

The Downfall of KP Oli Government: Critical Analysis of Youth Uprising, Deep State, and Opposition Politics

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Abstract

Several explanations ranging from constitutional crisis, party politics, poor foreign policies, and institutional conflicts have been advanced regarding the downfall of KP Sharma Oli's government in Nepal. But a close analysis would suggest that the Gen-Z protest had both symbolic and operational significance leading to the downfall of his government. This essay will argue that, although there is a truth in the adolescent frustration and anger expressed by teenagers in their protests, there were several elements of political conspiracy, consolidation, and geopolitics in the resultant political crisis. Through a theoretical lens incorporating theories on youth movement, deep-state research, and South Asian Political Economy, this essay seeks to examine the interconnection between modern-age networked social mobilization through the internet and the old structures of power hierarchy. A qualitative review of the relevant secondary literature highlights the significant roles played by internet disinformation campaigns and international politics in making the Gen Z protests morally right for elites who had designs on regime change. The essay contributes to the body of knowledge by filling an existing gap in the literature regarding the influence of youth activism on regime change. Recommendations are for inclusive youth involvement, institutional reforms, and transparency of governance to make Nepal's democracy less vulnerable to elite manipulation by using popular uprisings as cover. The paper develops a conceptual framework that connects structural, institutional, and generational processes while discussing some of the most recent research on youth agency during regime change. According to the report, rival players both inside and outside of Nepal dragged the Oli government down in addition to the unplanned youth protests. To reduce the likelihood of elite manipulation in the form of mass upheavals, policy recommendations urge youth involvement through participatory avenues, institutional change, and state transparency.

Keywords: *KP Oli, Gen-Z uprising, deep state, Nepal politics, regime transition, youth movement*

Introduction

Nepal's new democracy has been a long time in coming, and it has traditionally been marked by phases of political instability, with governments arriving in power and then tumbling under the weight of shifting alignments, constitutional crises, and external pressures. In the last two decades since the revival of multiparty democracy in 1990, no government has survived its entire term, bearing witness to the system's vulnerability to competition by elites and structural imbalance. Under such a scenario, the premiership of KP Sharma Oli between 2015 and 2021 was inevitably going to be characterized by an exercise of nationalism as well as some underlying conflicts of the state institution system. This tenure saw days of immense political importance, especially when he tried to draw up the boundaries of Kalapani, Limpiyadhura, and Lipulekh as per constitutional cartography, which is currently at the heart of the Nepal-India border dispute. This move was read as a nationalist appeal in his homeland and was widely supported in all political quarters, thus strengthening his nationalist credentials amongst common people (Bhattarai, 2021).

At the same time, the step heightened tensions with India, strained Nepal's foreign affairs, and added more complications to Oli's already fragile balancing act between mighty neighbors and global giants. In addition to his nationalist rhetoric, Oli also aimed to centralize power within the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), which was formed when two communist parties with rivalry between them merged.

His autocratic leadership style was observed increasingly in terms of shutting down opposition within the party and centralizing power at the executive level. Intra-party struggle between Oli and Madhav Kumar Nepal, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' and other geriatric leaders reflected a broader struggle within the socialist politics of Nepal.

Oli's efforts to deflect criticism from political opponents, civil society monitors, and international actors dissatisfied with his geopolitical maneuvers, particularly his increasing interaction with China, fueled massive outrage. Technology-driven Gen-Z demonstrations emerged as a new form of resistance to the growing political unrest and partisan intra-party disputes.

It gave Nepal a newfound sense of political awareness. Similar structural and personal problems were shared by the majority of Nepali young, including widespread unemployment, institutionalized corruption, discriminatory politics, and the belief that a small group of elites controlled state institutions. Unlike traditional politics, Gen-Z activism relied on organization through social media. Some of the social media platforms utilized included Face book, Twitter, and Tik-Tok, among others. Such platforms helped to expedite complaints against issues such as inefficiencies within the bureaucracy, lack of access to good healthcare services, and corrupt practices.

