

UNPRINCIPLED ALLIANCES: ON
POLITICS IN NEPAL

The Hindu

Paper - II
(IR)

The adage that there are no permanent enemies and no permanent friends, only permanent interests in politics could explain many a twist in shifting political alliances across the democratic world. But it would only be an understatement in Nepali politics, where the art of coalition making has for long been a farce. On Saturday, incumbent Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) predictably lost a trust vote, after only 63 of the 275-member House of Representatives backed him, while 194 lawmakers voted against the motion of confidence. The loss was a foregone conclusion after the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) led by Khadka Prasad Oli — he has been made the Prime Minister again — withdrew support from the CPN(MC)-led government and joined hands with the opposition Nepali Congress, led by Sher Bahadur Deuba. Mr. Dahal had managed to hold his post for close to two years, and after surviving three trust votes — all necessitated by his decision to change partners. The CPN(MC) had formed the government after the November 2022 elections, despite finishing a distant third and Mr. Dahal had managed to do so by exploiting the differences between the Deuba-led NC and the Oli-led CPN(UML). These two parties won 89 and 78 seats, respectively, in 2022, and have now formed a coalition government with the arrangement that Mr. Oli and Mr. Deuba will share the post of Prime Minister, each for half of the remaining term.

- ❖ **Floor test of January 2023:** Prachanda took oath for the third time in December 2022 (he had been Prime Minister earlier in 2008-09 and 2016-17). He won 268 votes in the floor test of January 2023 after receiving support from almost all parties, including both the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML.
- ❖ **Second floor test in March 2023:** Prachanda had to seek a second vote in March 2023 after CPN-UML and the monarchist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party withdrew support.
- ❖ These parties withdrew support over Prachanda's backing for Ramchandra Paudel of the Nepali Congress to be President. Nepali Congress supported the Prachanda government during this floor test.
- ❖ **Third floor test in March 2024:** On March 4 this year, Prachanda dumped Nepali Congress (led by Deuba) and went back to CPN-UML (led by K P Sharma Oli), which triggered the vote in Parliament.
- ❖ **Fourth floor test in March 2024:** Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) lost a trust vote, after only 63 of the 275-member House of Representatives backed him, while 194 lawmakers voted against the motion of confidence.

Ever since Nepal transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one in 1990, and then to a full-fledged republic in 2008, its democratic polity has been marked by instability and constant changes in power, leading to poor governance. Despite the institution of constitutional reforms related to federalism and guaranteed representation for marginalised forces following a civil war and the overthrow of the monarchy, the outcomes have been a perpetuation of the country's status as a "least developed country". It is quite evident that the leadership of the three major parties have shown more interest

in sticking to power by any means irrespective of whether they are driven by pre-poll coalitions or not. Besides, the inherent instability in a parliamentary system that reflects social fissures in the country has led to a form of coalition politics that is driven less by ideological or principled considerations and more by a hankering towards power. Such instability and an unprincipled pursuit of power will only result in more disillusionment among the Nepali people with the democratic process. Nepal can perhaps be better off with a presidential system that allows for a directly elected head of state.

Why is Nepal experiencing political instability?

- ❖ **Rushed Constitution:** Nepal's decision to become a secular federal democratic republic was rushed and barely debated, contributing to instability.
- ❖ **Young Democracy:** As a young democracy, Nepal has faced numerous upheavals and lacks experienced leaders and institutions to handle its challenges.
- ❖ **Loss of Hindu Identity:** The country transitioned from being the world's only Hindu kingdom to a secular state after the Maoist insurgency, causing confusion and dissatisfaction.
- ❖ **Calls for Monarchy Restoration:** Due to weak democratic institutions, there are calls to restore the monarchy to ensure stability and safeguard democracy.
- ❖ **Federal Setup Concerns:** The establishment of a genuine federal setup raises fears about potential disunity within Nepal.
- ❖ **Corruption and Misgovernance:** Rampant corruption and misgovernance are significant issues, making it difficult for Nepal to thrive in the post-COVID-19 world.

Expected Question for Prelims

Que. Consider the following statements in the context of the current political scenario of Nepal-

1. In the November 2022 elections, Pushp Kumar Dahal's party formed the government despite being the third number party.
2. Pushp Kumar Dahal's government has fallen in the recently held floor test.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1 (b) Only 2
(c) Both 1 & 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : C

Mains Expected Question & Format

Que.: Discuss the factors contributing to the political instability of Nepal? Is there a need to replace the parliamentary system with a presidential system in Nepal? Discuss.

Approach to answer:

- ❖ In the first part of the answer, discuss the factors contributing to the political instability of Nepal.
- ❖ In the second part discuss the pros and cons of the need to implement presidential system in place of parliamentary system in Nepal.
- ❖ Finally give a conclusion giving suggestions.

Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.