

TROUBLE IN NEPAL: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON NEPAL COMMUNIST PARTY FACTIONAL FIGHT

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The storm raging in Nepal's ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) is again rocking the [Khadga Prasad Oli](#) government, and putting Kathmandu's polity in suspense over what might follow. A crucial meet meant to announce an end to the differences between the party's two leaders, Mr. Oli, and his rival, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda), was [postponed on Tuesday](#). Last week too, the two rival factions decided to put off a meeting of the Standing Committee after Prime Minister Oli failed to attend. While the bone of contention, which has roiled party members, is that Mr. Oli continues to hold two posts — that of NCP Chairperson and Prime Minister — it is clear that there is a more complex power game going on. Party members leading the move against Mr. Oli point to growing discomfort over his autocratic style. The Dahal faction, which had merged with the Oli-led United Marxist Leninist (UML) in 2018 when their combine won a massive mandate in the general election, is also impatient for a chance to rule. Mr. Dahal is already unhappy over past power sharing agreements that he believes Mr. Oli reneged on, and Mr. Oli still has residual bitterness over Mr. Dahal's decision to pull out of his previous government in 2016. There is also concern over Mr. Oli's head-on collision with India over the past few weeks, beginning with the constitutional amendment to adopt a disputed map as well as his rather rash language against India, including a recent controversy over the birthplace of the Hindu god, Lord Ram. Mr. Oli has said that he believes there is a conspiracy against him, and alluded to alleged machinations by the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. Finally, there is considerable disquiet in the party and in the press over the public role played by the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal in bringing together the warring factions, especially after Mr. Oli's threat to split the NCP and revive the UML earlier this month.

Many in South Block will take heart, and may even rejoice over Mr. Oli's troubles, given his recent petulant behaviour with the Modi government. India-Nepal ties have hit new lows, with neither side willing to schedule the much promised meeting of Foreign Secretaries to begin to sort out their problems. Yet, it is important for the Modi government and the Indian mission to take a mature stand and play a more constructive role in the current political crisis. The larger struggle for the continuance of Nepal as a parliamentary democracy rather than as a politburo-style polity dominated by the party elite also depends on the outcome of this tussle. While Mr. Oli is outnumbered in the ruling party structure, he has won a mandate, and there is little doubt that he remains popular in Nepal. In power or out of it, New Delhi will still need to contend with Mr. Oli, whose polarising politics could impact the country's fragile ethnic mosaic, if not channelled deftly, and with some delicacy.

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