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Nepal

The genie of class struggle comes out of its lamp in Nepal

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Nepal has been shaken by three days of a lightning revolt. In less than 48 hours in early September, political power was swept away like a flash in the pan by popular anger. Many official buildings and private residences of ministers were set on fire. As we write this, the military has filled the power vacuum. A very strict curfew has been decreed.

Nepalese youth have been the spearhead and backbone of the mobilizations. The causes for their anger are well documented: monstrous social inequalities, poverty, lack of prospects, corruption of the “elites,” nepotism of the three parties in power. The hopes born of the fall of the monarchy (2008) have not materialised. The two Maoist Communist parties, which were unified for a time and then separated again, have deeply integrated into the system, alongside the Nepalese Congress Party.

KP Sharma Oli, the prime minister ousted by the uprising, was a member of one of these two formations – the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). At first, he made fun of the youth mobilization. Failure. In a second phase, his government tried to stifle the mobilization by imposing censorship on all social networks. Another failure. In a third phase, there was only repression: when the procession of peaceful students approached the parliament, the police deployed major means: tear gas, water cannon, rubber bullets and live ammunition. About twenty young people were killed, several hundred were injured.

Contempt, censorship and repression have set off the powder keg. Some media speak of “clashes in Nepal,” but it is indeed a revolutionary uprising. As in Bangladesh, as in Sri Lanka, as in Indonesia, a fortuitous event suddenly releases an enormous accumulated social anger, which sweeps away everything in its path.

At the time of writing (13 September 2025), a precarious calm has been restored, but nothing has been settled. Little Nepal is the stake in the struggles for influence between its two big neighbours. KP Sharma Oli tipped the scales towards Beijing. Behind the scenes, India and China are manoeuvring, the former to increase its grip on the country, the latter to maintain it. Other powerful neighbours are watching closely, primarily Pakistan and Russia. In this troubled context, attempts to instrumentalize the protest movement are not excluded, on the part of India in particular.

The social movement seems to have been largely spontaneous. From a distance, prudence of judgment is required. However, there seems to be a consensus around the demands for the dissolution of the assembly, a clear break with the old system of corrupt parties and the aspiration for another development, democratic and social. It is obvious that this is not the direction in which the bourgeoisie, the army, Modi and Xi Jinping intend to go. A long-term perspective is therefore necessary, for which the youth movement and its allies will need to invent a democratic structure.

In the meantime, the autocratic cliques in power around the world are scrutinizing Nepalese events to learn lessons. Their goal is obviously to better protect themselves from the popular classes. There is no doubt that this examination is underway even in “our democracies,” because their imperialist domination implies a constant vigilance on the forms of the uprisings in the countries of the periphery. But for the time being, the lessons of Nepal are being studied especially in China, for the simple reason that China is the big loser of the events.

For the Chinese Communist Party, the issue is not only foreign policy. Xi Jinping and his comrades know that discontent with corruption and inequality could shake the Chinese government as it did that of the Nepalese “Communists.” Chinese power is much more solid, but the risk exists. It is therefore understandable that Beijing is calling as a priority, not to eradicate corruption in Nepal, but to restore “stability” there.

According to the *Financial Times*, corruption prosecutions in China increased by 43% in 2024 compared to 2023 (nearly 900,000 cases). The regime gives a certain publicity to this repression, in order to give itself an image of integrity, even austerity. Nevertheless, the cancer of corruption apparently continues to grow. Moreover, Chinese billionaires are like the others: they generally prefer to flaunt their wealth rather than hide it, which can only excite the discontent of the popular classes. In short, corruption, nepotism and an explosion of social inequalities could also form a potentially explosive cocktail.

The comparison ends there. Because there is a significant difference between China and Nepal before the latest events: in China, social networks and society in general are very tightly controlled by the police apparatus of power. The so-called “neighbourhood committees” are branches of the regime. Together with surveillance technology, they allow for a degree of security control that is unprecedented in history. In this system, which even the STASI of the former GDR does not come up to, any critical element is immediately spotted and nipped in the bud, before it has had a significant echo on the web.

It is an open secret that the effectiveness of China's Big Brother arouses the discreet envy of the world's wealthy (see Trump, for example). However, Chinese stability could be more fragile than we think, especially among the younger generations. As a reminder, young Chinese men and women were on the front line of the protests against the ultra-repressive “zero covid” policy. It's a sign.

Napoleon is reputed to have said “you can do anything with bayonets, except sit on them.” It is certain that Xi Jinping's surveillance devices gag the protest more surely than the Emperor's bayonets. But probably not to the point of opening an ice age of struggles for emancipation. The class struggles will prove to be stronger than the dikes that claim to contain them.

From the point of view of class struggles, the Nepalese case confirms three things: 1) the strategic importance of the struggles against corruption and nepotism (two phenomena intimately linked to the fact that the economic closure of neoliberal capitalism is carried out through the consumption of the rich); 2) youth is indeed “the flame of the revolution” (Karl Liebknecht) and the struggle can direct this flame to the left; 3) once the genie of mass democratic and social protest has come out of its lamp, it is very difficult to lock it in...

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Gauche Anticapitaliste](#).

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