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# IT WAS ELECTION TIME: WHAT DO THE TWO ELECTIONS SAY?

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2009-10 is Sri Lanka's Year of Elections. A series of elections for provincial councils was held in 2009. The ruling UPFA won all of them with huge margins over the main rival, the UNP. Then there was the most important, the presidential election held on January 26, 2010. The incumbent President Mahinda Rajapaksa won defeating the main challenger, former Army Commander Sarath Fonseka. The parliamentary election in April saw President Rajapaksa's UPFA coalition government return to power with a near two-thirds majority. Meanwhile, local government elections will reportedly be held towards the end of the year.

## Presidential Election

Although the election was held in January 2009, it was constitutionally due in 2011. President Rajapaksa began his first term in November 2005. A presidential term, according to the Constitution, covers a period of six years.

Among the reasons why President Rajapaksa advanced the presidential election by two years was perhaps the belief that it would be easier to defeat any rival decisively while his popularity was at a considerably high point. The military victory over the LTTE in May 2009 made President Rajapaksa's popularity in Sinhalese society phenomenally high. Rajapaksa and his advisors may also have thought that a decisive victory at presidential election would set the terms for an equally decisive victory at the parliamentary election, constitutionally due in April 2010. In electoral calculations, an incumbent President would have to think carefully about the sequencing of presidential and parliamentary elections. The usual tactical thinking is that if parliamentary elections are held first, the president would run the risk of his own parliamentarians showing lukewarm interest in the presidential election, where the fate of the president's next term is decided. Thus, advancing the presidential election before the parliamentary election can be seen as a calculated measure taken to enable the president to re-assess authority over the legislature.

The most surprising development in the run up to the presidential election was the coming forward as the main challenger to Rajapaksa of the former head of the Army which that helped the government defeat the LTTE in a two-year intense war. Fonseka's candidacy was backed by a broad opposition coalition that included two unlikely allies, the right-liberal UNP and the left-nationalist JVP. The fact that the UNP, the main opposition party, accommodated General Sarath Fonseka as the common opposition candidate was also surprising. The usual opposition presidential candidate would have been the party's leader, Ranil Wickremesinghe.

What is it that persuaded him to accept, endorse and then back a total newcomer to politics as the common presidential candidate? Two factors may have shaped Wickremesinghe's thinking. The first was the realization that Rajapaksa would in any case win the election because of his popularity and therefore the opposition could minimize the margin of President Rajapaksa's victory by fielding a candidate with a greater potential to pose a credible challenge than Wickremesinghe could. The second consideration was perhaps the opportunity that Fonseka's candidacy offered to the UNP to weaken the UPFA's authority.

However, Wickremesinghe's endorsement of General Fonseka's candidacy created considerable internal dissent within the UNP. Some did not like the JVP's presence in the coalition and their backing of Fonseka. Others did not like their party conceding to a non-party candidate. Still others were worried about a military man heading an opposition alliance. For other UNPers, the UNP backing a candidate outside its ranks was not acceptable. Ultimately, the UNP continued with the new alliance. Fonseka contested the election under a new electoral symbol, the Swan.

Fonseka's surprising decision to challenge his former commander-in-chief at the presidential election also had significance at a different level. It indicated that the war coalition which President Rajapaksa presided over for nearly four years had split from within. Fonseka and the army was a key constituent of this war coalition. It is Fonseka who

seemed to have convinced the sceptical politicians that defeating the LTTE militarily was possible and feasible. He displayed a determination and ruthlessness that was not found in any of his predecessors. In fact, those linked to the government were quite proud to say that they had "found their own Prabhakaran to fight Velupillai Prabhakaran."

"The fact that the JVP became the main sponsor of Fonseka's candidacy also indicated that the UPEFA JVP coalition, which was a key component of the war coalition, had reached the end of the road. The JVP, we may recall, had been pushing for a hardline military approach to the ethnic conflict within the UPEFA coalition even during the time of President Rajapaksa's predecessor, President Kumaratunga. A third factor was Fonseka's decision to leave his position as the newly created chief of Defence Staff to launch his political career by challenging his own commander-in-chief. Hostilities developed at a personal level between him and the leaders of the government's defence establishment. What has become clear is that there was a bitter personal fallout between Fonseka and the Rajapaksa brothers, leading to a huge ego clash.

