

MAPPING SRI LANKA'S POLITICAL PARTIES:

ACTORS AND EVOLUTIONS

Politics &
Governance

November
2017



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The original version of this report was commissioned by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to assist in its work in Sri Lanka with the Sri Lankan parliament and political parties. The opinions expressed and contents of this report are not necessarily those held by Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1. MAJOR PARTIES	2
1.1. UNITED NATIONAL PARTY	3
1.2. SRI LANKA NATIONAL PARTY	11
1.3. ILLANKAI TAMIL ARASU KACHCHI	17
1.4. JANATHA VIMUKTHI PERAMUNA	21
2. OTHER PARTIES	26
2.1. POLITICAL PARTIES FORMALLY CONSTITUTED ALONG ETHNIC LINES	26
2.2. THE LEFTIST PARTIES	33

ACRONYMS

ACMC	All-Ceylon Makkal Congress	LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
ACTC	All Ceylon Tamil Congress	MEP	Mahajana Eksath Peramuna
CIC	Ceylon Indian Congress	NDF	National Freedom Front
CNC	Ceylon National Congress	NUW	National Union of Workers
CPSL	Communist Party of Sri Lanka	PA	People's Alliance
DLF	Democratic Left Front	PHU	Pivithuru Hela Urumaya
DPF	Democratic People's Front	PLOTE	People Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam
DNM	Democratic National Movement	SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
DUNF	Democratic United National Front	SLMC	Sri Lanka Muslim Congress
EPDP	Eelam People's Democratic Party	TELO	Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation
EPRLF	Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Organisation	TNA	Tamil National Alliance
EROS	Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students	TNPF	Tamil National Peoples Front
FSP	Frontline Socialist Party	TPA	Tamil Progressive Alliance
IPKF	Indian Peace-Keeping Force	TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
ITAK	Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi	UCPF	Up-Country People's Front
JHU	Jathika Hela Urumaya	UNFGG	United National Front for Good Governance
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna	UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
LMS	Lanka Mahajana Sabha	UNP	United National Party
LSSP	Lanka Sama Samaja Party	UPFA	United People's Freedom Alliance

INTRODUCTION

Politics in Sri Lanka has drawn significant media coverage and academic interest since the beginning of the civil war more than three decades ago. However, the history of party politics in Sri Lanka, which extends into the period of British colonial rule, is a key factor in understanding the ethnic conflict, and remains an under-explored area. This report aims to address the gap in the literature on Sri Lankan political history by examining the histories of individual political parties in Sri Lanka.

Over the course of Sri Lankan history, four political parties have dominated the political landscape: the United National Party (UNP), the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP/People's Liberation Front), and the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK). This report analyses the histories of these four parties, covering their:

- (1) History and background;
- (2) Key figures;
- (3) Key policy positions and objectives;
- (4) Party structure and decision-making;
- (5) External affiliated organisations (where applicable); and
- (6) Current parliamentary strength, coalition politics, and interests.

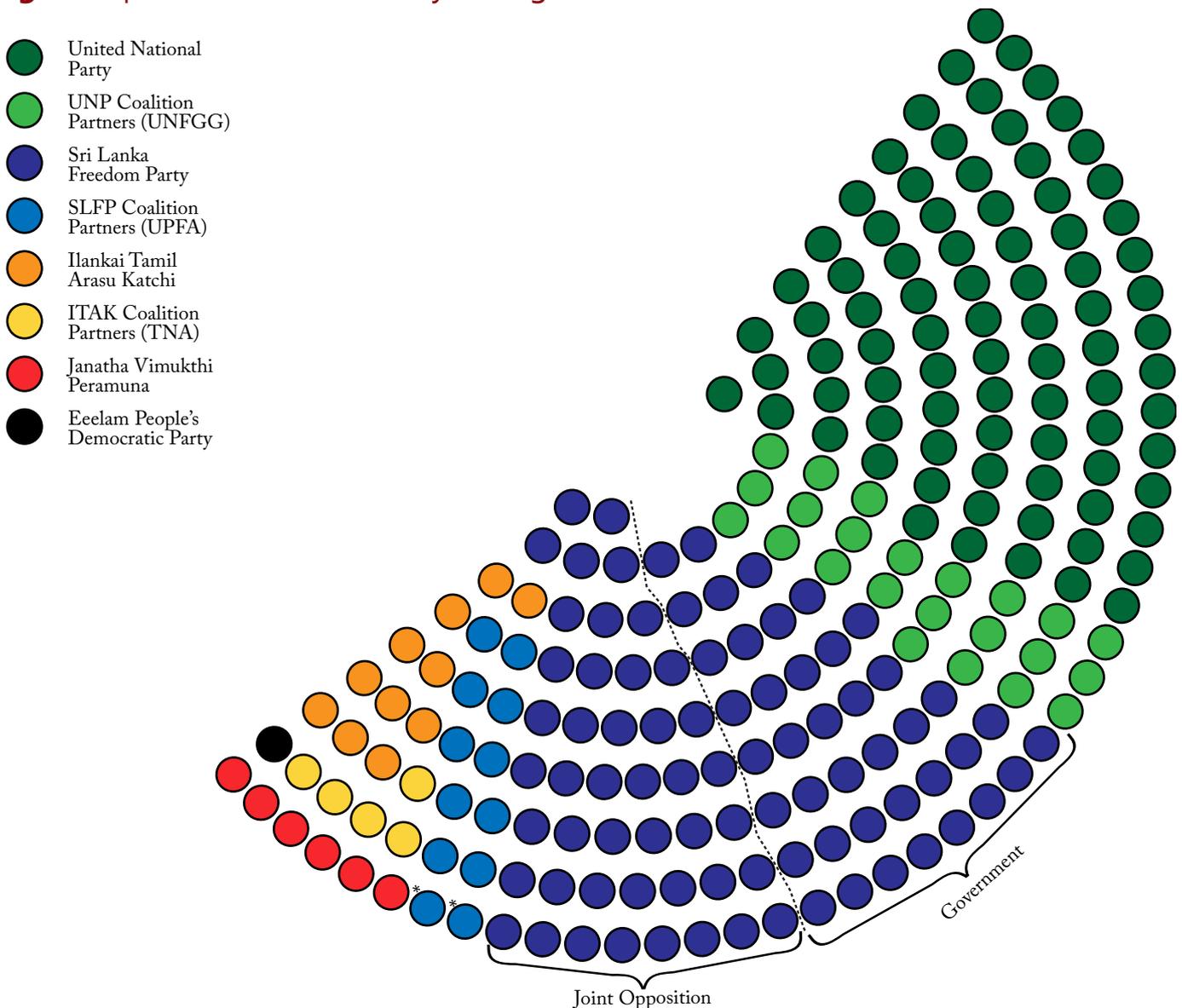
This report will also examine the histories of fourteen formal (registered) and two unregistered parties that are represented in the current Parliament of Sri Lanka. Additionally, it will look at the histories of two additional parties/coalitions that enjoy substantial leverage in shaping public opinion, despite their failure to secure any parliamentary seats. Significantly, fifteen out of the sixteen parties that are represented in the parliament – with the exception of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) – are part of a coalition led by one of the four major parties mentioned above. It should be noted that, the report has been structured in a manner that allows each section to be read independently of others.

1. MAJOR PARTIES

Four parties in Sri Lanka were identified as ‘major parties’ for this study. The number of seats occupied by representatives of each party in the current parliament as a proportion of the total number parliamentary seats, and the past election performances of the parties were used as the criteria for selecting the

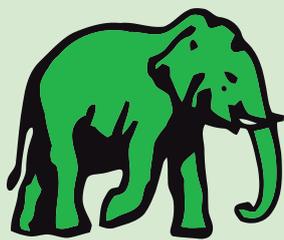
parties. The four parties consequently selected are: the two largest parties in the country – the UNP and SLFP, the largest ethnic Tamil political party, ITAK and the Marxist-Leninist JVP (also known as the People’s Liberation Front).

Figure 1 | Current Parliamentary Strengths[†]



[†] Parliamentary alignment estimated as of 30th Nov 2017

*independant UPFA coalition partners (CWC)



1.1. United National Party

1.1.1 History and background

Don Stephen (D.S.) Senanayake founded the UNP as a non-communal political party in 1946. The first convention of the UNP was held on 6 September 1946 at Palm Court, Albert Crescent, in Colombo. Ceylon National Congress (CNC)¹ members including John Kotelawala and J.R. Jayawardene, and Tamil political leaders including A. Mahadeva and S. Nadesan, were among those who voiced their support for the formation of the party. In addition to the aforementioned individuals, the *Sinhala Maha Sabha* under the leadership of S.W.R.D Bandaranaike, and the All Ceylon Muslim League also declared support for the party.² At the general elections of 1947, which was held in the lead-up to Ceylon's (Sri Lanka as it was known then) independence, the UNP failed to

secure an adequate number of seats to form a single party government. However, the UNP went on to form a coalition government in partnership with the Tamil Congress led by G.G. Ponnambalam.

1.1.2 Key policy positions and objectives

The UNP was founded as a non-communal party with a pro-western anti-communist ideology.³ According to the party founder, D.S. Senanayake, the key objectives of the UNP was to provide 1) freedom from poverty, 2) freedom from diseases, 3) freedom from ignorance, 4) freedom from unemployment, and 5) freedom from the fetters of imperialism.⁴ The UNP's initial economic position was in favour of a mixed economy, in which the state played a significant yet non-dominant role in economic manage-

1. The CNC is the oldest political party in Sri Lanka. Founded in 1919 by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, the CNC paved the way for a number of future parties, including the UNP and SLFP. Gooneratne, B. (2009, February 14). *Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam Memorial Oration*. Retrieved from <http://www.island.lk/2009/02/14/satmag1.html>

2. Liyanage, S. (1999). *Sri Lankawe Deshapalana Paksha* (1st ed., p. 16). Colombo.

3. *Sri Lankawe Deshapalana Paksha*. P.22

4. *Who is Ranil Wickremesinghe? Everything You Need to Know* (2017). *Thefamouspeople.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/ranil-wickremesinghe-6915.php>



ment. Senanayake paid particular attention to developing the agricultural sector.⁵ The UNP was also in favour of welfare initiatives such as free education and free healthcare.

During the 1963 party convention, it was agreed that the UNP would pursue the formation of a democratic socialist republic. However, following the change of leadership from Dudley Senanayake to J.R. Jayawardene after the 1977 election, the UNP leadership laid the foundation for the liberalisation of the economy. Nonetheless, the 1978 constitution changed the official name of Sri Lanka to Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, regardless of the then government's seeming bias towards an open-market economic policy. Notwithstanding the continued identification of the UNP's ideology as market-oriented with regard to its subsequent economic policies, the UNP is credited for several key welfare initiatives, particularly during the time of Ranasinghe Premadasa. Coming from a starkly different background to his party predecessors, Premadasa's economic policies also demonstrated notable differences to those of his predecessors. He introduced a number of welfare initiatives, including the Gam-udawa (village development), housing development projects for low-income households in and around Colombo, and the *Jana-saviya* movement – a comprehensive development programme aimed to benefit disadvantaged groups in society. Additionally, the Mahaweli national development programme initiated by Gamini Dissanayake, and the Mahapola scholarship scheme introduced by Lalith Athulathmudali can be considered other prominent UNP-led welfare initiatives.

Notwithstanding the long-standing perception of UNP governments as proponents of a pro-western foreign policy, the UNP government under Dudley Senanayake signed a trade agreement with the newly formed People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1952. This agreement enabled the barter of locally produced natural rubber in exchange for rice produced in China. Incidentally, this was the first trade agreement

signed by the PRC with a non-communist country.⁶ Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe is credited with establishing the Biyagama Special Economic Zone, which attracted numerous international investors to Sri Lanka. The current economic position of the UNP under Wickremesinghe's leadership can be considered 'free market-friendly', given the party's seeming preference to limit the role of the state in economic management.

Despite being founded as a non-communal party following the successful bid for dominion status, the UNP-led government passed the Ceylon Citizenship Act, which denied citizenship to a majority of Tamils of Indian origin living in Sri Lanka. Moreover, it contravened its initially professed commitment to maintaining English as the official language until a gradual transition to incorporate the local languages was made possible. By the time of the 1956 general elections, the UNP under the leadership of John Kotelawala had largely accepted the Sinhala Only position championed by its rival, the SLFP.⁷ Additionally, the Black July riots of 1983 – widely viewed as the event that triggered the breakout of a civil war in Sri Lanka – took place during the time of J.R. Jayawardene. His government's inaction in response to ethnic violence was met with international condemnation at the time. Members of the Jayawardene cabinet were also accused of instigating the 1981 burning of the Jaffna Library.⁸ Following the onset of civil war, the J.R. Jayawardene administration signed an accord with the Indian government in 1987 seeking a political compromise to the conflict. Although the LTTE, which had emerged as the most significant separatist militia, had initially agreed to surrender its arms to India, it refused to do so upon the signing of the accord. This resulted in the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) being deployed to fight the LTTE. The conduct of the IPKF in Sri Lanka was roundly criticized.⁹ Upon the assumption of duties as the second Executive President of Sri Lanka, Premadasa oversaw the suppression of the JVP insurrection of 1988/89

5. Sanderatne, N. (2004). Agricultural Development: Controversial Issues. In S. Kelegama, *Economic Policy in Sri Lanka: Issues & Debates* (1st ed., p. 210). SAGE Publications :India.