This type of cyber activism did more than just bring together the virtual debates and the physical protests; it actually brought into question the legitimacy of the government, which no longer seemed like an efficient and sovereign entity to an online generation of people. Despite all of the apparent spontaneity that characterized these protests, there was much more going on beneath the surface in the case of Gen-Z's protests.

On the other hand, they came up against opposing factions, outside influence, and even deep state actors who viewed Oli's increasing belligerence as an attack on their own gains. The "deep state" of Nepal refers to the country's security forces, civil service, royalists, and foreign affiliates, which have traditionally played a prominent role behind the scenes and significantly impacted politics in Nepal (Sharma, 2019). They recognized that the protests of the youth would be instrumental in the mobilization process against the ruling Prime Minister Oli's regime. In terms of the opposition factions, the Nepali Congress and the NCP knew the importance of mobilizing the youth.

In the same vein, outside players, particularly India looked askance at the aggressive nationalism and attempts to balance relations with China undertaken by Oli, making his administration even more vulnerable from the geopolitical angle. In this context, it becomes necessary to separate out the genuine power of generationally driven rebellion from the Machiavellian maneuvers involved in political engineering. While youth-led uprisings are generally lauded as expressions of democracy, there are problems in Nepal's case. Was the Gen-Z Revolution responsible for bringing Oli down, or was this a carefully orchestrated show by the elite to divert attention from the obvious encroachment by state and foreign powers into the country?

An analysis shows that despite the fact that the Gen-Z revolutionaries were taking active roles in shaping public opinion against the government, they were also being used by powerful hands to serve their own political interests. Disinformation campaign, strategic portrayal of Oli as an authoritarian leader, and manipulation of media discourse changed the picture, and the line dividing legitimate struggle and elite manipulation became hazy (Kharel, 2020). The downfall of the Oli-led government should not be attributed only to the youth protests or internal party rivalries. Instead, it needs to be analyzed from multiple angles, such as youth frustration, intrigue within the deep state, unity among the oppositions, and geopolitical interference that came together and created the perfect storm for regime change. Without such critical examination, narratives surrounding Oli's downfall can misrepresent the extent of youth autonomy while underplaying structural intrigues.

Such an analysis requires a review that puts the activism of Generation Z into perspective in the light of the fragile democracy of Nepal, where genuine dissenting views confront the dominant political order to result in actions that ultimately favor the common people as well as those in high offices. Review of Literature Pertaining to Youth Protests and Digital Activism Teenage activism can be revolutionary in authoritarian regimes and emerging democracies.

Castells (2012) argues that people who are not constrained by older hierarchies and acquainted with newer technologies are the most apt to bring about political disruption.

These individuals are usually the ones coming up with new forms of protests against the use of existing methods of organizing, for example, flash mobs, online registrations, viral movements, and street protests. Collective action has become faster and the cost of organizing has been reduced thanks to the use of network communications. As noted by Tufekci (2017), social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter are accelerators which could enable organizations even when there is no hierarchical organization involved.

This trait helps in organizing mass protests, but the limitation is that it becomes very hard to sustain this process over a period of time. The youth movement has a very important place in the political history of Nepal. It was the youth movement that led the fight against the Panchayat system in the People's Movement of 1990, contributing to multiparty democracy in Nepal (Hachhethu, 2007). In the Jana Andolan II of 2006, it was the youths who took the streets to revolt against the king, who finally had to step down leading to the declaration of a federal democratic republic.

Nevertheless, the Gen Z generation was quite unique since they used more online platforms, leadership decentralization, and symbolism as methods of protesting. For instance, 2020-2021 protests included "Enough Is Enough," which was indicative of not only the disapproval of traditional politics, but also pandemic COVID-19 governance issues (Shrestha, 2021). Despite all these revolutionary qualities, it is important to avoid exaggerating the role and independence of young people in movements.

