

Diffusion or Divergence? A Comparative Analysis of Youth-Led Movements in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine whether the movement in Nepal (2025) causing the resignation of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was inevitable in that given the country's domestic circumstances or was somehow inspired by past regional events such as Sri Lanka (2022) and Bangladesh (2024). This study employs a qualitative comparative method to analyse secondary data containing digital content relevant to the protest from X (Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, Discord and other social media platform and reports and analysis published by various think-tanks news agencies. To explore the patterns of diffusion or divergence, the data are collected and analysed adopting a conceptual framework that puts emphasis on strategies, organization, structure, symbols and primary grievances of the movements. The core findings show an integrated relationship. While the Nepali protest was mainly inspired by contemporary domestic issues such as indiscriminate political oppression, economic mismanagement and generational frustration, there is unique evidence of tactical and symbolic adoption both from Sri Lanka's Aragalaya and Bangladesh's July movement. Although the protest in Nepal 2025 was established on a domestic base, this study demonstrates that the successful mobilization in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka evidently influenced their strategic movement and tactical expression.

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1. Introduction

South Asia has witnessed a noteworthy renaissance of popular movement caused by public mobilization in the early 2020s (Kaur, 2025). These unique revolutions are mostly led by Generation Z and young millennials; the digital citizens who use technology to organize, mobilize, and express their condemnation, in contrast to the ideologically motivated, party-affiliated protests of the past (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). This is clear evidence of generational transition. The current scenario is indicative of a global trend in which young people are holding the traditional political systems accountable, transparent, and open to radical democratic reform (Tufekci, 2017). The South Asian region serves an ideal environment to compare different political dimensions of student-led movements. The 2022 “Aragalaya” (Struggle) movement in Sri Lanka was a spontaneous coalition that became successful in forcing President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign (Pyakurel and Khangchian 2024). It was crucial for its initial reluctance of traditional political leadership, its occupation of public space, and its strategic use of social media (ICG, 2022). Similarly, the famous July movement started with the demand for the abolition of the re-established quota system in the civil service in Bangladesh. Moreover, the issue of electoral dishonesty, economic mismanagement, and bad governance were addressed by the movement, and the state response was utterly suppressive. (Riaz, 2023; Mohsin, 2024).

In Nepal, a wave of youth-led movement in the summer of 2025 caused the deadliest social unrest Nepal had witnessed in recent years (CNN, 2025) and the historic resignation of the Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli (The Diplomat, 2025). Public outrage at the deaths of 22 people in police combats with anti-corruption demonstrators set off the protests, but they also catalyzed longstanding resentment of a political elite perceived as dishonest, incompetent, and disconnected from the hopes of the nation's youth (BBC, 2025). Oli's resignation highlights the effectiveness of the new form of youth mobilization and signifies the success of people's power over politics in South Asia. For academicians, learning social movements and comparative politics, the sequential nature of these movements from Sri Lanka to Bangladesh to Nepal presents crucial puzzles about the sources of the applied strategical motivation.

Significant regional models for youth-led mobilization were established by the Aragalaya in Sri Lanka in 2022 and the current pro-democracy protests in Bangladesh in 2024 (Imtiyaz, 2025). Potential activists around South Asia, including Nepal, may easily access their symbols, slogans, and tactics due to the prevalence of international and social media platforms. Nepali Gen Z, who are integrated into the same digital ecosystems as their regional counterparts, could not have avoided these demonstrations of people power (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). However, Nepal also has a unique and rich history of political mobilization, from the People's Movement of 1990 to the Maoist insurgency and

the succeeding movement that overthrew the monarchy in 2006 (Lawoti & Pahari, 2010). The country's major internal problems include a consistently unstable coalition government, rampant corruption, crippling inflation, and a huge youth out-migration due to a lack of opportunity (Acharya, 2025). The recent police violence against protesters and PM Oli's subsequent resignation serves as a surprising illustration of these internal divisions (Adhikari, 2025). Therefore, a distinct issue emerges: although a chronological sequence is present, to what level did the 2025 Nepal movement emerge from deliberate transnational inspiration, drawing on the tactics and symbols of the Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan movements, rather than from Nepal's own internal political and economic grievances, and how can these two explanations be distinguished?

