

# SHOWING THE WAY OUT: ON K.P. OLI'S OUSTER, YET AGAIN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Nepal

In what must be a *déjà vu* moment for outgoing Prime Minister K.P. Oli and President Bidya Devi Bhandari, the Supreme Court of Nepal set aside their dissolution, in May, of the House of Representatives. The [apex court had in February overruled](#) Mr. Oli's decision [to dissolve the House in December 2020](#) as well. But this time, the ruling was more than just a rap on his knuckles. The judgment also paved the way for [Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress to be appointed as Prime Minister](#) after recognising his claim based on signatures of 149 lawmakers across different parties affirming their support. The five-member Constitutional Bench also provided the way out of the unending political deadlock in the House by allowing individual lawmakers to ignore their party whips during a trust vote that is a must win for Mr. Deuba. The inability of Mr. Oli and Mr. Deuba to win trust votes, prior to the dissolution decision by Ms. Bhandari, was because the support for them in the 275-member House divided both the ruling Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (UML) and the Opposition Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) as rebel lawmakers risked suspension. The court's decision earlier in the year to [de-recognise the merged Nepal Communist Party](#) was another factor too. Mr. Oli had minority support within the merged NCP, but his faction retained the endorsement of the bulk of the legislators in the de-merged UML. The rebels, led by [Madhav Nepal](#) and Jhala Nath Khanal, were limited to a smaller faction. The other component of the NCP, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre), meanwhile endorsed Mr. Deuba's candidacy, while the JSP was split vertically, with the Mahantha Thakur-Rajendra Mahato-led faction supporting Mr. Oli as opposed to the Baburam Bhattarai-Upendra Yadav-led faction.

It remains to be seen whether the lawmakers will now vote based on their individual agency with the fear of suspension gone. There is no guarantee that Mr. Deuba will win a trust vote as he must secure the support of the rebel factions within the UML and the JSP. The Madhav Nepal-led faction, which has not endorsed Mr. Oli and welcomed the judgment, has also been a mercurial force undecided on joining hands with the Opposition in this new situation. Nevertheless, this is a blow to Mr. Oli whose brinkmanship and authoritarian tendencies have come at a difficult time for Nepalis reeling from the COVID-19 outbreak. It is also a stinging rebuke to Ms. Bhandari whose actions as President rubber stamping her former party colleague Mr. Oli's decisions have called into question her role as a constitutional functionary. Mr. Deuba has his task cut out, but a firm message of unity and consultative governance can bring about political stability, something that has long eluded Nepal during both its constitutional monarchy and its republican periods.

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From the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, to the landmark Ayodhya verdict, 2019 proved to be an eventful year.

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