As noted by Kharel (2020), mobilizations of the youth can effectuate change and challenge quos but are institutionally superficial with no clear agenda. As such, they are susceptible to coercion, manipulation, or disbanding by elites after having been responded to by a reaction. In the case of Nepal, the Gen-Z mobilizations, while genuine in nature, were also being manipulated as pawns by political elites and the deep state in a power struggle. The literature on youth action sees both opportunities and dangers in its democratic potentials.

Deep State and Informal Power

The idea of the "deep state" has been gaining momentum in the discourse of global politics as an interpretation of the tenacity of indirect structures of influence beyond democratic governance. According to Scott (2015), the deep state comprises the "entrenched security services, bureaucrats, oligarchs, and foreign clients who make political decisions in their own interests, irrespective of the electoral cycle." Though the deep state is a term mostly associated with Egypt, Turkey, and America, it could equally apply to a weak democracy such as Nepal. The deep state in Nepal includes the leftovers of the monarchical system, elements of the military and espionage machinery, deep state bureaucrats, and the patrons of Nepal such as India and China (Sharma, 2019).

The palace used to be the hub of the deep state, with security agencies at its disposal and access to the foreign patrons. Even after the monarchy was abolished in 2008, patronage and power networks still informally persisted. These kinds of networks thrive in times of crisis, usually using civil strife or government instability to reclaim power.

The fall of KP Oli's government is an example. Though Gen-Z protests appeared to be spontaneous outbursts of anger, they also provided a political opportunity structure for the deep state. Elite realignments could be justified by embedded forces by depicting Oli as authoritarian, inept, and alienated. Youth mobilization is a valid fig leaf for more significant structural change in this kind of trend. According to scholars like Baral (2022), Nepal's volatility is more a result of the way informal networks of power use formal procedures to achieve desired outcomes than it is of the way electoral competition uses formal procedures to achieve desired outcomes.

Analysis of informal power and the deep state, thus, highlights the necessity of going beyond the surface level protest or legislative opposition in order to achieve regime change. In Nepal, the deep state does not only repress or respond to youth mobilization, but also takes the shape of strategic appropriation, wherein popular anger is converted into a means for remolding political power. This necessitates the study of youth protests in the context of a broader set of latent power relations.

Oli's governance and nationalism

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has said that the blockade will be lifted in a few days and that his upcoming visit to India will not take place before border restrictions are eased. (January 26, 2016, The Kathmandu Post) - Oli wondered if India subscribed to the physical aspect of the emblem — the Lion capital of Ashoka — “<i>simhaevjayate</i>” or “<i>satyamevjayate</i>”. (https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/nepal-rubs-it-in-with-satyamev-jayate/cid/1774416) - The Council of Ministers of Oli had announced the new map on 20 May 2020 and two days later it was placed in the Parliament. (May 20, 2020, The Kathmandu Post) - Oli Government send Beaked map of Nepal in UN and in international Community September, 2025 - In May 2016, KP Sharma Oli, signed a landmark Transit and Transportation Agreement with China to end monopoly of India. July 11, 2021, The Kathmandu Post. - Chinese preference to PM Olivisit in Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2025
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Oli's political rise was closely connected with his ability for firm nationalist rhetoric, particularly at times of perceived foreign threat. When India blockaded Nepal between 2015 and 2016, Oli's obstinacy became a beacon of resistance against external intervention. The fact that he had a reputation of being a leader who would stand up to India's dominance in Nepal made Oli's image well-liked among Nepalis since they associated sovereignty with being vulnerable to attacks from foreign nations (Bhattarai, 2021).

For a number of people, Oli's approach stood out in that it was rare for a Nepali leader to favor territorial integrity over other matters (Adhikari, 2021). Despite this, Oli's way of leading came under scrutiny in that accusations were raised about him being an autocratic, corrupt and incompetent leader throughout his tenure as president. The COVID-19 crisis made it possible to see weaknesses in the health system, thus making people dissatisfied with the performance of the government.