6. Mallikaaratchi, N. (2012, December 23). When Rice was Bartered for Rubber Between Ceylon and China. *The Sunday Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/121223/business-times/when-rice-was-bartered-for-rubber-between-ceylon-and-china-25178.html>

7. *Sri Lanka we Deshapalana Paksha*, P.26

8. Ganesan, S. (2013). The Burning of the Jaffna Public Library by the Police in 1981 – 1. *DBSJeyaraj.com* Retrieved from <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/16896>

9. Balachandran, P. (2012). 25th Anniversary of War Erupting Between the Indian Army and LTTE. *DBSJeyaraj.com*. Retrieved from <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/11570>

and the culmination of the IPKF intervention in Sri Lanka. Although it has been claimed that Premadasa believed in devolution as a solution to the long-standing ethnic tension,¹⁰ there is insufficient evidence to establish this claim.

Although the UNP encountered accusations of ignoring ethnic tensions, or even promoting ethnic outbidding, a peace process led by the UNP was initiated in the early 2000s to find a political solution to the national question. The UNP-led coalition government under Ranil Wickremesinghe signed a ceasefire agreement with the LTTE in 2002. This agreement was in effect until 2008.¹¹ Upon the party's return to power in 2015, it reiterated its commitment to reconciliation and the introduction of a power-sharing mechanism that is acceptable to all communities in Sri Lanka. It meanwhile co-sponsored Resolution 30/1 to 'Promote Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka' at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2015.¹² Despite progress pertaining to the Resolution being limited¹³, in March 2017 the UNHRC granted the government's request for a two-year extension to fulfil its commitments.¹⁴

1.1.3 Party structure and decision-making processes

Party Leader: Ranil Wickremesinghe

Deputy Leader: Sajith Premadasa

Assistant Leader: Ravi Karunanayke

Chairman: Malik Samarawickrama

General Secretary: Kabir Hashim

Treasurer: Eran Wickramaratne

Senior Deputy Leader: Lakshman Kiriella

Senior Deputy Leader: Ranjith Maddumabandara

Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya Chairman: Akila Viraj Kariyawasam

Jathika Yowun Peramuna (Youth Wing): Kavinda Jayawardene

Lak Wanitha Peramuna (Women's Wing): Anoma Gamage

Working Committee Membership: 60

Party constitution

The UNP party constitution stipulates that if the incumbent president of the country is a UNP party member, he should be appointed party leader. Additionally, the leader of the house should be appointed the senior deputy leader of the party. In instances where the UNP is in the opposition, the National Executive Committee is tasked with deciding the leader and the senior deputy leader.

Party convention

The party convention is an important event for the determination of the party's goals, objectives and decision-making processes.¹⁵ The party constitution stipulates that the convention should be held at least once a year. The convention is used for the determination of the broader affairs of the party, making amendments to the party constitution and to other standing orders if deemed necessary. According to the UNP constitution, the office bearers of the party; the working committee of the party; members of organisations affiliated to the party; district representatives of the party; national executive committee members; and UNP representatives in parliament and provincial councils should be present at the party convention.

10. Cooray, B.S. (2012). Development, Democracy and Devolution: The Premadasa Solution to the Ethnic Problem. *The Island*. Retrieved from <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/7429>

11. Dias, W. (2008). *Sri Lankan government pulls out of 2002 ceasefire agreement - World Socialist Web Site*. *Wsws.org*. Retrieved 3 May 2017, from <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2008/01/sril-j09.html>

12. Paranamma, L. (2015, September 25). Sri Lanka Co-sponsors Fresh UN Resolution. *DailyMirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/88901/sri-lanka-co-sponsors-fresh-us-resolution>

13. Verité Research. (2017). *Sri Lanka: Resolution 30/1 Implementation Monitor*. Verité Research Pvt Ltd.

14. UNHRC Adopts Resolution On Sri Lanka Without Vote: Two-Year Extension Granted (2017). *Asian Mirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.asianmirror.lk/news/item/23096-unhrc-adopts-resolution-on-sri-lanka-without-vote-two-year-extension-granted>

15. *The United National Party: Party Constitution* (2010)



National Executive Committee

The National Executive Committee is appointed during the annual convention. According to the party constitution, the National Executive Committee should comprise:

- a) The party leader;
- b) All members of the UNP working committee;
- c) All UNP parliamentarians;
- d) UNP provincial councillors;
- e) UNP local authority members;
- f) The working committee members of the Lak Wanitha Peramuna (Women's Wing)
- g) The working committee members of the Jathika Yowun Peramuna (Youth Wing)
- h) The 75 party members selected during the convention
- i) At least 100 representatives covering all unions associated with the UNP; and
- j) Other party members who are deemed suitable by the Working Committee.

The tasks assigned to the National Executive Committee include among others:

- a) Developing party policies in line with the party constitution;
- b) Making recommendations on constitutional amendments to the party Working Committee and ratifying amendments and standing orders as instructed by the Working Committee;
- c) Accepting reports submitted by the Working Committee;
- d) Appointing subcommittees to the National Executive Committee in line with the standing orders; and
- e) Making the necessary amendments to existing standing orders.

The Working Committee

The Working Committee is selected by the National Executive Committee, and is responsible for the exe-

cution of tasks and activities assigned by the National Executive Committee. It is the responsibility of the Working Committee to put forward proposals for approval during the convention. The party constitution stipulates that the Working Committee membership should be limited to a maximum of 92 members, comprising senior office bearers of the UNP. The Working Committee of the UNP is tasked with:

- a) Convening party members for discussions prior to parliamentary sessions;
- b) Proposing amendments to the party constitution during the party convention
- c) Making the necessary arrangement to hold party conventions and other special conventions;
- d) Establishing and maintaining a party fund; and
- e) Resolving intra-party regional level conflicts.

1.1.4 External organisations linked to the party

Several prominent unions in Sri Lanka are affiliated to the UNP. At present, roughly 250,000 members in total hold membership in unions affiliated to the party. The following five unions are affiliated to the party:

- *Jathika Sewaka Sangamaya (JSS)*: Established in 1959, the JSS is the oldest and largest trade union attached to the UNP. The JSS currently comprises over 400 operational branches and its membership is reserved for those employed in the private sector (i.e. EPF/ETF receiving members of the workforce).
- *Rajya Sewa Eksath Wurthiya Samithi Sammelanaya*: Membership is available to all those who are employed in the state sector. UNP parliamentarian and State Minister Sujeewa Senasinghe is the current chairman of this union.
- *Lanka Wathu Kamkaru Sangamaya*: This union represents the interests of those employed in the estate sector. UNP parliamentarian and Minister of Telecommunications and Digital Infrastructure Harin Fernando currently heads this union.
- *Adyapana Sewaka Sangamaya*: This union comprises teachers and others who are employed in the educational sector in Sri Lanka. UNP parlia-

mentarian and Deputy Minister Ajith P. Perera currently heads this union.

The UNP is also a member of the International Democrat Union, an international working association of over 80 conservative political parties.

1.1.5 Current parliamentary strength, coalition politics and interests

There are 84 UNP MPs in the incumbent parliament. This makes it the single largest party in the Eighth Parliament of Sri Lanka with just over one-third of total seats (84/225).

The UNP stood for the most recent general election as part of the informal coalition United National Front for Good Governance (UNFGG) with smaller parties running under the UNP ticket. In addition to the UNP, the UNFGG also consisted of the JHU (Jathika Hela Urumaya), the TPA (Tamil Progressive Alliance), the ACMC (All-Ceylon Muslim Congress), and other smaller parties. The SLMC (Sri Lanka Muslim Congress) also contested under the UNFGG banner in some districts. Several defectors from the SLFP and Marxist parties also contested as UNFGG candidates. A unifying factor that brought these ideologically disparate parties together, some that had previously been in direct opposition to each other, was the prevention of the return of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa to power (as prime minister). The same uniting factor contributed to Rajapaksa's defeat at the presidential elections in January 2015. The coalition's manifesto had five key points: economy (e.g. creating one million jobs), education (ensuring higher education for all), infrastructure (e.g. build 50,000 new houses), anti-corruption, and key legislative reforms. The UNFGG coalition won 106 seats in total and went on to form an unprecedented coalition government, dubbed a 'national government' together with a section of the SLFP.

1.1.6 Key figures

D.S. Senanayake

D.S. Senanayake was born in the village of Botale near Mirigama, in the district of Gampaha. Senanayake was educated at the S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia. D.S. and his two brothers: D.C. Senanayake and F.R. Senanayake were all involved in the 'Temperance Movement': a pro-independence movement that was launched in 1912, and went on to assume an important role in the struggle for independence. As a member of the Lanka Mahajana Sabha (LMS), a nationalist political party founded by his brother F.R. Senanayake, D.S. was elected to the legislative council from Negombo in 1924. D.S. eventually spearheaded the independence movement as the leader of the LMS following F.R. Senanayake's untimely death in 1925.

Upon the establishment of the State Council of Ceylon under the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931, Senanayake was elected to the Council from the CNC. Subsequently, Senanayake was appointed the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, and went on to succeed Sir Baron Jayatilaka as the Leader of the House in 1942.¹⁶ Senanayake resigned from the CNC in 1943 citing dissatisfaction with the party's decision to pursue full independence from the British Empire, contrary to Senanayake's proposal to initially pursue dominion status until the political environment was conducive for a full independence transition.¹⁷ Subsequently, Senanayake established the UNP and served as the first prime minister of Sri Lanka until his death in 1952.¹⁸

Dudley Senanayake

Senanayake's eldest son, Dudley, succeeded his father as Prime Minister and the leader of the UNP in 1952. Dudley Senanayake was also educated at S. Thomas' college, Mt. Lavinia. He went on to read Natural

16. Imbulana, C. (2016, March 22). D.S. Senanayake: A Nation's Father and Undisputed Leader. *Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailynews.lk/?q=2016/03/22/features/77157>

17. Rajasingham, K.T. (2001, October 19). Sri Lanka: The Untold Story, Chapter 10: Lord Soulbury and his Soulless Report. *Asia*

Times Online. Retrieved from <http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/CJ13Df01.html>

18. Nanayakkara, H. (2014, October 20) D.S. Senanayake: The Father of the Nation. *Daily Mirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/54491/d-s-senanayake-the-father-of-the-nation>



Sciences at the University of Cambridge. At the time of his father's demise, Dudley was serving in the capacity of Minister of Agriculture, a position that he had held for six years having also succeeded his father. Although Dudley Senanayake served three non-continuous terms as Prime Minister, his first two terms were limited to eighteen months and four months respectively. Nonetheless, having being re-elected a third and final time in 1965, Senanayake stayed in office for the five-year duration of the parliament. His tenure ended with his defeat to Sirimavo Bandaranaike's SLFP in 1970.

Sir John Kotelawala

Born in 1885, John Kotelawala was educated at Royal College, Colombo and later at Christ's College, Cambridge. Upon his return to Sri Lanka in 1915, Kotelawala served in the Ceylon Defence Force. In 1942, he was appointed to the Ceylon War Cabinet as a Colonel.¹⁹ Kotelawala's aunt (mother's sister) was married to F.R. Senanayake, and hence Kotelawala was exposed to the independence movement from a young age. His formal political career began with a successful bid for the Legislative Council from the Kurunegala district. He was elected to the State Council in 1931 and re-elected in 1936, following which he was appointed Minister of Communication and Works. Kotelawala held several important positions in D.S. Senanayake's cabinet and thus was expected to succeed D.S. Senanayake as Prime Minister. Kotelawala eventually succeeded Dudley Senanayake as the third Prime Minister of Ceylon upon the latter's resignation in response to the 1953 Hartal: a civil disobedience movement organised by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and other leftist parties.

J.R. Jayawardene

Junius Richard (JR) Jayawardene was the son of Supreme Court Justice Eugene Wilfred Jayawardene. Jayawardene completed his secondary education at Royal College, Colombo prior to reading English, Logic, Latin and Economics at the Ceylon University College. Jayawardene, who was appointed Joint Secretary of the Ceylon National Congress in 1940, entered the State Council in 1943 from Kelaniya in a

by-election. Following his decision to join the UNP upon its formation in 1946, Jayawardene went on to become the first Finance Minister of independent Ceylon in 1947. During the mid-1950s, he pushed for the UNP to endorse the Sinhala Only Act. Although he held leading ministerial positions in the UNP government from 1947-56 and again from 1965-70, his relationship with the party leader, Dudley Senanayake, was marred by constant tensions. Having functioned as the de-facto party leader and the leader of the opposition from 1970 given the waning health of Dudley Senanayake, Jayawardene formally succeeded Senanayake as the party leader in 1973 upon the latter's death. At the 1977 general election, the UNP under Jayawardene won five-sixth of the seats in parliament, thus securing a 'supermajority'. Subsequently, Jayawardene replaced the first republican constitution of 1972 and introduced the Executive presidential system while retaining some features of the previous Westminster system of parliamentary rule. Since the provisions of the Amendment automatically made the incumbent Prime Minister the President, Jayawardene assumed duties as the first Executive President of Sri Lanka in 1978. Jayawardene went on to win the first presidential election held in 1982, and subsequently called for a referendum seeking an extension of the life of parliament by six years without a general election. Roughly 55% of the valid votes were cast in favour of the proposal.²⁰ This remains the only referendum held in Sri Lanka to date.

