The Presidential Election: Mortal Dangers, Intractable Challenges and Rare Historic Opportunities:

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In the current context, it is possible and useful to categorize four main political-ideological trends within the political spectrum in Lanka. This is to get at a strategic mapping of the political landscape and of the major players, and to try to work out a strategic line and perspective in defense of freedom and democracy. These main political-ideological trends identified are: 1. Theocratic-chauvinist-neo-fascist trend, 2. Bourgeois Liberal - Social Democratic trend, 3. Left trend and 4. Revolutionary trend. The Mahinda Rajapakse Regime (MRR) clearly represents the theocratic-chauvinist-neo-fascist camp. It constitutes the immediate threat to national unity, independence, freedom, democracy, civilized decency and social progress. No one has brought such calumnious infamy on the country, rained terror on the people and despoiled the Dhamma as Mahinda Rajapakse. The MRR is the supreme epitome of corruption, decadence and arrogance, nesting in a crony-narco-mafia political economy. Except for die-hard military-fascists and drug lords and war lords who profit and thrive from the crony-narco-mafia political economy, apart from those who have been bought and silenced by the Regime and apart from drugged out, stupefied sections of the Sinhala-Buddhist masses who buy into the line of ‘the savior of the Nation, Language and Religion, and the anti-imperialist patriotic gymnastics of the MRR’ the people at large demand an end to the terrorist-fascist dictatorship of the Rajapakse Regime commanded by the Rajapakse troika.

The Maitripala Sirisena (MSC) camp represents an unholy alliance of theocratic-chauvinist forces who have defected from the Rajapakse camp and the Bourgeois Liberal - Social Democratic camp. These theocratic-chauvinist forces have decamped not because of any dilution of Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony, but because it was felt that *the MRR was caving in and steadily betraying that cause*. Holding the Provincial Council election in the North and paving the way for the TNA is the biggest single gripe against Mahinda Rajapakse. Added to that is the repugnant bile of unbridled nepotism, astronomical corruption and irrational criminality that the MRR had begun to excrete, that even a foul pariah would not bear. Better to jump the sinking ship and hook on to another that can be more easily manipulated and controlled, with all the trinkets and ribbons of liberal democracy adorning it. As in the tale of Red Riding Hood; “All the better to devour you”.

The Maithripala Sirisena coalition (MSC) represents the only serious electoral challenge to Mahinda Rajapakse and has a high probability of displacing the MRR from power. Its bourgeois liberal agenda centered on instituting Constitutional reform, Rule of Law and Good Governance has a deep popular resonance. There is solid unity within the MSC on advancing this agenda. There is also consensus on defending the MRR from the international war crimes investigation. Some deal could be brokered with the US to dilute the whole issue by pledging a strategic shift away from the Chinese sphere of influence. India would be interested in such a deal. China will try to outdo the bid with even more colossal bribes. Whichever way it turns, the Land and the People of Lanka would be played and sliced in the politics of inter-imperialist rivalry and contention for strategic supremacy. In the interest of stabilizing the State and keeping the system afloat, there could even be some brokering with Mahinda Rajapakse to let him off the hook from the litany of horrendous crimes against Humanity, Nature and the People committed under his watch. Gotabhaya, Basil and Namal may even enjoy favored positions in a ‘National’ government. Chandrika will run around as the messenger girl relegated to the status of an outdated symbol, or packed off as an Ambassadress. Sarath Fonseka will be restored to all his military glory and may be given in charge of internal security, which role he will dispatch with unmitigated fervor and passion, in service to his US masters.

The fatal danger is that the MSC suffers from a critical internal fault-line that could explode at any time. While there could be broad and strong consensus on the above issues, there would never be any consensus nor synergy between the chauvinist-supremacist agenda of the JHU and the bourgeois-liberal camp. There can only be the most opportunist, unprincipled compromise, on the former’s terms. The JHU and other Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinist forces, including the JVP from outside will hold the MSC hostage. They will have the capacity to do so given their political base among the die-hard *and* moderate Sinhala-Buddhist constituency. The armed forces will have to be assured that their exalted dominance, status and privileges as the armed guardians of the unitary state will be intact. Maithripala Sirisena himself will be committed to hoisting the banner of Sinhala-Buddhist supremacy under the unitary state. His credentials as a liberal democrat is already highly suspect given his role in celebrating victory parades, passing the 18th Amendment and in the criminal ouster of the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. His Ministry of Health was a veritable den of thieves run by a powerful mafia under his watch. So, the future remains uncertain and fraught with landmines.