When the presidential election campaign began, the Fonseka candidacy seems to have introduced an element of uncertainty to the political process to general. It appeared that the government establishment was deeply divided. The government therefore took steps to play down the significance of Fonseka's challenge. However, when the election campaign intensified, the Fonseka factor took firm root in the political debate, and he acquired greater voter attention than the government anticipated. This led to something like a panic reaction on the part of the UPEFA government, and gradually, stakes at the election became extremely high. In the last two to three weeks of the election campaign, the government, probably 'left no stone unturned' in its campaign strategy, using any means necessary, to stem what appeared to be a wave of public support for Fonseka. At the end, the government succeeded by pushing Fonseka into defeat.

### Campaign Issues

President Rajapaksa launched his re-election campaign from a position of relative strength over his main rival because of the popularity he had enjoyed within the Sinhalese electorate which constitutes about 70% of voters. However, Rajapaksa's intention was not just to win, but to win decisively and with a considerable margin, over his main rival. Rajapaksa probably wanted to secure at least 60% of

the vote. Such a victory with a considerable winning margin could have given him what he probably thought as a 'clear mandate,' which could then influence the outcome of the subsequent parliamentary election as well.

Meanwhile, the nature of President Rajapaksa's re-election campaign changed in response to the challenge posed by the main opposition candidate, Sarath Fonseka. Fonseka presented himself as the military hero of the victory over the LTTE, and soon a competition began during the election campaign as to who should get the credit for the military victory. Rajapaksa claimed credit for being the political leader who managed the overall context, and Fonseka claimed credit for actually conducting the war. In the process, the Rajapaksa campaign also presented the argument that Fonseka represented a dangerous tendency. In this argument, even a retired military man entering politics and becoming the president would endanger democracy, create political instability and be the beginning of the end of civilian democracy in Sri Lanka. Thus, portraying Fonseka as a potential military dictator, in the mold of Uganda's Idi Amin in the 1970s, was a key element of Rajapaksa's election campaign. As opposed to Fonseka, the campaign portrayed Rajapaksa as the symbol of stability, prosperity and the only leader to ensure the voters a better future. In fact, the advertising company that was entrusted to 'sell' the president to the electorate coined the slogan "Prosperous Future" (*Sobo Aragatharyak*) as the key theme. To contrast the personality of President Rajapaksa against Sarath Fonseka, the military man in uniform showing his black gloves, the advertising company invented the braud label "Sensitive Leader" (*Sarveadi Nayakarya*). The media was flooded with campaign advertisements highlighting his virtues.

One of the most notable strategies of the Rajapaksa campaign was to dominate the media, particularly the state-controlled media, until election day itself. Three things became clear in this campaign, the power of ideology, the power of excessive use of the media, and the power of mobilization. We will discuss in some detail the issue of ideology separately.

Meanwhile, Sarath Fonseka's election campaign seemed to have been politically managed mainly by the JVP, with the support of the UNP. The fact that two parties with totally opposing ideologies and perspectives could come together to back Fonseka was surprising. Still more surprising was the decision of the Tamil national Alliance (TNA) and a few other small Tamil groups to back the candidacy of Fonseka whose ruthless counter-insurgency strategy had decimated the Tamil nationalist rebellion just a few months previously. As key

campaign themes. Fonseka focussed on his own military record, government corruption, concentration of power in the hands of the President and his immediate family, and governance. Particularly controversial was a statement he made to a Sunday newspaper, in the midst of the election campaign, suggesting that the defence establishment may have committed 'war crimes' during the last days of the war. President Rajapaksa wasted no time in using the 'war crimes' story to his advantage, portraying Fonseka as a traitor who betrayed his own army, the president and the country. When the propaganda campaign progressed, it became clear that Fonseka's unguarded comments to the media had cost him dearly.

### Alliances

A presidential election is usually an occasion for political and ideological forces to forge new alliances. It is also the case that these forces tend to gravitate around the two main candidates, thereby creating a bipolar framework of electoral alliance making. President Rajapaksa's UPPA is already an alliance of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, two Left parties (LSSP and CP), Ceylon Workers' Congress, National Unity Alliance, Up-Country People's Front, Jathika Hela Uramaya, Isalam People's Democratic Party and a group of MPs who had crossed over from the UNP. The JVP, a key member of the UPPA coalition government, had left the alliance to field its own candidate, Sarath Fonseka.