Ranasinghe Premadasa

Until the emergence of Premadasa, the UNP leadership rotated among elite families that were linked through marital alliances, and had engaged in Sri Lankan politics even prior to independence. All party chairmen until 1986 were related. Ranasinghe Premadasa was born to a low-income family in 1924. He completed his education at St. Joseph's College, Colombo. He founded the *Sri Sucharitha Movement*, which aimed to uplift the lives of low-income families in and around Colombo. He began his political career with the Ceylon Labour Party in 1949²¹ and later joined the UNP. He unsuccessfully challenged prominent left-wing leader, Dr. N.M. Perera from the

19. Kurukularatne, B. (2005, May 08) Sir John – Most Colourful Personality of Our Time. *Sunday Island*. Retrieved from <http://www.island.lk/2005/05/08/features5.html>

20. *Parliament of Sri Lanka - Referendums*. (2017). Parliament.lk. Re-

trieved 3 May 2017, from <https://www.parliament.lk/referendums>

21. *Ranasinghe Premadasa | President of Sri Lanka*. (2017). Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved from <https://global.britannica.com/biography/Ranasinghe-Premadasa>

Ruwanwella constituency at the general elections in 1956. Premadasa was elected to parliament from Colombo in 1960 and again in 1965, and was appointed the Chief Government Whip.²² In 1977, Premadasa was appointed the deputy leader of the UNP and the leader of the House, before becoming the Prime Minister in 1978. Premadasa was elected the second Executive President of Sri Lanka in 1989. He deliberately changed the party's policies from being elite-centric to appeal to the rural masses. President Premadasa was assassinated during the UNP's 'May Day' (international workers' day) rally of 1993, in a suicide attack carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Lalith Athulathmudali

Lalith Athulathmudali was born to a political family in 1936. Upon finishing his secondary education at Royal College, Colombo, Athulathmudali went on to read Jurisprudence at the University of Oxford. In 1958, Athulathmudali was elected the President of the Oxford Union, making him the first Ceylonese to be elected to the position. He went on to complete a L.L.M at Harvard University. Athulathmudali returned to Sri Lanka following teaching stints at a number of prominent international universities, and was elected to parliament from the UNP in 1977. Having held various ministerial portfolios during the 1980s, Athulathmudali made an unsuccessful bid to gain the UNP nomination for the presidential election of 1989, and was demoted to the position of Minister of Agriculture and Education by Premadasa upon being elected President.²³ Several UNP MPs led by Athulathmudali unsuccessfully brought forward a motion to impeach Premadasa, resulting in Athulathmudali being expelled from the Party. He formed the Democratic United National Front (DUNF) and announced his candidacy for the presidency, but was assassinated by a gunman on 23 April 1993. A Presidential Commission report later sanctioned by the Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga government

determined that the late President Premadasa was directly responsible for the assassination.²⁴

Dingiri Banda Wijetunga

Dingiri Banda (DB) Wijetunga was appointed the acting President of Sri Lanka following the assassination of Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993.²⁵ Despite being a UNP member since the party's inception, Wijetunga contested a seat in parliament for the first time during the general elections in 1965. Wijetunga was re-elected to parliament in 1977, and was appointed the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in the J.R. Jayawardene cabinet. Wijetunga's appointment as Prime Minister in 1989 came across as a surprise to many who expected Lalith Athulathmudali or Gamini Dissanayake to be appointed. Wijetunga announced that he would not be standing for the presidential elections in 1994, and retired after Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was elected President.

Gamini Dissanayake

Gamini Dissanayake was educated at Trinity College, Kandy and the Ceylon Law College. He later obtained a MPhil degree in International Relations from the University of Cambridge. Despite the poor performance of the UNP during the 1970 general elections,²⁶ Gamini Dissanayake managed to secure a parliamentary seat as a first time MP. He held numerous cabinet positions before defecting from the party with Athulathmudali to form the DUNF. Dissanayake succeeded Athulathmudali as leader of the DUNF following Athulathmudali's assassination. Dissanayake re-joined the UNP following the change in party leadership, and was appointed to parliament from the UNP National List. Dissanayake was selected as the UNP presidential candidate for the 1994 elections. However, a LTTE suicide bomber assassinated Dissanayake during a campaign rally. Dissanayake's wife Srima Dissanayake ran in his stead but was defeated by the SLFP-led PA candidate Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga.

22. Cooray, E. (2002). Remembering President Ranasinghe Premadasa. *Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~lkawgw/rprema.html>

23. Palling, B. (1993, April 26). Obituary: Lalith Athulathmudali. *The Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-lalith-athulathmudali-1457705.html>

24. Rajasingham, K.T. (2002, September 21). Sri Lanka: The Untold Story, Chapter 58: Premadasa Indicted. *Asia Times Online*. Retrieved

from http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/DI21Df01.html

25. Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (2016, February 20). DB Wijetunga: From "Deaf and Blind" Premier to "Dearly Beloved" President. *DailyMirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/105727/DB-Wijetunga-From-Deaf-and-Blind-Premier-to-Dearly-Beloved-President>

26. Wijeratne, S. (2008, October 23). Gamini Dissanayake – A Visionary Leader. *The Island*. Retrieved from <http://www.island.lk/2008/10/23/features6.html>



Ranil Wickremesinghe

Ranil Wickremesinghe was born in Colombo in 1949. Wickremesinghe studied at Royal College, Colombo, and University of Colombo (then University of Ceylon). Wickremesinghe was initially elected to parliament from the Biyagama electorate in 1977.²⁷ Having risen through the party ranks, Wickremesinghe was appointed Leader of the House in 1989. Wickremesinghe was sworn in as Prime Minister following the assassination of Premadasa. However, at the parliamentary elections of 1994, the UNP lost to the PA. Subsequently, Gamini Dissanayake, who narrowly defeated Wickremesinghe at an intra-party

vote, was appointed Leader of the Opposition and nominated the UNP candidate for the presidential election. After the election defeat of Srima Dissanayake (see above), Wickremesinghe was appointed the UNP party leader and the opposition leader. Following the election success of the UNP in 2001, Wickremesinghe again served as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka until 2004. Wickremesinghe served as Prime Minister again after Maithripala Sirisena's presidential election victory in January 2015. He is the incumbent Prime Minister, having begun his fourth tenure as Prime Minister after the general elections held in August 2015.

27. Ranil Wickremasinghe. (2017). The Famous People website. Retrieved from <http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/ranil-wickremasinghe-6915.php>



1.2. Sri Lanka Freedom Party

1.2.1 History and background

The SLFP was established in September 1951 under the leadership of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike.²⁸ Prior to launching the SLFP, Bandaranaike served in the UNP-led cabinet under D.S. Senanayake as a minister from 1947 to 1951. The *Sinhala Maha Sabha* faction headed by Bandaranaike decided to leave the UNP government in 1951. Having taken part in elections independently under the SLFP banner for the first time in 1952, the SLFP managed to secure nine seats in parliament, and the second highest number of votes among all parties after the UNP. Subsequently, Bandaranaike was appointed Leader of the Opposition in parliament.²⁹ Having campaigned on a socialist and nationalist platform, the SLFP-led Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) emerged victorious at the 1956 parliamentary election. There have been numerous instances in which the SLFP campaigned under coalition banners throughout its party history. In addition to leading the MEP coalition, the SLFP has

also campaigned under the PA and United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) banners.

1.2.2 Key policy positions and objectives

At the time of party formation, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike proclaimed the party as democratic and socialist. He appealed to the clergy, ayurvedic doctors, teachers, farmers, and the workers (together known as the *Pancha Maha Balawega*) to join in the party's struggle for a socialist state. The SLFP-led MEP's successful general election campaign of 1956 was conducted on a Sinhala nationalist and socialist platform. The main campaign promise of the MEP was that Sinhala – as the national language – would supersede English as the official language of the country.³⁰ However, the implementation of this policy, which came to be known as the 'Sinhala Only' policy, was met with significant opposition from the minorities, particularly the northern Tamils. Although Bandaranaike attempted to diffuse the ethnic tension

28. ඉතිහාසය | Sri Lanka Freedom Party. (2017). *Slfp.lk*. Retrieved from http://slfp.lk/?page_id=462

29. Ceylon Parliament Election Results (1952). Retrieved from <http://www.jpp.co.jp/lanka/gov/govde/gov32e.html>

30. BBC. (1956). *S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike: Interview*. [Audio Podcast]. Retrieved from http://www.swrdbandaranaike.lk/audio_speeches_english.html

by signing the ‘Bandaranaike–Chelvanayakam’ pact, – an understanding with the leader of the Northern, Tamil-dominated Federal Party (ITAK) – the decision was revoked following strong opposition from sections in both Sinhala and Tamil communities. The UNP under J.R. Jayawardene, which was in the opposition at the time, organized a 72-mile march from Colombo to Kandy in opposition to the pact. Despite assuming a largely neutral position pertaining to the country’s foreign policy, Bandaranaike removed the British air bases in Katunayake and China bay, and the naval base in Trincomalee.

The subsequent government under Sirimavo Bandaranaike advocated for a closed economy, paving the way for the state to assume a dominant role in economic management. She oversaw the nationalisation of banks, insurance, and petroleum, among other areas of commerce and of privately run, predominantly Christian missionary schools.³¹ The foreign policy realm was a notable part of the Sirimavo administration’s legacy. As a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, her contribution to the furtherance of Third World solidarity in the 1960s and 1970s, and her successful interventions on behalf of peace and stability within and outside the Movement, are viewed as significant.³² The Sirimavo government was initially successful in reaching an agreement with ITAK. However, her attempt to push Sinhala as the sole language of official administration led to a mass *Satyagraha* in 1961 by Tamil politicians, leading to a paralysis of government institutions in the North and the East. Moreover, Sirimavo’s failure to incorporate the recommendations of the Tamil political elite into the 1972 constitutional drafting process perpetuated a view among the Tamil populace that the government was ignoring their grievances.³³

Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was sworn in as the fourth Executive President of Sri Lanka at a time when the civil war had intensified. Moreover, the

country had been marred by political and economic instability following a string of political assassinations. Despite Kumaratunga’s many attempts to reach a political compromise with the LTTE, she was unable to secure definitive results.³⁴ Following the defeat of her PA coalition by the UNP in 2001, she oversaw the formation of the UPFA with the JVP in 2004, to guide the alliance to election success in 2004. In contrast to her parents’ policies, President Kumaratunga moved the party towards more open market policies and privatised several key state-owned enterprises, such as Sri Lanka Telecom and the National Development Bank. She also privatized the management of state-owned plantations.³⁵

Kumaratunga’s successor Mahinda Rajapaksa oversaw the military defeat of the LTTE. The Rajapaksa administration thereafter commenced a post-war state-led development drive. This development drive saw China assume a prominent role in Sri Lanka’s public investment lending and high economic growth rates. However, the increasing centralisation of power and the authoritarian tendencies of the administration saw Rajapaksa’s popularity decline during his second term in office. This decline created the environment for his own cabinet minister Maithripala Sirisena to defect and successfully challenge Rajapaksa for the presidency. The post-war Rajapaksa administration was also increasingly unpopular with ethnic minorities and was accused of complicity in wartime and post-war human rights violations, and supporting groups responsible for religious violence.

The SLFP under Maithripala Sirisena – as a coalition partner of the incumbent government – pledged major governance reforms. These included reforming the presidential system, anti-corruption measures and a commitment to a power-sharing mechanism that would provide greater autonomy to the North and the East. However, it recently announced its opposition to any constitutional reforms that would require

31. Thelikorala, S. (2016, April 17). A Century to Mrs. B, the woman who took Sri Lanka to the world. *The Sunday Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/160417/sunday-times-2/a-century-to-mrs-b-the-woman-who-took-sri-lanka-to-the-world-189724.html>

32. Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (2016, April 9). “Stateswoman” Sirimavo made History as the World’s First Woman Prime Minister. *DailyMirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/108079/-Stateswoman-Sirimavo-made-history-as-the-world-s-first-woman-prime-minister#sthash.dKfDtbEk.dpuf>

33. Dugger, C. (2000). Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka Dies at 84; First Woman Premier. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/11/world/sirimavo-bandaranaike-of-sri-lanka-dies-at-84-first-woman-premier.html>

34. Wickramasinghe, C. (2015, June 29). The Ten Years I worked with President Kumaratunga was an Enjoyable Period [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/41878>

35. Re-Nationalizing: New Economic Policy (2010, June 27). *The Sunday Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/100627/Columns/eco.html>

a referendum,³⁶ including significant advances in the devolution of power. In line with the longstanding ideological position of the SLFP, Sirisena has often criticised the UNP-led privatisation of state-owned enterprises, and has on occasion intervened to reverse policies that were deemed unpopular among certain groups in society, such as the increase of lottery ticket prices, which affected lottery sales negatively.³⁷

1.2.3 Party structure and decision-making process

Party advisor: Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga

Party President: Maithripala Sirisena

4 Senior Vice Presidents

10 Vice Presidents

General Secretary: Duminda Dissanayake

National Organiser: Susil Premajanth

8 Deputy Secretaries

Treasurer: S.B. Dissanayake

Central Committee Membership: 65

Party constitution and convention

The SLFP constitution stipulates that any changes to the party's policy direction should be approved at the party's general convention prior to implementation.³⁸ The Executive Committee is the body tasked with the presentation of changes to the constitution for approval at the party convention. The party convention should be held at least once every two years. The party constitution further stipulates that the following should be invited for the general convention of the party:

- a) Central Committee members;
- b) All-island Committee members
- c) Five members selected from the Electoral Constituent Action Committee;

- d) Ten members selected from youth and women's organisations;
- e) Five members from other organisations affiliated to the party;
- f) All SLFP MPs and provincial councillors
- g) Chairpersons of all youth and women's electoral constituencies; and
- h) The party General Secretary and treasurers.

