



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Democracy beyond the Ballot Box

“A Comparative Study of Sri Lanka (2022), Bangladesh (2024), Nepal (2025) and India (2026)”

### Author

Dr. Brahm Dev Pandey

Former Head-Department of Law, Gautam Buddha University-Greater Noida

Current Position- Assistant Professor, CMP Degree College-University of Allahabad.

### Abstract

Between 2022 and 2025, three governments in South Asia fell, not due to elections, coups or traditional opposition parties, but because of leaderless movements organised by youth that used digital platforms to mobilize and call out action. The Aragalaya movement in Sri Lanka (2022), Bangladesh's "Monsoon Uprising" (2024) and Nepal's "Gen Z protests" (2025) had one thing in common: they used encrypted messaging for coordination. The memes and humour were widely used to create a shared identity. These decentralized online groups took on roles such as setting agendas, discussing issues and even selecting leaders which were usually held by formal institutions. This paper gathers around the idea of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) and concepts of everyday digital culture (Shifman, 2014). It tries to explain how the events are not just examples of "social media protests" but rather experiments in direct democratic involvement using social media. They represent how networked communities can go beyond voting to assert their sovereignty directly, going beyond ballot box. It shows how closed networks like WhatsApp and open platforms are together forming an alternative political system, simply fuelled by memes. It explores the weaknesses associated with these platforms. Also, assessing the potential risks of control and unclear democratic aspects of governing through these platforms. Additionally, it discusses upon India's satirical "Cockroach Janta Party" (2026)- which emerged due to leaks from competitive exam papers and a moment of disdain among elites within a solid electoral democracy. This case also illustrates how the same connective approach that can spark revolutions during government collapse in countries like Nepal and Bangladesh, can also lead to satire and reform when placed in democracy that is secure.

**Keywords:** connective action, digital democracy, memes, WhatsApp, Gen Z, South Asia, social movements, direct democracy

# 1. Introduction

In the late 2010s, the primary narrative about social media and democracy focused on issues like misinformation, division and the loss of shared truths. It basically gathered around the decline. The South Asia nation contributed to the narrative with some of the most troubling examples, including deadly mob violence in India fuelled by WhatsApp rumours (Resende et al., 2019) and organized propaganda during national elections (Singh, 2019). However, within just three years, this same platform created a surprise that challenged the existing negative narrative regarding the social media. A series of youth anchored protests that not only challenged governments but also removed them from power and this too outside the institutional structures like political parties and elections. In the Aragalaya movement of Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was forced to escape the country in July 2022 after months of online-organized protests (Timberman, 2025; Wikipedia, 2022). In Bangladesh, a similar student protest over a civil-service quota escalated into a nationwide uprising that forced Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resign and flee in August 2024. She had been in power in Bangladesh for 16 years. (Rahaman et al., 2026; Turzo, 2024). In Nepal “Gen Z” protests was sparked by the government’s ban on twenty-six social media platforms. The parliament was set on fire and the PM K. P. Oli’s government was dismissed. The portrayal of direct democracy peaked when protestors even choose an interim prime minister through online vote. (Britannica, 2025; Kiernan, 2022). Such events are often termed as “social media and protest”. However, this paper exemplifies something more prominent. The platforms were not merely used to amplify the existing complaints; it rather became a tool for connecting people, facilitating discussions and acted as a decision-making space for political community. It represented a ‘virtual’ form of parliament where the participants laid their views, discussed and made decisions. This relates to the classical idea of direct democracy as operating in the Greece- city states where people rule directly without any role for the representatives. The paper suggests that closed networks like WhatsApp, meme-sharing cultures on open platforms and the identity of “Gen Z” came together to create a recognizable but fragile form of direct democratic action in South Asia. The paper builds upon a conceptual framework based on research about connective action and digital politics. A comparative analysis of three South Asian nations is made. The analysis seeks to show how encrypted messaging and meme circulation played an important role and became symbolic of “direct democracy”. A discussion and conclusion section clarifies how the tools can be positively used and negates upon the pessimistic view on social media. It also brightens upon how such sequence of events in these countries contributed to the democratic theory.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 From collective to connective action

