

Nepal Observer

An internet journal irregularly published by Nepal Research

Issue 62, December 25, 2020

ISSN 2626-2924

Putsch at the top of the state, 60 years after Mahendra's coup d'état

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Exactly 70 years ago, a revolution put an end to the Rana oligarchy, which had been in power for over 100 years, and raised hopes for a democratisation of Nepal. The driving forces at the time were young Nepali exiles in India and King Tribhuvan, who cooperated with them. Thanks not least to the mediation of Indian Prime Minister Nehru, the Delhi Agreement led to a very tentative democratisation in Nepal, but also to a resurgence of the monarchy. Recently, there have been renewed calls for a revival of both the monarchy and the Hindu state. Now, to make matters worse, the prime minister and president have engaged in what can only be described as a coup for the sake of maintaining personal power. Is the federal republic created in 2015 already at an end?

This paper attempts to analyse the dissolution of parliament by Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli and President Bidya Devi Bhandari on 20 December 2020 and place it in a historical framework.



PM Oli (Source: Annapurna Express, 25 December 2020)

The monarchy's ambitions for power

Tribhuvan, and above all his son Mahendra from 1955 onwards, knew how to play off the young, inexperienced party politicians, who were at loggerheads with each other, against themselves in order to promote their own interests. The first parliamentary elections in 1959 brought brief hope, although Mahendra

had previously had a constitution drafted that described the state not as a democracy but as a monarchy. The people were all described as subjects of the king. The latter possessed quasi-absolute power and only needed to make use of the intended democratic-looking institutions of the state when it suited him. However, thanks to the pure direct election system and a high number of independent candidates, the Nepali Congress (NC) was able to obtain a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives with only a good third of the votes, which would have made constitutional change possible.

After only one and a half years, Mahendra decided not to continue taking this risk and staged a coup on 15 December 1960. With the help of the military, he imprisoned the entire Council of Ministers (apart from the foreign minister who was in India) and many other politicians for many years, declared the democratic multi-party system to be completely unsuitable for Nepal, banned all political parties and created a non-party council system (Panchayat system) in which the people were only allowed to elect candidates at the very lowest village level. This disenfranchisement of the people lasted almost exactly 30 years, with some relaxation in the last decade.

The system of 1990

The political upheaval in the spring of 1990, a good 30 years ago, known today as Jana Andolan I, was a broad-based popular revolution. For the first time, the Nepali Congress and left communist parties had been able to agree on a minimal common ground: An end to the party-less Panchayat system, the re-admission of political parties, the establishment of an interim government, the creation of a democratic constitution by a panel of experts, the transformation of the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy, and parliamentary elections within a year. Most of these goals were achieved. For the first time, Nepal got a democratic system that lived up to its name.

But those in power soon had to face the reproach of having allowed too many compromises with conservative and feudal forces. In particular, those who were now politically responsible failed to break down outdated social structures and ways of thinking and to ensure inclusive and equal participation of all groups in society. Males from the upper Hindu castes continued to dominate all state functions and public life. Whereas under the monarchy male Chhetris had a preponderance, they were now replaced by male Brahmins (Bahuns) who had dominated the political parties since their inception. The unsatisfactory democratisation, as well as its poor advancement, soon contributed to disillusionment and fostered the emergence of the Maoist insurgency, in which far-left politicians were adept at exploiting social grievances and discontent.

Another problem was that the personal competition between the parties as well as between different factions of the parties, which had already existed in the 1950s, continued to characterise the 1990 system. This became particularly clear when between 1994 and 1999 no party had a parliamentary majority on its own. After that, the NC again had a majority of seats in parliament, but factional struggles prevented any political stability.

The coup of Gyanendra (2002/2005)

The power struggles between the NC's male leaders and the Maoist insurgency, now nationwide, enabled the return of the monarchy. In two stages, Gyanendra, who had risen to become king after his brother Birendrawas killed in a palace massacre in June 2001, once again seized absolute power. It was also important that the 1990 constitution had retained the Hindu state instead of declaring the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual Nepal a secular state. A particularly inglorious role was played by Sher Bahadur Deuba (NC), who as prime minister in November 2001 urged Gyanendra to mobilise the army against the Maoists and declare a state of emergency. This led to the most brutal possible escalation of the conflict, but not to its settlement. When Deuba failed to get an extension of the state of emergency in parliament in May 2002, he asked Gyanendra to dissolve parliament and call new elections just to maintain his personal power.

