

British Tamils Forum United Kingdom

04 October 2024

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President elect — the challenge faced by Tamil nation. Forge a strategic alliance and face any future democratic process unitedly

When the nation has been struggling under the regime of successive nefarious governments, the arrival of the newly elected President, Anura Kumara Dissanayake (AKD) with the promise of bringing radical changes to the system would seem a great relief to the people in Sri Lanka. Will this euphoria end the over 75 years old cycle of violence and genocide against Tamil people?

This report unearths the sinister past of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the grassroots base of AKD.

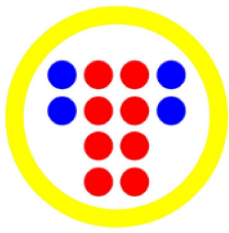
Who is this newly elected President of Sri Lanka, Anura Kumara Dissanayake (AKD) and what has been his background? He is not a Marxist as he claims, but a Sinhala nationalist on the Left of the Centre in Sri Lankan politics. His political career has been the best evidence for things that are yet to unfold under his presidency.

The British Tamils Forum (BTF) would like to present a few salient points of ¹facts of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and AKD in this report.

- During his student days AKD joined the JVP, an anti-Tamil, anti-West ideologist and ²anti-Indian Sinhala Buddhist fundamentalist group
- Opposed the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement in 1987 and staged a violent campaign.
- The following are some of the excerpts from a research article. (chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://personal.lse.ac.uk/venugopr/jvp%20modern%20asian%20studies.pdf)
- The JVP gained enormous prominence in the 2001–2004 period as the principal political force **opposing the Norwegian-mediated peace process** between the United National Front (UNF) government of Ranil Wickremasinghe and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).
- Following the February 2002 cease-fire, the JVP began to articulate a powerful and coherent ideo-political programme of opposition to the internationally sponsored peace process, which it propagated energetically and relentlessly. It organised a series of massive street demonstrations in Colombo at the rate of almost one a month during 2003 that brought the capital to a complete halt on several occasions. It successfully capitalised on the growing momentum of economic discontent against the UNF's market reform policies and used its influence in the union movement to instigate a series of sequenced public-sector strikes in the health sector and railways in late-2003 and early 2004. In doing so, the JVP played a

¹ <https://personal.lse.ac.uk/venugopr/jvp%20modern%20asian%20studies.pdf>

² <https://www.ft.lk/columns/The-1989-war-against-India-by-JVP-s-militant-arm-DJV/4-759967>



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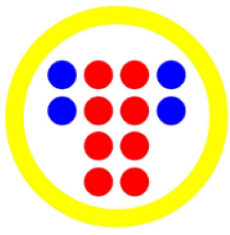
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decisive role in mobilising and coalescing public opinion against the peace process and provided a growing source of pressure on President Kumaratunga that legitimised her subsequent actions in dismissing the UNF government, which triggered the ensuing mid-term elections.

- During this energetic and persistent election campaign, the JVP became instrumental in the April 2004 election defeat of the UNF government that destabilised the peace process. Even after April 2004, the JVP's influence as a stubborn and uncompromising coalition partner within the new United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government played a significant, if not decisive part in the **failure of all subsequent attempts over the following two years to re-ignite the peace process.**
- They posed **impossible pre-conditions to be met before agreeing to support peace talks**, refused to tolerate any agreement with the LTTE over joint tsunami aid distribution, and backed the (successful) presidential campaign of Mahinda Rajapakse in November 2005 on an anti-peace process platform.
- From early 2006 onwards, the JVP openly **promoted a military solution to the conflict**, goading the government to resume the war—which finally occurred in August 2006.
- The JVP's Marxist background has been an asset in its emergence as a leading Sinhala nationalist force; the mixture of Marxism and Sinhala nationalism is not exceptional to the JVP.
- From June 1998 to December 1999, the JVP temporarily deemphasized the Sinhala nationalist component of their agenda and entered a broader alliance with three other small parties that positioned themselves to the radical left of the ruling People's Alliance government. But in the months following the election, the JVP broke ranks completely with these leftist allies and switched ideological emphasis away from Marxism towards Sinhala nationalism.
- The LTTE's spectacular military successes since late-1999, particularly in Elephant Pass in early 2000, had completely destabilised the viability of the government's military agenda. It marked Norway's entry and increasing presence as mediator in the conflict and held out the possibility of ending the war through direct negotiations with the LTTE. The government's landmark constitutional reforms and devolution package—which had been under preparation since 1995—were finally presented before parliament, in August 2000. Both issues—**constitutional devolution and foreign mediated negotiations—were a source of great anxiety to Sinhala nationalists**, who had long opposed devolution, foreign intervention, and any solution to the ethnic conflict short of outright military victory.
- Since the UNP, as the main opposition party, was in broad agreement with the government on the need for devolution, foreign mediation, and negotiations, the space for Sinhala nationalist opposition to the emerging peace agenda was left wide open for the JVP to capture and exploit. In the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections of October 2000, the appropriation of the growing Sinhala nationalist space provided the revitalized post-1994 JVP with the first opportunity to translate its carefully cultivated grass-roots strength onto the national stage. It was in fact the first meaningful opportunity for the JVP to compete in parliamentary elections in its entire 35-year history, and it did so with great success, leaching discontented voters from the left-wing of the ruling coalition.
- Between early 2000 and late 2005, the JVP staked out its leadership over the Sinhala