The Left is made up by the Left Platform driven by the Frontline Socialist Party and represented by Comrade Duminda Nagamuwa, and the United Socialist Party, represented by Comrade Siritunga Jayasuriya. The FSP has a strong base among the radical Sinhala-Buddhist youth and the militant student movement. They have a positive contribution to make in moving towards a revolutionary solution. While being opposed to national oppression, they have serious theoretical and ideological obstacles in approaching a democratic solution to the National Question based on the aspirations of the oppressed nationalities. Yet, the Left Front has dared to take on the fight against the Regime, targeting the System. The United Socialist Party, represented by Comrade Siritunga Jayasuriya presents a clear anti-imperialist, radical transitional democratic platform, which stands for the right of self-determination within a united country and demands effective devolution of power in the form of self-governing autonomy as a solution to the National Question. Both these Left platforms provide a progressive, anti-imperialist, radical democratic line and program to educate the oppressed masses and mobilize the advanced forces towards a revolutionary path of struggle.

The Revolutionary position, quite naturally, is not represented in the election spectrum. It is held by the Ceylon Communist Party (Maoist). The CCP-M stands on clear and firm proletarian internationalist/ revolutionary communist principles with the science of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as its guiding ideological foundation. The CCP-M upholds the right of national self-determination to be applied internally within a united and undivided country to include the Tamil nation in the North-East, the Moslem nationality and the Hill Country Tamil nationality (as does the USP). It has decided to give critical support to both Left Platforms in the interest of isolating the MRR, challenging the System and moving in the direction of a revolutionary solution. The New Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, with a Maoist orientation, solidly shares this principle on the National Question. It also has the potential to mobilize the oppressed masses and advanced class conscious forces towards a revolutionary solution. It has also kept away from the electoral fray while maintaining friendly relations with both Left Platforms.

Now, let’s try to evolve a strategic revolutionary line and orientation aimed at building broad consensus targeting the common enemy, which takes account of the mortal dangers and pit-falls that stand in the way of achieving national unity, independence and people’s democracy, based on the principles of truth and justice. Certainly the electoral battlefield is to be made use of in unseating the incumbent President. As it is, this is the only immediate and practical option left. If the MSC is the only option left, then so be it. However, the depth and scope of the struggle should not be limited to changing the palace guard, while keeping the bloody palace itself more white-washed and adorned. We should not narrow our sights to merely address the symptoms, while the cancerous disease is left to spread. While supporting and advancing the bourgeois liberal demands and reforms being pledged, for what its worth, we must ensure that the theocratic-fascist forces will not gain the upper hand and call the tune. We must build up the independent power, *people’s political power* that can finally resist, overthrow and eradicate the structural roots and material causes that generate the ideology of supremacy and the politics of violent division, hegemony and fascist terror. Any genuine wish for a victory by the MSC must be bound with taking active and effective responsibility to ensure that the demand of the people for truth, justice, freedom and democracy and for national unity, independence and prosperity be honored. We must also take independent responsibility to ensure that the people’s mandate be honored. We must be warned and be prepared to resist any grab at retaining state power illegally and extra-legally. This calls for a broad coalition of the people for democracy and freedom that cuts through all secondary differences and divisions. One that brings together all honest, progressive, democratic, radical and revolutionary forces from the North-South-East and the Hill Country to defeat the dark forces of feudal reaction and neo-fascism. This calls for building a mass resistance center and a people’s movement independent of any political party agenda. A Center and Movement that will stand with the people of Lanka in the common quest to liberate the Land of Lanka from the array of predators external and internal, that can withstand all challenges and overcome all dangers in the shared struggle to usher in a new era of peace, independence, solidarity, democracy and prosperity.

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