

GEN-ZS OF GLOBAL SOUTH: THE REFORMERS OF CIVIC CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper analysis the cause and effects of Gen-z led political riots in the global south particularly of the South Asia that not only disrupted the classic paradigm of political mobilization but also altered the nature of civic culture in its entirety. This paper argues that the Gen-z is leading a new period of hyperconnected social media activism that combines both the international tech culture and domestic socio-economic discontents. Through this method, they are establishing a new performance oriented political belonging and awakening, functioning more or less out of political institutions and pointing to a potentially irreversible change in the ways of thinking and active civic engagement in 21st century. A generation of hyperconnected and economically disadvantaged, politically ignorant and alienated youngsters are arising bringing drastic changes to the established and an organized political system. Even though the youth have never ceased being the forerunner of political change, the current contractions are characterized by a decentralized, digitally native stressed youngsters. The generational gap they have experienced can be called a generational rupture, the gap between a generation born in the age of digital omnipresence and instant wide connection and a generation of old school members. The dissatisfaction by the Gen-zs are not ideological but also due to economic deprivation and mass unemployment. In all the Gen-zs are constructing a new civic identity that is fluid, flexible and inclusive.

Keywords: *Gen-Z, Civic Culture, Nepotism, Digital activism, Monarchy, Internet shutdown*

INTRODUCTION

The work "Gen-z" originated from its place in alphabetical sequence of generations, following Generation X and Generation Y. Gen-z is the generation of people born between late 1990s and early 2000s. The name is also sometime linked to the term "zoomer", referring to this generation being the first to zoom across the internet from a very young age. As the growing young population of Africa, South and Southeast Asia that totals around 1.5 billion people-i.e about 60% of regional populations. These new generation leads activism and protest when confronted with corrupt and unjust practices. A shifting job market and lack of quality education have also kept the generation depressed. Gen-z stifled by internet shutdowns and censors, corrupt governments and a deficit of job opportunities is wreaking havoc on governments in Africa and South Asia. As a domino effect, one after another being triggered and influenced by their neighboring or regional political climate, youth led uprisings have spread in Kenya, Bangladesh, Nepal. Indonesia, Morocco and Madagascar becoming a major political force overthrowing the governments in their countries to reverse manipulating policies. Youth centric demography is a double edged- sword: they can trigger the nations in the global south to attain the developmental measures with the right opportunities of education, liberal economic policies especially or an open economy, efficient and transparent governance mechanism otherwise they can be a source of chaos and instability where corruption and of failing of policies exist. Gen-zs are a driving political force-the outcome which will ripple through the economic political and social order and be moulded by it.

In a world of multi-crisis, adds another layer of challenge that countries in the youthful nation faces. Many of these states are trying to navigate and find an apt solution for their demographic challenges in the midst of an uncertain, complex world order: two dominant economically aggressive major powers, deep debt amidst shrinking aid, grants and devastating environmental challenges. Debt in Bangladesh for instance has grown exponentially over the past decade amounting to over 103 billion. Serving this debt intakes 13% of government revenues, that affects funds for education, health and other public services. Foreign debt, an unscientific and non sensical tax base and American Tariffs of 35% are disrupting the countrys' once robust textile industry which is second only to China in terms of export and a major labour-intensive sector. Whereas, in Nepal the earlier protests were triggered by an abrupt ban on social media which was to silence the dissenters. The main factors for the rage included a weak and largely informal economy that is majorly dependent on foreign remittances for 27% of GDP, Foreign debt consuming 29% of government revenue and limited spending on public services and welfare schemes and 20% of mass unemployment that compounds the problem. The youths were frustrated with the elite corruption and widening inequality, that resulted in a youth led movement toppling the government within 48 hours. From Nepal to Indonesia, Srilanka to Bangladesh, Asian youths are furious. Protest shows a generation unwilling to accept and tolerate inequality and injustice as their destiny.