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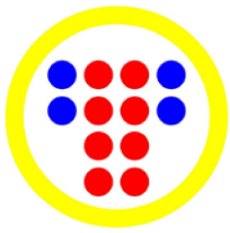


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nationalist landscape in a series of campaigns centred around the peace process. From March 2000 onwards, the JVP initiated a long campaign against the introduction of Norwegian mediators. A few months later, in August 2000, the JVP was once again at the forefront of nationwide protests against President Kumaratunga's new constitution and devolution proposals. In the aftermath of the December 2001 elections, it was the JVP, rather than the dispirited and dejected SLFP that remained energised and concentrated on coalescing and leading the opposition to the evolving cease-fire and peace process.

- In the following months, the JVP effectively stole a march over the other opposition parties by taking the initiative to **categorically oppose the formal cease-fire agreement (CFA) in February 2002, negotiations with the LTTE between September 2002 and March 2003, the government's interim power-sharing proposals from May to October 2003, and the LTTE's counterproposals in November 2003.**
- Even after the elections of April 2004, the JVP remained deeply hostile to the resumption of any negotiations with the LTTE during May and December 2004, and were instrumental in **scuttling 'P-TOMS', the post-tsunami aid sharing mechanism (<https://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2013/04/08/agreements-that-betrayed-sri-lankapost-tsunami-operational-management-structure-p-toms/>)** between March and July 2005, which proved to be the last gasp of the peace process.
- The JVP's increasing association with Sinhala nationalism post 2000 did not signify an abandonment of activism on traditionally Marxist issues. The insecurities generated by the economic crisis of 2000–2001, and the subsequent UNF government's market reform agenda, provided the JVP with a growing base of support from a variety of sources, including farmers, the unemployed, and public sector workers. At an ideological and practical level, the JVP's success lay in their ability to fold these often-spontaneous sources of predominantly economic opposition into component elements of an over-arching and coherent Sinhala nationalist framework.
- As such, opposition to economic globalization became part of an encompassing movement of resistance against the political machinations of predatory neocolonial powers, international NGOs, and international capital—all of whom the JVP accused of conspiring to divide and re-colonise the country through the peace process. The international community assisted greatly in the construction and reinforcement of this logic by offering generous quantities of development aid, conditional upon market reforms and progress in the peace process. By campaigning against both the peace process and the UNF government's market reforms, and by ideologically conflating these two elements, the JVP was in effect mirroring the way in which the ruling UNF had similarly ideologised the same two issues. Just as the government envisaged the peace agenda as a component element of an economic development strategy based on market reforms and greater global integration, so the JVP argued that the peace process and market reforms were part of a coherent assault by a constellation of foreign forces and domestic quislings to destabilise, fragment and re-conquer the island.
- In its campaign against the peace process, the JVP characterised **Tamil nationalism as an undemocratic, chauvinistic ideology of ethnic exclusivism, promoted by a terrorist organisation, and deeply implicated in a neo-colonialist enterprise by foreign powers to divide and re-conquer the island.**

