



THE “ONE PIECE JOLLY ROGER”

and Shared Political Identity in Gen Z’s Asian Spring

Christina H. Cho
UF International Studies Program



GEN Z-LED PROTESTS

- In August and September 2025, major Gen Z-led protests erupted in Nepal, Indonesia, and the Philippines.
- Each driven by corruption, elite privilege, digital repression, and economic frustration.
- A surprising symbol emerged across all three countries: the “One Piece Jolly Roger” flag.



These protests are **still ongoing** and are inspiring other uprisings around the world!

GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION



Indonesia

- Long-standing elite privilege + corruption.
- Cuts to education/health + new militarization law sparked youth backlash.
- 8/3 Gov banned the One Piece flag, use is viewed as treason.

Nepal

- 9/4 Gov banned 26 social media platforms → attack on expression + livelihoods.
- Deep anger at corruption, nepotism (“nepo kids”), and a youth unemployment rate at 22.7%



Philippines

- Corruption scandal over flood-control funds (“ghost projects”).
- Calls for accountability + end to political dynasties.

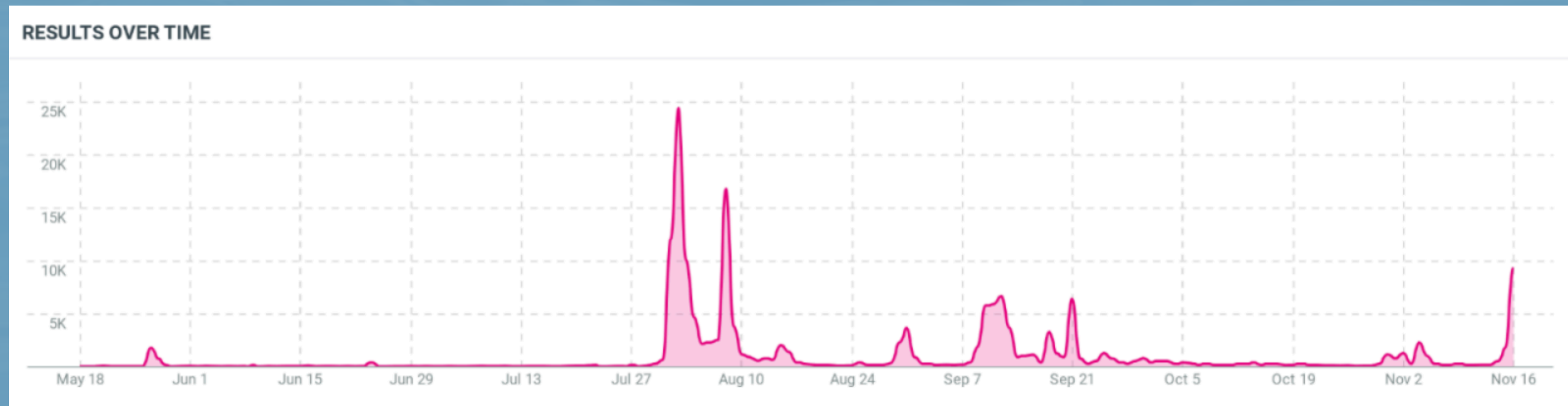
SOCIAL LISTENING

Boolean Query

- Combined terms such as “One Piece flag,” “Gen Z protest,” with “Nepal,” “Indonesia,” and “Philippines.”
- Twitter/X, TikTok, Instagram, Reddit, public Facebook data, YouTube, and online news mentions

Results on Talkwalker

- Published posts: 172,000+
- Engagement: 63,085,020,416.5 accounts
- Comparisons between One Piece and Indonesian government were made as early as May 2025!





Seno GP

@senogp



Translated from Indonesian [Show original](#)

In the famous manga One Piece, there's a period called the Void Century. A time when the true history was erased and replaced with the world government's version of history. People who study the Void Century's history will be sentenced to death.

Will it happen?

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Translated from Indonesian

The Ministry of Culture is writing the grand book of Indonesian History.

But.. a number of important events are not in the Ministry of Culture's draft of Indonesian History. Why? 🤔

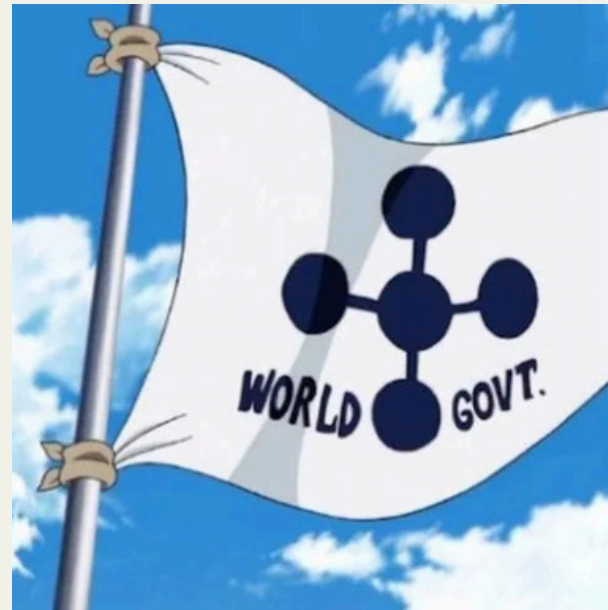
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ONE PIECE (1999)

CONNECTIONS

The Void Century

- A 100-year period of history that is erased, and researching it is punishable by death.
- This parallels censorship, and historical suppression.



