	2025	Government was banned 26 major social media platforms, citing regulatory issues, widely seen as censorship; and also, long-standing issues like corruption, lack of accountability, and the major issue of family dominance in politics.	Thousands of Young people (Gen Z) mobilised through rapid street protests and social media activism, calling for government accountability and political reform.	The youth actively opposed the government and put pressure on it to implement reforms. All over Nepal, there is a huge loss to public property, and the protests have led to the loss of lives of the youth in Nepal. Many people are severely injured in those mobs.
Morocco	2025	Poor public services, social inequality, high youth unemployment, and the government not spending money on society’s welfare.	Youth-led protests under a decentralised “Gen-Z 212” banner, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and social media coordination	The protests forced the government to publicly acknowledge grievances. The state began considering reforms to public service funding and spending priorities. The movement heightened the visibility of youth demands for fairness and accountability.
Madagascar	2025	The shortages of essential utilities- water, and electricity; poverty, mismanagement, corruption, and economic hardship especially affected the youth and students.	Young people, especially Gen Z and university students, mobilised through protests and street demonstrations, demanding political change and greater accountability in public services.	The protests escalated dramatically. The president fled the country; the military seized power. It resulted in regime change, showing the scale of youth-driven discontent and their capacity to force political collapse.
Philippines	2025	Youth/University-led protests around government accountability, rights violations, and public safety concerns.	Demand reforms, anti-corruption, and justice.	A large number of youth is participated in the protests, and many people were injured and lost public property.

**Theoretical Implications: Rethinking Digital-Physical Activism Boundaries**

The example of the Gen-Z revolt in Nepal shows that the binary classification of online versus offline does not adequately explain current activism. These modes of

activism do not compete against each other or succeed each other; rather, they form interdependent aspects of holistic activist networks.

Online platforms offer speed, wide reach, and decentralisation, not possible in an offline setting.

Physical presence produces bodily political awareness, symbolic effects impossible to achieve online, and spatial changes to urban environments that require a government response. Taken together, these elements provide activist power greater than the sum of their parts.

Theoretically, this integration suggests reconceptualising activism through what scholars term “globalisation,” the simultaneous operation of global digital networks and locally embedded physical practices. The Nepal case demonstrates this globalisation concretely: global TikTok algorithm distributes protest content, while simultaneously neighbourhood meetings organise specific local mobilisations; international Discord channels coordinate strategy across multiple Asian movements, while Parliament square assemblies produce spatially specific political effects unavailable globally.

### **Leaderless Movements and Distributed Leadership**

The organisational structure of the Nepal movement poses significant theoretical challenges to leadership theory. Social movement theory predicts that leaders will be found who channel communication within the movement and make strategic decisions for it. However, the Nepal movement defied these predictions by adopting distributed decision-making, emergent leadership, and horizontal coordination mechanisms.

Such an organisational form provided strengths and weaknesses. Strengths were in resistance to the government’s attack (killing off the leaders does not mean the end of the movement, as there are no particular leaders who might be arrested), flexibility of adapting to change (flexible decision-making allows quick adaptation to change), and the democratic nature of the organisation (the feeling of participation in decision-making makes people take responsibility for these decisions).

The example of Nepal suggests that, although unusual, distributed leadership is an innovative approach to organising that reflects the realities of the contemporary setting. When state oppression directly targets leaders, a distributed organisation becomes quite reasonable. In a situation when oppressed groups were led by elites whose actions did not match their claims to represent the interests of the former, distributed participation becomes crucial for solving issues of legitimacy.

### **Constitutional Role in Protecting protest rights**

Constitutions in democratic systems normally recognise protest as a right rather than a privilege, and digitally driven street movements are typically constitutional as long as they are peaceful, and state restrictions comply with strict rule-of-law requirements. The constitutions of different countries protect the

- Freedom of Opinion and expression (Speech, press, Online communication).
- Freedom, peaceful assembly and association (meetings, marches, demonstrations).