This study tries to answer this fundamental research question. The remainder of this paper is outlined as follows. Section 2 is the literature review where the existing literature on transnational social movements and various tactics used have been discussed. Section 3 outlines the research objectives, while section 4 describes the theoretical framework applied to this study. Section 5 presents the research methodology, data sources, data analysis and the ethical consideration and the limitation of the study. Section 6 discusses the findings of the study to answer the central research questions, Section 7 discusses the findings in relation to the research question, weighing the evidence for transnational inspiration against domestically rooted explanations. Finally, Section 7 presents the future implications and research potential of this study followed by the conclusion at section 8.

2. Literature Review

Youth-led political movements have emerged once again as a remarkable driver of political transition in the global South, especially in context marked by democratic backsliding economic mismanagement and lack of regime legitimacy (Ahsan et al, 2025). Contemporary studies argue that these protests cannot be fully understood through strict national frameworks, as recent protest practices increasingly operate within transnational network of symbolism and information (Boyd, 2024).

2.1 Tactical Convergence and the Need Comparative Analysis

Studies on Sri Lanka's 2022 Aragalaya reliably identify peaceful occupation of public spaces, decentralized leadership, and sustained people's participation as defining strategical features (Jayamaha, 2022; Himachandra & Sivasundaram, 2024; Abenante, 2023). These strategies were established based on a huge social integration while minimizing ideological exclusion, directly contributing to regime transition (Ray, 2025). Significantly, the literature demonstrates these tactics descriptively but does not theorize their regional influence.

On the other hand, Bangladesh's 2024 student uprising illustrate strikingly some similar strategic features. Imtiyaz (2025) documented a form of nonhierarchical cooperation alongside street mobilization pushed by economic frustration and political oppression in Bangladesh. While Chauwdhury (2024) posits that these protests are the continuation of Bangladesh's long-standing tradition of student activism, while emphasizing their unprecedented scale and intensity. Subsequent analysis by Reza and Bhuiyan (2025) and Das and Abdul (2025) describe that prolonged movement pressure pushed key political changes, including coalition building, elite defections and ultimately the collapse of regime.

On the other hand, Although Nepal has had 14 governments since 2008, not one of which has able to finish an entire five-year term (Al Jazeera, 2025), youth activism has always been historically detached from formal politics in Nepal. But the recent movements in Nepal are being led by Gen Z, those born between 1997 and 2012 (Aggarwal et.al. 2025). Existing studies on the 2025 Gen Z uprising illustrates peaceful protest ideas, decentralized and almost chaotic organization (Grand Pinnacle Tribune, 2025), and digitally scrutinized collective action and this protest is unlike any seen before in Nepal (BBC, 2025).

In spite of observing similarities, contemporary research largely treats tactical convergence as the sequences of domestic political dynamics, serving little in the way of systematic cross-national contrast. Therefore, the literature illustrates a significant analytical gap: the need for comparative framework able to evaluate if similar protest tactics emerged independently or diffused across movements. A theoretical approach that can systematically operationalize the tactical similarities across movements in south Asia is required to address the existing research gap.

2.2 Symbolic Repertoires and the Absence of Cross Movement Analysis

Studies on Sri Lanka's Aragalaya underscore the significance of symbolic slogans pushing leadership resignation, calls for systematic transition, anti-corruption narratives as unifying symbolic resources (Mendis, 2025 and Jayamaha, 2022). Hemachandra and Shivasundaram (2024) subsequently show how this symbolic expression draws upon historical memory while articulating existing political grievances. Sepala (2025) describes that struggles over symbolism during the movements also reshaped public discourse surrounding minority rights and post conflict reconciliation.

Similarly, studies on Bangladesh put emphasis on the mobilizing role of moral frames rooted in injustice, accountability, and youth political agency (Imtiyaz, 2025 and Chawdhury, 2024). Alam et al (2025) demonstrate how civil society actors utilized these frames to expand protest legitimacy, while Das and Abdul (2025) trace the transition of symbolic narratives from issue-specific demands to broader anti-regime discourse.