Of course, Gyanendra gratefully accepted this submission, knowing full well that elections could not possibly be held on time in the face of the nationwide Maoist insurgency. Therefore, when Deuba asked the king to postpone the election date in early October 2002, the king summarily dismissed him for

"incompetence". Thus, the two democratic institutions of the legislature and the executive were eliminated. For some time, Gyanendra experimented a bit more with governments staffed by selected conservative politicians of the Panchayat era, but in the face of street demonstrations by democratic forces, Deuba, who had been declared "incapable", was put in charge of the government again. Presumably, this was all calculated, because on 1 February 2005, Gyanendra finalised his coup, took over the government himself and used the two biggest hardliners of the former Panchayat system as his deputies in the Council of Ministers. For the second time, the monarchy had killed democracy by means of a coup, albeit this time with the active support of supposedly democratically minded politicians.



Sher Bahadur Deuba, Chairman of the NC, who opened the way for King Gyanendra's coup d'état in 2002 because of his personal ambitions for power (Source: The Kathmandu Post, 25 December 2020)

Power to the people (2006)

But the royal coup also seemed to bring about something positive. On the one hand, the people's awareness of democracy had grown to such an extent that they vehemently opposed the monarchy's absolutist attempts to gain power. The demonstration of power by civil society was at its peak in the streets. This did not fail to impress the leaders of the political parties, including the Maoists fighting in the underground. They met in New Delhi in November 2005, where a joint movement against the coup-plotting monarchy, for ending the Maoist insurgency and for the creation of a republican constitution with the participation of the Maoists was agreed upon.

A first step was a nationwide popular movement (Jana Andolan II) in April 2006, which finally caused Gyanendra to relinquish power. The parliament, which was dissolved in 2002, was reinstated, a peace agreement was reached with the Maoists in November 2006 and an interim constitution was drafted with their participation. This was passed by parliament on 15 January 2007, which then dissolved itself. The Maoists also entered the transitional parliament with MPs nominated by the party leaders. From April 2007, they also participated in the interim government of Girija Prasad Koirala (NC). Preparations began for the general elections to a socially inclusive Constituent Assembly.

Constituent Assembly (2008)

Elections were held in April 2008. At the first session of this assembly, the monarchy was abolished. The work of the Constituent Assembly was hopeful for a good year and a half. Then traditional and social ways of thinking and structures prevailed. Especially the proposals on the structure of the planned federal state

filled the leaders of the major parties, predominantly male Bahuns and male Chhetris, with concern that they would soon lose their dominant position. They therefore took the tasks of the various Constituent Assembly committees into their own hands in early 2010; the committees' original proposals were never really discussed.

Also, the power struggles between the various parties or their factions reasserted themselves. A two-thirds majority would have been required for the adoption of the new constitution, but there was not even one party in the assembly that had a simple absolute majority. So governments changed every few months, as has been the tradition in Nepal since 1951. Most shameful were the efforts of Ram Chandra Paudel (NC) to become prime minister. For more than half a year, he appeared no less than 17 times for votes on it and prevented any meaningful work on the new constitution.

Finally, in May 2012, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved without any arrangements being made on how to proceed afterwards. There was no legal option based on the interim constitution. Once again, the male high-caste leaders of the major parties took all the power into their hands and eventually entrusted the Chief Justice with the formation of an interim government, although he refused to resign from his office as judge to do so; he merely let the office rest. Thus, in principle, the executive and the judiciary were in one hand. But constitutional conduct has never played a role in Nepal, as can also be seen from recent events.

Constitution of 2015

Thus, a second Constituent Assembly was elected in November 2013, once again not with a clear majority for one party. However, since the NC and the CPN-UML were quite united on many issues and the Maoists had been dramatically dampened by the electorate, the bickering did not start again until the federal design of the state was addressed. But then the two major earthquakes occurred in the spring of 2015 and the top politicians went into hiding for some time for lack of competence in dealing with the aftermath. Only when they realised that they were in danger of losing control in the eyes of the people did they pull themselves together and, within a very short time, drew up a draft constitution within their elite circle, which, apart from very few amendments, they put to the vote in the Assembly. There they forced the deputies of their respective parties to withdraw further amendment demands and to vote as the party superiors dictated. The socially inclusive co-design of the new constitution envisaged by the interim constitution had thus failed. Agreements made in advance with ethnic and regional minorities were also disregarded, although it is difficult to identify minorities in this multi-ethnic state because there are no real majorities. The concerns of women and Dalits, who are still not recognised as full citizens and are exposed to numerous forms of discrimination, were also ignored.