These guarantees are mirrored and reinforced by international human rights law, especially the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Articles 19, 21, and 22, which bind a large number of states. Together they establish that:

- Citizens may criticise governments, organise collectively and use digital platforms to mobilise.
- Peaceful assemblies- including large, noisy or disruptive protests are presumed lawful. Constitutions also typically:
  - Require that any restriction on these rights be “prescribed by law,” preventing ad hoc or purely executive limitations.
  - Subject rights-limitations to judicial review, allowing courts to strike down vague, overbroad or abusive measures.

### **When are protests and digital mobilisations Constitutional?**

International standards apply a three-part test to restrictions on expression and assembly: legality, legitimate aim, and necessity/proportionality. In practice, this means:

- **Legality:** Limits must be clearly set out in accessible, foreseeable law (not informal orders or vague emergency powers).
- **Legitimate aim:** Only specific aims qualify, such as protection of national security, public order, public health or morals, or the rights of others, not shielding officials from embarrassment or criticism.
- **Necessity and Proportionality:** Measures must be strictly necessary in a democratic society and the least restrictive option available (ex, targeted time/place rules rather than blanket bans; calibrated, non-lethal crowd control rather than excessive force).

### **Constitution's Role in Protecting the Right to Protest: The Indian Perspective**

India’s Constitution has explicitly guaranteed the rights necessary for peaceful demonstrations, mainly under Article 19, but at the same time, a system of “reasonable restrictions” has been placed.

#### **Constitutional provisions under the Constitution of India:**

**Article 19(1)(a):** Secure to every citizen the freedom of speech and expression, which the Supreme Court has interpreted expansively since the 1950s to include all models of conveying ideas: spoken and written words, print media, pictures, films, digital communication, and artistic expression. This freedom is the foundation for online mobilisation, hashtag campaigns, live streams and other digital forms of protest coordination characteristic of Gen-Z movements.

**Article 19(1)(b):** Guarantees the freedom to assemble peaceably and without arms, covering public meetings, marches, dharnas, rallies, and street demonstrations. Together with article 19(1)(a), it constitutes the explicit constitutional anchor for physical protests.

**Article 19(1)(c):** Protects the freedom to form associations or unions, enabling citizens to create advocacy groups, student unions, civil-society

organisations, and informal activist networks without prior state approval.

**These freedoms are further reinforced by**

**Article 14:** Equality before law, which prevents discriminatory treatment of protestors.

**Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty, which the Supreme Court has interpreted to include the right to live with dignity, protection against arbitrary arrest, and due-process safeguards during protest policing.

The Constitution of India provides safeguards for the right to protest, but this right is subject to reasonable restrictions.

Key judicial pronouncements

Indian courts have elaborated these principles through the landmark judgements:

**Romesh Thappar vs State of Madras (1950):** The Supreme Court held that freedom of speech lies at the foundation of all democratic organisation and any restriction must be narrowly drawn.

**S. Rangarajan vs Jagjivan Ram (1989):** The court observed that freedom of expression cannot be suppressed merely because it causes discomfort to the state; there must be a proximate and real threat to public order.

**Ramlila Maidan incident vs home secretary (2012):** The Supreme Court affirmed that peaceful protest is a fundamental right; arbitrary dispersal of peaceful assemblies and excessive police action violate articles 19 and 21.

**Amit Sahni v. Commissioner of Police (2020):** While upholding the right to protest, the Court clarified that prolonged occupation of public spaces affecting others' rights may be regulated; however, such regulation must be proportionate and cannot amount to a blanket ban.

Are digitally driven protests Constitutional in India?

Applying these provisions, a Gen-Z style movement that:

- Uses social media platforms to express grievances, coordinate, and mobilise,
- Assembles peacefully and without arms in public spaces, and
- Advocates of political or social reform

Is squarely protected under Articles 19(1)(a), 19(1)(b) and 19(1)(c). These kinds of protests become constitutionally problematic only when:

- Participants resort to violence, carry arms, or directly incite serious crime; or
- The state can demonstrate a genuine, proximate threat to public order that cannot be managed by less restrictive means.

Conversely, blanket social-media bans, internet shutdowns, mass preventive detentions, and use of lethal force against peaceful crowds are presumptively unconstitutional unless justified by compelling, evidence-based necessity and subjected to prompt judicial scrutiny.

