

# Generation Z, Fall of Empires and The Little Speck of Land Lovingly Called Bangladesh



The origin of the term Generation Z (Gen Z) can be traced to Americans born during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Some sources give the definite year range of 1997–2012, although the years covered are occasionally debated because generations and their spirits are difficult to describe. Gen Z follows the millennial, sometimes called Generation Y, which followed Generation X. Gen Z is succeeded by Generation Alpha (a).

Since the Gen Z-led victory of the Bangladeshi people on 5 August, there have been hundreds of graffiti all around Bangladesh, especially on the walls, road dividers, bridges, overpasses, and flyovers in Dhaka. The phrases coined by Gen Z carry deep meanings. They displayed intellectually rich, emotionally rebellious and desperately courageous verve. Most importantly, the writings were loaded with patriotic fervor, ushering in the birth of a new Bangladesh. A Bangladesh free from tyranny, injustice and inequalities. A Bangladesh that stands for unity and inclusivity for all its citizens—175 million people, irrespective of race, religion, gender and culture. This united Bangladesh, a vision championed by Gen Z, aspires to rise above divisive politics and serve the national interests, not the petty interests of vested corners.

Gen Z's 'Writings on the Walls' are not just graffiti, they are strategic scripts, serving as firm warnings to anyone who dares to obstruct their path to achieving their strategic objective. These writings, filled with patriotism, poise, and aspirations, paint a vibrant future for the people. This creativity, manifested in Gen Z's street art, is a form of independent public art, post-graffiti, or even guerilla art. It likely grew out of the conviction that such art should function in opposition or resistance to hegemonic oppressive systems. The enthusiasm for such unrestricted displays could be that they should be seen publicly rather than hidden inside galleries and museums. These arts are deadlier democratic tools that empower everyone, regardless of race, age, gender, economic background, or social status. Out of hundreds and perhaps thousands of writings on walls, some stated: 'I am Little But We are Huge.' 'What is more powerful, the merit or the weapon?' 'Merit or quota? Merit, Merit!' 'We are one!' 'Gen Z was born to make history!' Etcetera. They have been proved to be the most lethal weapons of an 'army with a paintbrush' of a small number of the youth, a handful of innocent, creative, patriotic youngsters against far larger opponents full of depravities. The strategic nature of Gen Z's graffiti is a testament to the power and impact of their benign actions.

History is replete with many instances where despots failed to understand the vibes of the people, of the popular uprisings due to vendetta, vengeance, utter arrogance, and dependence on using brutal force to subdue their people. Most dangerously equating themselves with the Creator—the God Almighty! Much to the like of Pharaoh of Prophet Moses's Egypt. The arrogance of Pharaoh has been mentioned in various places in the holy Bible and the holy Qur'an. A couple of verses (21-26) from Surah An Nazi'at may be recalled: But Pharaoh denied and disobeyed. Then he turned his back, striving. And he gathered [his people] and called out and said, "I am your most exalted lord." So Allah seized him in exemplary punishment for the last and the first [transgression]. Indeed, that is a warning for whoever would fear [Allah]. Like the Pharaoh, as many of the people of knowledge conceive, arrogant regimes, generally always believed to be immune and above law. They consider extensively held resistance to be "futile", a "furor" by a "little" uncouth unarmed masses. Perhaps their conviction has always been that their potent "source of power" will deal with such irritants with ease.

Describing David Beat Goliath, Michelle Powell-Smith mentions that in the annals of history, ten small armies defeated large ones. His list includes the Battle of Marathon, 490 BCE; the Battle of Julu, 207 BCE; the Battle of Badr, 624; the Battle of Morgarten, 1315; the Battle of Agincourt, 1415; the Conquest of Tenochtitlan, 1519-1521; the First Battle of Panipat, 1526; the Battle of Lacolle Mills, 1814; the Winter War, 1939-1940; and the Six Day War, 1967. Today, the Battle of Thermopylae (480 BCE) is celebrated as an example of heroic persistence by a small group of patriotic warriors against seemingly impossible odds. The Greek army consisted of only about 7,000 men, while the invading Persian army may have had as many as 300,000. The Greeks could maintain their defensive position for two days until they were betrayed. Ephialtes, a Greek citizen desiring reward, informed Persian Emperor Xerxes of a path that went around Thermopylae, thus diluting the Greeks' defence line in preventing the advancement of the Persian army. Xerxes took advantage of this betrayal and sent part of his army along this path, led by Ephialtes, enveloped and

routed the patriotic defenders. Since the defeat in Plassey in 1757, Mir Zafar has been invoked to symbolize betrayal. As was Mir Jafar to the last independent Nawab of Bengal, Siraj Ud Daulah, perhaps Ephialtes was to the Spartan King Leonidas!

