A Monthly International Affairs Review by the Centre for Governance Studies

Issue | July 2026



About Global Up-to-Date

CGS Global Up-to-Date is an initiative of the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS), designed to serve as an analytical platform for understanding contemporary global issues. In response to a rapidly changing global landscape marked by armed conflicts, geopolitical shifts, socio-economic challenges, and evolving security dynamics, the initiative addresses critical and emerging questions relevant to policymakers, researchers, students, and wider policy audiences.

The initiative provides regular analytical briefs on pressing international developments, focusing on international politics, economy, security, human rights, development, and environment. In addition to regular online updates, CGS Global Up-to-Date publishes a monthly edition that brings together selected briefs on important contemporary global issues.

Contents

01 | India's Gen Z Awakening and the Next Stage of Indian Politics
Roman Uddin

02 | Same Virus, Different Fates: What Uganda Got Right That DR Congo Could Not
Nuzhat Tabassum

03 | The United States at 250: Between Founding Ideals and Global Power
Fawzia Afrin

GUTD Editor:
Roman Uddin, Senior Research Associate, CGS

Design:
Joyanta Biswas, Senior Creative Designer, CGS

The views expressed in these briefs are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of CGS.

India's Gen Z Awakening and the Next Stage of Indian Politics



Roman Uddin
Senior Research Associate,Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)



Abstract: *This article situates India's emerging Gen Z activism within a wider South Asian pattern of youth-led political mobilization driven by governance failures, economic insecurity, and digital connectivity. It argues that younger Indians are increasingly evaluating the state through jobs, merit, public services, and institutional accountability rather than identity-based political appeals alone. It concludes that India's democratic future may depend on whether its political system can translate youth demands into durable institutions and meaningful opportunities.*

Since 2022, four South Asian countries have watched their youngest citizens take to the streets in ways their governments did not expect. Sri Lanka's Aragalaya movement forced Mahinda and Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign, ending the family's rule in 2022. Bangladesh's student-led quota reform movement ended a fifteen-year regime of Sheikh Hasina within a few weeks in 2024. Nepal's Gen Z protests forced Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli to resign in September 2025. And in mid-2026, thousands of young Indians gathered at Delhi's Jantar Mantar under the banner of the Cockroach Janta Party until the country's education minister stepped down. The recurring question is whether these episodes are unrelated national crises or expressions of one regional transformation. From Colombo to Dhaka, Kathmandu to Delhi, similar frustrations drove these movements. Each showed young people's anger over the gap between government promises and reality.

Young people react faster to government failure today because information spreads instantly through smartphones. A local grievance can become shared national evidence within minutes. Attempts to control information can therefore intensify public anger. In Nepal, the government banned twenty-six social media platforms in September 2025, prompting strong youth-led protests. In Bangladesh, the government shut down the internet in July 2024 to control the quota reform protests. Young people grew angrier and it helped drive the movement that forced Sheikh Hasina's resignation weeks later. A local failure, once contained, now travels instantly and finds an audience already primed by a similar experience elsewhere. This is also why these movements begin among students and young professionals yet rarely stay confined to them, since a grievance that starts as a campus issue or a lost job application quickly reads as a shared national condition, drawing in parents, workers and older citizens who

recognize their own frustrations in it.

India's own trajectory over the past decade helps situate this pattern. The Bharatiya Janata Party's rise to national power in 2014 followed ten years of Congress-led rule that had become associated with a series of corruption controversies, including the 2G spectrum and coal block allocation cases, alongside a slowing economy and what political analysis widely termed policy paralysis. The same period saw the 2011 anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare, which turned public anger over corruption into a nationwide demand for accountability. Against this backdrop, the BJP under Narendra Modi consolidated a form of populist politics that paired a promise of decisive governance and economic development with the assertion of a majoritarian national identity rooted in Hindu nationalism, alongside an expanding welfare state that delivered benefits to lower-income households. The political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot describes this as a shift toward what he calls an ethnic democracy, where majority religious identity becomes tied to the nation itself, power centers on one leader, and independent institutions face growing pressure. This approach carries real electoral appeal and helped the BJP win three elections in a row. But it is also a model built on identity, symbolism and a single dominant leader, and that is precisely what appears to sit less comfortably with the new generation of voters.

"It is asking for a new definition of success, one measured by what every citizen can still become."

Indian politics has traditionally been shaped by identity. Caste groups influence voting in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Religion shapes national campaigns, and region and language shape state elections. Gen Z has not rejected the identities outright, but many of them seem tired of a politics built mainly on religion, caste and symbolism. They want to judge the state on a different measure, jobs, healthcare, and access to public information, rather than on which community or ideology it claims to represent. Economic pressure makes this urgent. India's Periodic Labour Force Survey found that graduate unemployment stood at 11.2 percent in 2025, more than three times the national average. The International Labour Organization's India Employment Report found that youth made up 83 percent of the country's jobless population. With internet access reaching 55 percent of India's population by early 2025, young people can see these numbers instantly, and an uncertain job market makes that comparison feel personal. It is a demand for a different kind of state, one that offers exams without leaks, hiring based on merit, and a real system for handling complaints instead of empty promises.