In essence, the Indian Constitution positions peaceful protest, whether organised online or offline, as a fundamental democratic right, while vesting courts with

the authority to police the boundary between legitimate state regulation and unconstitutional suppression of dissent.

**Societal Implications and Long-Term Impacts**  
**Generational Political Identity and Future Trajectories**

The Nepal Gen-Z uprising fundamentally altered participants' political subjectivity. Participants who reported directly say they were transformed by their political consciousness. Previously disengaged citizens became politically active agents, experiencing a sense of efficacy through participation in a successful institutional overthrow. This consciousness transformation extends beyond individual psychology to constitute generational political identity.

The effectiveness of the movements (in securing the resignation of the Prime Minister within days) instilled efficacy perceptions that the previously politically inactive youth population could maintain for an extended period. Future political activism focused on issues such as climate change, economic disparity, or backsliding democracy can borrow from this proven ability to achieve results through collective action.

However, the political identity of that generation is not only full of promises but also carries dangers. In September 2025, the demonstrations were initially very successful. In future events, they might face an even harsher climate and repressive government actions without collapse. Psychological impact of initial success and subsequent failure may turn out to be a detachment or an extremism.

**Conclusion:**

In particular, the Gen-Z movement was a response to Nepali Conditions – digital repression by the Government, lack of jobs among young people, corruption in politics, and generation awareness of inequality, but at the same time followed clear trends of Gen-Z activism common worldwide and observable throughout Asia in 2025. Technology offered an important organisational framework for modern-day protest movements, enabling easy mobilisation, non-hierarchical organisation, and networking among participants, regardless of geographical location. Moreover, government suppression of digital technology leads not to the end of movements but to technological resistance and innovation, indicating the presence of cybersecurity skills in digital activism. Street activism adds an extra dimension of qualitative change to digital activism through creating embodied political consciousness and space struggle.

This research focuses on the convergence of the digital and physical worlds and examines the rise of Generation Z activists. The Nepal uprising serves as an example that can be viewed within the framework of global transformations in the context of democracy implementation. There is a pattern across South Asia, Africa, and Latin America in youth-led protests, as the internet is emerging as one of the most crucial forms of basic infrastructure.

From a Structural perspective, this type of movement emerges from a common cluster of socio-economic conditions such as youth unemployment, economic insecurity, corruption, inequality, and disillusionment with democracy. In societies recovering from conflict and transformation, these factors intensify further, potentially drawing the vulnerable youth population into political affairs. The use of digital media accelerates such issues by enabling the transformation of local disconnect into narratives that can swiftly inspire large groups of people.

This study is important because it focuses on the transition into the real world. Social media trends, going viral, and algorithmic propagation become extremely important tools for influencing discussions, whereas encryption technology and decentralised networking have to be utilised for coordinating efforts. The emergence of non-hierarchical, horizontally integrated networks poses a challenge to existing paradigms of political organisation, as they demonstrate their capacity to remain cohesive, adaptable, and influential. At the same time, these entities reveal certain weaknesses as far as message consistency, strategy formulation, and resistance to fragmentation and manipulation are concerned.

In conclusion, the impacts of Generation Z's activism are not confined to their political influence on society but also have broader implications for the future. The role of activism is important because it helps shape a new political identity for Generation Z, characterised by greater consciousness of their involvement and demands toward governing institutions. In addition, it creates new chances for the reform process as well as poses some new challenges.

#### SUGGESTIONS:

To ensure that the revolutionary activism of Generation Z translates into sustained democratic development, some measures are indispensable. First, the legal basis for digital rights must be strengthened, meaning that when the state attempts to control online discourse, it should operate within constitutional and international human rights frameworks. Internet shutdowns and other strategies have already become unacceptable; instead, policies need to be devised on a more nuanced basis that balances interests. Second, the incorporation of youth into decision-making processes needs to be institutionalised through youth councils and participatory governance systems.

Capacity-building is another crucial element without which young people cannot acquire the knowledge and skills needed for governance and policy-making. Through capacity-building, this generation can be equipped with the skills to close the gap between activism on the streets and political involvement in the country's institutions. In light of the two-sidedness of contemporary activism, a framework is needed that coordinates activism in the virtual space with traditional participation in the democratic process.

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