Analysis of Nepal's 2025 movement likewise highlight the importance of anti-corruption exhaustion and youth-led calls for political renewal (Acharya, 2025; Shrestha, 2025). However, the literature does not inquire whether these symbolic repertoires reflect adaptation from earlier movements in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The absence of cross regional movement frame analysis shows the methodological limitation: most studies rely on single case interpretation rather than systematic comparison of symbols, slogans, and moral narratives across protests. Bridging the gap requires an analytical method capable of tracing symbolic adaptation instead of mere presuming symbolic originality.

2.3 Digital Mediation and Non-Relational Pathways of Influence

Online platforms nowadays play a very prominent role in contemporary youth mobilization reshaping both the motion of movement ideas and the organization of collective action. Kaur (2025) demonstrates that online spaces operate as transnational learning environments and empowering activists to involve in observational learning without direct organizational connectivity. Comparative studies from Africa similarly validate how youth protests in Nigeria Sudan and Senegal dependent on social media to coordinate scattered actions and build shared democratic imaginaries (Khalafallah et al., 2025 and Toure, 2023).

Digital mediation is highly prominent within South Asia. Bangladesh's July movement highlights social media platforms' dual role as both a mobilizing factor and a contested arena shaped by exploitation, narrative struggle and misinformation (Alam et al, 2025). Shrestha (2025) and (Mulmi, 2025) further demonstrates how Nepal's 2025 Gen Z uprising was profoundly built on digital dynamics especially following the government's temporary social media ban. Yet these studies are basically confining their analysis of online platforms to national context and do not inquire how protest content originating in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh is disseminated into Nepal's digital spaces. This gap demands the need for a framework that conceptualizes online or digital media as a non-relational diffusion mechanism, rather than viewing it merely as a domestic instrument for mobilization.

2.4 Contextual Divergence and Analytical Control

Broader studies on democratic backsliding in South Asia provide a critical structural context to comprehend these mobilizations. Pyakurel and Khangchian (2024) mention similar patterns of institutional struggle across Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, while O'Neil et al. (2020) emphasize the historically autonomous characteristic of Nepali youth politics. Altogether, these examinations argue against deterministic assumptions of external influence and highlight the importance of contextual uniqueness. Despite acknowledging divergence, the literature does not serve as systematic method for distinguishing diffusion from similar activities to shared structural pressures. This bottleneck

points to the requirement for an analytical strategy that identifies domestic grievances, opportunity structures and political triggers while accounting for transnational influences simultaneously.

2.5 Methodological Implications and Synthesis

Existing research delivers a comprehensive description of youth-led movements across Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The findings of the current studies demonstrate a common trend among these movements such as similar protest models, too much dependence on digital platforms for organization and coordination and use a similar type of symbols to express their goals. However, these inquiries remain largely confined, dependent on descriptive or single case analysis that cannot specifically differentiate between diffusion and endogenous emergence. The lack of a comparative analysis, a significant analytical gap can only be filled up through indicator-based approach. This research gap directly inspires the adoption of social movement diffusion theory as a constructing framework and supports and operationalization focusing on (1) tactical similarity (2) symbolic adoption (3) digitally mediated transmission, while analytically maintaining control for domestic political divergence.

3. Research Objectives

This study has the following three objectives:

- To enquire the extent of tactical dissemination by comparing the protest strategies used in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.
- To find out how the three movements revised their frame of protest slogans and symbols.
- To find how protest ideas were disseminated throughout Nepal's 2025 movement using social media.

4. Theoretical Framework

Social movement diffusion theory, constructed prominently by Sydney Tarrow (2005) and further reshaped by scholars such as Michael Beissinger (2007) and Givan, Roberts and Soule (2010), describes how protest ideas frames tactics and symbols dispersed from one movement to another across space and time. This theory claims that diffusion may occur through relational channels, meaning direct ties between activists, or more frequently in the digital era, and through non-relational channels where movements learn from and inspire one another via media social networks and global communication channels. Diffusion theory emphasizes on the ways activists adopt modular protest strategies and reshape them to fit their own cultural social political context. Importantly, the theory rejects the idea of simple imitation: rather it draws the attention on the concept that movements are selectively localize, hybridize and reinterpret external models