This makes Gen Z a new and notably impatient kind of political force. It stands apart from the parties, trade unions, farmer groups, and caste organizations that have shaped Indian politics for decades, and it is often critical of that entire old structure, not just of any single party. The Cockroach Janta Party had no formal members, no long-term leader, and no political ideology. Yet it built enough pressure to force a government minister to resign within a few days of its first protest. Nearly one in five of India's registered voters in 2024 was under thirty years old. This is a large group that older political organizations struggle to represent, because it does not organize around caste, occupation, or region the way earlier generations did. The strength of this new kind of movement is speed. A decentralized, digital protest can grow faster than any political party. Its weakness is that it rarely lasts, since once the immediate demand is met, the movement tends to fade instead of becoming a lasting institution.

One pattern repeats across South Asia. Governments often blame youth protests on foreign interference rather than admit domestic failure. Sheikh Hasina told India's envoy that "anarchists" were

trying to create "Sri Lanka-type mayhem" in Dhaka. A former Indian high commissioner separately suggested a foreign hand was behind Hasina's fall. In Nepal, some commentators pointed to an "American hand," even though observers on the ground said the uprising was a domestic response to corruption. India's own political conversation has used the same idea, blaming Western groups, short sellers, or unnamed conspiracies whenever its institutions face scrutiny. This habit protects governments from accountability by shifting blame elsewhere. But in every case examined here, the evidence points to domestic governance failure, not foreign interference.

None of this means India is close to the kind of collapse seen in Colombo, Dhaka, or Kathmandu. Its institutions are still stronger than those of its neighbors were before their governments fell. The question is whether India can move from politics centered on charismatic leaders to institutions that endure, from symbolic achievements to effective everyday governance, and from national ambition to opportunities that young Indians can genuinely experience in their own lives. Gen Z is not asking India to abandon its identity, religion, or welfare commitments. It is asking that these values not be used to divide society or replace the basic responsibilities of the state. Young Indians want a system that delivers fair exams, honest hiring, and an economy capable of creating opportunities for their generation. Whether India can make that shift will matter more for its democratic future than any single election. India's Gen Z is not just challenging one government. It is asking for a new definition of success, one measured by what every citizen can still become.

- ***Roman Uddin,*** *Senior Research Associate, Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)*

Same Virus, Different Fates: What Uganda Got Right That DR Congo Could Not



Nuzhat Tabassum
Program Assistant, Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)



Abstract: *This article compares the Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda to examine why similar epidemiological threats produced sharply different outcomes. It argues that conflict, displacement, weak infrastructure, mistrust, and reduced aid severely constrained containment in eastern DRC, while Uganda benefited from institutional preparedness, rapid isolation, contact tracing, and existing treatment capacity. The comparison demonstrates that effective outbreak control depends not only on medical interventions, but also on stable institutions, humanitarian access, community trust, and sustained investment in public health.*

Just three months after the declaration of Ebola virus again in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the 17th time, more than 4,900 people have been affected and 2,300 people died, breaking their previous record of 2018 - 2020 outbreak. This year's crisis has been the deadliest for the country . With the conflict inside the country and spillover to other countries due to travel, Ebola is spreading fast. But what should concern the whole world is how a conflict has made tackling the outbreak much harder than it was supposed to be.

This year's outbreak is caused by Bundibugyo virus, a very different type of Ebola virus than the previous one's. So far, no vaccine has been established, the only solution is to take precaution and contain its spreading, including early detection, supportive care, and community engagement .

This new variant was first identified in Ituri province's Mongbwalu health zone and traced back to transmission that was already under way before its official declaration on May 15. That delay allowed chains of infections to grow before response teams could deploy. But due to poor planning, logistical constraints, geographical problems, and local problems . The virus is moving faster than any response could arrive. The conflict, on the other hand, is playing the part of an accelerant. In Ituri and neighboring North Kivu and South Kivu has been in conflict for years from multiple armed groups like the Allied Democratic Forces, CODECO militias, and the Rwanda-backed M23. Conflict disrupts the process of outbreak control such as passable roads, functioning hospitals, community trust, water and sanitation, and reliable communication .

