

## Neighbourly Distance: India's Quiet Watch on Nepal

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### Summary

*The evolving political situation in Nepal is of significant concern to India. However, past experience suggests that New Delhi would do well to observe developments in Kathmandu closely, yet without direct involvement.*

As Sushila Karki, former Chief Justice of Nepal's Supreme Court, takes charge of an [interim government](#), becoming the first woman prime minister of Nepal, questions arise on how India should deal with the situation in its Himalayan neighbourhood.

When Nepalese youths began protesting against the existing political system of Nepal, especially targeting the K P Sharma Oli-led government, [India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#) wrote on X (formerly Twitter), "The violence in Nepal is heart-rending. I am anguished that many young people have lost their lives. The stability, peace and prosperity of Nepal are of utmost importance to us. I humbly appeal to all my brothers and sisters in Nepal to support peace".

On 9 September 2025, [India's Ministry of External Affairs](#) (MEA) stated, "As a close friend and neighbour, we hope that all concerned will exercise restraint and address any issues through peaceful means and dialogue". An [MEA statement](#) on 12 September 2025 then welcomed the formation of the Karki-led interim government, stating, "...as a close neighbour, a fellow democracy and a long term development partner, India will continue to work closely with Nepal for the well-being and prosperity of our two peoples and countries".

The protests in Nepal have been compared with political uprisings in India's other South Asian neighbouring countries, namely, [Sri Lanka in 2022 and Bangladesh in 2024](#). However, while there are [parallels](#), their political consequences for India are different. To begin with, Oli was never looked at as a close friend of New Delhi. Since returning to office as prime minister in July 2024, Oli did not visit New Delhi.

Now, with the interim government in office in Nepal, India does not seem to have many policy options. Theoretically, in most cases, an interim government's main role is to facilitate the formation of the next government. However, in some cases, it may be asked by the people involved in regime-changing protests to prepare a new constitution or introduce [economic and political reforms](#). For example, Mohammad Yunus-led interim government in Bangladesh set up a reform commissions to make recommendations for changes in the country's [democratic institutions](#). However, after taking charge of Nepal as an interim prime minister, Karki stated that she will stay in the job for the next six

months and hand over the office to a new political group, following the [elections on 5 March 2026](#).

On the political situation in Nepal, contrary to the Indian government, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Deputy Chief Minister from poll-bound Bihar, [Samrat Choudhary](#), blamed India's major opposition, the Congress. He said, "All this is the Congress' mistake. There is anarchy because [the] Congress has kept these countries separate. If Nepal had been a part of India today, there would have been peace and happiness in Nepal". Leader of the Congress, [Pawan Khera](#), responded, "People who read *Manohar Kahaniyan* instead of history end up making complete jokers of themselves. After losing the upcoming elections, this man should go and annexe all neighbouring countries and correct the mythical wrongs". A day after Choudhary's statement, the BJP headquarters [issued a directive](#) instructing its ministers, leaders, office bearers, spokespersons and social media handlers to refrain from commenting on political developments in Nepal. The directive further stated that any remarks on the matter must receive prior clearance from the party president, J P Nadda.

In the current political situation in Nepal, it would be beneficial for New Delhi to learn from recent history. In 2015-16, India carried out an unofficial blockade in support of the Madhesi people, who were then [protesting against the provisions in the constitution](#) which they believed would lead to their underrepresentation in the parliament and public employment. The Indian government, however, denied that it imposed any blockade on its border with Nepal. The unofficial blockade stirred Nepali [nationalism against India](#) and encouraged Nepali policymakers to [move closer to China](#). Hence, it is perhaps prudent for India not to sides this time.

Although the pro-monarchy elements in Nepal extended [support to the protest](#), many of the Generation-Z (Gen Z) protestors do not favour a return of a regressive monarchy in the country. Several Gen Z activists insisted on staying vigilant against attempts by the royalists to draw political benefit [from the situation](#). Many in Nepal see Indian Hindutva groups as supporters of the movement to [restore the monarchy in Nepal](#). Such perception prevails even though the Indian government has denied any hand in pro-monarchy movements held in Nepal in 2025. In such a situation, any unwanted statement or act from New Delhi may be misinterpreted by the Nepalese as support for the monarchy.

Nonetheless, given the geopolitical sensitivities, India cannot remain entirely disengaged from Nepal's political dynamics. The most effective approach for New Delhi is to observe developments closely, yet without direct interference. It is also imperative that New Delhi exercise caution in responding to unverified narratives or conspiracy theories propagated in the media and online platforms.

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