The new coalition that fielded Fonseka as its presidential candidate was jointly led by the JVP and the UNP. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), which has been in an opposition alliance with the UNP for some years, joined the pro-Fonseka coalition. However, for two Tamil political parties, the TNA and Western Province People's Front, backing Fonseka was not an easy decision, because of the latter's role during the war. Besides, Fonseka had also acquired the reputation of being a hardcore Sinhalese nationalist who saw ethnic minorities as secondary to the majority community. However, meetings held between leaders of these two Tamil parties and Fonseka had paved the way for their supporting the 'common opposition candidate.' Later, some influential dissident sections of the Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) of the plantation Tamils also backed Fonseka.

### Outcome

President Mahinda Rajapaksa won the election with a comfortable majority of 58% of total votes cast. Amidst allegations of misuse of state resources and manipulation of

results by the Rajapaksa camp, Sarath Fonseka has refused to concede defeat. He has challenged the election results before the Supreme Court, although it is surely a long-drawn-out process with no immediate impact on the outcome of the election. Three key trends in the outcome of the election prominent. Firstly, the electoral districts with concentrations of ethnic minorities have overwhelmingly voted for the opposition candidate. Secondly, President Rajapaksa has obtained little support in the urban electorates, where ethnic minorities as well as the social elites represent a sizeable share of the voters. Thirdly, and emanating from the first and second, is the fact that President Rajapaksa's main and strongest support base is in the rural districts and among the voters of the majority Sinhalese community.

These three factors might weigh heavily on the policy agenda of the Rajapaksa regime in its second term. One way to interpret these trends is to say that the minorities are clearly estranged from the Rajapaksa regime. In this post-election context, resulting out to ethnic minorities, particularly the Tamils, will be essential to address this deep sense of minority alienation and for Sri Lanka's political stability. In a press interview to the NDTV television channel of India soon after the election result was announced, President Rajapaksa asserted that he had a "plan" to address minority grievances.

### Fallout

Interestingly, Fonseka, an absolute newcomer to Sri Lanka's politics, managed to pose a credible challenge to the incumbent president. He had a relatively brief period for campaigning and mobilization. The resources he had for the campaign were meagre, compared with the immense state resources that President Rajapaksa and his camp had deployed to ensure his re-election. For a week or two, there was a discernible wave of public support in favour of Fonseka, or *General Mahuththaya*, as many people on the street referred to him. Ironically, he also became the first high profile casualty of the January presidential election. A few days after the election, the government arrested him on a variety of unspecific charges including planning a military coup. Subsequently, he has been brought before two military courts on charges of corruption and engaging in politics while being in military service.

### Printers

The Presidential election campaign as well as post-election developments indicate quite clearly that Sri Lanka's dominant political class is deeply and antagonistically

divided. Reconciliation does not seem to be possible at present. The subsequent parliamentary election further sharpened these divisions and antagonisms. The tragedy of electoral democracy in Sri Lanka is that elections do not seem to help the political class to negotiate and settle its contradictions and resolve problems in the polity. Rather, elections compel the factions of the political class to resort to false agendas and in turn to invent and pursue enmities. Nevertheless, parliamentary elections are crucial for Sri Lanka to allow a new political balance of forces in the country to emerge. The post-election regime formation should show how political power is reconfigured through coalitions.

The end of the violent civil war and the dramatic demise of the LTTE have created a significant political disequilibrium in Sri Lanka. Crucially, the LTTE was not there in January 2010 to shape the outcome of the presidential election, as it was the case in 1994, 1999 and 2005. Meanwhile, although the war coalition has disintegrated from within, a new post-civil war political equilibrium has yet to take shape. Thus, although the civil war is over, the trajectory of the island's post-civil war politics is still in the process of being formed. One has to suspend one's assessment of the possible paths of Sri Lanka's future politics until the shape of the new configuration of political forces becomes clearer during the first half of 2010.

### Parliamentary Election

The presidential election was quickly followed by the parliamentary election which was held on 8, April 2010. Sri Lanka's legislature has an official term of six years. The previous parliamentary elections were held in April 2004. During the tenure of the 2004 parliament, the ruling UPFA had only a thin majority. Forty seats belonged to the JVP and nine to the JHU. The SLFP had only ... seats. Quite interestingly, President Rajapaksa, who came to power in November 2005, managed to engineer a series of defections from the opposition UNP to ensure a working parliamentary majority for his UPFA government. Ironically, most of his key ministers were defectors from the UNP. Thus, an unusual feature of the previous parliament was the enormous control that the president exercised in deciding the balance of power in parliament, notwithstanding the fact that the ruling party appeared on the surface to be weak and vulnerable.