Also, internal wrangles in the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) have been detrimental to Oli's rule since opponents alleged that he was compromising collective leadership and an inability to reach agreements. It is argued that whereas Oli's emphasis on nationalism has been viewed as advantageous, it was unable to make up for the lack of sound governance and democracy. Nationalism proved to be a two-sided sword whereby, although it made Oli more popular during times of crisis, it left him diplomatically marginalized especially in dealings with India. Moreover, his inability to balance his foreign and internal policies made him vulnerable to attacks from his adversaries. Literature about Oli's regime focuses on the clash between good governance and national symbolism.

Although Oli has managed to paint a picture of him as a nationalistic figure, his authoritarian tendencies and poor governance practices negatively affected his image. The paradox rendered him vulnerable to manipulation by the deep state factions and the youth, who used his national unpopularity against him. Foreign Influence in Nepalese Politics Nepalese geopolitics, located between India and China, has led to foreign interference, and its internal politics have been exploited by foreign entities. Nepali politics have always been dominated by India's disproportionate influence, whereby the country utilizes its economic dependency, cultural affiliation, and national security considerations to ensure leadership survival in Nepal, according to Muni (2021).

However, India exerts much more pressure during periods when there is politics in play because during such times, India works hard towards safeguarding its own interests through influencing regime change within the region. Oli's nationalism and the constitutional amendment of the map was an outright challenge to India's geopolitical interests in the region, and thus diplomacy was tense. Another power that has sought to increase its geopolitical interests in Nepal is China. China's interests in Nepal arise geostrategically from Tibet and as part of the Belt and Road initiative. The close leaning of Oli towards China made Nepal's shift away from its conventional geopolitical position evident to both India and western donors.

However, even though China had initially backed Oli, it did not give him an unconditional go-ahead during his time of crisis.

Western nations, led by the US and European donors, have influenced the internal politics of Nepal through governance ideas and aid conditionality. Their democracy promotion agenda has regularly coincided with internal conflicts, placing Nepal's leadership under further external pressure (Shrestha, 2021). Oli's more authoritarian style of government collided with such narratives, further ostracizing him on the international front.

Research Gap

According to literature, Nepal's internal politics is inseparable from its external dimension. The downfall of Oli is not only a product of party rivalry but also one of changing geopolitics. The Indian government's passive disapproval, China's cautious diplomatic relations, as well as criticisms of his regime from the West, combined together to produce an external climate against him staying in power. This political weakness coupled with youth protests and activities from the deep state made Oli's demise inevitable. Even though there is literature about the role of youth movements, deep state activities, and Oli's nationalism, there are very few publications that have addressed the connection between the Gen-Z movement and Oli's downfall. In most cases, the literature portrays the youth movement as an independent democratic force without examining the manner by which it was manipulated to serve their interests. This essay will fill that research gap.

Table 1

Variables

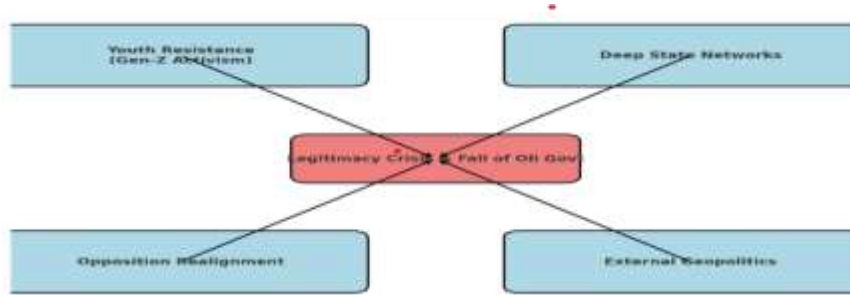
Independent Variables (IVs):	Dependent Variable (DV):
<p>Gen Z activism / youth resistance – Activism and demonstrations organized by the younger generation.</p> <p>Deep state networks – Influence and manipulation from bureaucratic and security organizations.</p> <p>Opposition realignment – Alliances among political opposition groups.</p> <p>Geopolitical pressures from outside influences – Influence from foreign powers (India, China, and the West).</p>	<p>Fall of KP Oli’s government / Political legitimacy crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall of KP Oli’s government / Political legitimacy crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is the outcome being explained or influenced by other factors.