Furthermore, any member of the party can submit proposals to the General Secretary of the party for approval at the convention. The party chairman has the right to suspend any member of the party or an organisation attached to the party, if he or she deems it necessary. The Central Committee of the SLFP is assigned the power to decide on when to hold the general convention.

Central Committee

According to the SLFP constitution, the party Central Committee should comprise:

- a) 26 members nominated by the Executive Council of the party;
- b) A maximum of 23 representatives of the party's Executive Council;
- c) The deputy leader of the SLFP youth wing;
- d) The deputy leader of the SLFP women's wing;
- e) The chief secretary of the *Sri Lanka Nidahas Sewaka Sanagamaya*;
- f) The chief secretary of the *Sri Lanka Nidahas Wurthiya Samithi Sammelanaya*; and
- g) Ten other members who are selected at the party chairman's discretion.

The Central Committee is identified in the party constitution as the supreme body of the party. Moreover, the party chairman and secretary should at all times be appointed the chairman and secretary of the Central Committee. The Central Committee deci-

36. President Sirisena says Committed to Lanka Reconciliation, Tamils Protest (2017, February 4). *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/president-sirisena-says-committed-to-lanka-reconciliation-tamils-protest/story-no7tgSvm1zKD8XZTbZEQ9I.html>

37. Mudalige, D. (2017). No increase in lottery ticket prices, President instructs. *Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://dailynews.lk/2017/01/17/local/104944/no-increase-lottery-ticket-prices-president-instructs>

38. *Constitution of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party*



sions pertaining to the party and the constitution are considered final.

1.2.4 External organisations linked to the party

According to party officials interviewed for this report, there are fifteen operational unions or organisations, and one defunct organisation affiliated to the SLFP.

- (1) Sri Lanka Nidahas Bhikku Sanvidanaya
- (2) Sri Lanka Nidahas Indigenous Physicians Organization
- (3) Sri Lanka Nidahas Teachers Union
- (4) Sri Lanka Nidahas Farmers' Organization
- (5) Sri Lanka Nidahas Sewaka Sangamaya
- (6) Sri Lanka Nidahas Medical Group
- (7) Sri Lanka Nidahas Students' Organization
- (8) Sri Lanka Nidahas Fishermen and Domestic Industrialists Organization
- (9) Sri Lanka Nidahas Cultural Organization
- (10) Sri Lanka Nidahas Lawyers Organization
- (11) Sri Lanka Nidahas Provincial Council Members' Association
- (12) Sri Lanka Nidahas Association of Members of Local Authorities
- (13) Sri Lanka Nidahas Management Assistants Union
- (14) Sri Lanka Freedom Party Graduates Association
- (15) Sri Lanka Freedom Party Development Officers Association
- (16) Nil Balakaya (Officially dissolved after the 2015 Presidential Elections)

Although the SLFP is not formally a member of any international organisation, the party representatives have taken part in numerous international forums

(e.g. International Conference of Asian Political Parties.

1.2.5 Current parliamentary strength, coalition politics and interests

Currently, the SLFP occupies 83 seats in parliament, making it the party with the second highest number of representatives in the Eighth Parliament of Sri Lanka. The SLFP-led UPFA coalition managed to secure 95 seats in total.³⁹ Subsequent to the general elections, the SLFP members of the UPFA in parliament diverged into two factions. The first camp, comprising approximately 40 SLFP members who aligned with President Sirisena, went on to form the incumbent coalition government with the UNP-led UNFVG. The second faction, comprising approximately 43 SLFP parliamentarians who aligned with former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, denounced the party's decision to enter into a memorandum of understanding with its traditional rival. It went on to form an informal faction known as the Joint Opposition (JO) in collaboration with other minor parties attached to the UPFA. JO members formally remain a part of the SLFP. The SLFP faction in government has often attempted to distance itself from UNP-led initiatives that are perceived as unpopular, such as the strict austerity measures. Such tactics essentially aim to challenge the JO for influence over the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist electorate – a constituency that has historically formed the crux of the SLFP voter base.

1.2.6 Key figures

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike

Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike, more commonly known as S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, was born to Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, who was the chief native interpreter (*Mudaliyar*) and advisor to the Governor of British Ceylon in 1899. Bandaranaike returned to Ceylon in the early 1920s after completing his tertiary studies at the University of Oxford. He began his political career as the founder of the Progressive National Party. Having formally joined the CNC, Bandaranaike was elected to the

39. *Parties – Manthri.lk.* (2017). *Manthri.lk.* Retrieved from <http://www.manthri.lk/parties>

Colombo Municipal Council in 1926 and later the State Council in 1931. In 1935, he founded the party *Sinhala Maha Sabha*. The stated objectives of the party included upholding the status of Buddhism, the Sinhalese race and culture, and campaigning for full independence. He backed the formation of the UNP in 1946, and held ministerial positions in the D.S. Senanayake cabinet until his breakaway from the UNP to establish the SLFP in 1951. During the 1956 elections, Bandaranaike led the MEP coalition, comprising three other left-wing parties, to a landslide victory. Prior to the elections, the MEP also reached a non-contestation agreement with the leading left-wing party of the time, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party. Bandaranaike served as the fourth Prime Minister of Ceylon and the first non-UNP Prime Minister from 1956 to 1959. On 25 September 1956, a Buddhist clergyman Talduwe Somarama shot and mortally injured Bandaranaike at Bandaranaike's private residence in Colombo. A later investigation led by Scotland Yard identified a prominent clergyman named Mapitigama Buddhakkitha as the mastermind behind Bandaranaike's assassination.⁴⁰

Sirimavo Bandaranaike

Although the Leader of the House at the time of Bandaranaike's assassination, Wijeyananda Dahanayake, succeeded Bandaranaike as the Prime Minister, he soon fell out of favour with his fellow SLFP membership. Since none of the parties managed to secure a majority at the 1960 general election, the UNP established a minority government. However, the UNP leadership was forced to dissolve government and to re-call the election, following the defection of its coalition partner, the Federal Party. By that time, the SLFP party leadership had passed onto Bandaranaike's widow, Sirimavo Bandaranaike. She went on to become the world's first female Prime Minister in 1960 by successfully heading a SLFP-led coalition to election victory during the second general election of 1960. Sirimavo Bandaranaike (born Sirima Ratwatte) was born to a prominent elite up-country family in 1916. She completed her secondary education

at St. Bridget's Convent in Colombo. She married Bandaranaike in 1940. In 1972, Sirimavo Bandaranaike oversaw the formal independence of Ceylon (subsequently, Sri Lanka) with the introduction of a republican constitution. Although she was expected to run for office at the first presidential election held in 1982, her civic rights were revoked in 1980 on 'abuse of power' charges. Hence the SLFP was forced to field Hector Kobbekaduwa in her stead.⁴¹ Kobbekaduwa's bid for presidency was unsuccessful as he lost the election to J.R. Jayawardene. Nonetheless, Sirimavo Bandaranaike served three terms in office as the Prime Minister, first from 1960 to 1965, then from 1970 to 1977, and finally from 1994 to 2000. In her final term, she served as the Prime Minister under the presidency of her daughter, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga.

Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga

Chandrika Bandaranaike was born to S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Sirimavo Bandaranaike in 1945. Chandrika Bandaranaike was educated initially at St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo and later at Sciences Po in Paris.⁴² She launched her political career as an Executive Committee member of the SLFP Women's league. She left the SLFP to support her husband, Vijaya Kumaratunga's Sri Lanka Mahajana Party before leaving Sri Lanka for a career in the United Kingdom. Chandrika Kumaratunga re-joined the SLFP following her husband's assassination, which was attributed to a gunman of the Patriotic People's Movement (PLF), the military wing of the JVP. She was later elected Chief Minister of Western Province in 1993. She contested under the SLFP-led PA banner, and was appointed Prime Minister following the coalition's victory at the 1994 general election. Kumaratunga was then elected President in the presidential elections held that same year, ending the seventeen-year rule of the UNP. Chandrika Kumaratunga secured a second term in office by winning the presidential election in 2000, and served until the end of her second term in 2005, after which she was constitutionally barred from seeking another term in

40. Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (2014, September 26). The Incident That Rocked Ceylon 55 Years Ago: The Assassination of Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. *Daily Mirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/53002/the-incident-that-rocked-ceylon-55-years-ago-the-assassination-of-prime-minister-swr-d-bandaranaike>

41. First Presidential Election (2014, December 12). *DailyMirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/58683/first-presidential-election-1982>

42. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (2017). *Biography*. Retrieved from <http://www.presidentcbk.org/biography.php>



office. She remains a patron of the SLFP.

Mahinda Rajapaksa

Percy Mahendra Rajapaksa, more commonly known as Mahinda Rajapaksa, was born in 1945. His father D.A. Rajapaksa was a founding member of the SLFP, and a former parliamentarian. Following his father's death, Rajapaksa was nominated as the SLFP candidate from the Beliatta constituency. In 1970, Rajapaksa became the youngest MP to be elected to parliament, having entered parliament at the age of 24.⁴³ Upon entering parliament, Rajapaksa obtained a legal qualification from the Colombo Law College. He rose through the party ranks while the SLFP was in the opposition for an extended period. He later held numerous cabinet positions in the Kumaratunga government from 1994 to 2001, and was appointed the Leader of the Opposition in 2002, following the general election victory of the UNP. Rajapaksa was sworn in as the Prime Minister in 2004 after the SLFP-led UPFA coalition won a majority of parliamentary seats. Rajapaksa succeeded Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga as the fifth Executive President of Sri Lanka in 2005, and the first elected SLFP head of state outside of the Bandaranaike family. Rajapaksa is credited for concluding the war by militarily defeating the LTTE in 2009. He was re-elected thereafter in 2010. Early into his second term, Rajapaksa successfully introduced the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, allowing him to contest an unprecedented third term in office. However, he failed to win re-election.⁴⁴ Rajapaksa continues to serve as an opposition MP within the SLFP's dissident wing following the 2015 general election.

Maithripala Sirisena

Maithripala Sirisena was born in Polonnaruwa in 1951. Sirisena began his political career with the Ceylon Communist Party as a teenager.⁴⁵ He later joined the All-Ceylon SLFP youth organisation led by Anura Bandaranaike (son of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike) prior to formally obtaining party membership in 1976.⁴⁶ In 1983, Sirisena was appointed the chief organiser for Polonnaruwa and the president of the SLFP All-Island Youth Organisation. Sirisena has featured in the Sri Lankan parliament since 1989, and was appointed General Secretary of the SLFP in 1997, and again in 2001. Additionally, Sirisena was appointed Leader of the House in 2004.

Sirisena, the General Secretary of the SLFP and Minister of Health at the time, defected from the Rajapaksa government in the lead up to the presidential election of 2015. Sirisena cited the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the Rajapaksa government as the reason for defecting, and announced his candidacy for the presidency as the 'common opposition candidate' representing the National Democratic Front (NDF). The UNP, the ITAK-led Tamil National Alliance and a number of other parties backed Sirisena's candidacy. Sirisena defeated Rajapaksa at the election and successfully prevented him from securing a third term in office. After assuming duties, Sirisena oversaw the establishment of a unity government featuring members of both the SLFP and the UNP. This was the first instance in the country's history where the two largest political parties became coalition partners.