The conceptual idea originates from Bennett and Segerberg’s (2012,2013) that draws difference between collective action and connective action. Traditional collective action (Olson 1965) relies on formal organisation-based problem solving. It considers institutions to be more reliable way to coordinate, express grievances and manage the cost of mobilization. Conversely, in the connective action the organisation is done through digital media. The participation is more personal. It is loosely connected and self-driven. It largely relies on content serving as a way to organise. (Bennet & Segerberg, 2012). The author highlights that the meme is the key element through which these networks develop and grow because they are easily shareable and adaptable. Instead of eliminating organisation the connective action shifts it from physical presence to the communication practices within the network. This replicates well into the South Asia arena. The movements with almost negligible leadership centred rather around shared symbols. Young participants who are distanced from political parties and unions seek their voice to be heard through loosely

held networks. (Cammaerts, 2014; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). It also focuses on a common aspect of these protest that is non-partisanship or their claim of being ‘apolitical’. They describe it as an inherent characteristic of how these networks stay connected rather than a sign of ignorance.

## **2.2 Memes as political participation**

If the structure is described by the connective action, then the message is explained via the study of internet memes. The authors like Shifman (2014) consider memes to be more than just silly jokes rather representing a way culture spreads. They are pieces of content that travel through imitation and adaptation, accumulating common meaning along the way. Memes play important roles in hot political situations. They reduce complex issues to simple and comprehensible symbols, encourage others to join, build group cohesion through shared humour, and are less easily censored than overt texts, because irony is difficult to regulate (Shifman, 2014). Hashtags, slogans and memes such as #GotaGoHome, the “nepo kid” cartoon or a funny Facebook post are a message and a sign of belonging (Timberman, 2025, 2025; De Guzman, 2025; Abir et al., 2025).

## **2.3 Direct democracy and the platform public sphere**

The main objective of this paper is to examine the differences between representative and direct democracy in relation to current affairs. Voting is an important part of this. In a representative democracy people elect officials to make decisions on their behalf in between elections. Direct democracy, by contrast, allows the public to make decisions themselves, using tools like referendums, citizens’ assemblies, town meetings and the ancient Athenian ekklesia. This paper contends that the digital movements in South Asia constitute a lesser-discussed space of popular sovereignty that operates beyond the mainstream electoral processes and institutions but seeks to be reflective and consequential. The online public space is not only a platform for citizens to ask representatives to do something, but also a place for them to try to do something themselves – by setting agendas, challenging legitimacy and even naming a government in Nepal (Kiernan, 2022). The key question is whether these efforts actually deliver on their promises or are mere window dressing.

## **3. Method and Scope**

This paper examines three similar events: Sri Lanka in 2022, Bangladesh in 2024, and Nepal in 2025. They were selected because they all face critical problems including major economic or governance crises, a young and well-connected population, the use of digital tools to mobilize, and results that reshaped their governments. They do disagree, however, on the cause of these events and the specific platforms that were used. The analysis is based on a wide range of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed articles, preprint research, reports by international and regional news agencies and reports by human rights and policy organizations. The goal of this paper is more to understand concepts than to establish direct causes. It does not claim that social media platforms were solely responsible for regime changes, ignoring economic collapse, elite corruption and state violence. But it does not mean these platforms caused these events. It means that these platforms influenced the organization and action of people during these events.

