



South Asia Analysis Group

[HOME](#)
[PAPERS](#)
[NOTES](#)
[FORUM](#)
[SEARCH](#)
[FEEDBACK](#)
[LINKS](#)
[Note_no. 211](#)

23. 01. 2004

Sri Lanka: SLFP-JVP Agreement: *Supping with the devil.* Update 58.

by Dr. S. Chandrasekharan.

Chandrika Kumaratunge's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the JVP-(Jana Vimukthi Perumana- People's Liberation Front) have entered into what is being termed as a "broad patriotic alliance to carry out a common programme of national resurgence."

Chandrika is doing exactly what one would term as "cutting the nose to spite one's face." Her grievances against the ruling UNP (United National Party) of Wickremasinghe are well known and some of them are understandable. As the executive President she should have been consulted when the memorandum for the cease fire agreement between LTTE and the Sri Lankan government was signed. She made no bones about her disagreement and ever since the CFA (Cease fire agreement) was signed, the media had been having a fine time in throwing up all the differences and the statements from both sides to the amusement of analysts.

It was also known that Chandrika had personally directed negotiations with the JVP for some time now (since December 2002) though it was obvious to everyone that the JVP was totally opposed to any negotiation with the LTTE. It was thought that she was negotiating with the JVP more to put pressure on the ruling party than for any genuine alliance. **But her decision to openly embrace the JVP, an extremely fascist, left wing and anti Tamil organization has startled many.**

The agreement is a set back to the peace process:

There is no doubt that the agreement is a severe set back to the peace process itself. Mr. Akashi, Japan's

special representative, who is presently in Sri Lanka was too polite to describe the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between SLFP and the JVP as one that introduces "new complexity." Significantly the LTTE has stayed away from the Sri Lanka Donor's conference starting from today on the ground that in the absence of political stability and unified leadership of Sri Lankan government, their participation would cast doubts in the minds of the Tamil people.

The JVP:

The JVP or the People's liberation Front was founded in 1965 and headed by Rohana Wijayaweera a student of Patrice Lumumba University, Moscow and started as an extreme leftist organisation. Rohana Wijayaweera who was a member of the communist Party of Sri Lanka joined the pro China faction when the party split and later on ploughed his way in forming the JVP. Sometime in 1984, the party had made a turn to the extreme right and after two failed insurrections one in 1971 and later between 1988- 1990, the party entered into main stream politics in 1994 and emerged as the third largest party in the last elections.

The most disturbing aspect of the JVP has been that it had never championed the rights of Tamil minority. In fact in the last elections they fought on the twin slogans of "fight to protect the motherland" and "No concession to the Tamil Minority."

The MOU is bad in many respects:

- Given the known opposition of JVP of any concession to the Tamils, the agreement would give a wrong signal to the LTTE and the latter has also come in for severe criticism in the text of the agreement.
- The agreement for all practical purposes closes any hope of *rapprochement* between the two warring leaders- the President and the Prime Minister. With this, the chances of any consensus on the peace proposals are remote throwing further doubts in the minds of the LTTE.
- There is a hint under part B titled Ethnic harmony, where an intention of negotiating not only with LTTE but also

other "relevant" groups and communities is mentioned. This position is a change from what the UNP government had conceded earlier prior to the talks that the LTTE is the sole representative of the Tamils. LTTE is unlikely to participate in any talks that does not accept its primary position. .

- It would further polarise the two major parties of the Sinhala majority, throwing the country into instability.

- A thoroughly revised constitution is to be introduced dumping the present Executive Presidency and reverting to parliamentary system. The pity is that both the leaders never seriously tried to work on the basic premise of cohabitation in the current constitution.

- It may be recalled that the JVP protested strongly against 2000 draft constitution placed by the SLFP led government which promised a great deal of devolution to the Tamil areas. The differences between the SLFP and the JVP over the unit of devolution have cropped up in the text with the latter opting for decentralisation and not devolution at the local authority level, a position that will never be accepted even by the non LTTE groups..