43. Webley, K. (2010, January 28). Mahinda Rajapaksa. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1957266,00.html>

44. BBC (2015, January 9). Sri Lanka's Rajapaksa Suffers Shock Election Defeat. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30738671>

45. The Sunday Leader (2015, January 11). Maithri-From Father's Son To President. Retrieved from <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2015/01/11/maithri-from-farmers-son-to-president/>

46. Jayasekara, S.A. (2015, January 10). Who is This Sirisena. *Daily Mirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/60879/who-is-this-sirisena>



1.3. Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi

1.3.1 History and background

The ITAK was founded in 1949 as the Federal Party (FP) by then parliamentarians, S.J.V Chelvanayakam, C. Vanniasingam and Senator E.M.V. Naganathan. Prior to establishing the ITAK, Chelvanayakam, Vanniasingam and Naganathan were all part of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) led by G.G. Ponnambalam.⁴⁷ ITAK rapidly emerged as the primary representative of the Tamil people in the North and East, given the ethnic and political tensions caused by the policies of successive governments. In 1972, ITAK re-merged with ACTC and the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) to form a united front for Tamils across Sri Lanka under the name Tamil United Front (TUF). TUF was later renamed the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which advocated for an independent state for Northern Tamils. Subsequent to the formation of the TULF, the CWC left the coalition. The TULF secured 18 seats, which

was the second highest among all parties at the 1977 general election to become the formal opposition. However, all TULF parliamentarians resigned from the parliament having refused to formally renounce their support for a separate state as stipulated by the 6th Amendment to the Constitution passed in 1983. In 2001, the constituent parties of the TULF together with the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Organisation (EPRLF) and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) formed the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). Upon its formation, the TNA formally recognised the LTTE as representatives of the people. This stance led to the TNA's fragmentation. The TULF leader, V. Anandasangaree alias Sangaree, who was a vocal critic of the LTTE refused to allow the TNA to use the TULF name for elections. Therefore, the TNA (as a non-registered party) resurrected the ITAK ticket, which they used for all elections since 2004. In the post-war period, ITAK, no longer under the coercive influence of the LTTE, has returned to its original federalist roots.

47. "Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi" (2017). *Revolvy.com*. Retrieved from https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Illankai%20Tamil%20Arasu%20Kachchi&item_type=topic

1.3.2 Key policy positions and objectives

ITAK was founded in 1949 with four major objectives: (1) the creation of a federal union in Ceylon with separate units for the Sinhalese and Tamils, (2) cessation of state-sponsored colonisation in the Tamil majority areas, (3) ensuring unity among the Tamil-speaking peoples of Ceylon, and (4) equal status for Sinhala and Tamil languages. In 1951, the ITAK leadership demanded a federal arrangement in the North and the East – the Tamil majority regions – with due consideration to the claim that Tamil people were a group distinct from the Sinhalese.⁴⁸ Following the introduction of the controversial ‘Sinhala Only’ policy by the S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike administration in 1956 and the subsequent failure of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact, ITAK took an increasingly Tamil nationalist position. The government banned the Federal Party in 1958 following the anti-Tamil riots, pushing the ITAK to a more nationalist position. Although a revised version of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact was signed between Dudley Senanayake and Chelvanayakam in 1965,⁴⁹ its implementation was also met with strong Sinhala nationalist opposition. This pact was also retracted as a result of such opposition.

In 1970, a Constituent Assembly was formed to enact Sri Lanka’s first autochthonous (i.e. locally drafted) constitution. ITAK also participated in this exercise and urged the inclusion of provisions to share powers of governance with Tamil-speaking peoples in the ‘Northeast’ (i.e. a reference to the Northern and Eastern parts of the country) on the basis of shared sovereignty within a united country. However, once the recommendations put forward by ITAK were rejected, it left the Assembly and went on to form the TUF. TUF became further nationalistic and renamed itself the TULF.⁵⁰ During the first TULF convention held in 1976, the proposal to pursue the establishment of an independent Tamil Eelam (State) – the ‘Vaduk-

kodai Resolution’ – was officially adopted.

The TULF’s successor, the TNA, originally backed the establishment of an independent Tamil Eelam. However, since the conclusion of the war, the alliance has dropped the demand for an independent Tamil Eelam and has consistently expressed its willingness to accept regional self-rule, which is provided via a devolution mechanism within a united Sri Lanka.⁵¹

Please refer to the infographic on peacebuilding for a detailed analysis of the party/coalition’s current position on post-war peacebuilding.

1.3.3 Coalition structure

R. Sampanthan (Leader of the TNA)

Mavai Senathirajah (Leader of ITAK)

Selvam Adaikalanathan (Leader of TELO)

D. Siddarthan (Leader of PLOTE)

Suresh Premachandran (Leader of EPRLF)

M.A. Sumanthiran (Media Spokesperson & Secretary of External Affairs to the TNA)

1.3.4 Current parliamentary strengths, coalition politics and interests

The ITAK, as the main coalition partner of the TNA, secured eleven parliamentary seats at the 2015 election. The TNA coalition as a whole meanwhile secured sixteen seats. The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and People’s Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) won two seats each while the Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) secured one seat. As a section of the UPFA joined the UNFGG to form the incumbent unity government, the TNA, which had the third highest number of seats in parliament, was formally recognised by the Speaker as the official chief opposition in

48. Wickramasinghe, C. (2015, June 29). The Ten Years I worked with President Kumaratunga was an Enjoyable Period [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/42305>

49. *Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact*. (2017). *Satp.org*. Retrieved from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/actsandordinance/senanayake.htm>

50. Anandasangaree, V. (2014, November 10). Historical Importance of the TULF. *Asian Tribune*. Retrieved from <http://asiantribune.com/node/85821>

51. Sri Lankan Tamil alliance drops independence demand (2010 March 14). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/14/sri-lanka-tamils-self-rule>

parliament. The TNA leader R. Sampanthan was thus appointed Leader of the Opposition of the Eight Parliament.⁵²

At the 2015 presidential election held prior to the general election, the TNA backed common candidate Maithripala Sirisena's bid for presidency.⁵³ TNA's endorsement of Sirisena was instrumental in the ultimate success of Sirisena's bid.

1.3.5 Key figures

S.J.V. Chelvanayakam

Samuel James Velupillai Chelvanayakam was born in Malaysia in 1898. Chelvanayakam moved to Jaffna with his mother and siblings in 1902. He was educated at the Union College, Tellippalai, St. John's College, Jaffna, and ultimately S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia. Following a brief teaching stint, he joined the Ceylon Law College. Chelvanayakam entered politics as part of the ACTC in 1944, and was elected to parliament in 1947 from Kankesanthurai. He was a strong critic of the controversial Ceylon Citizenship Act that denied citizenship to over 700,000 Tamils of Indian origin. In 1949, Chelvanayakam accordingly led two other parliamentarians out of the ACTC when the party decided to join the same government that had introduced the Act a year earlier.

As a co-founder and leader of the ITAK, Chelvanayakam lost his parliamentary seat during the 1952 election. However, he managed to regain the seat at the 1956 election. Following the introduction of the Sinhala Only Act in 1956, ITAK rapidly overtook the ACTC as the more popular party representing the interests of the Tamil population.⁵⁴ The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact was signed in 1957 between then Prime Minister Bandaranaike and Chelvanayakam, granting the Northern and Eastern provinces a degree of autonomy, and recognising Tamil as a national minority language. However, Sinhala nationalist objections led to the retraction of the pact. In the subsequent years, Chelvanayakam unsuccessfully

attempted to reach a political compromise with numerous UNP and SLFP governments. In 1972, he was appointed President of the newly formed TUF coalition. At the launch of the TULF in 1976, Chelvanayakam announced that his attempts at finding a federal solution had failed, and that the newly formed alliance would seek the establishment of a separate state for Tamils in Sri Lanka. Chelvanayakam died on 26 April 1977.

A. Amirthalingam

Appapullai Amirthalingam (born in 1927) was a founding member of ITAK. Following the establishment of the party, Amirthalingam was appointed the leader of its Youth Front. Having stood for parliamentary elections since 1952, Amirthalingam was appointed the leader of both ITAK and TULF following the demise of Chelvanayakam. Amirthalingam was appointed the Leader of the Opposition in 1977 when the TULF became the largest opposition party. Following the Black July riots in 1983, Amirthalingam, like his TULF counterparts, forfeited his seat and fled to Madras, India. He later returned to Sri Lanka after the signing of the Indo-Lanka accord in 1987, and was appointed a National List member of the TULF in 1989. Amirthalingam was assassinated by an LTTE gunman soon after, during a meeting that was arranged at his residence to mend ties with the LTTE and the TULF. Murugesu Sivasithamparam succeeded Amirthalingam as the leader of the TULF.

V. Anandasangaree

Veerasingham Anandasangaree began his political career with the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in 1955. However, he grew disenchanted with the leftist movement and the LSSP following the increasingly Sinhala nationalist stance it adopted, and quit the LSSP in 1966. Sangaree then joined the ACTC. Sangaree was elected to parliament in 1977, and left for India subsequent to his resignation in 1983. Upon his return, he was re-elected to parliament in 1989 and was appointed deputy leader of the TULF in 1993.

52. Sampanthan Chosen as the New Leader of the Opposition (2015 September 3). *Colombo Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.columbotelegraph.com/index.php/sampanthan-chosen-as-new-leader-of-the-opposition/>

53. Srinivasan, M. (2014, December 30). Tamil National Alliance Backs Opposition Candidate in Sri Lanka Presidential Polls. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/interna->

[tional/south-asia/tamil-national-alliance-backs-opposition-candidate-in-sri-lanka-presidential-polls/article6738507.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/tamil-national-alliance-backs-opposition-candidate-in-sri-lanka-presidential-polls/article6738507.ece)

54. Jeyaraj, D.B.S (2015, July 31). Political Role of Federal Party (ITAK) in Unmaking and Making Govts in 1960. *Daily Mirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/81793/political-role-of-federal-party-itak-in-unmaking-and-making-govts-in-1960>



After succeeding Sivasithamparam as the leader of the TULF in 2002, Sangaree led the TULF out of the newly formed TNA coalition, in protest to the increasingly pro-LTTE stance adopted by the TNA.⁵⁵ His exit compelled those who remained with the TNA to resurrect the ITAK name and logo in order to campaign for subsequent elections.

R. Sampanthan

Rajavarothiam Sampanthan was born in 1933. He completed his secondary education at St. Sebastians College, Moratuwa and later joined the Ceylon Law College. Sampanthan began his political career in 1956 after joining ITAK. He then entered parliament

for the first time in 1977 under the TULF ticket. Sampanthan was also among the MPs who forfeited their parliamentary seats in 1983. Sampanthan was appointed the leader of the newly established TNA coalition in 2001. Following the decision taken by the Sangaree faction to leave the TNA coalition, Sampanthan led the process of resurrecting ITAK, and was appointed its leader. He was re-elected to parliament from the district of Trincomalee in all general elections held subsequently. Sampanthan remains the leader of the TNA, but handed over party leadership of ITAK to Mavai Senathirajah in 2014. However, Sampanthan was appointed as the Leader of the Opposition following the 2015 election.

55. Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (2013, June 14). Anandasangaree: Democratic Leader who Defied the Tigers. *Daily Mirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/30950/anandasangaree-democratic-tamil-leader-who-defied-the-tigers>



1.4. Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna

1.4.1 History and background

The JVP was founded in 1964 as a leftist political movement in an era when the traditional leftist parties in Sri Lanka were experiencing waning support.⁵⁶ While the oldest leftist party in Sri Lanka, the LSSP, had joined the Sirimavo government, the alternative Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL) – known earlier as the Ceylon Communist Party – had fragmented into two factions: CPSL (Moscow wing) and CPSL (Peking wing) at the time. Following the decision of the CPSL factions to also integrate with the government, Russian-educated CPSL (Peking wing) party member, Rohana Wijeweera, organised a meeting with several others to ‘correct’ the party’s ideology.⁵⁷ However, upon discovery, Wijeweera and six others were expelled from the party in 1965, triggering the emergence of the JVP as a separate politi-

cal movement.

In April 1971, the JVP under Wijeweera – who was imprisoned for activities against the state – launched an anti-state insurrection. Prior to launching the insurrection, the JVP recruited and armed thousands of youth in the south of Sri Lanka throughout the late 1960s.⁵⁸ However, government security forces swiftly suppressed the April insurrection. Subsequent to the release of the main leaders of the JVP following the change of government in 1977, the JVP transformed itself into a political party with a Marxist ideology. In 1987, the JVP launched a far more organised, violent and prolonged insurgency that almost succeeded in overthrowing the government in 1989.⁵⁹ After thousands of casualties – many of whom were civilians – the government security forces were ultimately successful in suppressing the rebellion. The second JVP insurrection ended with the killing of its leader

56. The origins of the left movement in Sri Lanka extend back to as far as 1935, the year in which the oldest leftist party in Sri Lanka: The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) was founded. Independence and socialism were among the primary objectives of the party, which was founded by a group of students who had returned from abroad influence by Marxist and Leninist ideals.

57. JVP: A Brief History (2017), *About Us*. Retrieved from <http://www.jvpsrilanka.com/english/about-us/brief-history/>

58. Venugopal, R. (2010). Sectarian Socialism: The Politics of Sri Lanka’s Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). *Modern Asian Studies*, 44(3), p. 567-602

59. Moore, M. (1993). Thoroughly Modern Revolutionaries: the JVP in Sri Lanka, *Modern Asian Studies*, 27(3). p. 593-642.



Rohana Wijeweera in November 1989. Following a period of hiatus, the JVP returned to electoral politics in 1994.