World Government & Celestial Dragons

- Controls all information, trade, and food, and uses the Marines to enforce order/restrict movement between islands.
- An elite ruling class that preserves its status through violence, slavery, and control of resources.

Pirates as Freedom

- Luffy's crew symbolizes justice, traveling the sea without permission from the government.
- The story revolves around the Straw Hat Pirates resisting and liberating oppressive governments as they travel across the ocean.

KEY CONCEPTS & PRIOR RESEARCH

Shared Political Vocabulary

- Street & Kelleher (2020–21):
- Movements build a set of shared symbols through pop culture references to reach diverse audiences.

“Portable Repertoires”

- Tarrow (2022):
- Protest symbols travel across borders and are adapted to other cultures.

Collective Political Imagination

- Storey (2021):
- Popular culture shapes how people imagine alternative futures.

“Pop Culture Protest Symbol: One Piece Flag in Non-Violent Political Expression in Indonesia” by Dina Nurul Fathiya

- identifies **three political functions** of the Jolly Roger.
- I extend that framework **across countries** and add shared imagined futures as a dimension.

RESEARCH Q/A & ARGUMENT

Original Question

How does East Asian pop culture imagery/symbolism generate political consciousness among fans across Asia?



Across all three countries, the Jolly Roger performs **three political functions**:

1. Shared political identity
2. Universal recognition and virality
3. Nonviolent activism via imagined futures

FUNCTION 1: SHARED POLITICAL IDENTITY



Indonesia

Fathiya's Interviewees chose Jolly Roger bc:

- Neutral (8/10)
- Universally recognizable (7/10)
- Non-confrontational in aesthetic (9/10)

One 22-year-old says: "The pirate flag doesn't belong to any political party... it belongs to **everyone who loves freedom.**"

Nepal

- Posting flag with slogans attacking the luxurious lifestyles of politicians' children ("nepo kids")

The flag condenses a shared Gen Z identity around **anti-corruption and anti-nepotism** rather than party politics.

Philippines

- 20-year-old protest organizer says, "Even though we have different languages and cultures, we speak the **same language of oppression.**"

FUNCTION 2: UNIVERSAL RECOGNITION & VIRALITY

- Flag is instantly legible to fans of One Piece across the world and spreads as a political meme.
- Fathiya: netizens in Japan (4,200 posts), the Philippines (2,800), Thailand (1,900), and the US (1,500) actively supported Indonesian protests.

Localization Across Countries

- Adaptation of the flag across cultures illustrates global solidarity through shared iconography.
- Artists are sharing their versions of the Jolly Roger and sharing the designs for public use on Reddit.



News sources document Jolly Roger appearances in:

- Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, France, Palestine, Madagascar, Peru, Morocco, United Kingdom, United States, Mexico

FUNCTION 3: NONVIOLENT ACTIVISM VIA IMAGINED FUTURES

Indonesia

- Explicitly **nonviolent strategy** to criticize the state.
- It draws on One Piece's message that freedom beats authoritarian power.

Nepal

- Inspired by Indonesia, Nepali youth used the flag to imagine the fall of corrupt elites.
- After the clashes, protesters returned to **clean the streets, showing a vision of a future built on care**, responsibility, and justice, not punishment.

Philippines

- Protesters see their political dynasties as real-life Celestial Dragons.
- Youth organizers say they are inspired by pop-culture precedents like the Hunger Games salute and Harry Potter references, but see One Piece as **complete liberation and uniquely hopeful**.

OVERALL *ANALYSIS*

The Jolly Roger works as a shared identity marker, a globally portable symbol, and a tool of political imagination.

Implications

- Reinforces that youth activism is meme-driven and symbols allow **safe, creative political expression**.

New Insights

- Extends portable repertoires into **anime symbolism**;
- Expands shared political vocabulary into fandom culture

CONCLUSIONS & MORE



Pop Culture is Politics

- **September:** In just 5 days, Nepal protesters overthrew the government, elected the first woman interim prime minister (over Discord!)
- Currently organizing new committees and bringing in new elected officials
- **October:** Madagascar also overthrew after weeks of youth-led protests against corruption and shortages

Indonesia and the Philippines remain ongoing movements as do other countries like Mexico.

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