Despite the absence of narrative details, it is related that Talut (Saul) had organized his army for battle. The holy Qur'an in the chapter named Heifer, verse 249, narrates: And when Saul set out with his forces ... And as soon as he and those who had kept faith with him had crossed the river, the others said: "No strength have we today [to stand up] against Goliath and his forces!" [Yet] those who knew with certainty that they were destined to meet God replied: "How often has a small host overcome a great host by God's leave! For God is with those who are patient in adversity". Most of Saul's army was fearful of the Philistines. Many of the soldiers refused to fight. Out of the original 80,000, only 300 remained. During these events, David, Prophet Dawood was a young man, and Goliath was a powerful king and a fearful fighter. The same story is mentioned in the Bible's best-known battle, narrated in 1 Samuel 17:32-51. According to the Bible God won a great victory in Israel that day through the hand of a young man (David) who trusted in his God.

In his "The Mediterranean in the 14th Century: Rise and Fall of Empires," Ibn Khaldun wrote: "The world is a garden, the fence of which is the dynasty. The dynasty is an authority through which life is given to proper behavior. Proper behavior is a policy directed by the ruler. The ruler is an institution supported by the soldiers. The soldiers are helpers who are maintained by money. Money is sustenance brought together by the subjects. The subjects are servants who are protected by justice. Justice is something familiar, and through it, the world persists." In his famous book "A History of the Arab Peoples," the British-born Lebanese historian Albert Habib Hourani referred to Ibn Khaldun's epic work, the Introduction—Prolegomena and the first book of world history, the Kitab al -'Ibar ("Book of Lessons, Record of Beginnings and Events in the history of the Arabs and Foreigners and Berbers and their Powerful Contemporaries") when he cited three critical reasons for the fall of empires: tyranny of the ruler, extravagance of the sovereign and rise of unjust 'Asabiyya. The word 'Asabiyya' is originally used in the Arabic language in the context of tribalism and clanism. The current interpretation of the word could be similar to "nepotism" in Bangladesh.

According to the classical Moroccan scholar and explorer Ibn Battuta, Bangladesh—Bengal Delta was "the richest province of the then Indian subcontinent." He described the region of Bengal as "A country of great extent, and one in which rice is extremely abundant. Indeed, I have seen no region of the earth in which provisions are so plentiful." Bangladesh is relatively small geographically because there are scores of other countries smaller than Bangladesh. Geopolitically, geo-strategically, geo-economically, culturally, historically, and demographically, is it small? A Bay of Bengal Littoral, an abode of over 175 million patriots! How many countries are at par with Bangladesh regarding its demographic dividend, untapped sea resources, and potential to be a developed country?

There are conspiracies from within and without to cleverly demotivate the people of Bangladesh to believe that Bangladesh is a small country! The wider world is also cunningly served with the incorrect artificial narrative that Bangladesh is a breeding ground for

Islamic extremism where minorities are not safely secured and justly treated. Whereas, in reality, our beloved motherland is a “garden”, a heavenly abode where different races, religions, ethnicities, and cultures have intermingled and flourished ever since. There are no minorities or majorities in Bangladesh. “We all are Bangladeshi,” “we are one.” as appropriately highlighted by Nobel laureate Professor Yunus, the Chief Advisor to the current interim government recently in reply to a wicked question, and according to the graffiti appropriately painted by our Gen Z.

We do have our challenges. Even the most powerful democracies in the world face challenges. For Bangladesh, these challenges are problems, not crises, which can be fixed by just, honest, meritorious, and patriotic leadership. By ensuring justice, freedom of speech, and human rights for all, irrespective of their political affiliations and social status, the leadership must remain alert to keep the country and its citizens safe from external interference, evil schemes, and concocted narratives from fifth columnists’ crocodile tears, from adversaries in the garb of intellectual inspiration, support or friendship. The homegrown perpetrators, irrespective of their caste and colors, must be brought to justice for heinous acts like genocide, kidnapping, arson, extrajudicial killings, political arrests, rape and extortion, in one word, to be tried for offences related to crime against humanity before the individual or the political party they belong to are allowed to be reinstated to normal life in the society and do their business including politics. Besides, this is of vital national interest to articulate and, where needed, rewrite, within the Grand National strategy, the correct policy to defend institutions to make Bangladesh a “garden” of the world.

Therefore, a thorough scientific investigation is urgently needed as to who is responsible for the systematic destruction, inter alia, of our institutions and education system, creating a void or reducing self-esteem as a glorious freedom-loving nation. The current leadership needs to be a vanguard against sinister forces still trying to keep us politically and economically, militarily, and diplomatically subjugated. It won’t be of wisdom to resort to buck-passing, blame game, or allow rifts between and among the leaders. The interim government must identify the malignant forces and the betrayers and remain vigilant, not allowing Mir Zafar or Ephialtes to stab from the back. The general mass hopes that our leadership, with the mix of youth and elderly, unite the nation to bring back our magnificent past keeping their focus on creating a thriving future. The nation’s hope is in our meritorious students, our triumphant Gen Z, under the guidance of the patriotic and wise seniors that they are not lured to vendetta, vengeance, injustice and misguidance. That they remain steadfast on the straight path—Siratul Mustaqim, and pave the way for all of us—the people of Bangladesh. Aren’t they our future? Yes, by all means, they are Bangladesh, so dear, the little speck of land!

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