## 4. Three Cases

### 4.1 Sri Lanka: the Aragalaya and the grammar of the slogan (2022)

Sri Lanka's uprising was fuelled by a severe economic crisis. Sri Lanka's uprising was sparked by a severe economic crisis. The country was marred by serious shortages of fuel, cooking gas, medicine and electricity due to degraded foreign reserves by the year 2022. On the other hand, inflation hiked sixty percent (Razick, 2025). It all began as a small non-political candlelight vigils and protests against power outage in early 2022 and got transformed by late March into the Aragalaya movement. They were united by one demand that is removal of President Gotabaya Rajapaksha and removing his family's control over politics (Timberman, 2025; Wikipedia, 2022). The role played by social media was crucial in this movement. The hashtag like #GotaGoHome was a clever twist on the President's name. It helped in achieving three important goals like it helped in bringing various complaint under single message. It informed people about the time and place of assembly. It also helped in the live updating of the events (Timberman, 2025). Galle Face Green in Colombo became the central gathering place for protestors. It was named GotaGoGama ("Gota Go Home Village"), a title that originating online took a physical form here (Perera, 2022). The essential spirit to the movement became humour and satire. The experts found how it helped maintaining morale and build unity through anger and laughter circulated through its online presence. (Fedricks et al., 2023). It was recognised as threat by the authorities and social media was blocked briefly. The usage of signal jammer at the protest sites were reported to disrupt livestreams and messaging (Freedom House, 2022; Wikipedia, 2022). There are two important points here. Firstly, the leadership of the movement was deliberately decentralized; many of those involved did not consider themselves political and were often suspicious of traditional political parties (Wikipedia, 2022). Second, while the movement gained some ground when protestors stormed the President's House in July 2022 and forced Rajapaksa to resign, parliament appointed Ranil Wickremesinghe-a familiar face of the establishment-as his replacement (Timberman, 2025). Yet the major change that Aragalaya hoped for occurred two years later in elections when Anura Kumara Dissanayake's National People's Power coalition scored a decisive victory in 2024 (Timberman, 2025). Sri Lanka's situation thus exemplifies both the power of collective action to effect change and the difficulty of achieving durable change-a tension that is evident across similar movements.

### 4.2 Bangladesh: Facebook, satire, and the Monsoon Uprising (2024)

Bangladesh's "July Revolution," or "Monsoon Uprising" began with a specific legal issue: the re-establishment of a rule setting aside thirty percent of government jobs for the descendants of 1971 independence fighters. To students, it was an attack on fairness in job opportunity under the increasingly controlling Awami League government (Turzo, 2024). In a matter of weeks, it had turned into a national protest against sixteen years of Hasina's rule, fuelled by frustration about repression, economic hardship and disputed elections (Rahaman et al., 2026). Facebook was the main organizing platform and the creation of a shared identity was central to the movement. The research found that different types of online content such as images, memes, funny posts, hashtags and videos helped to unite students from different locations while avoiding local media which many considered to be biased or pro-government (Abir et al., 2025). Digital platforms allowed the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement to lead the way: shocking images of state violence against peaceful protesters quickly spread online, surpassing official narratives and sparking protests in the real world (Islam et al., 2025; Tabassum, 2024).



The government's response shows just how vital these platforms were. Officials shut down mobile internet and broadband access as well as apps like Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram in mid-July. They were resumed briefly on July 31 but grounded again on August 5 (Turzo, 2024). This internet blackout served to direct the situation by disrupting communication within the movement (Miaji, 2026). But they were not successful. On 5 August 2024, there was a big event called the "Long March to Dhaka". Hasina resigned and fled to India. Three days later, an interim government headed by Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus was formed (Rahaman et al., 2026; Turzo, 2024). Like Sri Lanka, a leaderless network managed to oust a long-standing regime but rebuilding institutions would be a task for people outside the network.