1.4.2 Key policy positions and objectives

The JVP was established as a communist (Marxist-Leninist) party, assuming a far-left economic position. Its support base has historically been the working (proletarian) class. The armed military groups previously attached to the JVP during the insurrections typically comprised disenfranchised youth in rural areas. The initial support base of the JVP was almost entirely made up of rural Sinhalese youth, and thus minority concerns were of marginal importance to the party's objectives. However, the JVP under Rohana Wijeweera was accused of intentionally targeting Tamils during the insurrections – particularly during the 1988-89 resurrection. Wijeweera openly opposed any form of decentralization in Sri Lanka, stating that it will lead the island towards fragmentation. Moreover, the JVP explicitly rejected the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, and the resulting 13th Amendment to the Constitution, terming it as an amendment imposed on the people of Sri Lanka by India. The JVP also assumed a highly critical stance towards the IPKF intervention; terming the intervention as imperialistic.⁶⁰

Following the re-emergence of the JVP in 1994 as a mainstream political party under the leadership of Somawansa Amarasinghe, the party continued to assume a Marxist-Leninist economic position. However, the JVP relaxed the strong, statist economic ideology it once advocated under Wijeweera by 1994. Between 1994 and 2008, the JVP assumed an increasingly Sinhala nationalist position. While Amarasinghe accepted decentralization as a possible solution to the ethnic question, the party supported the government-led war effort against the LTTE. In a surprising move, the JVP together with the SLFP and other minor left-wing parties founded the UPFA 2004. However, the JVP ceded from the UPFA government in 2005 after issuing an ultimatum to then

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga to withdraw the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure agreement with the LTTE. The proposed agreement provided the LTTE with a degree of autonomy in the management of aid and resources in the post-Tsunami recovery process in LTTE-occupied areas.⁶¹ The agreement was eventually withdrawn following a successful constitutional challenge by the JVP.

The JVP endorsed Mahinda Rajapaksa during the 2005 presidential election and hence did not put forward a candidate from the party. However, the party would later split with its influential Propaganda Secretary and Sinhala nationalist ideologue Wimal Weerawansa forming a separate party in 2008. The JVP eventually left the UPFA while Weerawansa's faction remained in Rajapaksa's government. In 2010, the JVP backed the common opposition challenger to Rajapaksa, former Army General Sarath Fonseka. Upon Fonseka's election defeat, the JVP contested the general elections under the Fonseka-led Democratic National Alliance ticket. In the most recent presidential election, the JVP provided tacit support to the common candidate Maithripala Sirisena, but stood independently for the general election held eight months later.

The JVP's views on foreign and economic policies have remained largely consistent. The JVP has often iterated its commitment to maintaining a foreign policy that guarantees the sovereignty of Sri Lanka, and to oppose what it calls 'imperialism and neo-colonialism'.⁶² It seeks to foster ties with socialist countries and to open new missions in countries where Sri Lankans reside for work and other purposes in large numbers. In the economic realm, the JVP remains strongly committed to the concept of the welfare state, and opposes capitalist ideals and neoliberal economic policies. On the question of post-war reconciliation, the JVP has supported the establishment of a truth and reconciliation committee as a means of promoting ethnic harmony and addressing the grievances of all those affected by the civil war (please refer to the infographic on peacebuilding).

60. Bopagae, L. (2009, July 29). Sinusoidal Nature of the JVP Policy on the National Question. *Groundviews*. Retrieved from <http://groundviews.org/2009/07/26/sinusoidal-nature-of-the-jvp-policy-on-the-national-question/>

61. Gunaratna, H. (2005, June 17). JVP Quits the UPFA, Says Not

the Last Time. *The Island*. Retrieved from <http://www.island.lk/2005/06/17/news2.html>

62. JVP to Abolish Executive Presidency. (2015, July 22). *Daily Mirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/80579/jvp-to-abolish-executive-presidency#sthash.a7hoQhFV.dpuf>

1.4.3 Party structure and decision-making process

Party Leader - Anura Kumara Dissanayake

General Secretary – Tilvin Silva

Propaganda Secretary - Vijitha Herath

Administrative Secretary - K.D. Lalkantha

National Organiser – Bimal Ratnayake

Financial Secretary - Sunil Handunneththi

A centralised leadership committee is tasked with intra-party decision-making and ensuring party democracy. Under this system, all appointments to party organisations are made via a vote in which a simple majority is needed. All organisations affiliated to the party function under a hierarchical system, where the organisations that are designated a higher position in the system enjoy significant leverage over the organisations ranked below them.

In comparison to the UNP and SLFP constitutions, which stipulate that the party convention should be held annually and every two years respectively, the JVP constitution underlines that the convention should typically be held once every five years, unless a majority of the fulltime party members deems it necessary to hold an emergency convention. The Central Committee (currently comprising 29 members) is tasked with the organisation of the convention and determining the agenda.

According to the party constitution, the party convention is the forum for:

- a) Selecting the party leader;
- b) Determining follow-up actions based on the reports submitted by organisations affiliated to the party and unions during the convention;
- c) Making amendments to the party constitution and policy direction;
- d) Deciding on actions tailored to suit the existing political landscape; and
- e) Selecting the Central Committee.

1.4.4 External organisations linked to the party

Since its inception, the JVP has maintained a strong union presence in Sri Lanka. Although a breakaway faction of the JVP, known as the Frontline Socialist Party (discussed in detail under the minor parties section) has challenged the JVP in this realm, the following unions continue to operate under the JVP's purview:⁶³

- (1) Lanka Teachers Service Union
- (2) Lanka Schools Principals' Union
- (3) Lanka Schools Non Academics staffs' Union
- (4) Lanka Piriven Services Union
- (5) The Combined Union of Graduate Employees - 2004
- (6) National Library Services Board Employees' Union
- (7) Inter University Employees' Trade Union
- (8) All Ceylon Zoological Garden Employees' Union
- (9) All Ceylon Forest Conservation Employees' Union
- (10) All Ceylon Agricultural Services Local Officers' Union
- (11) *Lak Pohora* General Employees' Union
- (12) Commercial Fertilizer General Workers Union
- (13) All Ceylon Agrarian Operation Offices' Union
- (14) Irrigation Management Services Union
- (15) Irrigation Machine Operators and Greasers' Services Union
- (16) Mahaweli Employees' Union
- (17) Agricultural Research Production Assistant Officers' Union
- (18) All Ceylon Agricultural Services Regional Officers' Union

63. Union Lanka. (2017). *Unions.lk*. Retrieved from http://www.unions.lk/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109&Itemid=1165



- (19) Lanka Irrigation Employees Union
- (20) Agriculture Assurance Services Union
- (21) All Ceylon Agricultural Services Committees Employees' Union
- (22) Agricultural General Workers Union
- (23) State Pharmaceuticals Corporation Workers' Union
- (24) Government Ayurvedic Medical Officers' Association
- (25) All Ceylon Health Services Union
- (26) State Pharmaceuticals Corporation Workers' Union
- (27) All Ceylon Transport Workers Union
- (28) All Ceylon Railway General Employees' Union
- (29) Road Development Authority Employees Union
- (30) State Printing Corporation Workers' Union
- (31) Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation Employees Union (Television)
- (32) Government Printing Workers' Union
- (33) Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation Employees' Union
- (34) Sri Lanka News Papers Board Employees' Union
- (35) All Ceylon Ports General Workers Union
- (36) All Ceylon Customs Services Union
- (37) Lanka Electricity Board Employees' Union
- (38) Lanka Postal Services Union
- (39) Water Supply and Drainage Employees' Union
- (40) State Engineering Corporation Employees' Union
- (41) Lanka Telecom Services Union
- (42) All Ceylon Bank Employees Union
- (43) State Combine Services General Workers' Union
- (44) Sugathadasa Sport Complex Employees Union
- (45) State Trading Corporation General Workers' Union
- (46) Cultural Triangle Workers' Union
- (47) Sri Lanka Audit Examiners' Services Union
- (48) Ceylon Petroleum General Services Union
- (49) All Ceylon Local Government General Employees Union
- (50) All Ceylon Development Officers' Union
- (51) Water Resources Board General Workers Union
- (52) Livestock Development Consultants' Union
- (53) State Development and Constructions Corporation Employees' Union
- (54) Film Corporation Employees' Union
- (55) Tower Hall Theater Foundation Employees' Union
- (56) Lanka Fisheries Corporation Employees Union
- (57) Urban Development Authority General Workers Union
- (58) Factories General Employees Union
- (59) Public Services United Survey Assistants' Union
- (60) Water Resources Board General Workers Union

Additionally, the JVP is also a member of the International Communist Seminar.

1.4.5 Current parliamentary strength, coalition politics and interests

The JVP, having stood for the 2015 general elections independently, managed to secure six parliamentary seats. Although the JVP managed to improve on its previous election performance in 2010 where it secured just four seats, the party was expected to perform better given its widespread acceptance as a party untainted by corruption, that also prioritised academically qualified candidates. However, despite the small number of seats, given the unprecedented coalition between the UNP and the SLFP, the JVP became the

fourth largest political party in parliament. Hence, upon convening the Eighth Parliament in September 2015, the leader of the JVP, Anura Kumara Dissanayake was also appointed the Chief Opposition Whip – a role he continues to function in today.

1.4.6 Key figures

Rohana Wijeweera

Rohana Wijeweera was born in the southern district of Matara in 1943. Wijeweera's father was a Ceylon Communist Party activist. In 1960, Wijeweera left for the Soviet Union and enrolled at the Lumumba University to study Medicine. His political ideology was influenced by his time in Moscow. Having being granted an academic term of leave for medical purposes, he returned to Sri Lanka and joined the pro-Chinese CPSL (Peking wing). This decision led to the Soviet Union revoking his visa, effectively ending his chances of recommencing his studies in Moscow.

After his expulsion from CPSL (Peking wing), Wijeweera became increasingly radical and appealed to the rural youth who were gripped by unemployment and a lack of opportunities to take up arms and challenge the establishment. The initial attempt by Wijeweera to direct an insurgency from prison in 1971 resulted in thousands of JVP militants being either apprehended or killed by the government.⁶⁴ Having transformed the JVP into a political party, Wijeweera ran for the presidential election in 1982, and finished a distant third behind the UNP and SLFP candidates. In 1983, the government proscribed the JVP and several other leftist parties, accusing them of being involved in the 'Black July' riots. Subsequently, Wijeweera oversaw and commanded the second JVP

insurrection launched in 1987. In 1989, Wijeweera was captured by the police and died under mysterious circumstances while in custody. His death marked the end of the armed insurrection era of the JVP.

Somawansa Amarasinghe

Wijeweera's close ally, Somawansa Amarasinghe assumed leadership of the JVP in 1990. He is credited for resurrecting the JVP as a political party after it lost a majority of its leaders during the second insurrection.⁶⁵ Following Wijeweera's capture, Amarasinghe initially went into hiding and fled to Europe via India in late 1990. After the UNP government was defeated by the SLFP-led PA in 1994,⁶⁶ Amarasinghe returned to Sri Lanka and regrouped the JVP. Although the JVP managed to secure only a single parliamentary seat in 1994 under Amarasinghe's leadership, the JVP went on to win ten seats in 2001, and 39 seats in 2004 having contested for the election under the UPFA ticket. Amarasinghe functioned in his capacity as the leader of the JVP until his retirement in February 2014. Later in his life, Amarasinghe formed the People's Servants Party citing dissatisfaction with the JVP leadership. Amarasinghe passed away in 2016.

Anura Kumara Dissanayake

The incumbent leader of the JVP, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, succeeded Amarasinghe as the leader of the JVP in 2014.⁶⁷ Born in 1968, Dissanayake served as the Cabinet Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Land and Irrigation as part of the UPFA government until the JVP decided to quit the government in 2005. The JVP under Dissanayake did not contest the 2015 presidential election, but provided implicit support to the common candidate Maithripala Sirisena. In the subsequent parliamentary election, the JVP ran independently and secured six seats in the parliament.

64. Haviland, C. (2014, November 13). The Killing of Sri Lanka's Stalinist Icon. *BBC*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30017905>

65. 'Siri Aiya' who revived the JVP (2015, April 18). *DailyFT*. Retrieved from <https://thinkworth.wordpress.com/2015/04/18/interesting-facts-about-jvps-somawansa-amarasinghe/>

66. Somawansa No More. (2016, June 15). *DailyMirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/110970/Somawansa-no-more>

67. Anura Kumara Dissanayake is New JVP leader. (2014, February 02). *Daily Mirror*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymirror.lk/42454/anura-kumara-dissanayakeis-new-jvp-leader>

2. OTHER PARTIES

In addition to the four major parties discussed above, Sri Lanka has a multitude of smaller parties that compete either in coalition with the three largest parties, UNP, SLFP and ITAK or independently. Currently, fourteen formally constituted parties and two informal parties are represented in parliament through the major coalitions. Moreover, one party, the EPDP, contested independently and won a seat in parliament. The EPDP and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), which contested in alliance with the UNP in multiple districts but independently in one district, are the only parties to win seats in the Eighth Parliament of Sri Lanka outside the coalitions led by major parties.

Two parties, which currently have no parliamentary representation but have significant ideological weight in public debate, the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) and the Tamil National People's Front (TNPf) are also included in this section.