THE YOUTH LED RIOTS IN THE ASIAN COUNTRIES

The Unrest in Nepal

In the Himalayan country of Nepal the people's movement was for democracy and took 19 days to oust the monarchy but currently there is demand for the restoration of monarchist sentiments and hot rage against corrupt government. The whole movement began as a generational chaotic uprising against systematic corruption and nepotism but the latest trigger was a government-imposed ban on all social media platforms. However, the anger has been building for years. The ferocity of the youth who make up around 40% of population and have witnessed the country through 14 governments in 16 years with bare progress on education education, jobs or infrastructure development finally culminated into violence. The youth movement also created for new political voices-some among them demanding stronger democratic reforms. Nepal's P.M, K.P Sharma Oli was forced to resigned after two days of demonstrations over an abrupt social media ban. At least 19 people were killed and hundreds more injured. Blocking the app was the sudden catalyst for their frustrations and the remaining of living under a government that is out of touch with their concerns. These digital tools are vital in a country where approximately one in 4 live below national poverty line. In February 2022, demonstrators opposing a 500 million U.S grant clashed with the police forces and dozens were detained amid fears that the deal would compromise our national sovereignty. There has been demand for Hindu statehood due to the mis happenings with the government. In 2023 the government approved for a controversial National Cyber Security Policy, introducing provisions such as state-controlled internet gateway. Rights group warned the move could enable mass surveillance, online censorship and endanger data privacy which lacks protections of freedom of expression. The appointment of Arzoo Rana Dauba to parliament through proportional representation despite speculation that she might not win a direct first past the post election is seen as betrayal of the spirit of Nepal's constitution which

intended proportional representation for women and people from marginalized groups who are not politically powerful. Nepotism, misuse of state resources and a political class that appears detached from the struggles of ordinary Nepalis have deepened the trust deficit. Gen-z is not simply rebelling, they are demanding systemic reforms. Demonstrators expressed dissatisfaction with unemployment and mismanagement of public funds by political elites. The protests centered on governance and political accountability. The situation was aggravated by banning of 26 social media sites. Nepal now stands at crossroads. It can either continue the path of kleptocracy where wealth and power remain concentrated in a few hands or it can seize this moment to rebuild trust in governance and government. Justice must be served both for those who pulled the trigger and those who gave the orders. Nepal must create a mechanism to include Genz voices in governance, ensuring their concerns are heard before frustrations spills into the street again. Nepal's sensitive geopolitical position has always complicated its internal politics. Sandwiched between two giant neighbours- India to the south and China to the north-every major political instability raises suspicion of foreign policy. While Gen-z's movement is homegrown, many Nepali's worry that external powers may try to exploit the current political situation to advance their own strategic interests-making Nepal to find solutions from within, focusing on building an inclusive governance system that actually serves its people and shields the country from unwanted foreign influence.

The riot in Srilanka

In Srilanka -their experiences are of a cautionary tale. In 2022 a largely youth led protest movement known as Agralaya borrowing its name from Sinhala word for struggle that forced the resignation of president Gotabaya Rajapaksha and the political clan. His incompetent, nearly 3year rule culminated with the nation economically melting down. The government foreign reserve crisis meant it was not even unable to pay import duties that ended up in citizens standing in a long queue for petrol and daily 13hour power cuts which was unmanageable for the commoners. Only last year did electorates find an authentic alternative in NPP led by Anura Kumara Dissanayake. Protests in Srilanka has evolved beyond the streets and penetrated into the places of power corridors. Demands should focus not just toppling the government or authorities but reform should take place on the efficient functioning of courts, election commissions, legislatures, police forces and also by creating an independent watch dogs. Movements solely led by youth will dissolve when the anger or the moment of heat fades. Building a viable and structural political parties or coalitions that can confidently and credibly stand for elections is essential and restore public faith in the authorities is essential in the long run.

Jasmine revolution in West Asia

The Arab spring or Jasmine revolution offers relevant lessons. More than a decade ago, youthful revolts toppled dictators from Tunisia to Egypt and Libya but movement collapsed and ended with worsening repression in certain parts of the region.

PROBABLE CAUSES ON THE GEN-Z UPRISINGS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Gen-z led violent demonstrations across global south point to the long term socio-economic and environmental crisis caused by neo-liberalism and also they have been co-opted by entrenched social classes.

There is youth dominance across the global south, where the average age is 25 years and youngsters in these regions find themselves as victims of debt-ridden societies, climate catastrophe and permanent war.