#### **4.3 Nepal: when the parliament became a Discord server (2025)**

This paper mainly focuses on the 2025 uprising in Nepal. The uprising is more than a protest to establish a temporary self-government. The trigger was serious: On September 4, 2025, the Oli government banned twenty-six social media platforms including Facebook, X, YouTube and messaging apps for not registering with the authorities. The action was perceived by many as a means to suppress dissent in a country where some half of the population uses social media (Britannica, 2025; De Guzman, 2025). This ban was the start of a movement that had started online around the "nepo kids" campaign, which highlighted the wealthy lifestyles of children of politicians in contrast to high youth unemployment and emigration (De Guzman, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2025). On September 8, protests started. At least seventeen to nineteen protestors were shot and murdered by police in Kathmandu that day; as crowds set fire to government buildings and the parliament in the days that followed, the death toll surpassed seventy (Human Rights Watch, 2025; Britannica, 2025). Oli resigned on September 9, the military imposed a curfew and the restriction was lifted (Britannica, 2025). For democratic philosophy, what came next is particularly important. Political conversations moved to discord when the government was overthrown and the streets were taken over by the military. To select an interim leader, live discussions and polls were held on a server called "Youth Against Corruption," which is run by the civic organization Hami Nepal and has more than 100,000 members (Kiernan, 2022; Sankaran, 2025). Sushila Karki, a former chief justice, rose to prominence as a result of her anti-corruption initiatives; in one survey, 89% of over 7,000 respondents favoured her becoming prime minister (Kiernan, 2022). After Gen Z officials met with the president and army chief to ratify their online agreement, she became Nepal's first female prime minister on September 12 (Sankaran, 2025; Khan & Mehta, 2025). "The Parliament of Nepal right now is Discord," as a twenty-three-year old content creator succinctly put it (Sankaran, 2025). Connective action has reached a new level in this scenario. In addition to urging legislators to act, the network established a decision-making body that discussed candidates, cast votes on them and produced a legally binding decision that was subsequently implemented by official institutions. Even though it was unplanned and had several shortcomings, such the fact that only those with internet access could participate, it was obviously intended to give residents a direct say in how their government is run. In order to regain power through voting, Nepal scheduled formal elections for March 2026 (Sankaran, 2025). However, during this brief time without an official government structure, political choices were made on a gaming platform.

#### **4.4 India: the meme-party, paper leaks, and satire as connective action (2026)**

A crucial distinction between Kathmandu and Dhaka can be attributed to political chances rather than generational divides. An existing administration that has lost legitimacy and a lack of robust institutions are prerequisites for regime transition; India does not meet these requirements. It has ongoing elections, a powerful incumbent backed by its own efficient communication tools-the expert WhatsApp network previously discussed (Jaswal, 2024) as well as considerable authority to enforce laws and established channels for contesting rulings in court, through opposition parties and in future elections. Collective acts

can spark revolutions in a collapsing state; in a stable state, similar movements are typically more focused on reform and expression. Satire reduces the risks of direct confrontation that organizers fear by providing both emotional support and creative ways to avoid censorship. One founder even mentioned anticipating arrest and claimed his account was hacked because “the government is scared of Gen Z” (Mogul & Mitra, 2026; Sharma, 2026). Satire allows people to express dissent while remaining within legal bounds. India's condition tends toward expressive reformist types of direct democracy, according to the previously described paradigm. It's potential to revoke legitimacy is more symbolic than real; while it cannot revoke an election mandate, it can weaken the authority of the ruling party online by simulating a vote of no confidence. The campaign has a significant impact; it caused a sitting chief justice to reconsider his remarks and sparked public debate on topics including exam fairness, youth unemployment and judicial responsibility. The founder has constantly portrayed the movement as peaceful, democratic and constitutional while rejecting any calls for regime change. Therefore it does not seek to immediately establish new authorities as was the case in Nepal (Kumar, 2026). The movement is attempting to transition from internet activism to street protests with its first significant offline test, a sanctioned demonstration at Delhi's Jantar Mantar on June 6, 2026, seeking the resignation of the education minister over exam scandals (Bhattacharya, 2026). The location is important because Jantar Mantar has been the site of protests by opposition parties and student organizations for years with little effect (Naik, 2024). In contrast to the escalation observed in Nepal, the state's response-allowing the protest but stepping up security-indicates an attempt to manage it within regular political channels. Therefore, rather than strengthening the paper's argument, the Indian instance expands it. It illustrates how collective action varies depending on the political environment: in stable democracies, the same Gen Z strategies utilizing social media and memes can result in the overthrow of governments during times of crisis or become a part of a satirical movement. It presents the idea of a meme party in which its structure is determined by humour. It also moves "direct democratic action" toward its expressive side, serving as a reminder that most group efforts don't result in spectacular incidents like burning legislatures. This story also demonstrates common flaws: ties between opposition leaders and the founders' political histories run the risk of transforming seemingly nonpartisan energy into a factional tool, diminishing its appeal outside of party politics; the humour of satire can decrease its gravity by enabling the powerful to brush off a movement that mocks itself; also, millions of followers gained swiftly can disappear just as quickly while the networks of established incumbents remain intact. The situation in India raises the question of whether this viral expression can develop into long-lasting organized power against such systems.