Due to the prolonged conflict many people have been displaced, took shelter in refugee camps or migrated to neighboring countries. This has made disease control harder for the health workers. The refugee camps are overcrowded, lack hygienic environment or sanitation, and lack proper nutrients. As the area is already conflict ridden, it becomes harder for the healthcare team to reach the affected person or for the people that need treatment to come to the medical team . Also, the conflict has made it difficult for the healthcare providers to do contact tracing as many people are hiding, migrating or fleeing the place. The affected people may at first think that it is a common flu or fever, but by the time they are identified it is already too late. A person exposed in one area may fall ill somewhere else entirely, breaking the chain investigators rely on to follow the virus.

"Uganda's experience just across the border shows what becomes possible when preparedness, trust, and rapid isolation are in place; DRC's experience shows what happens when a virus arrives in a landscape already broken by war, displacement, and years of neglect."

For healthcare providers to do their task properly, the problem does not only end there but the bigger problem is to tackle the mistrust of the people. Community mistrust during DRC's outbreaks is tied to years of conflict, political instability, and chronically under-resourced healthcare. People often doubt the healthcare workers mainly due to mistrust on safe burial practices as they consider it a sacred ritual. Communities often ask why aid money arrives when there is a disease and not when they are suffering. This has created anger and frustration among many people. There are several cases where people have attacked healthcare facilities and workers which has forced the aid workers to suspend their treatment in the area.

As recently, the United States president Donald Trump, has suspended USAID, there has been a shortage of funds. Aid in DRC has dropped sharply in 2025, just when the country needs funding to combat a deadly disease. It has been reported that health workers at one Ituri treatment center went unpaid for three months and went on strike, temporarily shutting it down . Reduced aid support has put strain on clean water access, food and health care. Aid cuts have put a barrier to fighting Ebola.

On the contrary, Uganda, a neighboring country of DRC, has also become affected with the same variant of Ebola virus. But it has recorded only 20 cases and two deaths and declared itself Ebola-free after its last patient was released from hospital . Even though they have declared Ebola in the same time period as DRC. Officials their credit preparedness built from experience with nine prior outbreaks since 2000: rapid isolation of suspected cases, active use of personal protective equipment, and swift activation of a specialist treatment center in Kampala that still held supplies from a previous outbreak . Immediate action taken by the government has prevented spreading. They swiftly quarantined more than 6,000 contacts for the full 21-day incubation period . Uganda invested in preparedness, which the DRC has failed to do. While it is DRC's 17th Ebola outbreak, on the contrary, it's the outbreak, citing lessons learned from previous outbreak to stop the disease from spreading. When a 12-year-old girl showed suspicious symptoms in 2011, health workers isolated her, used protective equipment, and safely handled her body after she died steps that stopped that outbreak from spreading further. That kind of institutional memory shaped the response this time too.

Once cases were confirmed, Uganda didn't have to build a response from scratch. A specialist Ebola treatment center at Mulago Hospital in Kampala, left over from a previous outbreak, was stocked

with supplies and had an emergency medical team on standby. Getting it fully operational was easier for them. Also, early patients came directly to treatment units rather than passing through general hospitals first, which limited opportunities for the virus to spread through casual contact with other patients and staff before diagnosis. Uganda did not just stop their authorities closed the DRC border despite the economic cost to cross-border traders, cutting off one of the main routes the virus could have used to keep re-entering the country.

DRC is far behind Uganda, even though they are neighboring countries. One country successfully won; another failing miserably. But the point is, the conflict did not create Ebola; rather it is hampering the process to contain it. The way Uganda was able to prepare themselves, the DRC could not. The conflict stripped away passable roads, functioning clinics, trusted authorities, stable communities, the very things that disease control depends on. Uganda's experience just across the border shows what becomes possible when preparedness, trust, and rapid isolation are in place; DRC's experience shows what happens when a virus arrives in a landscape already broken by war, displacement, and years of neglect.

Until the underlying conditions of conflict, displacement, and mistrust are addressed, eastern DRC will remain vulnerable not only to this outbreak, but to the next one.

Stopping this outbreak will take more than vaccines, treatment centers, and contact-tracing teams, though all of those remain urgently needed. It will require protecting humanitarian access, funding local health systems consistently rather than only in moments of crisis and treating affected communities as partners rather than obstacles. Until the underlying conditions of conflict, displacement, and mistrust are addressed, eastern DRC will remain vulnerable not only to this outbreak, but to the next one. As responders on the ground have made clear, in Ituri prevention cannot be separated from protection the two must move together, or neither will succeed.