Youth in the global south are stressed and anxious with the mass unemployment. Neo-liberalism has left state with weakened capacity, leaving very few solutions and options to address this problem. Educated youth with middle class aspirations are unable to find apt employment opportunities that leads to disguised unemployment or skills mismatch. Gen-z is the most educated and literate generation in history yet it is also the most obligated and underemployed. This paradox between ambition and precarity produces resentment and anger.

Youngsters do not want to migrate in order to have a respectable life. In Nepal young protestors chanted against the forceful economic migration. This compulsion to migrate evokes embarrassment about one's own culture and feeling of alienation from the history of national movements that has shaped one's nation.

Large agri-business and mining companies have grinded their assault on small holder workers and farmers. Youth from these families are fed up with rural distress and radicalized by the often - failed protests of their parents move to the cities and then abroad for jobs. They bring experiences from the country sides to cities and are often the main reasons of these movements.

For Gen-z the issues of climate change and continuous natural calamities is not an inattention but a cause of proletarianization through displacement and financial exploitation. They understand that the recurrent climate crisis is directly linked to their inability to work and build a present let alone a future.

This generations main interaction with the state are through rigid and inflexible bureaucrats and militarized police. The old national parties have exhausted their agenda or had it destroyed by sternness and mishandling of finances, leading to political voidness in global south. To get rid of them all is an activism that ends with a focus on social media political commentators and influencers who have not participated in real party politics but often use their platforms to preach a gospel of anti-politics and middle-class dissatisfaction.

The rise of informal and blue-collar labourers workers have created an unorganized society with no hope of fellow feelings among workers or memberships in mass organizations like trade unions. The uberisation of working conditions and the gig platforms have created an informality of life itself, where worker is alienated from all the connections and are pressurized to perform. The cruciality of social media rises with the increase in informality as the internet becomes the main platform for exchange of ideas and thoughts replacing older forms of political organizations. It is attractive but erroneous to conclude that social media is the main driving force behind these impulsive riots. Social media is a communication instrument of ideas, strategies and tactics. Internet is also a tool for surplus extraction and interactions. Platform workers are continuously monitored and disciplined by algorithms that force them to work harder for a minimum wage.

These reasons have been mainly urban with small indication that they have drawn in rural areas. The goals and aim of these protests rarely addresses the long term or the complex structural-

functional crisis in the underdeveloped nations. To put things straightforwardly the typical politics of Gen-z uprisings lead in to an abyss of middle-class resentment. These protests like in Bangladesh and Nepal are created and supported by entrenched social forces that entertain the voices on the streets and develop conspiracies that benefit the western financiers. The solution in the long term is to articulate the authentic grievances into a social policy that demands a higher share of social and economic surplus and uses that surplus to enhance net fixed investment and transform social conditions of the masses.

CONCLUSION

The cause and effects of Gen-z led uprisings in the global south particularly of the south asia that not only disrupted the classic paradigm of political mobilization but also altered the nature of civic culture in its entirety. The Gen-z is leading a new period of hyperconnected social media activism that combines both the international tech culture and domestic socio-economic discontents. Through this method, they are establishing a new performance oriented political belonging and awakening, functioning more or less out of political institutions and pointing to a potentially irreversible change in the ways of thinking and acting civic engagement in 21st century. A generation of hyperconnected and economically frustrated politically ignorant and alienated youngsters are arising bringing drastic changes to the established political domain. Youth congregated on discord using pseudonym such as jalebi and ghost to discuss political leaders and their disappointment with the government. Nepal's case exemplifies youth aspiration for employment and dignified life. When nepo kids flaunted luxuries, this showcased the gap between masses and political elites-particularly egregious when a new democratic framework had promised inclusivity and better life. Social media generated activism has tendency towards slacktivism people restricting internet to clicks rather than real time action. Even though the youth have never ceased being the forerunner of political change ,the current spasms are characterized by a decentralized, digitally native stressed youngsters. The generational beak they have experienced can be called a generational rupture, the gap between a generation born in the age of digital omnipresence and instant wide connection and a generation of old school members. The dissatisfaction by the Gen-zs are not ideological but also due to economic deprivation and mass unemployment. In all the Gen-zs are constructing a new civic identity that is fluid, flexible and inclusive.

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