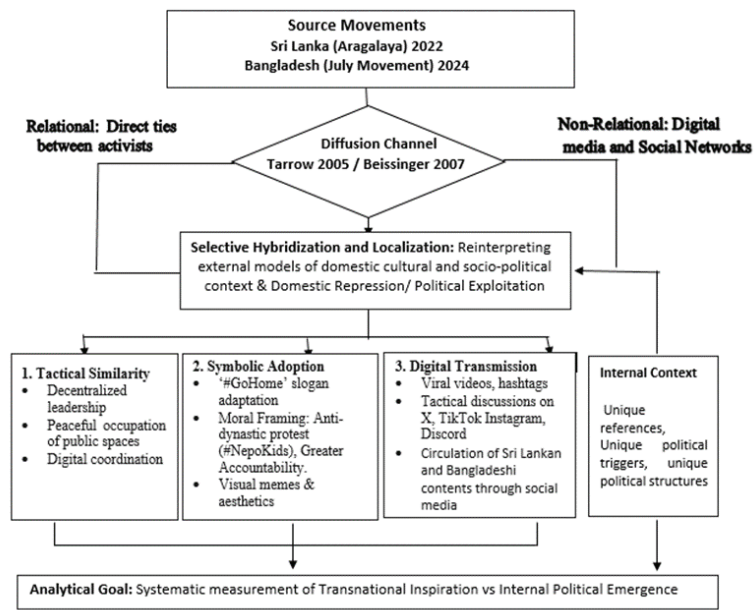
in response to domestic repression and political exploitation. This way of thinking is especially well-suited to inquiring youth-led democratic mobilization in South Asia, where movements influence one another while remaining rooted in distinct national context.

In this study, social movement diffusion theory is employed to examine how specific protest factors associated with Sri Lanka's Aragalaya (2022), Bangladesh's July uprising (2025) surfaced within Nepal's 2025 movement. Focusing on the work of Tarrow (2005) and Beissinger (2007), the theory is elucidated into three distinctive observable indicators: (1) tactical similarity (2) symbolic adoption and (3) digitally mediated transmission.

Tactical diffusion is measured through the presence of modular protest practices such as nonviolent sit-ins, decentralized form of leadership structure, and digitally constructed mobilization that closely resemble strategies deployed during Sri Lanka's Aragalaya. Symbolic diffusion is studied through the adoption of protest's slogans for example, the transition from "GottaGoHome" and "StepDownHasina" to "OliGoHome", alongside shared visual expression, and moral frames focusing on corruption, accountability, and youth political agency.

Digital diffusion is assessed by pointing out the circulation of Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi protest digital content across Nepali TikTok, X, and Instagram networks, showing the non-relational and media-driven pathways of influence demonstrated in diffusion studies. Similarly, divergence can be identified by mapping references political triggers and opportunity structures that are unique to Nepal's domestic political environment. Altogether, this operationalization enables a systematic measurement of the extent to which Nepal's 2025 protest drew transnational inspiration rather than emerging solely from internal political context.

Figure 1: Operationalization of Social Movement Diffusion Theory – Mechanisms of Diffusion and Divergence in Nepal’s 2025 Movement



Sources: Prepared the by authors based on the social movement diffusion theory developed by Sydney Tarrow (2005) and Michael Beissinger (2007)

The figure describes a theoretical framework for evaluating social movement diffusion in the context of youth-led protests in Sri Lanka (Aragalaya 2022), Bangladesh (July Movement), and Nepal (2025). Developed by the of work of Tarrow (2005) and Beissinger (2007), it illuminates diffusion through two main channels, relational ties between protesters and non-relational digital media networks facilitating the transmission of protest ideas across borders. External influences are reshaped through a process of hybridization, where imported protest methods are tailored to fit local cultural norms and political constraints. This research framework operationalizes diffusion through three specific dimensions: tactical similarity, symbolic adaption, and digital transmission while also incorporating various internal contextual factors. Finally, it aims to systematically measure the balance between transnational inspiration and internal political emergence.

5. Research Methodology

A comparative qualitative method helps to systematically examine similarities and dissimilarities across various socio-political phenomenon such as groups, nations, or culture to detect the existing patterns, assess theories, and establish causal relationships among them (Ragin, 2014 and Barun et al, 2006). For this study, a comparative analysis of offline and online youth protests illustrates how

digital connectivity has fuelled up cross context learning, encouraging activists to observe adopt and borrow protest strategies beyond their existing political environments. This dynamic is especially significant in South Asia, where a series of youth uprising since 2022 has made favourable environment for transnational diffusion of movement ideas and practices.