### Re-making of Alliances

The run up to the parliamentary poll in April was the occasion when interparty alliances were reconfigured.

The fact that the parliamentary election was scheduled after the presidential election was important in shaping the outcome of the former. Usually, the party that had won the presidential election would be better placed than the losing parties in the parliamentary poll. Against such a backdrop, there were initial attempts by the opposition parties to sustain the alliance formed for the presidential election. The JVP was particularly keen to maintain the common opposition alliance, but there was opposition from the UNP, resulting in the break-up of the alliance.

Two factors seem to have worked within the UNP against continuing the common opposition alliance. The first was the dispute over its leadership. The JVP, while arguing strongly for the continuation of the alliance, wanted Fonseka to be its leader and the Swan, Fonseka's presidential election symbol, to continue as the opposition's parliamentary election symbol. The UNP was obviously not ready to continue the common opposition alliance in its old form. It wanted the UNP to be the core party, the Elephant to be its election symbol, with Ranil Wickremesinghe as the alliance's leader. The second factor in the UNP's resistance was the opposition from middle-level party activists who were potential candidates at the parliamentary elections. Many of them were worried that they would stand to lose in the lists of candidates in a broad alliance, since a considerable number of JVP candidates had to be accommodated in the candidate lists. Eventually, the UNP decided to go it alone without the JVP, as well as without Fonseka. Wickremesinghe thus revived the old UNP-led coalition, the United National Front (UNF) with the participation of the SLFP's Mangala Samaraweera wing, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, and the Western Province People's Front led by Mano Ganeshan.

### TNA

The other important reworking of alliances occurred within the TNA, the main Tamil political party. The TNA was formed in the late 1990s as a coalition of a number of Tamil political parties that were not ready to join coalition governments with either the UNP or SLFP. The core of the TNA was the old TULF, which had split in the 1990s. At the 2004 parliamentary election, the TNA had 19 seats from the Northern and Eastern provinces. Interestingly, the TNA maintained a stance sympathetic to the LTTE and often functioned as the parliamentary front of militant Tamil nationalism. After the LTTE was defeated in May 2009, the TNA managed to survive politically, and there were signs that some of its leaders wanted the TNA to reinvent itself as the continuation of the old Federal Party. In the process of

the reorganization of the TNA in the post-LTTE context, the TNA re-emerge as IATK (*Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi*,) and dropped from the list of candidates some of its sitting MPs. Few of those dropped eventually joined President Rajapaksa's UPFA, indicating the degree to which shifting of political loyalties across ethnic boundaries has become flexible and easy in Sri Lanka's contemporary politics.

Meanwhile, the UPFA continued its coalition form with greater confidence in a relatively easy victory over the divided opposition. The UPFA continued its alliances with the old Left, the EPDP, CWC, NUA, UCPF, the recently formed National Freedom Front and the break-away UNP group that had been with the UPFA government for a few years.

In terms of pre-election alliance formation, three major political tendencies surfaced during this period. The first was that there were two main centres of interparty coalition formed around the two main political formations, the UNP and UPFA, and the space for a third coalition centre was not particularly wide. The second was that to secure chances of winning, small parties, both ethnic and non-ethnic, had to align themselves with either the UPFA or the UNP. Thirdly, both main coalition centres demonstrated the character of being multi-ethnic, despite ethnic-ideological differences among coalition partners.

### Campaign

The UPFA launched its election campaign with a decisive advantage over its rivals. The fact that the UPFA had already won the presidential election just three months earlier made the UPFA's chances of winning absolutely secure. Thus, government stability was the main campaign theme which the UPFA emphasized. The UPFA did not just want to win; rather, it wanted to win with a two-thirds majority. In this campaign, too, the UPFA presented itself as the only political force committed to protecting national sovereignty, the country's territorial integrity and national unity. A crucial part of the UPFA's message to the electorate was the notion that only a strong government, led by a strong president and backed by a strong parliament, could lead the country to meet the challenges of post-conflict development in a potentially hostile dominated by the West world. The UPFA's ideology of a strong state, a strong government and a strong leader, ably articulated and propagandized during both presidential and parliamentary elections was also accompanied by a return to the ideological framework of nation-state nationalism anchored in the legacy of ethnic majoritarianism and state-

welfarist populism. It worked quite well, proving the point that repackaging of old nationalism does pay political, including electoral, dividends.