## 5. Cross-Cutting Analysis

### 5.1 Two layers of infrastructure: the closed network and the open square

A further analysis of the three examples reveals a shared task distribution between two kinds of platforms. The public square is represented by open platforms such as Facebook, X, TikTok, YouTube and Discord in Nepal. They host livestreams, memes and slogans that help establish agendas, mould identities and spread messages around the globe (Timberman, 2025; Abir et al., 2025; Kiernan, 2022). However, when open platforms are blocked, closed and encrypted networks-primarily WhatsApp, Telegram and Signal-act as the crucial connections. These more private channels enable logistical communication, mobilize masses and preserve coordination (Martin et al., 2021). This section explains why, despite the fact that the majority of the visible activity takes place on open platforms, WhatsApp is included in the conversation. In South Asia, WhatsApp's importance stems more from its organization than from its glitz. Encrypted texting is the cornerstone of regular political conversations, with over 400 million users in India alone and extensive usage throughout the region (Garimella & Eckles, 2020; Jaswal, 2024). Its end-to-end encryption is a great

means to transmit content that is difficult to monitor and offers a safe space for activists operating in hostile environments (Martin et al., 2021; Singh, 2019). People resorted to encrypted applications and VPNs as alternatives when Bangladesh and Nepal banned open platforms; the same privacy that shields organizers also aids in avoiding government surveillance (Turzo, 2024). Like the portion of an iceberg hiding beneath the surface, the closed network receives less attention because of encryption, yet it may be more important for mobilizing than any widely shared viral article.

## **5.2 Memes as the connective tissue of a leaderless demo**

In each of the three instances, meme culture functioned similarly to a party or union in conventional collective action. The humorous caricature (the “nepo kid”), the viral image depicting state aggression and the pun-slogan (#GotaGoHome) are more than just decorations for “real” politics; they are a means for a dispersed, leaderless public to perceive itself as a cohesive group (Shifman, 2014; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Memes facilitate participation with a single tap, allow complaints to be spoken more quickly than through censorship and foster emotional connections—such as shared rage and laughter—that sustain a movement in the absence of a central leader (Abir et al., 2025). Protesters in Nepal purposefully mirrored those in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh since the name “Gen Z” is a kind of meme that enables movements in many nations to exchange ideas (Britannica, 2025).

## **5.3 In what sense is this “direct” democratic action?**

The cases exhibit a variety of reactions. By refusing to endorse legitimacy, all three cases, at the very least, show direct democratic activities. Outside of election seasons, networked groups took action to deprive the current governments of their power and prevent them from continuing to rule. The people took issues into their own hands without waiting for the next election, which makes their action direct. Setting objectives and debating topics is a more effective way to do this. The movements didn't merely express dissatisfaction; they also made explicit demands, discussed tactics and established their own boundaries (the repeated assertion that “we are apolitical” is a shared choice about their identity). The most potent example of establishing direct authority occurred only in Nepal, when a leader was selected through online public discussion (Kiernan, 2022; Sankaran, 2025). This multifaceted strategy helps prevent two errors. It avoids the unduly hopeful notion that old institutions have been entirely supplanted by internet platforms; formal bodies such as parliaments, courts, militaries and finally elections have regained their functions in every circumstance. However, it also refutes the condescending notion that these occasions were “simply protests.” No matter how straightforward the process may appear, selecting a prime minister via an online vote is very different from carrying a sign. It is preferable to think of the South Asian upheavals as existing along a spectrum of directness, with Nepal currently marking its extreme point.