- The memorandum has criticised the peace process as one that will "not usher in a durable peace but threatens the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the country degrading its dignity." Even the Norwegians who are doing an admirable but thankless job have come in for criticism! With this kind of criticism, what confidence will the LTTE have to negotiate?

The full text of the MOU is given as an appendix to this update.

It looks that President Chandrika is looking for snap polls. If that be so, the peace process and negotiations on the LTTE on the ISGA (Internal Self Governing

Authority) will be further delayed. **Her Adviser Kadirgamar has described the alliance with JVP as one to forge peace and prosperity. It looks that there would be neither peace nor prosperity in the near future.**

Appendix:

The full text of the MoU signed by the SLFP and JVP follows: -

1. Sri Lanka, which is country blessed with plenitude of natural resources, and an ancient and rich cultural heritage is today facing an unprecedented crisis. This crisis, which has gripped the totality of Sri Lanka's society, is manifest in political, economic and cultural spheres.

As a result of the wrong policies followed by the ruling United National Front (UNF) government, the country faces the prospect of losing its territorial integrity and the establishment of a parallel Eelamist state. Conditions for international support for such a separation are being fostered by the UNF. At the same time the foundations of a vibrant national economy are being systematically destroyed and a new economic configuration based on crony capitalism, racketeering, corruption and subservience to international financial institutions is being rapidly established.

Faced with this debacle, which affects all Sri Lankans, irrespective of race, creed or language, the people are seeking a new path of governance.

2. The economic policies of the UNF are determined by lending agencies with scant regard for local priorities and the aspirations of the people. These policies include the sale of strategic national assets such as State Banks, petroleum industry and power, and of economically viable state ventures such as insurance and vital social services, such as transportation (CTB and Railway), to political favorites in a manner particularly lacking in transparency. In the field of agriculture, policies inimical to local farmers are being pursued. Laws relating land sales are being amended to suit foreign investors, a water tax has been proposed in the guise of water management and fertilizer subsidy and other assistance granted by the previous government has been curtailed.

The so-called development policies of the UNF government have been undertaken with scant regard for preserving the natural habitat, and environmental protection. The natural resources of the country are being pillaged with no regard for economic consequences.

The poor are called upon to bear the brunt of these policies. The safety-net against poverty established by the Peoples' Alliance Government has been removed by curtailing social welfare programmes. For example:

- Cutting Samurdhi benefits
- Removing fertilizer subsidies
- Cuts in allocation of school textbooks and uniforms,
- Rapidly rising cost of living
- No parallel wage increase

- Abolishing of public sector recruitment
- Voluntary retirement schemes
- Amendments to worker legislation safeguards
- Lack of incentives for domestic production
- Cuts in public education and health
- Rise in unemployment, poverty levels, malnutrition and suicide and alcohol rates
- Rise in grave crime rate

3. The ethnic question of Sri Lanka too has taken an undesirable turn since the formation of the UNF government. In the name of the aspirations of all our peoples for an honourable and durable peace, the UNF has set out on a path which would lead to a separate Eelamist State.

The MoU signed by the Prime Minister did not have the prior approval of the Head of State-the President, Parliament or even the cabinet and the parliamentary group of the UNF. The terms of the MoU have been flagrantly violated on numerous occasions by the LTTE, but the UNF government has been unable to respond. Consequently, the objectives of the separatist forces have received a boost while the legitimate rights of Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim peoples of the country have not been recognized.

As result of these lapses the separatist LTTE forces have become stronger.

- a. The LTTE has laid claim to a naval zone for its Sea Tigers thus reinforcing their claims to a separate navy. Their claims have been entertained by the Norwegian Monitoring Mission.
- b. The security forces of Sri Lanka have been under intense pressure to vacate the High Security Zones. They have been rendered ineffective in the Northern and Eastern provinces.
- c. LTTE is also continuing to abduct thousands of innocent Tamil children, extort money in the guise of “taxes” and harass Muslims and the Sinhalese to drive them out from the eastern province.

Accordingly, the so-called Peace Process will not usher in a durable peace but threatens the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the country degrading its dignity.

The LTTE’s proposals for an Interim Self-Governing Authority go far beyond the resolution of the problems of the Tamil people and other minority communities, and create the basis for a separate Eelam state.