2.1 Political Parties Formally Constituted Along Ethnic Lines

Many smaller parties are formally constituted along ethnic lines, particularly minority ethnic groups. There has been an increasing proliferation of ethnic Tamil parties, and a shift by former Tamil militant groups towards constituting their own political parties. Several former Tamil militant groups contested in alliance with ITAK under the informal banner, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). Parties representing the ethnic Muslim minority also emerged in the 1980s, the largest of which is the SLMC. Other such parties include those representing Indian Origin

Tamils, and Sinhala nationalist parties.

2.1.1 TNA coalition partners: EPRLF, PLOTE and TELO

As discussed in the section on ITAK, the TNA coalition formed in 2001 consists of three other parties in addition to ITAK. These parties are the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE)

Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front

Kandasamy Pathmanabha, Douglas Devananda, Vatharaja Perumal, and Suresh Premachandran established the EPRLF in 1981 following their breakaway from the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS). The party's ideological foundations relate to the revolutionary transformation of the Eelam national liberation struggle through building a mass base, and preparing the masses for an armed struggle.⁶⁸ Accordingly, the military wing of the EPRLF, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), was formed under Devananda's leadership. However, the LTTE conducted a brutal crackdown of an underprepared PLA in response to the confrontational stance the EPRLF took towards the LTTE for its alleged involvement in the disappearance of Jaffna university student Vijithiran.⁶⁹ At the time of the incident, however, the LTTE had already begun a campaign to wipe out all other regional militias including the EPRLF.⁷⁰ Douglas Devananda, who was accused by the party of antagonising the LTTE, split from the EPRLF to form the Eelam National Democratic

68. Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberal Front. (1984). Retrieved from <http://padippakam.com/document/EPRLF/book/ep0006.pdf>

69. University Teachers for Human Rights. (2001). *The Snares of Violence*. Retrieved from <http://www.uthr.org/Reports/Report1/Appendix1.htm>

70. Ceylon Today. (2016). 30 years after LTTE massacre of TELO!. Retrieved from <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/column-20160321CT20170330.php?id=190>

71. Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (2001, November 22). The Douglas Devananda Phenomenon. *Sangham.org*. Retrieved from http://www.sangam.org/ANALYSIS ARCHIVES/Jeyaraj_11_22_01.html

Liberation Front (ENDLF) together with a break-away faction of the PLOTE, led by Thangaraj alias Paranthan Rajan.⁷¹

Subsequently, the remaining members of the EPRLF joined mainstream politics and led a successful campaign during the 1988 provincial council elections under the patronage of the IPKF, securing 41 out of the 71 seats of the North Eastern Provincial Council. EPRLF's Varatharaja Perumal became the first Chief Minister of the now defunct North-Eastern Provincial Council in 1988. Subsequent to the IPKF withdrawal in 1990, Perumal moved a resolution in the North-Eastern Provincial Council, unilaterally declaring the formation of a Free and Democratic Republic of Eelam that encompasses the Northern and Eastern provinces. President Premadasa immediately dissolved the Council in response to the resolution.⁷² Perumal returned to Sri Lanka after a period of self-imposed exile in India. However, his return resulted in intra-party tensions leading to the break up of the party into two factions in 1999. General-Secretary Kandaiah 'Suresh' Premachandran allegedly made a deal with the LTTE to split from the EPRLF to form the EPRLF (Suresh wing), while the majority faction of the party formed the EPRLF (Varathar wing) under the leadership of Varatharajah Perumal. Despite the latter's numerical advantage; the Suresh wing had control of both the party's assets and the right to use the party's official name.⁷³ The 'Suresh wing' of the EPRLF, together with ITAK, PLOTE, and TELO formed the TNA in 2001. Subsequently, Perumal dissolved the Varathar wing of the EPRLF and left the country for India.⁷⁴ The party's current parliamentary representation is limited to Nadesu Sivasakthi who ran for election under the ITAK (TNA coalition) ticket at the 2015 parliamentary elections, representing the Suresh wing of the EPRLF.

Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation

Although TELO was officially founded in 1979,⁷⁵ it

has existed as an unstructured military organisation since 1968.⁷⁶ At the time of its origin, TELO was a radicalised student group led by Nadarajah Thangathurai and Selvarajah Yogachandran alias Kuttimani. The Sri Lanka Army captured Thangathurai and Kuttimani when they were trying to escape to India in 1981. They were later killed in a prison riot that took place during Black July riots of 1983. Sri Sabaratnam, having succeeded Thangathurai and Kuttimani as the leader of the TELO, set up a united military front under the name of Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) with the EPRLF and EROS, to fight the government troops. The LTTE also joined the ENLF in 1984. However, the LTTE was at constant odds with TELO for the latter's pro-India stance, and later accused the TELO of assassinating two Jaffna politicians, M. Alalasundaram and V. Dharmalingam, in September 1985. After pulling out of ENLF in February 1986, the LTTE began to crack down against the TELO leadership. Sri Sabaratnam was assassinated by the LTTE in May 1986.

Selvam Adaikalanathan who succeeded Sabaratnam, reconstituted TELO as a political party. Having formed coalitions with numerous regional political parties, TELO joined the TNA in 2001, and have since functioned under the TNA banner. Party leader, Adaikalanathan, and Kaveendran Kodeeswaran represent TELO in the current parliament. Adaikalanathan is also the Deputy Chairman of Committees in the current parliament of Sri Lanka.

People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE)

Former chairman of the LTTE Uma Maheswaran alias Mukundan defected from the LTTE following a dispute with LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, and formed the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) in 1980. Although PLOTE and the LTTE occasionally cooperated against the government, the two organisations were generally confrontational towards each other.⁷⁷ The LTTE

72. Ferdinando, S. (2000). I'm no traitor, says Perumal. *Sunday Island*. Retrieved from http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/features/20000912no_traitor.html

73. University Teachers for Human Rights. (2003, June 15). *The Murder of T. Subathiran: Sri Lanka's End Game*. Retrieved from <http://www.uthr.org/Statements/Subathiran.htm>

74. Asian Tribune. (2015). 'Tamil youth won't take up guns again'-Varatharaja Perumal. Retrieved from <http://www.asiantribune.com/node/86895>

75. Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (2012, February 25). *TELO History*. Retrieved from http://telo.org/?page_id=203

76. Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization. (2017). Retrieved from <http://padippakam.com/document/telo/Publications/telo58.pdf>

77. Cassman, D. (2017). *People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam / Mapping Militant Organizations*. Web.stanford.edu. Retrieved from <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/499#note6>



attacked PLOTE as part of its larger crackdown against opposing separatist military groups in 1986. By mid-1987, the strength of PLOTE was greatly diminished. The remaining members of PLOTE initially fought alongside the government forces as a paramilitary group prior to establishing a political wing under the Democratic People's Liberation Front (DPLF) in 1998.⁷⁸ D. Siththarthan succeeded Maheswaren as the leader of PLOTE following his assassination in 1989. Currently, PLOTE/DPLF is a part of the TNA and have two parliamentary seats in the Eighth Parliament of Sri Lanka. Party leader Siththarthan, who was elected from the Jaffna district and Sathasivam Viyalendiran who was elected from the Batticaloa district currently occupy these seats.

2.1.2 Other ethnic Tamil parties

Eelam People's Democratic Party

The ENDLF formed by Douglas Devanananda and Paranthan Rajan collapsed after the latter declared his allegiance to the IPKF. In response, Devananda, who was a vocal critic of the IPKF intervention, founded the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) in 1987.⁷⁹ The Devananda-led EPDP initially functioned as a pro-government paramilitary group, and later a political group that supported the government's war effort against the LTTE. Devananda continued to assume a confrontational stance towards the LTTE until the culmination of the civil war in 2009, and hence was the target of many assassination attempts. Devananda held ministerial positions under former presidents Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Mahinda Rajapaksa. Devananda ran independently under the EPDP ticket and was elected to the current parliament.

Tamil National People's Front

The Tamil National People's Front (TNPf) is a Tamil nationalist political party, launched by a dissident faction of the TNA in 2010.⁸⁰ The founding members of the party included then parliamentari-

ans Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, S. Kajendran and Pathmini Sithamparanathan. The All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC - *Ahila Ilankai Tamil Congress*) – the oldest political party representing Tamil interests in Sri Lanka – is the main constituent party of the TNPf. In the 1950s, ACTC aligned itself with the UNP, leading to a massive drain of support in favour of the breakaway faction that became the Federal Party (ITAK). As the UNP became more Sinhala nationalist, the ACTC lost credibility for remaining aligned to the former. The ACTC eventually re-joined with the Federal Party to form TULF, and later joined the TNA. In 2010, the ACTC left to form the new TNPf.⁸¹ Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, the grandson of the founder of the ACTC, G.G. Ponnambalam, is the current leader of the TNPf and the ACTC. Although the TNPf ran independently at two general elections (2010 and 2015), it failed to secure any parliamentary seats on both occasions. In 2015, the TNPf ran from the ACTC ticket and finished fifth in the electoral district of Jaffna. Although the TNPf managed to cross the 5% threshold, which usually guarantees a seat, both the UNP and the UPFA performed marginally better in Jaffna, thereby denying the TNPf a seat in parliament. Despite assuming a more radical stance compared to the TNA, and wielding significant influence in the Tamil media, the TNPf is yet to successfully pose an electoral challenge to the TNA. However, a wing in the TNA, which includes the Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council C.V. Wigneswaran, has also now assumed an ideological position similar to that of the TNPf.

2.1.3 Muslim parties

Prior to independence, the Muslim political and community leadership were scattered across the political spectrum. However, charismatic leaders such as Siddi Lebbe and T.B. Jayah formed an organisation of their own initiative to advocate for the causes of their local Muslim communities. The All Ceylon Muslim League led by T.B. Jayah endorsed and joined

78. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1992, September 01). *Sri Lanka: Current information about the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), including their recruiting methods and whether they have camps*. Refworld. Retrieved from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ac3e58.html%3E>

79. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2010, September 27). *Sri Lanka: Information on the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP)*

Retrieved from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e43b8222.html>

80. Tamil National People's Front Launched in Jaffna. (2010, February 26). *TamilNet.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=31285>

81. Verité Research Election Guide. (2015, August). VeritéResearch.org

the UNP at the time of its formation. Nonetheless, discriminatory policies adopted by successive governments, particular with regard to the Tamil language – which is the language spoken by a majority of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka – resulted in the alienation of Muslim leaders from the decision-making process. By the early 1980s, calls for an independent Muslim party along ethnic lines intensified.

Sri Lanka Muslim Congress

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) was initiated in 1981 following a meeting organised by likeminded Muslim intellectuals in Kattankudy, Batticaloa.⁸² The SLMC received official recognition as a political party in 1986.⁸³ The other prominent Muslim organisation at the time, the Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF), joined the Tamil United Liberation Front. Meanwhile, the leader of the SLMC, M.H.M Ashraff refused to get involved in the Tamil struggle for an independent state. By the mid-1990s, the SLMC had established itself as the foremost party representing the Muslim community in the country. Witnessing the success of the SLMC, the MULF also agreed to merge with the SLMC in 1996. Following the demise of the founder leader, M.H.M. Ashraff in 2000, Rauff Hakeem succeeded Ashraff as the leader of the SLMC.⁸⁴

Despite experiencing some internal turmoil during the mid-2000s (discussed in detail in the section on the All Ceylon Makkal Congress), Hakeem continues to function as the party leader to date. However, continued differences of opinions between Hakeem and the General-Secretary of the SLMC, Hasan Ali, have long been speculated in the media.⁸⁵ The significant number of parliamentary seats that the SLMC has managed to secure in recent times – in spite of the aforementioned internal crises – has by default made the party an important cog in successive coalition governments in Sri Lanka. The SLMC ran for the 2015 elections under the UNP ticket in all districts,

except the Ampara district, in which the party ran independently. Six members who contested under the UNP ticket were elected to parliament while another was elected under the SLMC ticket from the Ampara district. SLMC currently functions as a coalition partner of the national unity government.

All Ceylon Makkal Congress

A dissident faction of the SLMC founded the All Ceylon Makkal (people's) Congress (ACMC – formally known as All Ceylon Muslim Congress) after a prolonged intra-party dispute within the SLMC. The tensions reached its climax with then SLMC parliamentarian Hussein Baila's decision to crossover to the government in May 2004, resulting in the suspension of the party memberships of Rishad Bathiudeen, M.N. Abdul Majeed and Baila by the SLMC.⁸⁶ Subsequently, Bathiudeen, Majeed and another SLMC parliamentarian, Ameen Ali, accepted ministerial positions with the then ruling UPFA government, leading to their expulsion from the SLMC.⁸⁷ Following an unsuccessful bid to overthrow SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem, the dissident faction of the SLMC founded the ACMC as an alternative party for the Muslim community in Sri Lanka.

At the 2010 parliamentary elections, the ACMC secured three parliamentary seats via the UPFA ticket. Although the ACMC decided to declare its support for the common candidate Sirisena in the lead up to the 2015 presidential elections, ACMC parliamentarian Mohammad Hisbullah decided to remain with the UPFA and support President Rajapaksa's bid for re-election. During the 2015 parliamentary elections, the ACMC led by Bathiudeen secured four seats under the UNFGG, but failed to win any seats from the Ampara district, from which the party ran independently. Former ACMC member Hisbullah was also appointed to parliament from the UPFA national list.

