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Cultivated instability instead of positive renewal

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So now Nepal has yet another new government, the third in just 14 months. At best, the office of Prime Minister appears stable. But that is precisely the illusion. Ever since the new constitution was adopted in 2015, Nepal's political life has been solely about controlling power, with three so-called top politicians - Dahal, Oli and Deuba - passing the office of prime minister on to each other. As there is a lack of the necessary majorities for a single party to form a government, coalitions of several parties are required, but these do not work thanks to the authoritarian and autocratic attitude of the three top politicians.

Each of the three top politicians, who consider themselves indispensable and extremely competent, is focussed exclusively on their own power. To achieve this, every means is justified: Mergers under party names that are already registered elsewhere; agreements between the three politicians to change the office of prime minister in the middle of the legislative period, with the planned subsequent breach of such agreements; electoral alliances that deprive voters of the right to free and independent elections; violations of the constitution and laws; disregard of Supreme Court rulings, especially those concerning the power of a prime minister, if necessary based on brazen lies; authoritarian control of their own parties by the three politicians thanks to the party law they enforce, which is undemocratic in many respects; formation of ministerial councils in constant disregard of the constitutional provision on social inclusion (Article 76 (9)); prevention of the federal state through extreme centralised control of the provinces; covering for corrupt and criminal elements despite claims to the contrary; retention of politicians accused of various crimes; misuse of electoral lists and parliaments to infiltrate relatives and other personal clientele; delaying the investigation of crimes from the time of the insurgency and preventing justice for the victims of the same; exacerbating patriarchy and dominance of male Khas Arya groups in all areas of public life instead of the social inclusion prescribed by the constitution. One could continue this list almost endlessly.

The three politicians are true world champions in whitewashing their achievements. Yet politics, the economy and society have been in an ever worsening crisis for years. Events such as earthquakes and the pandemic may have contributed to this, but they are not the cause. None of the three prime ministers of recent years has shown themselves to be up to the high standards required of a head of government in Nepal. This is also due to the fact that they lack charisma. They do not see the urgent needs of the country and its people because they are only ever focussed on themselves and their personal power.

The government's political incompetence has been discussed openly for months. At the same time, conservative and backward-looking forces are exploiting the failure of the supposedly democratic parties to call into question the entire political system, which has only just been achieved after decades of struggle with the absolutist endeavours of the monarchy and at great human sacrifice.

Instead of at least finally implementing the political system of 2015 in the face of this development and forgetting the numerous mistakes and oppressions as well as the royal coups of 1960 and 2002/2005, the top politicians and their parties are continuing their failed games unchanged.

In the context of the current change of power under the continued premiership of Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the politicians of the parties involved never tire of emphasising the "new" in this development. But how are the repeatedly failed old heads suddenly capable of something new? Devendra Paudel, secretary of the CPN (MC), seriously declares that the people of Nepal want a united, strong communist policy. However, the election result of November 2022 proves the opposite, where all communist parties were far from an absolute majority. Such a result has only been achieved once before, in 2008, when the Maoist party won a landslide victory. Since then, the latter has been in free fall in terms of voter support. The current 11 per cent should not really be a justification for Dahal's third term in government. The experiment of merging with the CPN (UML) after the 2017 elections must also be considered a failure, not only because of the Supreme Court's revocation of the name.

KP Oli, Chairman of the CPN (UML), speaks of a necessary step for the development and well-being of the nation. Yet during his time in office as Prime Minister, he did everything he could to discredit the new political system. What is supposed to be different now? The CPN (UML) may have been the strongest party in the last elections with just under 27 per cent of the vote; the fact that the Nepali Congress was ahead in terms of seats won was only due to the manipulative electoral alliance. However, the 6.3 per cent drop in votes for the CPN (UML) compared to 2017 must be seen as a slap in the face for Oli's authoritarian and sometimes illegal activities, especially in 2020 and 2021.

As even the participation of all parties calling themselves communist would not be enough to form a majority capable of governing, non-communist parties would have to be brought in once again. The RSP, which received almost as many votes as the CPN (MC) in the 2022 elections and is now of fundamental importance for the new government with its 21 MPs, was the first party to be considered. Without this party, the government is unlikely to succeed, unless the number of parties involved in the government is expanded to such an extent that constructive politics becomes impossible. The problem with the still young RSP is that it is not fully grounded in the 2015 constitution. Not only does it, like all political parties in the country, lack social inclusion, its leading politicians have also recently made it clear that they reject the federal system in its current form. What is almost worse is that they are flirting with a return to a Hindu state. The latter tendency is also recognisable in other political parties, particularly in the Nepali Congress, but also in the CPN (UML).

So what "new" things can we expect from the third Dahal government in a row? For example, will there finally be adequate social inclusion within the government, as stipulated in the

constitution? If so, there should at most be 1-2 male ministers from among the Bahuns, including the prime minister; at least three Dalits and 8-10 women would have to be involved, and not just at the bottom of the cabinet hierarchy.

Even more important would be the political content. Will federalism and secularism be implemented as prescribed by the constitution? Will jobs finally be created at home in order to stabilise the economy instead of promoting labour migration? Will the peace process that began in 2006 be brought to an immediate conclusion and justice served to the victims of the uprising? The list could go on and on. The bottom line is that it would have to be a complete reversal of previous policy.

However, this cannot be assumed, as the old, failing forces continue to set the tone. A rejuvenation of their parties and their transfer to the political system is being deliberately prevented by all three leaders. The parties in their government will remain mere accessories, regardless of whether the prime minister is initially called Dahal and later perhaps Oli. Ultimately, the necessary participation of several political parties in the government will make it impossible to pursue a purposeful policy that is immensely important and orientated towards the needs of the country and its people. This is not only because of the clash of opposing views in some fields, but also because the parties involved do not show any real will for the future of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and still patriarchal country.