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An Indian jurist's proposal derived from a Supreme Court ruling could play a key role in building consensus on Hong Kong's political reforms, which are grabbing headlines, following the surge of recent street protests.

There are deep divisions in Hong Kong's political class, which have surfaced prominently, during the course of student protests, which had, for months, rocked the territory's Central Business District.

But the Hong Kong based *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) is reporting that the popular mood in Hong Kong maybe slowly changing. Shifting from the earlier maximalist demand for the abolishment of Nominating Committee — supposedly a cabal of pro-Beijing functionaries — who are to pick candidates eligible to stand for Hong Kong's 2017 election's for the Chief Executive, there could now be more room for a functional compromise with the opposition.

That is where, a bridging proposal by Shubhankar Dam, an Assistant Professor at the Singapore Management University's school of law, is coming into play. Taking the cue from Supreme Court ruling on the case *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) v Union of India (2013)*, Mr. Dam wrote in the *Jurist* magazine, that without the abrogation of the "pre-selection" provision of eligible candidates by the nominating committee, the Hong Kong electorate must be given the None of the Above (NOTA) option, when they vote for the Chief Executive's post.

This would give the voters a choice of rejecting all the candidates in the fray.

In an e-mail to *The Hindu*, Mr. Dam explained that he had made one major modification to the Supreme Court's ruling. "In India, the Court clarified that even if NOTA gets the majority of votes in a constituency, it will have no effect. The candidate with the second highest vote would be declared the winner."

He added: "I argued that Hong Kong should implement a different rule. Perhaps the rule should be that if a majority of voters in Hong Kong opt for NOTA it should mean that NOTA has won: all other candidates must be declared as having lost the elections. And the consequence should be that new elections must be called for."

Mr. Dam's proposal could be making a dent in Beijing's power elite, mainly because the idea has been picked up and further tweaked by Albert Chen Hung-yee, an influential legal expert trusted by Beijing.