In the Tarai in particular, there was unrest immediately after the adoption of the new constitution. Political groups there blocked the border with India, largely with the support or at least acquiescence of the Indian government. Based on a prior power agreement, Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli (CPN-UML) took over the Prime Minister's Office from Sushil Koirala (NC) immediately after the adoption of the new constitution. He enforced his policies with great firmness against the Tarai groups, although the country now also had to deal with an economic blockade for months after the severe earthquakes.

Elections of 2017

In 2017, elections were held for the first time at all three levels of the federal system. In the run-up to these elections, a rapprochement between the two left parties CPN-UML and CPN (Maoist Centre) (CPN-MC) had become apparent. Before the elections to the House of Representatives and the provincial parliaments, these two parties formed an electoral alliance, i.e. they agreed on a common candidate in each constituency. As a result, the NC, as the main competitor in the direct election system, through which 60 per cent of the MPs were now elected, had no chance against the alliance parties. Only in the list election (40 per cent) could the NC keep up to some extent and became the second strongest party behind the CPN-UML.

The alliance parties agreed to form a joint government, with KP Oli (CPN-UML) first becoming prime minister and then to be replaced by Pushpa Kamal Dahal (CPN-MC) after two and a half years. Then, in May 2018, the two parties even merged into a single party, the NCP. The latter now almost had a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives. Apart from the pure Tarai Province 2, the NCP also has a

whopping absolute majority in all provincial parliaments, i.e. Nepal has been under almost complete control of the NCP after the 2017 elections. Since the first tentative democratisation in the early 1950s, there has never been such control of power by a single party. It should therefore have been easy to swiftly implement the numerous outstanding concerns of the new constitution and to advance the development of the state and its people in giant steps.

Power struggles in the NCP

However, this ignores the fact that the merger of the two left parties in May 2018 was only superficial and from the top. All posts and functions to be allocated were given precisely according to original party allegiance and a percentage agreement; competence never played a role. A prime example has been the replacement of the position of the Speaker of Parliament in early 2020. According to the agreement, this post was due to a person from the former CPN-MC. When the incumbent parliamentary speaker had to resign because of a scandal, his deputy, a woman political scientist with a doctorate, and from an Janajati group at that, would have been happy to take over. But then it had to be a male politician from the former CPN-MC, although he had long been accused of a murder from the time of the Maoist insurgency.

In 2020, the continuing differences within the NCP became increasingly clear. However, at the top of the party, the lines no longer run exactly along the original parties. Among the top politicians in particular, some have switched sides. At the lower levels, this is difficult to trace, but is likely to be similar.

Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, who has been prime minister for almost three years, has increasingly become the focus of controversy. Not only has Oli long refused to hand over the office to Pushpa Kamal Dahal at the halfway point, as agreed in a "gentlemen's agreement" of 2018, he is characterised in particular by an excessive degree of incompetence and an authoritarian approach. He does not see duties of a Prime Minister, only rights. A Prime Minister does not have to abide by the constitution and laws anyway, he believes. Legally binding rulings of the Supreme Court have never interested him, like many other politicians in Nepal. The same applies to findings and requests by constitutional bodies such as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). In general, constitutional bodies are not filled at all or only partially, in some cases for the past five years, and this despite the fact that they are largely supposed to help traditionally excluded social groups in particular to participate more strongly in the shaping of the state. Many fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution, such as the rights to information and freedom of expression or the right to demonstrate, hinder Oli's authoritarian approach. He has therefore repeatedly tried to restrict these rights.