The UNP's campaign was devoid of ideology, and that ran parallel with its lackluster election campaign. The UNP, the core constituent party of the UNF, has been a party without a mobilizing ideology since the demise of President Premadasa in 1993. Under Ranil Wickremesinghe, the UNP in fact became a liberal-cosmopolitanist party, moving away from both the populism and nationalism which President Premadasa had effectively utilized for political mobilization. Without a clear ideology, the UNP lost most of its popular bases and backing, making it an elitist party, open to the external world of influence. If the UNP had anything approximating an ideology it was a weak commitment to peace, ethnic pluralism and neoliberal economic reforms. These were not effective ingredients to win elections. That partly explains why the UNP since 1994 has been in the opposition except for a brief interregnum in 2002-2003. It clear became once again during the parliamentary election campaign of 2010 that the UNP did not possess an effective ideological appeal even to its own voters and supporters. What the UNP actually lacked was an ideology and programme identified with a charismatic leadership, enabling the party to cement its hardcore voter base, usually around one-third of the total electorate, with the vast layers of floating and new voters.

The DNA's election campaign was marked by the arrest of its principal leader, Sarath Fonseka, for a variety of conspiracy and corruption charges. He was arrested on 8 February, barely two weeks after the presidential election. The DNA expected a sympathy vote for Fonseka. The DNA's campaign understandably focussed on President Rajapaksa and the alleged misdeeds of his regime. Corruption, nepotism, malgovernance, disregard for democracy and attacks on the media were issues that both the UNP and the DNA highlighted in their critique of the UPFA regime.

### Outcomes

Predictably, the UPFA coalition won the election comfortably, and obtaining more seats than the UPFA leaders would have realistically expected—a total of 144 seats out of the 225-member parliaments, just six seats short of a two-thirds majority. Under normal circumstances of the scheme of proportional representation operating in Sri Lanka, no party or coalition could get more than just a simple majority of seats. If the UPFA performance at the Presidential election

was translated into parliamentary seats, it could have obtained around 125 to 130 seats. The main contributory factor to this near two-thirds majority victory of the UPFA was the low percentage of votes received by the UNF coalition. The gap between the votes received by the UPFA and UNP in almost every district outside the North and East was unprecedentedly wide, in many instances the UPFA obtaining about 65% and the UNF about 30%. The UNF's dismal performance seems to have reflected a new tendency in this election. Voting data suggests that nearly one-third of the UNP voters did not vote at all. The UNP's lackluster election campaign, coupled with the crisis of confidence in the party's leadership, seem to have caused a great deal of apathy and despair among key sectors of the UNP's vote base. That eventually paved the way for the way for the UPFA to obtain 144 seats, normally a near impossible achievement under the PR system.

### Two-Thirds Majority?

The UPFA, meanwhile, asked the electorate to give it a two-thirds majority to "strengthen the hands of the president." This is a phrase that has been used for the past several years, particularly when those who crossed over from the UNP and the JVP had to justify their shifting of loyalties in favour of President Rajapaksa. The government rationalized the two-thirds majority requirement by the argument that a few constitutional changes needed to be introduced. However, the government did not specify what these changes would be, except to point to changes needed in the electoral system. This stood in contrast to the experience of the SLFP-led United Front coalition, of 1970 which openly and specifically sought a mandate from the people to abolish the pre-existing constitution and replace it with a new Republican one. Thus, constitutional reform was not a major campaign promise of the UPFA. However, some constitutional reforms are possible, but the nature of these reforms will largely depend on President Rajapaksa's political agenda. It will not be difficult for President Rajapaksa to find six MPs from opposition parties to ensure that he will have 150 votes necessary for piecemeal changes in the constitution.

Both presidential and parliamentary elections reconfirmed Sri Lanka's dominant two-party system as well as bicentric coalition formation. Sri Lanka has nearly 40 registered political parties. However, the largest percentage of votes as well as the largest number of parliamentary seats are usually shared by the dominant parties, SLFP and UNP, or coalitions led by them. The only exception to the dominance of the

two-party framework is the TNA or its latest reincarnation, the ITAK. In the previous parliament, the TNA had 19 seats in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. In the new parliament, it has been reduced to 14. Even then, the ITAK remains the third largest political formation in parliament.

