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# Boomers vs. Gen Z: A Growing Divide We Cannot Afford to Ignore

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Is Gen Z at war with the boomers? Probably not. But a meaningful and widening disconnect exists between segments of the older generation and today's youth, and it is no longer confined to private conversations. It is evident in public debates, voting behavior, social media, and, increasingly, in the tone with which each generation speaks about the other.

At its core, this is less a 'clash of personalities' and more a clash of lived realities: different relationships to authority, different exposures to information, different definitions of dignity, and different thresholds for patience. The debate is not new; the visibility is!

A recent social media debate, sparked by an article criticizing Baby Boomers for limited understanding and empathy toward younger generations, brought this divide into sharper focus. But the argument didn't emerge because an article was written. It emerged because the conditions that create generational tension have matured into a broader crisis of credibility.

What has further inflamed the discourse is Gen Z's growing defiance and its alignment with particular political narratives. For years, institutions have invested significant effort in shaping what young people should think, whom they should trust, and how they should vote. The establishment of a 'preferred narrative' has long been treated as a form of governance. Increasingly, however, those efforts are confronting an uncomfortable reality: message discipline does not produce loyalty when trust has eroded. Narrative engineering cannot substitute for lived experience.

The response from some quarters has been predictable: if Gen Z does not accept the message, then Gen Z must be irrational, manipulated, extremist, ungrateful, or immature. But that response reveals more about the speaker's anxiety than about the youth's reasoning. Remember that Gen Z is not an accident; it is an outcome.

Gen Z did not appear in a vacuum. They are the outcome of successive generations and the inheritors of a society many perceive as fractured, marked by dishonesty, incompetence, hypocrisy, and corruption. They have grown up with instability as the norm: economic pressures, institutional distrust, widening inequality, and a persistent sense that rules apply differently to different people.

To be clear, collective accountability does not rest on the shoulders of a single generation. But neither can older generations claim innocence while holding power or having held it, through the very decades that produced the current reality. If there is national disappointment, it did not emerge spontaneously in the

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youth; it was cultivated through repeated failures, broken promises, and a public sphere where truth has often been negotiable. In that context, Gen Z's skepticism is not an 'attitude.' It is pattern recognition.

### ***Misreading Gen Z: The Convenience of Dismissal:***

Gen Z should be understood, not indicted. When older voices reflexively blame the youth, they often reveal an unwillingness to examine their own role in shaping today's conditions. Rather than engaging seriously with the sources of young people's frustration, some dismiss them as arrogant, naïve, or 'cult followers.' This is not only unfair but also strategically self-defeating.

Every generation has its political awakening. Baby Boomers had theirs; so did Generation X; so did Millennials. The only difference is that Gen Z's awakening is happening under surveillance and amplification, with everything recorded, replayed, debated, memed, and archived. The responsible question is not whether Gen Z's disillusionment is convenient to the older generation's worldview. The central question is why it has become so widespread and what it responds to.

Young people are not asking for perfection. Many are asking for something simpler: coherence between what their country claims to stand for and how it actually behaves; between constitutional ideals and practical outcomes; between promises and lived experience.

### ***The Boomer Legacy, and the Remaining Opportunity:***

The boomer legacy, in the eyes of many young people, includes missed opportunities, misguided priorities, and repeated failures of governance and leadership. It includes a political culture in which personal networks frequently outweighed merit, public institutions were weakened rather than strengthened, and moral language often served as a mask for transactional politics. Yet there is still room for course correction if the older generation chooses humility over defensiveness.

Instead of attempting to crush Gen Z's aspirations or delegitimize their political choices, older generations should prioritize understanding, respect, and constructive mentorship. That means listening without contempt and advising without condescension. It means teaching civic responsibility and ethical conduct while acknowledging the credibility gap that institutions have created. Mentorship must not become a euphemism for obedience. The goal is not to tame Gen Z; it is to prepare them to lead better than their predecessors.

### ***When Youth Becomes 'the Enemy,' the Country Loses:***

Gen Z now constitutes a significant share of any nation's intellectual, political, and social capital. The worst response would be to treat them as an internal enemy, and, troublingly, there are signs that this is happening. When young people are portrayed as a threat to stability, when dissent is framed as disloyalty, and when political participation is treated with suspicion, the state does not strengthen itself. It weakens its legitimacy.

Their voices should not be silenced, and their grievances should not be trivialized. They need credible assurance that their participation matters, that their votes will be counted, that their speech will not be punished, and that they can criticize without being branded. A generational conflict with them would be

costly, corrosive, and ultimately unwinnable, as it would deepen the very alienation the country cannot afford.

**Importantly, the cost will not be borne by the powerful first. It will be paid by the country.**

***The Smartphone Generation is Not Governable by Old Methods:***

Unlike previous generations, Gen Z carries the world in its pocket. They observe events in real time, compare narratives across borders, and recognize propaganda far more quickly than those who rely on controlled media ecosystems. They have grown up with access to contradictions: speeches versus outcomes, headlines versus facts, and morality versus practice. Social media has not made them perfect, but it has made them difficult to mislead at scale.

Government-controlled media instruments have therefore become less effective, not because young people are inherently rebellious, but because an information monopoly is no longer possible. Against this backdrop, talk of marginalizing, alienating, or disenfranchising young people would be an extraordinary mistake. Such a move would not restore stability; it would institutionalize resentment. It would reinforce a dangerous conclusion: that participation is meaningless and that only power matters. No society survives long when its youth internalizes that lesson.

***A Practical Way Forward: Respect, Reform, and Representation:***

If we want to bridge the boomer-Gen Z divide, we must shift from emotional reactions to practical commitments:

- Respect: Stop treating young citizens as a problem to manage. Treat them as stakeholders to serve.
- Reform: Fix what is visibly broken, governance, accountability, education quality, employment pathways, and justice timelines.
- Representation: Create legitimate avenues for youth influence within parties, policymaking, local governance, and civic institutions.

Most importantly, older generations must recognize that power is not only coercion but also credibility. And credibility is earned, not demanded.

***The Movement Will Outlast the Moment:***

This generation must be treated as a principal stakeholder in our collective future. In the digital age, awareness is not easily reversed; it expands, adapts, and persists. Movements rooted in connectivity and information often outlast the power structures that attempt to suppress them.

*Gen Z's message is simple and unmistakable: they see what is happening, they understand the game, and they will not pretend otherwise.*

**The question is not whether this generation can be controlled. The question is whether it will be engaged with dignity and whether those who came before will choose defensiveness or responsibility.**

**Keywords:** Generational Divide; Boomers' vs Gen Z; Intergenerational Conflict; Gen Z Political Awakening; Youth Disillusionment; Generational Tension.