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# NEPAL'S POLITICAL EARTHQUAKE: FROM GEN Z PROTESTS TO REGIONAL REPERCUSSIONS

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**NEPAL'S POLITICAL EARTHQUAKE: FROM GEN Z PROTESTS TO REGIONAL  
REPERCUSSIONS BY AMB (PROF) SD MUNI**

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Nepal's recent political upheaval is far more than a localised rebellion; it reflects a larger global and regional trend where democracies are under pressure, youth discontent is rising, and strategic alignments are shifting rapidly. According to Prof. S.D. Muni, a renowned scholar of South Asian affairs, the events in Nepal are part of a broader wave of democratic degeneration and political unrest across the Global South, especially in countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. At the global level, three interconnected forces are driving the crisis of governance in emerging democracies. First, economic growth without equity has created massive inequality. While economies expand, benefits are cornered by a small elite, pushing large populations into despair and marginalisation. Second, illiberal governance is on the rise, even in elected democracies; authoritarian tendencies are becoming normalised, weakening institutions and undermining civil liberties. Third, geopolitical competition is replacing ideological conflict. The Cold War's ideological clashes have faded, giving way to a new strategic rivalry, particularly between the United States and China.

In Nepal, these global trends have intersected with national frustrations. Despite moderate economic growth, the benefits have failed to reach the masses. Youth unemployment is high, corruption is rampant, and public services remain weak. Every day, thousands of Nepali youths migrate abroad in search of work, leaving behind a country where the flaunting of wealth by the elite only deepens resentment. This built-up frustration found an outlet when the government banned unregistered social media platforms, including YouTube and WhatsApp. TikTok, which complied with local regulations, remained operational. For Generation Z, this selective ban was seen not as a regulatory measure, but as a direct attack on freedom of expression.

The protests began peacefully but turned violent after police used excessive force, killing 19 young protesters on the very first day. This brutal response further inflamed public anger and eroded the government's legitimacy. The Nepali Army, which refused to intervene in the early stages despite direct requests from the Prime Minister, eventually stepped in only after the collapse of civilian authority and the resignation of top government officials.

The army also involved leader Durga Prasai in its negotiation process, suggesting a potential push to restore normalcy. Such a reversal was due to the monarchy's centuries-long failures that fuelled the Maoist rebellion and Nepal's eventual transition to a republic. Bringing back the monarchy, he argues, would be regressive and could destabilise the country further.

Another critical dimension of the crisis is the allegation of foreign interference. Prof. Muni points to credible concerns regarding U.S. involvement in fuelling the youth-led protests. NGOs such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and even corporate-backed foundations like those supported by Coca-Cola have reportedly provided funding to activist groups. While there is no conclusive proof of regime change planning, the pattern of external

support for civic movements has raised eyebrows. In contrast, India maintained a neutral and cautious stance, supporting peaceful democratic processes while keeping strategic interests intact.

This geopolitical backdrop is essential to understanding why the crisis matters beyond Nepal's borders. The ousted leadership was seen as pro-China, having closely aligned with Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its newer Global Security Initiative (GSI). Thus, Nepal has become an arena for a quiet but intense strategic contest involving China, the United States, and India. While China aims to deepen its regional footprint, the U.S. appears to be pushing back using soft power and civil society engagement. India, caught in the middle, seeks to protect its influence without being drawn into overt confrontation.

Nepal's crisis was within a broader pattern now visible across South Asia. Sri Lanka's financial collapse, Bangladesh's governance tensions, and Indonesia's democratic backsliding all point to a larger problem: democracies in the region are failing to deliver on their promises. Elections have become tools for power acquisition, not governance. Institutions are weakening, and a disillusioned youth is increasingly turning to protest, often met with state violence. The real lesson from Nepal is that the future of governance in South Asia, and perhaps across the Global South, will depend on how nations handle inequality, institutional integrity, and youth engagement. Suppressing dissent, banning digital platforms, and ignoring economic disparity only invite instability. If governments do not listen, the streets will speak louder and more violently.

In conclusion, Nepal's 2025 uprising should be seen not as an isolated explosion but as a prototype of a democratic crisis in the post-pandemic, geopolitically competitive world. It reflects a reality where youth are politically aware, globally connected, and unwilling to remain silent. For policymakers, the message is clear: the foundations of democracy must be rebuilt on inclusion, accountability, and equity- or they will collapse under the weight of their own contradictions.