

*Theoretical Organ of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party*

# **Marxist Leninist New Democracy**

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**Self determination  
in a United Sri Lanka**

**Ukraine Conflict**

**The Political Crisis**

**NDMLP National Report**  
presented at the Sixth All Sri Lanka Congress

**Resisting MCC in Nepal**

**Poetry: *Lebedev-Kumac, Du Bois, Sivasegaram***

*Background is based on a black painted U.S. Air Force Douglas B-26C Invader dropping bombs during the Korean War in 1953. USAF, photo HF-SN-98-07390, Public Domain.*

# The Song of the Smoke

W E B Du Bois

I am the Smoke King!  
I am Black!  
I am swinging in the sky,  
I am wringing worlds awry:  
I am the thought of the throbbing mills,  
I am the soul of the soul-toil kills,  
Wraith of the ripple of the trading rills;  
Up I'm curling from the sod,  
I am whirling home to God;  
I am the Smoke King  
I am Black.

I am the Smoke King,  
I am Black!  
I am wreathing broken hearts  
I am sheathing love's light darts  
Inspiration of iron times  
Wedding the toil of toiling climes,  
Shedding the blood of bloodless crimes—  
Lurid lowering 'mid the blue,  
Torrid towering toward the true,  
I am the Smoke King,  
I am Black.

I am the Smoke King,  
I am Black!  
I am darkening with song,  
I am hearkening to wrong!  
I will be Black as Blackness can—  
The blacker the mantle, the mightier the man!  
For Blackness was ancient ere whiteness began.  
I am daubing God in night,  
I am swabbing Hell in white;  
I am the Smoke King,  
I am Black!

## *Editorial*

That the global panic about COVID-19 hurt tourism income and even foreign remittances from the nearly two million employed abroad is true. It also hurt the local economy and harmed export earnings. The crisis, however, cannot be blamed entirely on any one government, while the government of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his entourage of sycophants who claimed to be experts on many things of the group have much to answer for.

Corruption and theft by the 'ruling family' caused big losses for the country and government. Unwise moves like banning fertilizer import and deliberate misleading by interested parties that a consignment of Chinese fertilizer had toxic contaminants in order to compel purchase of Indian ammonia fertilizer pellets with which the peasants were unfamiliar caused a huge drop in the yield of paddy. Import of excessively volatile cooking gas mix led to kitchen 'explosions', some deaths and shortage of gas. The country's finances were undermined by allowing import of luxury goods even when shortage of foreign reserves was over the horizon, and offering tax cuts when the economy was visibly in trouble owing to the impact of COVID-19.

Clumsy handling of finance certainly precipitated problems of shortages and soaring prices. That was compounded by devaluation of the rupee by almost 100% against the US\$ over a few months causing further rise in prices.

It is the long queues for sugar, milk powder, kerosene and cooking gas since 2011, and even longer petrol and diesel queues this year that led to the call for President Rajapaksa to step down. The protest gathered momentum with support from trade unions and other mass organizations, amid growing public anger. The demands grew to include the resignation of the entire parliament and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in particular. It was at this stage that violent supporters of the Prime Minister attempted to create chaos by violently disrupting the protests on 9<sup>th</sup> May. That resulted in the resignation of the Prime Minister and some serious acts of arson against key government figures, the background to which is still unclear.

The events of 9th May helped to thoroughly expose the motives of the major opposition figures, especially in the SJB, the successful breakaway from the

UNP. It was an important turning point in the protest movement that encouraged protesters to discuss political matters openly, unlike earlier when ideological discussion was taboo. Many protesters have lost faith in the existing parliamentary political parties, with a significant number in the system itself. It also enabled the expansion of protests to other regions.

Most politicians with parliamentary ambitions distanced themselves from the protest movement, dubbed the Aragalaya (struggle), particularly since Ranil Wickremesinghe was appointed Prime Minister by the President to replace Mahinda Rajapaksa, on prompting by a big power. Wrangling for cabinet posts and reappointment of discredited politicians to posts showed that little has really changed and it will be business as usual regardless the sufferings of the people.

The Aragalaya will now need to face the new reality in which a sizeable section of the population desperately hopes that the economic problem will be resolved somehow with 'help' from the IMF. Meanwhile, unknown to them, the US and India seek to seize control of key sectors of government and business on pretext of providing interim relief. An anti-China lobby is working overtime on their behalf to keep China out of the country's affairs.

The challenge facing Aragalaya is to develop into a genuine mass movement for democratic change that will tirelessly resist all anti-national elements allied to forces of foreign domination and exploitation, corruption and abuse of power. This could imply polarization within Aragalaya while rival schools of thought exchange views in the process of reaching a common programme free of manipulation and groups with private agendas.

How events will unfold is open-ended, but there are positive signs. Protesters show clear signs of transcending parochialism, and have notably overcome fear of state repression and intimidation by criminal elements in the pay of reactionary parties. Many show willingness to learn of each other's problems and of world events, and readiness to cooperate.

