

Yet Another Longpost on the Gen Z Protest

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In recent times, there has been three-four countries in the South Asian region that have experienced youth movements, starting in Sri Lanka in 2022 against the economic crisis, followed by Bangladesh and Nepal in 2024 and 2025 respectively against their respective governments, and India in May-June and October 2026 against leaked examination papers and the allegation of stealing votes against the Election Commission of India, with arguably a predecessor in Myanmar in 2021 as the youth resisted the military coup that ousted the elected government and launched the country into a years-long civil war. These have been termed Gen-Z protests after the generation of people born between 1996 and 2010.

However, the concept of Gen Z is not native to South Asia. The demographic phenomenon of the “baby boom” which happened across many western countries in the period of relative prosperity in the years after the second world war, which led to subsequent generations being named Generations X, Y, Z, and now Alpha, did not happen the same way in the South Asian region. Points of generational distinction in India is made in decades: 80s kids, 90s kids, 00s kids, but even this is a nostalgic categorization made for remembrance of commodities past, thanks to the opening up of the Indian market to foreign goods and culture. It was, for example, the millennial/ “90s kid” youth that got out on the streets for Anna Hazare, and, a while later, for Nirbhaya, but these were never called the Gen Y protests.

Therefore, the Gen-Z protests get their name from the very phenomenon that facilitated such protest in the first place: the social internet. The Bangladesh Quota Reform Movement was facilitated by coordination and rally organization, which was then quashed by internet blockages across the country that have now been established as being ordered by Zunaïd Ahmed Palak without administrative or judicial approval. The Nepal protests culminated in the election of an interim Prime Minister on a Discord server by 7586 young Nepalis.

The Indian Gen Z protests have so far had a few key players: the Cockroach Janata Party, named after an infamous statement by the Chief Justice of India and headed by Abhijeet Dipke, Saurav Das, and Ashutosh Ranka, the Indian National Congress, headed by Rahul and Sonia Gandhi, and the left parties, represented in the popular media by AISA president Neha Bora, with social and education rights activist Sonam Wangchuk joining the NEET movement. Thus, unlike the other South Asian countries where the movements operated as fluid peer-to-peer networks and only had organizers like Nahid Islam and Sudan Gurung as figureheads, the Indian protests have not been as decentralized.

This centralization of visibility of protest leaders like Neha Bora, Rahul Gandhi, and the three-four people of the frivolously-named Cockroach Janata Party is a double-edged sword. While the state’s capacity for violence and illegitimate violations of its own codes of conduct are hypervisibilized and may galvanize into votes for the Rahul Gandhi-led Congress Party, other options remain limited. The left does not have enough support for a nationwide campaign, the AAP and TMC have declined from the loss of power and the exodus of MPs and MLAs to NDA-allied political groups, and the Cockroach Janata Party claims to not wish to enter electoral politics.

On the other hand, due to the Gen Z protests being a heavily digitally-mediated movement, a multi-pronged movement is easier to distract from the main issues at hand. The title of this article is a reference to this sheer number of text posts on the Gen-Z protest, some of them clearly generated by AI, that currently do the rounds on social media.

For example, when Abhijeet Dipke first landed in India during the NEET protests, there were apprehensions that he would be arrested upon arrival. When that did not happen, the Cockroach Janata Party was compared to the Aam Aadmi Party that had destabilized the Congress-led second UPA government. On the other hand, the protest demonstration led by the CJP and the Left student parties on October 12th was met with police violence, as did the demonstration led by Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi on October 2nd, but the demonstration on October 13th led by the Congress did not face the same police brutality as the day before. This led, ironically, to the Congress being labeled a “B-team” for the BJP. On the internet, similar debates have occurred on caste lines, gender lines, and so on.

It is not clear how many of these “debates” are borne out of legitimate concern and how many are followers or paid members of the BJP (or even other political entities) instructed to act moderate from anonymous accounts with huge amounts of engagement in an effort to “divide and rule.” Added to this is the fact that a lot of social media content is made through bots (often called the “dead internet theory”), which reduces the indexicality of the concept of “user” as a fellow human being. This has led to an erosion of trust in internet content from the very generation that is organizing and circulating its protests on it. Unlike Sri Lanka, Nepal, or Bangladesh, where the movement was short and aimed directly at regime change, the Indian Gen-Z protests aim towards political accountability and are thus slower, thereby allowing the political establishment the time it needs to push a counter-strategy to the forefront, be it shifting the New Delhi’s designated protest sites away from the city itself, or making new Subreddits to push onto the algorithms of the general Reddit user.

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