Therefore, this study uses the comparative qualitative research method based on social movement diffusion theory to examine how youth-led protest circulated across the South Asian political context characterized by weak democracy and economic crisis. Despite pursuing casual generalization, the research design focuses on context-specific comparison, allowing assessment of how protest, strategies, symbols, and digitally coordinated practices converge, and diverge under shared structural pressures.

This study emphasizes three cases mainly. These are Sri Lanka's Aragalaya (2022), Bangladesh youth-led uprisings (2022-2024), and Nepal Gen Z-led movement (2025). These cases are chosen through theoretical sampling. They are temporarily clustered and regionally proximate, and they arose from comparable political-economic conditions, such as price hike, declined regime legitimacy, and constrained democratic participation of people, while differing in institutional arrangements, protest influencers, and political outcomes. This framework allows a systematic measurement of if perceived similarities echo transnational diffusion or corresponding reactions to shared crises.

5.1 Data Sources and Collection

Data were drawn from three triangulated secondary sources, following the established practices for large-scale comparative qualitative research (Johnston, 2017). Firstly, Facebook, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and TikTok are used for digital media content collection as they are central to youth mobilization and cross-border information flows. The analysis focuses on widely used movement-specific hashtags, including #GotaGoHome and #Aragalaya (Sri Lanka), movement-related hashtags associated with Bangladesh's July movement, and #NepalProtest. For each of the cases, content is drawn from clearly identified peak protest period (approximately 3 months), based on protest timelines reported in reliable and reputable news outlets. The material includes images, short videos, posts, captions, examined for recurring protest practices rather than individual user behaviour. Secondly, leading national newspaper coverages and international agencies (BBC, The Diplomat, CNN etc.) are examined to reshape protest chronologies and contextualized protest dynamics. Specific attention is paid to activist statements regarding protest tactics symbols and sources of motivation. Thirdly, Reports from think tanks and non-governmental organizations, including the Centre for Policy Alternatives, Human Rights Watch, and the International Crisis group, are employed to situate protest movements within broader political, economic, and institutional contexts.

Relying exclusively on secondary data is justified both methodological and practical reasons. This study focuses primarily on the visible cross-border diffusion of protest strategies, various symbols and digital contents. Through these activists and protesters observe and learn from each other. Thus, secondary sources provide more direct and reliable evidence of the non-relational diffusion mechanism at the centre of the theoretical framework. Since the Nepal movement was very recent, collecting the primary data such as expert or activists' interviews logistically was not feasible. Moreover, collecting primary data collection needs various substantial resources such as funding, time, travel, human resources, secure access arrangement across three countries.

To mitigate algorithmic bias and platform-specific visibility effects, data had been collected consistently across the entire three-month period, including both high and quieter-protest days, while also decreasing the dominance of highly noticeable events and drawing from numerous sources and keywords. Moreover, to make the findings more reliable, timelines across various sources were verified and delayed diffusion effects had been considered.

5.2 Data Analysis

The data are analysed using thematic analysis that mixes both deductive and inductive coding strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Deductive coding was applied first, guided by the three theory-driven indicators of the social movement diffusion framework (tactical similarity, symbolic adoption, and digitally mediated transmission). This helped to test the theoretical propositions regarding the cross-border impacts systematically.

Inductive coding allows the identification of context-specific patterns and references. For example, inductive coding helped to analyse various humour and satire as a form of protest expression used by the Nepali protesters, which were not initially anticipated within the three pre-defined indicators of diffusion. Significantly, similarity merely is not taken as definitive evidence of diffusion; empirical observation parallels are described as diffusion only when credible channels of transmission can be constructed. Patterns of divergence are analysed to account for differences in domestic political economy regime responses and institutional constraints.

5.3 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

This study employs exclusively publicly available secondary data sources and does not involve direct engagement with human beings as participants. Moreover, no expert opinion has been used as primary data for data triangulation. However, to avoid the reproduction of identifiable personal information, intensive care is being taken. Rather, it focused on the analysis of collective dynamics and movement-level trends. The studies limitation include reliability on publicly visible digital content, potential distortions of information introduced

by platform-specific visibility and algorithm bias, and the inability to point out causal direction with certainty. These limitations create future research scopes where both secondary and primary data would be utilized for the generalization of the findings.