4. Today, basic human and democratic rights are being violated in our country. Prior to the establishment of the UNF government, the peoples Alliance (PA) and the JVP with the active support of the United national party set up several independent commission following the 17th Amendment to the Constitution. Today, they have been made ineffective. Many of the powers and functions of the Independent Police Commission have been re-vested in the Inspector General of Police due to the lack of facilities and staff in the National Police Commission.

Over 60 SLFP activists have been murdered. Over 3000 party

members and suffered have suffered loss to person and property. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Security took no action against these violations of our law. UNP representatives, their kith and kin and party supported attack the police with impunity. Law and order has broken down. As a result organized crime including murder; robbery, kidnappings and rape have become the order of the day. The UNF government brought the Police and prisons under a single Ministry, thereby setting the stage for the creation of a Police State.

The former Minister of defense attempted to grab the defense power of the President. Fortunately the Supreme Court held that the proposed 19th Amendment was unconstitutional thereby thwarting the Government's attempts to impose dictatorial rule in the rest of the country. The government failed to take action, while the LTTE set about crushing the democratic and human rights of all communities- Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim in the North and East. Under the "ceasefire" leaders of Tamil organizations opposed to the LTTE were brutally murdered. The Muslims of the eastern province were deprived of their rights and physically attacked.

The UNF government's attempt to set up a one party, police state dictatorship was strengthened by its stranglehold on the media. It unleashed a 'media mafia', which controlled the flow of news and information thereby violating the citizens' right to information.

For all these above mentioned reasons, joint action to prevent the drift towards a one-party, anti-democratic, UNF dictatorship has become an urgent national responsibility and priority.

It is in this backdrop that the President was compelled to take over the defense, Internal Security and Media ministries, as she was constitutionally empowered to do.

5. Under the UNF government the traditional values and culture of the country has been degraded in the guise of the "open economy". A culture of greed and exploitation has been implanted. The principle of community, mutual responsibility and political decency have been replaced by a 'winner takes all' philosophy which has no place for the poor, the underprivileged and the handicapped.

6. Our foreign policy, which was based on regional co-operation and mutual respect, has been replaced by one of servitude and the absence of national dignity. Such a change in our policy can even pose a threat to our neighbouring countries. We must therefore return to a balanced approach, which is our valuable legacy from the past.

7. It is clear that in respect of the above mentioned five areas, the UNF government has rapidly brought the country to the brink of disaster.

8. In terms of the analysis set out above, it is imperative to implement an alternative plan of action encompassing the economic, political and cultural spheres in order to save the country from destruction. The time has come for the creation of a broad, patriotic, popular national alliance, which will be the way forward for all the people of our country- be they are Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim Malay and Burghers.

The time is now opportune for such a broad patriotic national

alliance, which will present and carry out an agreed common programme of national resurgence. This is therefore a historic moment.

9. We therefore, have dedicated ourselves to the task of establishing a government, which will seek to implement the following. “ Pancha Maha Piliweth” or the Five Noble Objectives of Governance:

A) The Economy

- a. To promote an economy, which will give pride of place to local production in both agricultural and industrial sectors, encourage local farmers, entrepreneurs and industrialists and rejuvenate local companies and industries.
- b. To lay emphasis on increasing productivity in both public and private sectors, which will be afforded significant roles in economic development instead of indiscriminately selling off national assets in a corrupt manner
- c. To emphasize the significant role in development of efficient and modern management, including all necessary measures to promote transparency and good governance.
- d. To revive and adopt global advances in modern technology, maximize foreign capital investment on the basis of mutual benefit with a view opening our country to global economic progress.
- e. To solve the pressing economic problems of the masses by granting a variety of relief measures.