### Decline of JVP & JHU

The decline of the representation earlier enjoyed by the JVP and JHU is another outcome of this election. The JVP contested this parliamentary election as the Democratic National Alliance (DNA), in coalition with Sarath Fonseka, the former presidential candidate. In the previous parliament, the JVP which had contested the 2004 election as a constituent party of the UPFA, had 40 MPs. This was later reduced to 30 when ten left the party and formed themselves into National Freedom Front. In the new parliament, the JVP-led DNA has only five members, four elected from electoral districts and one from the national list. The JHU, meanwhile, did not contest separately as they did in 2004. Two of its members were elected this time from Colombo and Gampaha districts. The JHU also has one national list MP.

The decline of the number of MPs of the JHU represents another tendency reflected in the 2010 parliamentary election—that is the difficulty for smaller parties in coalition with a big party like the UNP or SLFP to retain previous levels of representation. The LSSP, CP and CWC suffered decline in numbers of MPs, while the NUA, a Muslim party based in the Eastern Province, failed to get a single seat. The plantation-based Up-Country People's Front suffered a similar fate. In the UNF alliance, the SLMC presents an entirely different story. The SLMC, which contested under the UNF list, obtained eight seats, a dramatic increase from its the four seats in the previous parliament, even surpassing the JVP.

The weakening of the JVP as an outcome of the election that warrants further comment. The JVP's voter base has normally been around 5%, with slight variations. In 2004, however, the JVP received a huge share of votes when it contested in alliance with the UPFA under a single list. In fact, in April 2004, some prominent JVP candidates received more preferential votes than the SLFP candidates in the UPFA list. That was the election which gave the JVP 40 seats in parliament. The JVP also maintained the expectation that it would emerge as a credible 'third-party' in Sri Lankan politics, eventually becoming a 'second party' by replacing either the SLFP or the UNP. The April 2010 parliamentary election has now shattered that myth. In fact, the JVP is a

poor 'fourth party' after the UPFA, UNF and ITAK. It is clear that the JVP is another political casualty of the presidential election of January. Joining with the UNP to form a common front for the presidential election has cost the JVP all its left-wing, radical as well as nationalist credentials. It will not be easy for the JVP to find a new ideological plank. The JVP at present seems to be focussing on democracy, good governance, human rights and social rights. It would be interesting to see whether can reinvent itself as a social democratic entity.

The continuing decline of women's representation in the legislature is another trend demonstrated in the parliamentary election. Sri Lanka usually has had a dismally low proportion of women in parliament, not exceeding 6% since the 1930s. The figure remains today at 5.8%.

### Overall Trends for the Future

What will the new government's policy agenda be? Two issues have dominated the political debate in recent years. The first is constitutional reform and the second is a political solution to the ethnic conflict.

Concerning constitutional reform, there seems to be a consensus across political parties that the existing presidential system should be changed and or at least reformed. There has also been a strong argument to return to the Westminster-type of prime ministerial government. Reforming the electoral system is another theme. A few years ago, a Parliamentary Select Committee proposed a mixed electoral system, combining features of both the PR and First-Past-the-Post systems. But the UPFA government has not yet clearly indicated its constitutional reform directions. A government

preoccupied with stability as well political succession within the family might not be very keen to alter a secure Presidential system of government in favour of an uncertain new system. Concerning electoral reforms, smaller as well ethnic minority parties are not likely to back the changes in the PR system. It is the PR system which has enabled small parties, even parties like the JVP and JIU, to secure representation.

### Political Solution

On the question of a political solution, there seems to be two schools of thought within the government. The first argues for the 'full implementation' of the existing 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which does not require new constitutional amendments. The other, while negating the need for any political solution to the ethnic conflict, accords priority to development over devolution. In this second perspective, after the military defeat of the LTTE, the ethnic conflict has been resolved and the residual issues are basically economic and developmental in nature.

The signs at present are that the Rajapaksa administration in its second term might work out an overall policy framework combining political stability and rapid economic development. 'Miracle of Asia' seems to be the new brand name chosen for the new policy orientation. The government will also combine the new stability-development framework with an assertive form of nation-state nationalism, which will continue to juxtapose national sovereignty and independence from the West. Indications are there that an ideology for a post-liberal developmentalist state is waiting to be worked out, framed in terms of 'South Asian values.' ■

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