82. Sri Lanka Muslim Congress. (2017). *Our History*. Retrieved from <http://slmc.lk/about-us/sri-lanka-muslim-congress/>

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84. Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (2016, July 08). Muslim Congress Leader Rauff Hakeem Faces Political Challenges in East [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/47185>

85. Mohan, S.R. (2017, January 17). *Will SLMC-Hassan Ali Spat Continue*. Ceylon Today. Retrieved from <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/print20161101CT20161231.php?id=12545>

86. SLMC Suspends Three MPs over Opposition to Hakeem. (2004, May 19). *Tamilnet.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=12041>

87. Chandrasekara, T. (2005, March 03). SLMC Expels Dissident Trio. *The Island*. Retrieved from <http://www.island.lk/2005/03/25/news20.html>



2.1.4 Plantation worker parties: representatives of 'Indian Origin Tamils'

During colonial rule, many Tamils of Indian origin were brought to Ceylon from the southern regions of India as tea estate workers. These workers settled in the central regions of the country. However, after dominion status was granted to Ceylon, the government in 1948 passed a controversial Act by which all citizenship applicants had to individually prove that their father was born in Ceylon in order to be granted Ceylonese citizenship.⁸⁸ This affected Tamils of Indian origin. The government disregarded the strong opposition from Tamil politicians to this Act.

Ceylon Workers Congress

The Ceylon Indian Congress (CIC) was established in 1939 to fill the political void that existed among the upcountry Indian Tamil community. In 1940, the Ceylon Indian Congress Labour Union (CICLU) was formed under the leadership of Peri Sundaram as the CIC's official trade union. Saumyamoorthy Thondaman changed the name of the union to 'Ceylon Worker's Congress (CWC)' in 1950. CWC was the largest trade union in the country at the time with roughly 180,000 members.⁸⁹

Thondaman since supported and held cabinet ministerial positions in many UNP and SLFP-led governments, and advocated for the granting of citizenship rights to all Indian Tamils. CWC is currently functioning as a regional party that primarily focuses on estate workers in the central province of Sri Lanka as its constituency. Saumyamoorthy Thondaman's son Arumugam is the current leader of the party. There are currently two CWC members in parliament, including Arumugam Thondaman. The CWC currently functions as a coalition partner of the UPFA, aligned with the Mahinda Rajapaksa faction. However, the two CWC parliamentarians have not formally identified themselves as members of the JO.

2.1.5 Parties of the Tamil Progressive Alliance: DPF, UCPF & NUW

The leaders of the Democratic People's Front, Up-Country People's Front (UCPF) and the National Union of Workers formed the Tamil Progressive Alliance (TPA) in June 2015. The three parties represent the interests of 1.6 million Tamils living outside the Northern and Eastern provinces. The DPF leader, Mano Ganesan was appointed the leader of the TPA, while the UCPF leader, Velusami Radhakrishnan and NUW leader, Palani Thigambaram were appointed as joint deputy leaders.

Democratic People's Front

The Democratic People's Front (DPF) was initially established as a trade union called the Western People's Front, under the leadership of Mano Ganesan. Although the party's focus upon its venture into politics was largely limited to the western province in the past, the DPF's contemporary activities also encompass other regions of the country. The DPF has enjoyed particular support from the upcountry Tamil community in the central province. Party leader Ganesan and Velu Kumar were elected to parliament from the UNFGG ticket from the Colombo and Kandy districts respectively.⁹⁰

Up-Country People's Front

The Up-Country People's Front (UCPF) is a regional political party founded in 1989 by Periyasamy Chandrasekaran. Prior to the formation of the UCPF, Chandrasekaran was a member of the CWC. The party experienced a split in the lead up to the presidential elections of 2015, when party president Shanthini Chandrasekaran declared allegiance to then President Rajapaksa, whereas party MP Radha Krishnan Velusamy declared his support to common candidate Maithripala Sirisena.⁹¹ In the subsequent parliamentary elections, the UCPF contested under the UNFGG ticket and managed to secure two parliamentary seats. Radha Krishnan Velusamy is cur-

88. Citizenship Act: An Act To Make Provision For Citizenship Of Ceylon Matters Connected Therewith. (1984, November 15). *TamilNation.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.tamilnation.co/sri-lankalaws/48citizenship.htm>

89. Perisundaram, J. (2007, October 28). Whither the Ceylon Workers Congress. *Sunday Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/071028/News/news00026.html>

90. The Rise (or) Fall of Mano Ganesan (2009, February 09). *The Island*. Retrieved from <http://www.island.lk/2009/02/01/politics1.html>

91. UpCountry peoples Front Divides. (2014, December 20). *Hirunews.lk*. Retrieved from <http://www.hirunews.lk/99598/upcountry-peoples-front-divides>

rently the State Minister for Education.

National Union of Workers

The National Union of Workers (NUW) is a trade union and an informal regional party representing the interests of upcountry plantation workers. The NUW was founded by V.K. Vellayan in 1965 and is currently led by Palani Digambaram. Since 2015, the NUW has been a part of the TPA, and ran for the August 2015 general election under the UNFGG ticket, and secured two parliamentary seats.

2.1.6 Sinhala nationalist parties

The first Sinhala nationalist movement, pioneered by Dr. Gunadasa Amarasekara and Professor Nalin De Silva, was organised in response to the open market economic policies introduced by the J.R. Jayawardene administration.⁹² The first official Sinhalese party founded along ethnic lines was the Sinhala Urumaya, which was founded in 2000.⁹³

Jathika Hela Urumaya

The Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) is a Sinhala nationalist party established in 2004 as an alternative to conventional political parties.⁹⁴ Prior to being officially recognised as political party, the JHU fielded a candidate pool comprising exclusively Buddhist monks for the 2004 parliamentary elections. The JHU contested under the Sinhala Urumaya (SU) ticket and secured nine parliamentary seats and 5.97% of the total votes. The JHU backed Mahinda Rajapaksa's bid for presidency in 2005, and joined the Rajapaksa government in 2007. MP Omalpe Sobitha there resigned at the time of joining the government, paving the way for Champika Ranawaka to enter parliament.

The JHU announced in late 2014 that the party would not extend its support for then president Mahinda Rajapaksa's bid for a third term in office, and declared its support to Sirisena. JHU members ran under the UNP ticket at the 2015 presidential elections. Champika Ranawaka was successfully re-elected to parliament from the district of Colombo. The UNP also nominated two JHU party members: Venerable Athuruliye Rathana and Karu Paranawithana from its national list. Subsequently, Venerable Rathana announced that he would function as an independent member of parliament for the remaining duration of the incumbent parliament.⁹⁵

Pivithuru Hela Urumaya

Former Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) representative, and western provincial councillor Udaya Gammanpila established the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya (PHU) in December 2014.⁹⁶ The nationalist party was launched in response to the secession of the JHU from the then ruling UPFA coalition led by Mahinda Rajapaksa. Gammanpila later ran under the UPFA ticket and was elected to parliament from the Colombo district.⁹⁷ The Election Commission of Sri Lanka is yet to recognise PHU as a political party.⁹⁸

National Freedom Front

The National Freedom Front (NFF) was formed by a dissident group of the JVP. The JVP decided to suspend Wimal Weerawansa, who was the party's Propaganda Secretary and parliamentary group leader at the time on disciplinary grounds in March 2008.⁹⁹ Weerawansa led the dissident group, which founded the NFF in May 2008. The NFF is a nationalist party with a welfare-oriented economic ideology. MPs Piyal Wijenayake and Achala Jagoda were among

92. Bandara, V. (2012, June 15). On National Consciousness (jathika Chinthanaya and Democracy). *Colombo Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/on-national-consciousness-jathika-chinthanaya-and-democracy/>

93. DeVotta, N. (2007), *Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Ideology*, East-West Centre, Washington

94. Buddhist Monks at Elections: Replies to Allegations. (2004, March 15). *SinhalaNet*. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20051102060336/http://www.sinhala.net:80/View_Point/View_Point_1.htm#A10

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98. *Recognized Political Parties*. (2017). *Slections.gov.lk*. Retrieved from <http://www.slections.gov.lk/web/index.php/en/recognized-political-parties>

99. *JVP Suspends Weerawansa* (2017). *BBC.com*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/sinhala/news/story/2008/04/080404_jvp_weerawansa.shtml



the JVP members who defected with Weerawansa to form the new party.¹⁰⁰

The NFF supported Mahinda Rajapaksa during his bids for second and third terms in office, and contested the 2015 parliamentary elections under the UPFA

ticket. Five members of the party, including party leader Weerawansa, were subsequently elected to the incumbent parliament. Weerawansa topped the Colombo district's preferential vote list for the UPFA by obtaining 313,801 votes.

100. *BBCSinhala.com*. (2017). *BBC.com*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/sinhala/news/story/2008/04/080409_mps_vehicles.shtml

2.2 The Leftist Parties

Mahajana Eksath Peramuna

Philip Gunawardena and P.H. William De Silva founded the MEP in 1959. The party name was adopted from the name used by the SLFP-led coalition that came to power in 1956, and was founded on similarly leftist ideological grounds.¹⁰¹ Contesting independently in the 1960 general election, the MEP secured ten parliamentary seats. Gunawardena's son Dinesh Gunawardena succeeded Philip as the leader of the MEP upon the latter's demise in 1972. The MEP has been a coalition partner of the UPFA since 2004, and contested under the UPFA banner at the last three elections. Party leader Dinesh Gunawardena and Sriyani Wijewickrama are the party members with seats in parliament.

Democratic Left Front

The Democratic Left Front (DLF) is a nationalist, welfare-oriented party formed by Vasudeva Nanayakkara in 1999. It was initially named the Left & Democratic Alliance. Nanayakkara was a parliamentarian representing the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), which was a coalition partner of the ruling SLFP-led PA at the time. After voicing his dissatisfaction with the government's privatization drive and the management of the civil war, Nanayakkara crossed over and sat in the opposition section of parliament, triggering the formation of what would later become the DLF. The DLF joined the successor of the PA, the UPFA as a coalition partner in 2010. Nanayakkara was elected to parliament at the parliamentary elections of 2010 and 2015 under the UPFA ticket, and is the only DLF representative in the current parliament.

Communist Party of Sri Lanka

The Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL), earlier known as the Communist Party of Ceylon, was founded in 1943, and was initially led by Dr. S.A.

Wickremasinghe. Prior to assuming leadership of the CPSL, Wickremasinghe was the leader of the United Socialist Party. Having partnered with a number of other socialist parties (e.g. LSSP and MEP) to form coalitions over the course of the party's history, the CPSL is currently a coalition member of the UPFA. The CPSL is now led by its secretary D.E.W. Gunasekara, and is represented in parliament by Chandrasiri Gajadeera. Gajadeera contested at the general election of 2015 under the UPFA ticket from the district of Matara, and was elected to parliament.

Frontline Socialist Party

The Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) is a welfare-oriented, statist political party launched in April 2012 by a breakaway faction of the JVP. Premakumar Gunaratnam, the founding chairman of the party, continues to function in that capacity.¹⁰² The current convener of the Inter University Student Federation (IUSF), which is the most prominent student union in Sri Lanka, is Lahiru Weerasekara, who is also a member of the FSP. Despite the ostensible ability of the party to drive public opinion against government policies, particularly among university students,¹⁰³ the party failed to secure any parliamentary seats. The FSP obtained only 7,349 (0.07%) votes at the 2015 parliamentary election.

Democratic National Movement

The Democratic National Movement (DNM) is a coalition partner of the UNFVG and is currently led by parliamentarian Chathura Senaratne. Having defected from the then ruling Rajapaksa government with common opposition candidate Maithripala Sirisena in the lead up to the 2015 presidential elections, Rajitha Senaratne was appointed Health Minister of the interim government. However, Rajitha Senaratne declared his intentions to contest under the UNFVG ticket in opposition to the UPFA's decision to grant a nomination to Mahinda Rajapaksa to contest the 2015 general elections from the UPFA. The announcement cost Senaratne his party membership.¹⁰⁴

101. *Asia Times: Chapter 19: Anguish and pain.* (2017). *Atimes.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/CL15Df05.html>

102. *Sri Lanka: The politics Of The Frontline Socialist Party – Interview With Premakumar Gunaratnam.* (2017). *Colombo Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/sri-lanka-the-politics-of-the-frontline-socialist-party-interview-with-premakumar-gunaratnam/>

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Subsequently, Senaratne joined the DNM, which was led by his son Chathura Senaratne and contested under the UNFGG ticket. Rajitha Senaratne was elected to parliament from the Kalutara district while his son Chathura and party member Arjuna Ranatunga

were both elected from the Gampaha District. Although, M.D.K.S Gunawardhane – another DNM member – was also appointed to parliament through the UNFGG national list, he passed away in January 2016.¹⁰⁵

105. Edirisinghe, D. (2017). DNM Demands Vacant UNP Seat. *The Island*. Retrieved from http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=138992

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