6. Findings and Discussion

The comparative study reveals an intricate interaction between transnational forces and internal crises in the youth-led movements in Nepal (2025), Bangladesh (2024) and Sri Lanka (2022). The findings show that distinct national concerns offered as the main foundation for each protest. In terms of its strategic, and expressive aspects, there is, nevertheless, also a unique type of cross-border motivation, particularly from Sri Lanka to Nepal. Bangladesh's case was characterized as a narrative intervention, rather than serving as a direct accepted model,

6.1 Strategic Similarity: Decentralized Mobilization and Digital Coordination

These three movements represent a pure convergence in protest tactics, with decentralized, digitally coordinated, occupation-based strategies substituting the old-style, party-led, hierarchical mobilization. The strategic repertoire in Sri Lanka's Aragalaya was characterized by the nonviolent occupation of significant public spaces, such as Colombo's Galle Face Green, which presented as a continuous, outdoor venue for large-scale gatherings. There was no single charismatic leader or dominant influence of any well-established political parties. The leadership was significantly dispersed and unorganized. Rather, ornamental coalition of trade unions professionals and youth groups developed cooperation, using social media platforms for logistics safety alerts and rallying calls. As a result of this model's success, president Gotabaya Rajapaksa resigned to uphold widespread legitimacy and constant applied pressure.

The tactical characteristics of the youth mobilizations in Bangladesh, especially the protests in July 2024, are appropriate to compare the online platforms used to call for marches and sit-ins, and protests were directed through non-hierarchical student networks. Likewise, Aragalaya's plan, an important strategy was the persistent occupation of important spaces and university areas in Dhaka. However, the state response was very different in Bangladesh. The movements were targeted swift, harsh and frequently violent crackdowns that included digital surveillance, mass arrests, and internet shutdowns. Due to this exploitation, protesters were facing hurdles to maintain long-term physical presence seen in Sri Lanka, compelling for a more sporadic, flexible, and digitally cooperated type of mobilization.

The most evident strategical imitation of the Sri Lankan model, customized to local circumstances, was seen in the 2025 Nepali movement. Famous Places like Ratna Park in Kathmandu, and other cities were being used as the long-term

protest camps by youth activists after the triggering event of police violence against protesters. Similar to the Aragalaya, these places developed into centres of political discourse, cultural expression and group action that were intentionally kept peaceful and inclusive. Leadership represented as ‘leaderless’ was divided among multiple youth-led collectives as a response to the deliberate rejection of Nepal’s traditionally party-dominated protest culture.

Digital technologies were prominent; social media platforms streamed lives, recorded state activities, and mobilized turnout, while encrypted messaging applications managed logistics. Leadership was decentralized by strategic movement, digital coalition, and peaceful occupation. Along with modular tactics that were effectively employed in Sri Lanka. Notably, the study of online content reflected that Nepali activists had opened conversation about these tactics. Posts on X and TikTok showed the benefits of Aragalaya’s “occupation model” and discussed its implications in Kathmandu, while warnings circulated about the danger of state persecution taking place in Bangladesh. This suggests a process of purposive observation, assessment and selective adoption instead of simple coincidence.

6.2 Symbolic Adaptation: Slogans, Frames and Visual Protest

The protests shared a symbolic repertoire focusing on direct accountability, anti-corruption, and generational transition, having an obvious sign of cross-border imitation and adoption. The term “Aragalaya” (struggle) itself, the popular demand “GotaGoHome” (directed at President Gotabaya Rajapaksa), graffiti, satirical arts, and communal public kitchen (Dana Salawa) are glaring examples of these iconic symbols created by Sri Lanka’s Aragalaya. The movement was effective in portraying its fight against a corrupt, kleptocratic family dynasty as a moral battle of the people (janatha). The most recent wave focused on the issues of prolonged corruption and injustice, though student protest in Bangladesh has a long history. Slogans like “StepDownHasina” and “We Want Justice” reflected straightforward and accountability-focused approach of Sri Lanka. The uses of hashtags like “RedForJustice”, the color red which is related to the blood of martyrs and a symbol of protest became a tremendous visual maker.