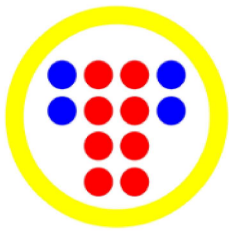


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- The JVP's outlook on Tamil nationalism in the 2001–2004 period remained heavily influenced by a thesis developed in the mid-1980s by the party's founder-leader, Rohana Wijeweera. In an extended polemical engagement within the Marxist debate on the national question, Wijeweera argued that the right to self-determination was not absolute in Lenin: support for a given nationalist movement was conditional on its juxtaposition to world imperialism and to its strategic value to the communist movement. At certain historical moments, nationalist movements can be progressive, democratic and liberatory. But at other times, they can be distinctly dangerous, whether as the refuge of reactionary parochial elites, or as the handmaiden of predatory imperialist forces seeking to divide and re-colonise the Third World. **Wijeweera asserted that Tamil nationalism (conflating Tamil Nadu's Dravida movement with Sri Lanka's Tamil Eelam movement), was in the latter category, and deserved to be opposed on grounds of principle.**
- Beyond the casual and misleading conflation between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil nationalisms, Wijeweera's work was arguably an opportunistic misreading of the Leninist tradition, which distinguishes between the oppressive and undemocratic nationalism of imperialist and larger nations, and the more democratic character of the nationalism of smaller, colonised nations.
- In Sri Lankan conditions, it is this legacy of Lenin that has brought the mainstream Marxist left into a position of broad sympathy with Tamil nationalism as the democratic expression of an historically discriminated minority. **Wijeweera instead argued that Tamil nationalism, through its alleged complicity with imperialism, was a dangerous and reactionary threat.**
- Through its tireless opposition to even the most moderate versions of the Tamil nationalist agenda, the JVP consciously pandered to, cultivated, and benefited from Sinhala chauvinism, arrived at alliances with outspoken extremists, and became the leading advocate for the issues most central to Sinhala nationalism.
- Based on these actions, the **JVP** is viewed by large sections of Sri Lankan society, and particularly by the Tamil community, **as a Sinhala chauvinist organization.**
- **The JVP has historically been composed overwhelmingly of Sinhala-Buddhists, both among its rank and file, and at leadership level—who are utterly opposed to any measures to decentralise powers to the Tamil north-east.**
- Even during his campaign in 2024, at a meeting in Jaffna Anura Kumara made it clear that he was not willing to give an undertaking regard to the 13th Amendment. He refused to propose a political solution with substantial power sharing for the ongoing conflict.
- Mobilised the rural mass and recruited 1000s of Sinhala youth to join the security forces in 2002 – 2006. Many of the middle level or senior commanders in the security forces in the armed forces were recruited by the JVP. They were involved in many atrocity crimes perpetrated against the Tamils.
- Vehemently opposed a ceasefire in 2009.



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The JVP's deep-rooted political positions are:

- Unitary State — with no devolution of the powers of the Parliament.
- Refusal to recognise the traditional homeland of the Tamils.
- Non foreign intervention in the political affairs and the economy.
- Oppose any form of the international action to establish an international criminal justice mechanism for the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide perpetrated against Tamils.

Is Tamil peoples' current plight being "*out of frying pan into the fire*"?

We urge the Tamils living in the North East of Sri Lanka to **forge a strategic alliance and face any future democratic process unitedly.**

- A. The elected Tamil representatives from the North-East of Sri Lanka have recognized and addressed the concerns and priorities of the Tamil victims. As requested by these representatives, any political solution must acknowledge the inherent right to self-determination of the Tamil people and be based on federal principles.
- B. A negotiated political solution has to be conducted through an international arbitration process. The implementation of this solution must be guaranteed by a core group of nations, including India, the USA, the UK, the EU, and Canada, to ensure a sustainable, long-term political settlement.
- C. International arbitrators must guarantee the implementation of subsequent agreements, to ensure non-recurrence of civil strife and cycles of violence, to attain equitable and sustainable peace, and to establish and maintain the geo-political stability of the region.
- D. The international community must set up a time bound implementation plan for all the above objectives.

United we stand.

-The End-

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Notes to Editors:

British Tamils Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including mainstream decision makers in the UK with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Tamils community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self-determination within a democratic frame work under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. For more information info@britishtamilsforum.org and/or visit: www.britishtamilsforum.org