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Why do some Gen Z protests succeed and others fail?

Like many of you, I suspect, I am wrestling with how best to use (and not use) AI in my daily work. Take blogging. If I just generate posts with ChatGPT, people will probably stop reading. That's certainly true of my colleague Tom Kirk, who responded 'As soon as the Chat GPT list started I felt an immense sense of dread about having to read through a list created by an AI that would largely give me surface information devoid of trends or insights.'

On the other hand, for some kinds of questions (and it's all about the topic and the prompts), AI can throw up really interesting ideas that you wouldn't easily arrive at yourself. It adds something. No dread. Not just surface information. It's particularly useful for cross country comparisons, where your knowledge is v limited, doing the research would take so long that it would be hard to justify for a blog, and in any case, you'd probably turn to the same sources as the AI.

Example: I recently asked it for a comparison of Gen Z protests around the world over the last 3 years. I asked for principal demands, whether the movement (largely) succeeded or failed, and the key political/social/economic/accidental factors that shaped those outcomes. (Like I said, it's all about the prompts).



Credit: ChatGPT. No idea what 'Noit Aiko' means.....

Here's what it came back with – there was something mesmerising about watching the rapid spool-through of dozens of sources as it prepares the answer to your question (mainly Wikipedia + news wires):

Gen-Z Protest Movements (2022–2025): Summary Table

Country	Principal Demands	Outcome	Reasons for Success / Failure
Bangladesh (2024 student-led uprising)	Reform of civil-service job quotas; end to corruption; resignation of PM Sheikh Hasina; democratic reforms.	Succeeded – PM resigned; interim government formed.	Success factors: Security forces refrained from fully backing the government; cross-class solidarity; nationwide strikes; government repression backfired and amplified moral outrage.
Nepal (2025 social-media ban protests)	End to social-media bans; anti-censorship; anti-corruption; accountability of ministers.	Mostly successful – ban reversed; ministers resigned; government fell.	Success factors: Weak coalition government; highly networked digital organizing; ban directly targeted youth's main communication tools; broad public sympathy for free expression.
Kenya (2024 anti-tax youth protests)	Scrap tax hikes; reduce cost of living; jobs; anti-corruption.	Partially successful – several tax proposals amended or withdrawn, but structural reforms unmet.	Mixed factors: Strong public support but government faced genuine fiscal constraints; protests shaped legislative debate but did not threaten

Country	Principal Demands	Outcome	Reasons for Success / Failure
			regime stability; limited elite fractures.
Morocco (2025 "GenZ 212" protests)	Accountability for governance failures; better public services; anti-corruption; justice for local accidents.	Failed / repressed – arrests of activists; little policy change.	Failure factors: Highly cohesive security state; heavy criminal charges; limited cross-class support; rapid decapitation of organizers.
Iran (Mahsa Amini movement into 2023)	End mandatory hijab; women's rights; political freedoms; systemic change.	Failed (politically) – regime endured; protests violently suppressed.	Failure factors: Unified coercive apparatus; mass arrests; surveillance and Internet shutdowns; few elite defections; limited international leverage.
France (2023 youth role in pension protests)	Stop pension reform raising retirement age; protect social protections.	Failed – reform passed.	Failure factors: Strong executive power; government used procedural tools; mixed public support; economic framing of reform as necessary for sustainability.
Madagascar (2025 youth protests)	Reliable water/electricity; better governance; resignations; anti-corruption.	Partially successful – government dissolved elements of cabinet; promised reforms.	Success factors: Severe economic/utility crises created broad support; political elites feared prolonged unrest; youth mobilization resonated beyond cities.

Cross-Movement Patterns (Condensed)

1. Regime Type Matters Most

Movements succeed when governments are divided or vulnerable (Bangladesh, Nepal, Madagascar). They fail when the security sector remains unified and repressive (Iran, Morocco).

2. Breadth Beyond Youth Is Decisive

Gen-Z energy catalyzes momentum, but lasting victories require workers, unions, professionals, and older generations to join. Mixed support explains mixed outcomes in Kenya and France.

3. Economic Hardship Amplifies Grievances

Where cost-of-living crises are severe (Madagascar, Kenya), governments face stronger pressure to compromise.

4. Digital Organizing Cuts Both Ways

Social platforms allow rapid mobilization (Nepal, Bangladesh), but states can shut them down or use surveillance to weaken protests (Iran, Morocco).

5. Repression Can Backfire – or Crush Movements

Violent crackdowns sometimes escalate mobilisation (Bangladesh) but can also decisively suppress dissent (Iran, Morocco).

From my limited knowledge, all this seems about right. I liked the way it combines politics, eg regime type, coalitions, economics and the importance of crises and avoids getting hung up on single factors like Gen Z or social media. But I imagine there are some experts on the particular countries reading this blog – what did ChatGPT miss or get wrong?

About the author

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