This is very evident that a direct hybridization has been adopted in the symbolic environment of the Nepali movement. The primary slogan “OliGoHome” applies the “GoHome” template from Sri Lanka to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and it is an important linguistic and strategic transaction. Digital records reveal that the slogan appeared along with memes and images that were prominently similar to those from the Aragalaya, directing that this was not an isolated case. Moreover, activists adopted the name “Andolan” (Movement), which is similar to the use of “Aragalaya” and elucidates a fresh, youth-led battle.

The “NepoKids” or “NepoBabies” campaigns are evidently the most striking instance of symbolic dispersion. The anti-dynastic framing of Sri Lanka’s rallies

against the Rajapaksa was functionally paralleled by this frame, which emphasized the unbridled privilege and political inheritance among Nepal's aristocratic families. The framing strategy personalizing systemic corruption through familial networks was clearly influenced by regional precedents, even though the specific grievance against nepotism was rooted domestically. An analysis on Instagram and TikTok and some other social media contents demonstrates that Nepali protesters repurposed formats such as split-screen videos and particular meme templates with local people and themes that initially acquired popularity in protest contexts in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Divergence persisted, in order to assert legitimacy and continuity, Nepal's movement heavily incorporated symbols from its own political history, such as allusions to the 1990 People's Movement and the 2006 republication movement. Additionally, the grievance framing distinguished itself from the severe economic collapse that brought Sri Lankans together by emphasizing large youth out-migration and the failure of the post-civil war political settlement.

Protesters in Nepal frequently used various digital memes, satire slogans, and ironic placards and posters to criticize corrupted politicians similar to Bangladesh movement. However, Nepali protesters used more localized and culturally adapted forms.

6.3 Digital Transmission: Non-Relational Trails and Platform Ecosystems

As a transnational learning environment and mobilization infrastructure, digital platforms were the main non-relational channel for the spread of protest ideas. Before and during the height of the 2025 protests, protest materials from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were extensively shared in Nepali internet spaces, according to content analysis. On Nepali X threads and TikTok videos, viral videos from the Aragalaya which featured moments of state confrontation, creative protests, and nonviolent sit-ins were shared, subtitled, and analyzed. Nepali activists were keeping an eye on hashtags like #GotaGoHome and #Aragalaya, as seen by quote-tweets and answers that connected them to the Nepali context ("When will our #OliGoHome moment come?"). The spread of modular protest aesthetics was greatly aided by TikTok. Short-form videos from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka that featured occupation-site activities, signpost designs, and protest slogans offered a flexible "toolkit." By imitating these visual and performative approaches, Nepali users helped South Asian youth challenge older political elites by fostering a feeling of shared transnational identity.

Digital diffusion was also influenced by each nation's state reaction. The severe methods of internet shutdown and online surveillance adopted by the Bangladeshi government were closely monitored. Lessons from the Bangladeshi experience were reflected in Nepali digital discourse, which included sharing suggestions on VPN uses, digital security, and decentralized communication tools like Signal, Telegram, and Discord (Civicus Lens, 2025). This pattern

reflects the growing role of digital platforms in contemporary collective action. Digital platforms increasingly function as powerful mechanisms for the diffusion of narratives, emotions, and collective action frames across societies (Saidy & Hossain, 2026). Through social media networks, activists are able to observe, interpret, and adapt protest strategies beyond national boundaries, facilitating transnational learning and the circulation of movement repertoires. To exhibit integrated flexibility from regional models, the movement visibly moved to the alternative social media platforms when the Nepali government banned social media in 2025. Digital transmission was a two-way process that made a discussion on comparison easier. Instead of merely copying, user participated in in-depth analysis: “How can we combat the similar crackdown?” and “Why did the Aragalaya succeed when the protests of Bangladesh are being crushed?”. This meaningful discussion emphasizes that diffusion needed contextual calibration and purposeful learning rather than mere imitation.

