

OLI FACES THE HEAT

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K.P. Sharma Oli's position as Nepal's prime minister may have become untenable after a rebellion in the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP). Former PM Prachanda, who co-chairs the party with Oli, and other top leaders want him to quit the leadership of both the NCP and the government. Oli seems unpopular, perhaps because of his inept handling of the covid-19 pandemic. An economic slowdown may have taken a turn for the worse. He recently sought China's help to stay in power. Now Pakistan's Imran Khan is reported to be joining hands with China's Xi Jinping to save Oli's government.

A beleaguered Oli has tried to blame India and some Nepalese leaders for conspiring to bring his government down. In what seemed like an attempt to distract people from holding him to account, he even stoked nationalist sentiments by redrawing Nepal's political map to include territories claimed and controlled by India. If Nepalese politics is free of external pressure, Oli's government could soon fall. But Beijing's sway in Kathmandu is seen to have risen in recent times. New Delhi needs to stay alert in guarding our strategic interests in the Himalayan region.

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