- ***Nuzhat Tabassum*** *is a Program Assistant at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)*

The United States at 250: Between Founding Ideals and Global Power



Fawzia Afrin
Research Intern, Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)



Abstract. *This article uses the United States' 250th anniversary to assess the tension between the founding principles of equality, liberty, and popular consent and the country's historical and contemporary exercise of power. It traces how domestic struggles over slavery, Indigenous displacement, civil rights, and political inclusion developed alongside the United States' rise as a global power and the renewed America First agenda under Donald Trump. The article presents the anniversary as an opportunity to examine how American ideals continue to shape, and be challenged by, debates over democracy, sovereignty, economic policy, and international influence.*

This year, the United States marked 250 years since the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. The Semiquincentennial has been commemorated through the congressionally established U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and its supporting America250 organization, alongside the Trump administration's Freedom 250 initiative. Yet America's 250th birthday invites more than celebration. It raises a difficult question: How closely has the United States lived by the principles it announced in 1776?

The Declaration's revolutionary significance rested not only on separation from Britain but also on its claims about political legitimacy. It asserted that "all men are created equal," that human beings possess rights including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that governments derive their legitimate authority from the "consent of the governed." Those principles gave the new country a powerful vocabulary of liberty and self-government.

But there was a profound contradiction at the country's birth. The same generation that declared all men created equal built an economy substantially dependent on slavery. It took a civil war, a constitutional amendment, and another century of struggle before Black Americans could claim even formal citizenship rights. Native Americans were also excluded from the expanding political community. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 facilitated the forced relocation of Indigenous nations from ancestral lands.

These were not footnotes to America's history. They demonstrate why 1776 should be understood not as the completion of American liberty, but as the beginning of a continuing argument over who was entitled to it.

By the 19th century, the republic was already asserting itself beyond its borders. The abolition of slavery, constitutional amendments after the Civil War, women's suffrage and the civil-rights movement progressively broadened political and legal rights. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 declared the Western Hemisphere off-limits to further European colonization, an early statement of the idea that American security required influence beyond American soil.

"Its founding ideals have repeatedly been violated, but they have also supplied the language through which generations demanded reform."

Over the following century, wars, economic expansion, and the Cold War transformed the United States from a fragile former colony into a global superpower. CFR describes the recurring dilemma of American foreign policy as how to balance national interests, professed values, and the responsibilities created by growing power.

Donald Trump's second administration has sought to redefine American power through an explicit "America First" framework. On his first day back in office, Trump ordered U.S. foreign policy to put American interests first and issued an America First Trade Policy directing a broad review of trade deficits, economic security, and foreign trade practices. Trade quickly became one of the most visible elements of the strategy. On February 1, 2025, the administration announced additional tariffs of 25 percent on most imports from Canada and Mexico and 10 percent on imports from China, linking the action to border security, illegal migration, and fentanyl trafficking. Supporters argue that tariffs can protect strategic industries, encourage domestic manufacturing, reduce dependence on competitors, and strengthen Washington's negotiating leverage. Critics contend that tariffs can raise costs, disrupt supply chains, and strain relationships with allies. CFR says Trump's second term has produced a fundamental shift toward an America First approach across trade, security, and immigration.

That strategy also encountered institutional limits. On February 20, 2026, the Supreme Court struck down Trump's sweeping emergency-power tariffs. Trump nevertheless pledged to pursue tariffs through other statutes, meaning protectionism remained an important feature of his economic agenda.

Immigration presents an equally sharp debate over sovereignty. Trump's second administration intensified immigration enforcement and removals. Supporters view stricter enforcement as necessary to restore border control and uphold immigration law. Critics point to humanitarian, due-process, and economic consequences. Brookings estimates that sharply reduced migration in 2025 and 2026 is dampening labor-force growth, consumer spending, and GDP growth.

The broader question is therefore not whether Trump seeks to reduce American power abroad, but how he wants that power used: more transactionally, with greater reliance on economic leverage, and with greater emphasis on sovereignty and direct national advantage.

The anniversary celebrations have themselves reflected competing interpretations of American identity. America 250 began the Semiquincentennial year with a special Times Square ceremony after midnight on January 1, featuring an America250-themed ball, red-white-and-blue illumination, and 2,000 pounds of matching confetti.

The White House's Freedom 250 program began on Memorial Day 2025 and is scheduled to continue through the end of 2026. It has included the Great American State Fair, July 4 celebrations on the National Mall, and events at historic locations nationwide. But Americans enter the next quarter-century with considerable uncertainty. A Pew Research Center survey conducted in April 2026 found that 66 percent expect the country to become more politically divided by 2050, 58 percent expect the United States to become less important internationally, and 51 percent described themselves as pessimistic about the country's future. Yet 48 percent were optimistic.

Perhaps that mixture of pride and unease is appropriate for America's 250th anniversary. The United States has expanded democracy and individual rights while also bearing the legacies of slavery, Indigenous displacement, exclusion, and controversial uses of international power. Its founding ideals have repeatedly been violated but they have also supplied the language through which generations demanded reform.

- ***Fawzia Afrin*** *is a Research Intern at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)*

Global
UP-TO-DATE

by

cgs
Centre for
Governance Studies