## **5.4 The same tools, the other way: capture, disinformation, and the dark mirror**

The systems employed for freedom are the same as those used for control and this must be acknowledged in any honest assessment. The ruling party in India has developed a sophisticated “WhatsApp machine” thanks to the encrypted networks that enable activists in Bangladesh and Nepal to collaborate during blackouts. In order to disseminate messages, including misleading material that would be too risky to broadcast publicly, this system depends on a large number of volunteers and groups split along caste and religious lines (Jaswal, 2024; Singh, 2019). Dangerous rumours that led to fatal mob violence have been linked to the same closed systems that shield dissidents (Resende et al., 2019). During the revolt in Bangladesh, disinformation clearly contributed to the digital disputes that affected several parties (Rahaman et al., 2026). Furthermore, leaderless groups frequently find it difficult to efficiently administer

or reach agreements, even though they can adapt successfully when faced with obstacles. This results in a trend where the power that these networks attained is taken over by well-known individuals or unselected transient groups (Timberman, 2025). In conclusion, platforms by themselves do not promote democracy; rather they merely support the most successful organizers on them even those in positions of authority.

## 6. Discussion

What does the South Asian sequence add to our understanding of democratic theory?

These are the three key points. First, it demonstrates that the distinction between direct democracy and representative democracy is not as distinct as textbooks claim. In the space between elections and revolutions, direct action outside of formal institutions is becoming more and more popular. It frequently uses digital means, strives for meaningful dialogue and has the potential to produce important results. This new middle ground where linked groups take on tasks akin to constitutional functions is ignored by theories of democracy that only take voting on one end of the spectrum. This new middle ground, where linked groups assume tasks akin to constitutional functions, is ignored by theories of democracy that only take voting on one end of the spectrum and mob violence on the other (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Second, these instances demonstrate the prerequisites that must be met for group action to progress from demonstrations to short-term self-governance. For example, Nepal switched to a prime minister chosen by Discord because there was essentially no functioning government (the previous government had fallen and the military was reluctant to seize power), an established civic organization (Hami Nepal) assisted in organizing and legitimizing the process and a candidate with a reputation for integrity made the network's selection acceptable to other institutions (Kiernan, 2022; Khan & Mehta, 2025). In contrast, networks in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka may remove leaders but they do not create new ones, allowing established players to assume control. Third, this sequence demonstrates the fragility and lack of legitimacy of platform-based democracy. Rural residents, the elderly and those without internet connection are not included in a Discord survey of self-selected young urban users, which does not accurately reflect the population as a whole (De Guzman, 2025). Rather than being supported by a strong theory of representation, decisions made in this manner are justified by the absence of alternatives and public support. These movements can form overnight due to the same speed but they can also disintegrate just as quickly. This leaves crucial duties like drafting constitutions, forming alliances and overseeing day-to-day governance to others. Direct digital actions are excellent at rejecting requests or acts they disagree with but they have trouble bringing about constructive change. These revelations also alter our perspective on the WhatsApp problem that was raised at the beginning of this essay. This closed network has both advantages and disadvantages: its privacy protects citizens who are being watched while also supporting propagandists (Martin et al., 2021). Any analysis of "platforms and democracy" that concentrates solely on what is visible—the popular hashtags—will ignore the encrypted communications, which are where a great deal of real organizing and manipulation occurs.



## 7. Conclusion

Three South Asian regimes fell within three years as a result of movements with few leaders, no political party and no defined purpose. On social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, and X, these movements flourished. One participant in Nepal even referred to a Discord server as the nation's parliament in a startling turn of events (Sankaran, 2025). Simply calling these occurrences "social media protests" ignores their actual importance. They functioned as experiments in direct democracy, where groups connected via networks to discuss ideas, withdraw support from authorities, declare goals and at the cutting-edge name a new administration without using conventional voting procedures. An intriguing contrast is the emergence of India's Cockroach Janta Party in 2026 without any government collapse. Though it focused on reform rather than toppling the system and employed humour rather than insurrection, it still drew on the same youthful enthusiasm. This demonstrates how people's networking and organizational strategies can change based on the government they are dealing with. These experiments were extremely delicate and forceful at the same time. The same ties that made it possible for a group without a leader to quickly unite also made it difficult for them to rule afterward. The encryption tools that protected activists also made it possible for misleading material to proliferate and undermine democracy in other places. These Gen Z upheavals in South Asia show that a new kind of popular power exists outside of established structures which is idealistic in nature but revolutionary in impact and still unsure of its democratic validity. Understanding this space before another ban, blackout or viral trend revives it- is a challenge for both democratic theory and the institutions these movements both asked for and opposed.