Conflict between Oli and Dahal

Meanwhile, tensions between Oli and Dahal have been mounting for months. Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been trying to get Oli to relinquish one of the two offices, prime minister and co-chair of the party, for some time. Oli has repeatedly managed to stall for time and get his head out of the noose through machinations and agreements that were obviously never really meant seriously. Majorities in the party's two highest bodies play a major role in this. The NCP's highest body is the Standing Committee, which includes seven men besides the two party leaders, Oli and Dahal. In all, these are seven Bahuns, one Chhetri and one high-caste Newar. Two camps of four politicians each have emerged in recent months. The ninth person, Bam Dev Gautam, plays the tongues in the scales and changes the camp affiliation depending on how it seems to be to his own advantage. In this way, he has managed to be nominated to parliament by the NCP in 2020 even though the voters had rejected him. While the Supreme Court has upheld the legality of this action, it is still morally questionable. Gautam's next target is the position of Prime Minister. Depending on which of the two camps offers him the best, his decision will be made, and this has fluctuated repeatedly in 2020.



Oli and Dahal: What are their signatures worth? (Source: The Kathmandu Post, 23 December 2020)

The balance of power in the second highest body of the NCP, the Central Committee, is different. Here, the camp of Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal has had a majority for a long time. This has repeatedly been reason enough for Oli in 2020 to avoid convening the Central Committee. If this was not possible, Oli was usually able to cite health problems or other important appointments that made his appearance impossible. Even prolonged talks between the two NCP chairpersons failed to resolve the differences. If nothing else helped, Oli made concessions, which he never intended to keep, as was the case with his promise to immediately withdraw the amendment to the Constitutional Council Act made by decree in December 2020.

Escalation in the NCP and subversion of the constitution

The dispute between the two party leaders and thus the crisis in the party came to a head when Dahal presented a political document to the party secretariat on 13 November 2020 in which he accused Oli of failure across the line. Oli countered with his own document on 28 November, accusing Dahal of serious party damage. He demanded that Dahal withdraw his document, which the latter refused to do, especially since most of the accusations made in it could hardly be refuted factually.

At the same time, pressure on Nepal increased at the international level. In the run-up to the upcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR), UN circles pointed out Nepal's persistent failure to address human rights violations, although the government had repeatedly promised to do so. Among other things, this concerned the constitutional bodies that remain unstaffed or understaffed five years after their adoption. No less than 46 posts in 11 constitutional bodies had to be filled.

To alleviate this pressure, Oli finally decided in early December to fill the vacant posts, a task for the Constitutional Council to decide. As under the previous two constitutions, it includes, in addition to the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and his deputy, the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives (Article 284). All the term limits mentioned in this article have been simply ignored by governments for years, including the

Oli government. Oli and Nepal's political circles are obviously not interested in the fact that the offices of the functionaries of the Constitutional Council have not been filled for a long time. For example, the office of the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives has not been filled for almost a year. According to Article 91 of the Constitution, this office is held by a member of parliament from a party that does not hold the office of Speaker, in this case not the NCP.

Oli's problems in convening this council were compounded by the fact that the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who is close to Dahal, refused to attend the meeting Oli had called. Opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba (NC) also did not appear because his party's rallies against the government were more important to him. It is possible that Oli's timing was intentional.

Since Oli was unable to achieve his goal, he decided on 15 December to amend the constitutional rules laid down in the Constitutional Council Act by means of an ordinance immediately signed by the President, a move he had already failed with once before in April. Accordingly, Oli could now have decisions made by a simple majority in this council, a clear breach of the constitution. The outcry from all sides was also great now, so that Oli supposedly agreed to withdraw the ordinance again. In reality, however, he had obviously never thought of it. There is no other explanation for the fact that the ordinance had still not been withdrawn on 20 December, when Oli had the members of the Constitutional Council who had appeared fill the vacant positions of the constitutional bodies.

Oli and Hindu political thinking

So this was the situation on the morning of 20 December 2020: For months, KP Oli had been fighting within his own party against the loss of power that was becoming increasingly apparent, partly with dishonest means and untruths, deliberately false promises, attempts to play party comrades off against each other, and partly also with authoritarian measures and decisions. These behaviours are all too reminiscent of the means (*upaya*) which, according to the classical scriptures of political Hinduism, a Hindu monarch should use when he feels oppressed by his opponents: Reconciliation, negotiation (*saman*), punishment, chastisement, attack (*danda*), gift, bribe (*dana*), division, betrayal, sowing discord (*bheda*), deception, fraud (*maya*), neglect, ignoring (*upeksha*), as well as accusation, pretence of false facts (*indrajala*).¹ From 1951 until Gyanendra's abdication from power, the kings in the Hindu state of Nepal had repeatedly used these means to protect their interests and keep the people, pejoratively referred to as "subjects", in check.