B) Ethnic harmony

- f. To launch a multi-faceted programme which will ensure that all people who have made Sri Lanka their home viz. Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslims and others should not suffer any discrimination on grounds of race, religion, language or culture and totally to remove all manifestations of differential treatment. Further on the basis of such equality, to guarantee fundamental, human and democratic rights to all the above-mentioned groups.
- g. To ensure that attempts at separatism based on language and religion combated and defeated and the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the country be safeguarded, through ensuring the unity of all ethnic groups and guaranteeing to every one of them equal benefits of economic development.
- h. While rejecting separatism and political violence, both parties emphasize that a negotiated settlement to the ethnic question should be found though a correct dialogue with the LTTE and other relevant groups and communities so that political solutions which will safeguard the political equality and democratic rights of the Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and other communities will be arrived at.

The SLFP and JVP agree that this problem must be settled on the basis of ensuring the equality of all ethnic groups and guaranteeing of all human and democratic rights, which will signify such equality, as well as by strengthening respective democracy.

The SLFP holds the view that these objectives could be achieved by the devolution of power to provinces within a united state. The JVP holds the view that these objectives could be achieved by administrative decentralization to the local authority level, in order to ensure the ethnic identity and safeguard the cultural heritage of all groups within a unitary state. However both parties agree that divergence of views regarding final settlement should not be an obstacle to their journey together to overcome the serious crisis, which is faced by Sri Lanka.

Both parties agree to enter into a process of political dialogue with the LTTE and all other relevant groups and communities on the correct basis, including granting their rights and eliminating inequality and mistrust among them and consolidating democracy. Both parties further agree to go forward to a final solution and abide by the results of the negotiation process and the wish of the majority of the people.

C) Strengthening Democracy

In order to strengthen democracy we will formulate a New Constitution

- i. Executive Presidency will be abolished and the Sovereignty of Parliament will be further strengthened.
- j. This will include necessary safeguards to ensure the rights of all communities.
- k. A new electoral system will be introduced, which will reflect wishes of the people.
- l. The two parties agree that in order to further strengthen the sovereignty of the people and halt the present march towards authoritarianism and the breakdown of law and order the Independent Commissions should be strengthened. Reform measures affecting the Police, the judiciary and the police services would be undertaken with a view to depoliticizing such institution.

D) Cultural Policy

While safeguarding the national identity and the cultural heritage of all sections of the Sri Lankan people, the two parties agree that useful influences of cultures from all over the world would be made use of in the free and vigorous growth of indigenous cultures. It was agreed that every attempt should be made to halt the rapid erosion of social values and direct society towards cultural rejuvenation based on traditional values, to rebuild a desirable political culture in our society.

E) Foreign Policy

The two parties agree that our foreign policy should be based on safeguarding our sovereignty and independence

while maintaining friendship and goodwill with all State and international organizations. Our foreign policy will not be aligned or subservient to any camp. In particular, we should ensure that our foreign policy should not endanger the sovereignty and independence of our neighboring states but should rather preserve and expand our existing goodwill with these neighbouring countries in the spheres of political, economic and cultural relations. We believe that the implementation of the “ Pancha Maha Piliweth” set out above will help Sri Lanka to emerge from the present crisis and be the basis of a National Regeneration.

We believe that a people based development can be evolved on the basis of public accountability, transparency and good governance.

It is our belief that the United National Front government, which has created a crisis among all the people who live in Sri Lanka, should be defeated at the earliest possible time.

We also believe that by dedicating ourselves to the achievement of the five goals enumerated above a new administration based on the people’s participation for national reconstruction should be established.

Based on the above mentioned principles we invite all patriotic progressive people belonging to all communities to united to bring such a government into fruition.

We solemnly pledge that we will safeguard this Agreement based on the “ Pancha Maha Piliweth” and to commit ourselves to make such a programme a reality for the benefit of our Nation. We now pledge and proclaim our firm resolves to build such a future for our motherland and seek the active support of the each and every patriotic Sri Lankan citizen to achieve that end.

Signed:

For SLFP- Maithripala Sirisena-General Secretary

For JVP _ Mr.Tilvin Silva- General Secretary

[Back to the top](#)

[Home](#) | [Papers](#) | [Notes](#) | [Forum](#) | [Search](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Links](#)

Copyright © South Asia Analysis Group

All rights reserved. Permission is given to refer this on-line document for use in research papers and articles, provided the source and the author's name are acknowledged. Copies may not be duplicated for commercial purposes.