## References

1. Abir, M. T., Chowdhury, A., & Rahman, A. (2025). *Monsoon uprising in Bangladesh: How Facebook shaped collective identity* (arXiv:2508.02498). arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2508.02498>
2. Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2013). *The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139198752>
3. Bhattacharya, S. (2026, June 6). *CJP gears up for June 6 protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar: What's on agenda? Who's attending? 5 points*. The Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/cockroach-janta-party-protest-live-updates-cjp-founder-abhijeet-dipke-india-return-dharmendra-pradhans-resignation-demand-neet-case-delhi-protest/liveblog/131543117.cms>
4. Deccan Herald. (2026, May 19). *Cockroach Janata Party: Satirical youth outfit mocks CJI remarks on social media*. Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/voice-of-the-unemployed-whos-behind-the-cockroach-janata-party-with-1-lakh-members-in-3-days-4008230>
5. Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2025, September 9). *2025 Nepalese Gen Z protests: Background, social media ban, & political breakdown*. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/2025-Nepalese-Gen-Z-Protests>
6. Fedricks, K., Haniffa, F., Kahandagamage, A., Kodikara, C., Kumarasinghe, K., & Spencer, J. (2023). Snapshots from the struggle, Sri Lanka April–May 2022. *Anthropology Now*, 14(1–2), 21–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19428200.2022.2123194>
7. Freedom House. (2022). *Sri Lanka: Freedom on the Net 2022 country report*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sri-lanka/freedom-net/2022>

8. Garimella, K., & Eckles, D. (2020). Images and misinformation in political groups: Evidence from WhatsApp in India. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*, 1(5). <https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-030>
9. Human Rights Watch. (2025, November 19). *Nepal: Unlawful use of force during 'Gen Z' protest*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/19/nepal-unlawful-use-of-force-during-gen-z-protest>
10. Islam, M. A., Nur, S., Mahmud, I., Rakiv, M., Noor, R. N., & Moniruzzaman, M. (2025). Gen Z's digital uprising in Bangladesh: The role of social media in the fall of a political despot. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 12(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102181>
11. Jaswal, S. (2024, May 15). *Inside the BJP's WhatsApp machine*. Rest of World. <https://restofworld.org/2024/inside-bjps-whatsapp-machine/>
12. Khan, S. H., & Mehta, A. (2025, September 11). *Nepal Gen Z votes via Discord: Meet the five interim PM contenders*. Outlook India. <https://www.outlookindia.com/international/nepal-gen-z-votes-via-discord-meet-the-five-interim-pm-contenders>
13. Kiernan, G. (2022, November 18). *A Discord-led democracy*. Brown Political Review. <https://brownpoliticalreview.org/2022/11/a-discord-led-democracy/>
14. Kumar, S. (2026, June 8). *Will Cockroach Janata Party trigger a Nepal-Bangladesh style Gen Z protest in India? Inside the viral youth movement shaking social media*. Outlook India. <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/will-cockroach-janata-party-trigger-a-nepal-bangladesh-style-gen-z-protest-in-india>
15. Martin, Z., Glover, K., Trauthig, I. K., Whitlock, A., & Woolley, S. (2021). *Political talk in private: Encrypted messaging apps in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe*. Center for Media Engagement, University of Texas at Austin. <https://mediaengagement.org/research/political-talk-in-private-encrypted-messaging-apps/>
16. McConnell, S. (2021, July 14). *A transnational public sphere for a digital generation?* E-International Relations. <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/07/14/a-transnational-public-sphere-for-a-digital-generation/>
17. Miaji, M. Z. I. (2026, January 28). *The unyielding power of authoritarianism: Hasina's failed cards to stop Bangladesh's July 2024 uprising*. Review of Democracy. <https://revdem.ceu.edu/2026/01/28/bangladesh-uprising/>
18. Mogul, R., & Mitra, E. (2026, May 22). *India's Gen Z have flipped the lowly cockroach into a symbol of defiance*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2026/05/22/india/india-gen-z-cockroach-janta-party-intl-hnk>
19. Naik, Y. (2024). *NEET exam 2024: A troubled history of paper leaks, mark scams, and corruption in India* (Idea Legal Research Paper Series No. 25). SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4859471>
20. Olson, M. (1965). *The logic of collective action: Public goods and the theory of groups*. Harvard University Press.
21. Perera, N. (2025). Aragalaya: Struggle for space and the spaces of the struggle. *Polity*, 12(2), 12–19. [https://polity.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/12.2\\_4-3Aragalaya-Struggle-for-Space-and-the-Spaces-of-the-Struggle-Nihal-Perera.pdf](https://polity.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/12.2_4-3Aragalaya-Struggle-for-Space-and-the-Spaces-of-the-Struggle-Nihal-Perera.pdf)
22. Perrigo, B. (2019, January 25). *How WhatsApp is fueling fake news ahead of India's elections*. TIME. <https://time.com/5512032/whatsapp-india-election-2019/>