There is no denying that Oli, a Bahun himself, has a great affection for Hinduism and its political and social attitudes. This was particularly evident in his joint appearance with the Hindu fundamentalist Indian Prime Minister Modi during his state visit to Janakpur in May 2018, or in the contrived transfer of the birthplace of the Hindu deity Ram to Nepal. Oli cannot deny his spiritual roots in Hindu politics, nor can numerous other Nepali politicians, such as Nepali Congress General Secretary Shashank Koirala. The latter has repeatedly pleaded for a return to the Hindu state, most recently during street demonstrations by monarchist-oriented extremists. Although Koirala has said: Hindu state yes, monarchy no, the close link between Hindu state and monarchy in Nepal's history is readily overlooked by many Bahun politicians. In any case, they deny the multi-ethnicity and multi-religiosity of the Nepali population, which only a secular state free of Hindu hierarchical thinking can do justice to.

Coup by Oli and Bhandari

In recent times, Oli has also been increasingly acting in violation of the law. Instead of convening parliament and bringing about necessary changes in the law democratically (at least to maintain his personal power), he preferred to issue decrees, which the President, who is compliant in every respect, almost blindly signed. President Bidya Devi Bhandari, whose main duty under Article 61 (4) is to respect and protect the Constitution, not only fervently supported every action of Prime Minister Oli, but also tried to mediate in his dispute with Dahal to support him. There was never any doubt about the head of state's lack of non-partisanship.

1 The Hindu political options for exercising power were analysed by the author in his master's thesis: [Der politische Hinduismus von Nepal unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Königtums](#). MA thesis, University of Bonn 1978.



The building of the dissolved House of Representatives (Source: The Kathmandu Post, 21 December 2020)

On 20 December 2020, Oli and Bhandari decided to stage a coup d'état, presumably because they saw no other way to retain power despite numerous previous violations of the law and the constitution. Oli applied to the president to dissolve parliament, and the president complied without hesitation. In doing so, the two declared the measure constitutional on the basis of Article 76 (7) and Article 85.

Article 76 concerns the Council of Ministers and in particular the election of the Prime Minister, not his possible removal by a vote of no confidence or his loss of power due to an interim loss of majority. Oli was elected in 2018 under Articles 76 (1) and (2) thanks to the NCP's large majority in parliament. Article 76 (7) cited by Oli and Bhandari refers only to a case where a prime minister is appointed to form a government without such a clear majority and must subsequently prove support by a majority of MPs through a vote of confidence:

In cases where the Prime Minister appointed under clause (5) fails to obtain a vote of confidence or the Prime Minister cannot be appointed, the President shall, on recommendation of the Prime Minister, dissolve the House of Representatives and appoint a date of election so that the election to another House of Representatives is completed within six months.

Article 85 declares that Parliament shall remain in office for five years unless dissolved earlier. Possible reasons for such dissolution are not mentioned. In addition, reasons for a possible extension of the term of office are still mentioned. The provisions were taken almost verbatim from the 1990 Constitution. Also in the 1990s, there were two cases in which prime ministers applied for a dissolution of parliament, at that time still with the king, because they saw their exercise of power endangered. In 1994, the then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala (NC) requested this after a group of MPs from his own party led by Ganesh Man Singh opposed him for his authoritarian and Bahun-favouring policies. Koirala could not prove a possible additional majority of MPs at the time, but neither could his opponents. The Supreme Court declared the action and the holding of early elections to be lawful. A year later, Man Mohan Adhikari (CPN-UML) also wanted to apply for this as prime minister of a minority government, but the Supreme Court ruled against it this time, as Sher Bahadur Deuba (NC) was able to prove the possibility of another government with a single vote majority.