There were various independent factors that affected the dependent variable, which was the ousting of the government led by KP Oli. Instability in politics was caused by different factors, among them the realignment of opposition forces, deep state actors, youths, and

geopolitical considerations from the outside world. This relationship made the political environment more complex and hostile, leading to the collapse of the government.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework on the fall of KP Oli Government: a Critical Analysis of Youth Uprising, Deep State, and Opposition Politics



Note: As depicted by this conceptual model figure, the combination of Youth Resistance, Deep State Networks, Opposition Realignment, and Geopolitics was responsible for the Legitimacy Crisis and subsequent fall of the KP Oli government.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research and narrative research design, utilizing both primary data and secondary data to critically analyze the downfall of KP Oli’s government. Primary data were collected through, Politician person and and youth of Nepal and secondary data were collected through review of published and unpublished documents such as government reports, parliamentary records, newspaper articles, online news portals, research articles, books, policy documents, and relevant archival sources related to the downfall of the KP Oli government, youth uprising, deep state influence, and opposition politics in Nepal. Thematic data analyses was applied to examine youth uprisings, deep state influences, and opposition politics, with triangulation ensuring validity and reliability, while ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality are maintained (Shrestha, 2021; Washington Post, 2025; The Diplomat, 2025; Times of India, 2025; NDTV, 2025; Reuters, 2025; Lowy Institute, 2025).

Results

The sources and media articles have indicated that the political crisis in Nepal during 2025 was an outcome of a complex set of circumstances. The demonstrations were not impromptu, but a consequence of underlying socio-economic issues, political manipulations, and geopolitics.

Youth Discontent

The most apparent and immediate cause of instability was youth discontent. Almost half of Nepal's population is under the age of 35, and a large majority of them are facing

extremely high unemployment rates, very poor educational prospects, and enormous corruption (Shrestha, 2021).

They felt alienated from the political process, thinking that political leaders were not connected to their own problems. These sentiments were intensified by social media, as it exposed incompetence in the government, nepotism, and showed off stories about naked richness in political dynasties, causing feelings of unfairness.

It is worth mentioning that the government decided to block several popular social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube, in September 2025, triggering protests and plunging the masses into mass public fury (Washington Post, 2025). Digital Activism and Mobilization Internet activism was vital for increasing participation and mobilizing the masses. Enough Is Enough, StepDown PM, NepoBaby, and NepoKids were some of the popular hashtags which unified the personal grievances of citizens and transformed them into a mass movement (Washington Post, 2025). Social media helped organize and mobilize the protests in a decentralized manner, as individuals could organize protests and highlight the repression committed by the authorities in the cyber space. Scholars claim that cyber activism made the resistance process more democratic and rebalanced power relations by giving voice to the voiceless (Shrestha, 2021).

The government's action to muzzle online media ironically escalated mobilization because the power of online activism was shown in contemporary political protests (Washington Post, 2025). Deep State Manipulation Besides spontaneous mobilization, there were also rumors that some figures in the "deep state" manipulated the unrest for political benefits. Former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli announced that powerful interests exploited the protests to paint him as dictatorial, destabilizing his administration (Times of India, 2025a). Even while on-the-ground accounts indicated that the majority of rallies were unplanned and motivated by real grievances, the topic of large-scale state complicity continued to dominate the headlines in public life.

That political activities are shaped or engineered by political insiders or intelligence agencies is not a revelation given the record of such trends in Nepal, where cabals within the bureaucracy, security forces, and elite groups have penetrated democratic processes at times (Times of India, 2025b).

