

Topic of the week for discussion: 12th to 18th May 2016

Topic: 24 hours can make or break in politics!

Nepal is governed according to the **Constitution of Nepal**, which came into effect on **Sept 20, 2015**; replacing **the Interim Constitution of 2007**. The Constitution was drafted by the Second Constituent Assembly following the failure of the First Constituent Assembly to produce a constitution in its mandated period

On May 4, The Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (UCPN) party led by **Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’**, who served as **prime minister** for a brief period from August 18, 2008 to May 25, 2009, issued a statement saying that it was **pulling out** of the **7-months old** coalition government in Nepal headed by **Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli**. The Maoist party, **the third largest in the Nepali parliament** after Nepali Congress and Oli’s Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist–Leninist (CPN – UML), said that the utility of the Oli government had ended and it would now be looking to form a government under **Dahal’s leadership**. The Maoist chairman was enthused as the Nepali Congress had committed support for his leadership. With the support of Congress, Dahal would be able to easily marshal a comfortable majority in the **601-member parliament**.

But by the morning of May 5, **Dahal had completely changed his mind**. Instead of bringing a motion of **no-confidence against the prime minister (In the similar manner as that of Uttarakhand and Andhra Pradesh)**, as was planned only a day before, the party now said it would **continue to support Oli** and allow him to bring the annual budget at the end of May. After that, Dahal would become prime minister of the same communist coalition. The new UML-Maoist agreement also says every effort will be made to expand the coalition into a ‘national consensus government’ and that there will be a renewed push for dialogue on federalism with the protesting Madhesi parties.

The Maoist party’s **volte-face** (turn around) represents a huge symbolic victory for Oli. First, it will **allow him a more graceful exit**, compared to being **forced out through a no-confidence** motion. Second, he can now claim that **he has once again thwarted** ‘Indian designs’ to destabilise Nepal.

So, Once again, Nepal appears to be on the brink of leadership change. The past few days have seen frenetic activity, driven by Maoist leader Prachanda’s desire to oust Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli just months after he took charge. While the attempt has been stalled for the moment, it may be only a matter of time before the number-crunchers get to work to forge an alternative coalition in the **601-member Parliament**. There is a difference of **only 24 seats between Mr. Oli’s Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and the Nepali Congress**. With their 83 seats, the Maoists can always tip the balance. Keeping the confidence of a fragmented Parliament was always going to be a challenge for Mr. Oli. But he finds himself embattled so early in his tenure is also the result of failing to deliver on **three important promises**.

- The first is that of a more equitable Constitution and polity, that accommodates the sensitivities of Madhesi, Janjatis and other marginalised groups.

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Introduction

- The second is that of reversing the estrangement with India. Yes, Mr. Oli has reached out to different groups, and invited the SLMM, or the Samyukta Loktantrik Madhesi Morcha, back for talks after a three-month hiatus. The strain in ties with India has been prevented from worsening, thanks to conciliatory statements from Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa over the weekend.
- It is on the third, and possibly most pressing, responsibility that Nepal's government has failed its people entirely: speeding up reconstruction after last year's earthquake that killed nearly **9,000 people**. NGOs estimate that only about **one per cent of the 7, 70,000** destroyed houses have been properly reconstructed; millions are living in damaged, unsafe homes or in temporary shanties. At this rate, another winter may well come and go without children returning to proper schools, and without hospitals acquiring the facilities to serve Nepal's most wanting.

Some Other Reasons for Oli's government misrule:

- The UML-led government clearly wants to create an impression that the May 4 decision to unseat Oli was also India's doing. To drive home the point, Prime **Minister Oli cancelled the India visit of Nepali President Bidya Devi Bhandari**. Nepal's ambassador to New Delhi, **Deep Kumar Upadhyay**, who had been appointed by the previous government of Sushil Koirala, was also recalled, **supposedly for plotting Oli's exit**.
- **Inflation, already in doubt digits**, is threatening to get out of hand. People have seen the prices of daily commodities like sugar and salt multiply, almost overnight.
- **Oli's overtures to China** also did not bring immediate dividends.
- There is, yet, a glimmer of hope. Even if the **perennial shape-shifter in Prachanda** comes to power, the Madhesi and Janjatis organisations will find it easier to talk to him compared to the **divisive figure that Oli is**.

It is a **mystery why Mr. Oli's government** has been so lethargic in drawing up a comprehensive plan to spend the billions of dollars committed by the world community. **India too must share some responsibility** for the political crisis in Nepal. For the past six months, **New Delhi has raised the ante with Kathmandu**. New Delhi has criticised Nepal's Constitution, banding with other countries at the **UN Human Rights Council** as well as with the **European Union** to rebuke Nepal's government.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/the-crisis-in-nepal/article8576735.ece>

<http://thewire.in/2016/05/05/nepal-maoists-call-for-change-but-isolated-k-p-oli-not-ready-to-go-33826/>