23. Rahaman, A., Efaz, A. R., Rajon, M. A., Ashraf, A., & Juearia, Z. (2026). Fight against disinformation and fact-checking in Bangladesh's July 2024 uprising: The digital battlefields. *Discover Global Society*, 4(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-026-00337-2>
24. Razick, S. (2025, December 17). *Sri Lanka's aragalaya: The role of a citizen movement during crisis*. Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University. <https://fsi.stanford.edu/sipr/content/sri-lankas-aragalaya-role-citizen-movement-during-crisis>
25. Resende, G., Melo, P., Reis, J. C. S., Vasconcelos, M., Almeida, J. M., & Benevenuto, F. (2019). Characterizing attention cascades in WhatsApp groups. *Proceedings of the 10th ACM Conference on Web Science*, 247–256. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3292522.3326027>
26. Rizwan, H. (2026, May 18). *The Cockroach Janta Party: How A CJI Comment Became A Movement*. BOOM. <https://www.boomlive.in/explainers/the-cockroach-janta-party-how-a-cji-comment-became-a-movement-31586>
27. Sankaran, V. (2025, September 15). *Sushila Karki: How Gen Z protestors chose Nepal's first woman prime minister on Discord*. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/south-asia/nepal-sushila-karki-new-prime-minister-discord-protests-b2826473.html>
28. Sharma, Y. (2026). 'Cockroach Janta Party': Top Indian judge's comment sparks satire, protest. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2026/5/20/cockroach-janata-party-top-indian-judges-comment-sparks-satire-protest>
29. Shifman, L. (2013). *Memes in digital culture*. The MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9429.001.0001>
30. Tabassum, M. (2024, August 6). 'The July uprising was about truth and justice'. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/the-july-uprising-was-about-truth-and-justice>
31. Timberman, D. G. (2025, August 27). *The Aragalaya protest movement and the struggle for political change in Sri Lanka*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/08/sri-lanka-aragalaya-protest-movement-oust-wickremesinghe-rajapaksa>
32. Turzo, M. A. P. (2024). *The impact of digital platforms on Bangladesh's 2024 student-led revolution: Analysing the role of social media as a catalyst*. ResearchGate. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383669262\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Digital\\_Platforms\\_on\\_Bangladesh](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383669262_The_Impact_of_Digital_Platforms_on_Bangladesh)
33. Wikipedia contributors. (2026, July 1). *Cockroach Janta Party*. Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cockroach\\_Janta\\_Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cockroach_Janta_Party)
34. Wikipedia contributors. (2026, June 28). *2022 Sri Lankan political crisis*. Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022\\_Sri\\_Lankan\\_political\\_crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_Sri_Lankan_political_crisis)

**Note on sources:** This paper synthesizes reporting and scholarship published between 2012 and 2026. Casualty figures for the Nepal protests vary across sources (commonly cited as 17–19 killed in the initial police firing on 8 September, rising to 70+ over subsequent days); readers should consult primary human-rights documentation for authoritative figures.