Such activities also eroded citizen trust in government institutions, setting off a chain of distrust and instability (Shrestha, 2021). Opposition Alliances Political rivals exploited the turmoil to hold Oli's leadership responsible. SherBahadurDeuba, leader of the Nepali Congress party, and Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the CPN (Unified Socialist Party), forged tactical partnerships to capitalize on public anger (NDTV, 2025). The partnerships generated the parliamentary stress that finally compelled Oli to step down.

The next appointment of an interim government led by SushilaKarki, a retired chief judge who was largely perceived to be free from corruption accusations, was both a reaction to

popular pressure and a tactical maneuver by political elites to revive institutional legitimacy (Reuters, 2025).

Foreign Pressures

The constitutional crisis in Nepal arose in a very dangerous geopolitical situation. The dominating presence of India in Nepalese affairs became worrisome for Oli due to his increasing closeness and alignment with China as the country seemed to be putting its interests behind. In spite of the close economic ties with Nepal, China chose not to take any sides in the ongoing conflict due to fear of more chaos (The Diplomat, 2025).

This coincidence of external pressure generated a culture of diplomatic isolation, weakening Oli's grip and underscoring the pressures and politics of external and domestic dynamics (Lowy Institute, 2025; The Diplomat, 2025).

Discussion

Some of the issues illustrated by the Nepalese protests of 2025 include the following: Firstly, youth protests realize the need to coordinate their efforts towards fighting structural inequalities such as lack of education and employment opportunities. Secondly, the transition of citizenship from one form to another is shown through cyber protests, highlighting the power of bottom-up grievances that result in mass online protest. Thirdly, the allegation of deep state complicity underscores the importance of keeping Nepal's institutions intact, owing to its vulnerability to external pressures.

Ultimately, it might not be appropriate to comprehend the political problems of Nepal without considering the impact of external pressure on Nepal's geopolitical position with respect to China and India. Moreover, the ouster of Oli's administration represents an instance where intergenerational defiance works hand in hand with politics as usual. Unlike the Arab Spring in Tunisia or the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, Gen-Z activism in Nepal lacked proper leadership yet managed to get some publicity. However, the regime change campaign was hijacked by the deep state by portraying Oli as unpopular and ineffective.

Although youth movements are often heralded as democratizing forces, elites may sabotage such movements in the case of weak democracies. This presents a paradox. Nepal shows us how real-world issues such as marginalization and corruption can be used as levers for the exercise of power.

In South Asia, too, the same holds true. While Gotabaya Rajapaksa was ousted from office due to the "Aragalaya" protests of 2022, elites bargained away the reforms after the protests took place (Jayasuriya, 2023). Likewise, Gen-Z-led protests in Nepal led to the democratization of politics but did not result in a transfer of power straight away.

Conclusion

Gen Z Protests in 2025 are a turning point in the Nepalese political scene. It represents the complex relationship between the mobilization of youths, cyber activism, deep state

machinations, political oppositions, and external pressures. Despite the resignation of K.P. Sharma Oli and the formation of an interim government being a quick political fix, the governance problems, popular confidence, and geopolitical stability have not been resolved yet. Solving such structural weaknesses is of the utmost importance for Nepal's future stability and development of democracy (Shrestha, 2021; Reuters, 2025; Washington Post, 2025). Failure of KP Oli's government should not be attributed solely to the Gen Z Protests. Even though there was a moral justification for the Gen-Z Revolution, the true motivation came from state machinations, opposition coalitions, and geopolitical enmity. Though the protests represented intergenerational grievances, they were not enough to cause political changes by themselves. They were used to legitimize aristocratic goals.

Policy Recommendations

For addressing the issues raised during the protest demonstrations in 2025, Nepal will require both political and institutional reforms. Incorporation of the youth advisory groups in Parliament will ensure that issues of concern for the youth are effectively communicated when making policies. Effective communication is the key to counter disinformation and build trust among citizens. State reform involves ensuring that the security forces and civil servants have civilian oversight so that they are not subjected to political pressure. Open foreign policy is likely to reduce foreign interference in Nepal.

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