Assessment of Oli's and Bhandari's rationale

What does this say about the situation today? Article 76 (7) refers to the re-election of a prime minister in case of unclear majorities and a vote of confidence then required. What this has to do with the present dissolution of parliament is incomprehensible. At most, this article could come into play if no new candidate for prime minister can prove a majority of MPs. Article 85 in its current form is only clearly related to the term of the House of Representatives. This was elected by the people at the end of 2017 in a completely correct and democratic manner and should thus not be re-elected until the end of 2022. There is no discernible legal provision in the constitution that a prime minister can send the popularly elected representatives home early for the sheer personal sake of retaining power. Incidentally, this was also the view of Oli when in 2002 the then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba (NC) asked the Head of State, King Gyanendra, to dissolve Parliament and Gyanendra behaved in the same manner as President Bhandari does today. However, looking ahead, the mention of early termination of the House of Representatives in Article 85 should be clarified urgently. As it is, it says nothing.

Conclusion: Prime Minister Oli has lost the support of many MPs of his party and thus probably the parliamentary majority. The logical democratic options would have been either his immediate resignation or at least a vote of confidence in parliament. However, KP Oli and Bidya Devi Bhandari have deliberately tried to reinterpret the constitution in their personal interest. This attempt is reprehensible and should have legal consequences. It is to be expected and hoped that the Supreme Court's judgement will confirm this assessment. By 25 December, 13 such petitions were already pending when the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court took up the case.

What options remain in the event of a Court ruling against the dissolution of parliament or its withdrawal by Oli and Bhandari? First, the long overdue winter session of the House of Representatives would have to be convened immediately to give legitimacy a chance to return to Nepali politics. Then Oli would have to take a vote of confidence in parliament. The chances of a successful vote for him appear slim, as Oli apparently has only 60 of his party's 174 MPs still behind him. Almost certainly, this realisation was also the reason for his abstruse approach.

The second option would be a vote of no confidence against Oli in parliament. This has already been tabled by Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his NCP faction at the House Secretariat on 20 December. Success would not be unlikely at this stage, as one should assume that the opposition also wants the Oli government gone. However, just a few days after Oli's action, opportunistic approaches within the main opposition party, the NC, are once again becoming apparent. Party president Deuba, in particular, is dreaming that new elections next spring could bring the NC back to power. After a successful vote of no confidence, a new prime minister would then have to be elected under Article 76 in any case. However, there are no clear majorities for a candidate at the moment.

The particular problem at least of the larger parties is the outright ageing of their party leaderships. None of the major parties really gives their youth a chance. In principle, all the old so-called leaders at the top of the parties have failed in one way or another, some of them already several times. There also Sher Bahadur Deuba, Chairman of the NC, who opened the way for King Gyanendra's coup d'état in 2002 because of his personal ambitions for power. There needs to be an urgent shift towards inclusive and appropriate participation of truly all groups in society. The total dominance of male Tagadharis, especially male Bahuns, is simply intolerable. If the major political parties set a good example here, it could have an important impact on administration and public life as a whole. The chances of this happening are also slim at the moment.

Of course, there would also be a third option at this time. Oli and Bhandari could withdraw their coup. Oli could look for other allies and remain in office, especially now that the NCP has formally split. Mentality and personal desire for power to do so would certainly be present in him as well as in other politicians. However, Oli's and Bhandari's actions were so reprehensible that they should remain virtually untouchable for all future. Nepal has seen at least three serious political coups in the last 60 years. The one by Mahendra in 1960 was against the people and democracy, but went completely unpunished. On the one hand, the time was simply not ripe for it at that time, on the other hand, he died already in 1972. The gradual coup of his son Gyanendra in 2002 and 2005 already met with massive resistance from civil society. Ultimately, it was the firm will of the people that Gyanendra was quickly dragged into the fold at that time. But they were still not ready for the final consequence. While the people decided to abolish the monarchy, there was no real

punishment for Gyanendra's coup. As a result, there are recurrent returns not only of the deposed last monarch but also demonstrations by the remaining, albeit comparatively small, number of supporters of the monarchy; the two per cent vote for the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) as main propagator of monarchy in 2017 speaks volumes as to its irrelevance. Thus, the monarchy remains a disruptive factor. The mistake with Gyanendra should not be repeated with regard to Oli and Bhandari, whose coup was against the people, the constitution and democracy in general. In all three of the aforementioned coups, personal power ambitions of their instigators were in the forefront. The victims were always the people.

Text notes:

[Democracy's undoing : Prime Minister Oli and President Bhandari have ticked all boxes of Machiavellian treachery in Nepali politics.](#) In: *The Kathmandu Post*, 21 December 2020

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