6.4 Divergence: The Predominance of Domestic Grievances and Political Triggers

Despite these disseminated patterns, the core factors behind each protest were evidently domestic. The ‘how’ was affected by diffusion while the basic ‘why’ was unaffected. An asymmetrical economic collapse and extreme shortage of food, gasoline and medication set off Sri Lanka’s protest, making the crisis intolerable for all citizens. Movements in Bangladesh were fueled up by particular policy complaints such as quota system, which developed into a wider outrage over electoral manipulation, autocracy, one-party rule and declining civil liberties. Long-simmering frustrations, including perceived widespread corruption among a revolving-door political elite, severe economic mismanagement resulting in high inflation and unemployment (The Guardian, 2025) and deep generational disillusionment with the unmet promises of the federal republican system established after 2006, served as the catalyst for Nepal's 2025 uprising. There were significant differences in the organization of political opportunities. The movement in Sri Lanka was successful in part because it took advantage of weaknesses in a collapsing ruling coalition. The state machinery in Bangladesh continued to be unified and ruthlessly oppressive, although that eventually led to the end of the Hasina regime through her deportation to India. The time of the movement in Nepal coincided with apparent divisions within the government coalition, which activists skillfully took advantage of. PM Oli's resignation was more of a successful result of using diffused techniques to a particularly Nepali political configuration than it was a replication of Rajapaksa's removal.

7. Implications and Future Research Possibilities

This study has multiples outcomes. For better understanding of the dynamic transmission between local and transnational spirit in social movement, a

comparative and context-based analysis is mandatory, which has been addressed in this study. However, the study is still making this case for academics to research further. It offers a warning to future activities. This study's limitations direct two potential arenas for further investigation. If publicly accessible data is relied upon, the contents from more private or encrypted platforms may be missed. Furthermore, the qualitative methodology of this study cannot conclusively demonstrate causal directionality, even while it reveals association and plausible channels of influence. Thus, further research can be conducted applying a quantitative method based on a combination of techniques to track more direct personal learning networks such as activist interviews or surveys for attaining primary data. Wider applicability of this diffusion model might also be tested by expanding its' framework and including other youth mobilizations happened in Pakistan or India. Lastly, prolonged and in-depth research is required to determine if these dispersed tactics and symbols remain episodic or become institutionalized in the protest culture of South Asia.

8. Conclusion

This comparative study demonstrates that Nepal's 2025 youth-led democratic movement was a hybrid phenomenon, strategically influenced by international inspiration yet created out of the necessity of a domestic political crisis. The study finds support for the main research objectives: although Nepal's internal conditions of corruption, economic hardship, and generational alienation made the movement inevitable, its' tactical repertoire and expression were directly influenced by earlier regional events, most notably Sri Lanka's Aragalaya. The results provide strong support for the Social Movement Diffusion Theory's operationalized framework. Firstly, the use of decentralized leadership, long-term peaceful occupation, and digital cooperation demonstrated tactical similarities. Secondly, symbolic adoption was demonstrated by the anti-dynastic "NepoKids" framing, the linguistic alteration of "GoHome" slogans and the copying of visual protest aesthetics. Thirdly, Through the platforms like X, TikTok, Instagram, and Discord, Nepali activists disseminated, discussed and tailored their activities of non-relational digital transmission. Bangladesh's story provided a unique model of official response, offering a guide of repression to be anticipated and opposed rather than a model for victory. This study theoretically reflects the value of diffusion theory in the digital era by highlighting how protest toolkits become modular, cover national boundaries, and apply significant reconceptualization. The Nepali movement tailored the Aragalaya instead of replicating it fully. activists made a powerful hybrid model that produced visible political outcome. The resignation of a sitting prime minister happened by employing borrowed strategies and symbols deeply interconnected with national narratives and grievances. This illustrates that youth-led activisms in South Asia are increasingly being defined by a dual awareness. Protesters are now concurrently

navigating shared regional tactics for movements while adapting to the specific political realities of their own countries.

Consequently, the fundamental inquiry of this study whether these movements represent ‘Diffusion’ or ‘Divergence’ reveals a dual reality. The concomitant youth-led movements in Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri-Lanka are not random; they are connected by deep structural similarities rather than a mere luck or coincident. Within a region of common democratic concerns, they constitute a new pattern of tactical, digitally mediated diffusion. This new reality is demonstrated by the 2025 Nepali movement, which was a battle deeply ingrained in Nepali soil but whose architects were well aware of and cleverly borrowed from the struggles fought by their generational counterparts over the border.

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