The left should support Aragalaya and work with all potentially progressive elements within it and thereby strengthen themselves and Aragalaya. The minority nationalities should be encouraged to join the struggle so that they gain a voice there and win a receptive audience to their genuine grievances.

# Self determination in a United Sri Lanka

## 1. On Self Determination

Self determination is badly misunderstood in politics, mostly by will and as a result of deliberate misreading by interested parties.

Tamil narrow nationalists have for long held that self determination is simply secession of a 'nation' from a country made of several nations. Sinhala chauvinists, in the name of patriotism, used that interpretation to reject self determination as a way to solve the national question.

The idea of right to self determination evolved a century ago under VI Lenin to unite as a voluntary union people of different national identities held under the Russian empire. The idea has endured to be applicable to multi-nation states, despite distortions aimed to defeat the purpose.

This essay aims to further explore the concept of self determination from a Marxist Leninist angle. Based on the intended purpose and context in which the concept evolved, the essay explores ways to apply it usefully to the post-colonial (really neo-colonial) national question. It also examines the concept of nation in the new context.

### **The National Question Today**

The national question is a big political challenge and cause of conflict in much of the Third World. Its happy resolution is important to political stability, economic development, and democratic and human rights.

The nature of the national question has changed since the end of direct colonial rule. But the class nature of nationalism remains unchanged. Nationalism has to this day kept its two faces, one progressive and liberating and the other reactionary, narrow and oppressive.

The progressive aspect of nationalism was once strong and egalitarian. It worked to unite people to struggle for liberation from colonial rule. It later yielded to the reactionary tendencies like chauvinism and national oppression, and narrow nationalism. The change was not sudden.

The Third World that emerged from colonial rule initially opposed big power and imperialist domination. In the face of that challenge, post-colonial imperialism changed into neo-colonialism and modified its strategy of oppression of former colonies accordingly. It has made itself far less visible than direct colonial rule, and uses a variety of economic tools, creates client states, and passes the burden of controlling resistance to its exploitation, to its clients who rule the neo-colonies.

The non-aligned movement and related social organizations had, at a popular level, much promise as defenders of Third World interests. We should see why many Third World rulers could not oppose imperialism to defend their economies.

By late 1970s most national bourgeoisie had yielded to imperialism with which they later partnered to carry forward the imperialist grand programme of globalization. Their failure weakened the national leadership in most Third World countries and led to the failure of the Non Aligned Movement as a defender of Third World interests.

Most Third World leaders failed to defend political and economic independence because they represented local exploiting classes and were unwilling to change the existing social system. Their social reforms were aimed to prevent revolution. Often those reforms were later reversed by right-wing forces (like JR Jayewardene dismantling workers' rights after 1978) with imperialist blessings.

As political independence raised political awareness in former colonies, poorer sections of the population wanted a fairer share of the wealth, and the working class led demands for social justice. The ruling classes found it convenient to use contradictions among the people to divide the poor and the working class. (The colonial masters set an example by dividing the elite by inciting rivalry. Personal ambition blocked unity among leaders who found communal identity including race, language, region, religion and caste useful to strengthen their bases.)

Every imaginable difference in identity was used in politics. It helped, at least temporarily, to divert popular attention from pressing issues. But it also hurt the economy, undermined political stability and made the rulers depend even more on imperialists for their survival.

As Third World poverty and debt worsened, imperialism through various cartels dictated price and through its agencies like the World Bank and the IMF could decide the economic and social policies of the poorer countries. Imperialism could subvert governments failing to follow its orders, and create conflict and civil war. In many ways, for the Third World, the neo-colonial situation has been worse than that under colonialism, where people clearly saw the enemy. Under neo-colonialism the enemy is invisible. Lost for an option, the ruling elite classes, for their own survival, betray their countries and the people.

Of late, in the name of peace and democracy, NGOs act to create divisions among people, and undermine the state in the interest of imperialism.

## **Addressing the National Question**

It takes courage to accept the existence of a national crisis in several countries of the Third World, especially Asia, as well as in Europe, and find just and lasting solutions. Governments representing the exploiting classes hesitate to solve the national question, as it risks uniting the people to find their path for political and economic emancipation.

Instead they will act to divide the people to protect an unfair social system. Valid solutions for the national crisis can come only from progressive forces that emphasise social justice and look to uniting the oppressed masses nationally and internationally for the purpose.

The national question in Sri Lanka came up as conflicts in various contexts: business rivalry between members of different communities (1915 anti-Muslim riots); petit bourgeois political ambitions using communalism to divide workers (AE Gunasinghe's attack on Malayali workers in the 1930s); manipulation at national level (Citizenship Act of 1948); local politics (use of communal identity and even caste identity in electorates with mixed populations); and stirring chauvinist, narrow nationalist and religious sentiments (the language issue and discriminatory policies). Blaming other groups for the problems of a group is common in parliamentary politics.

The lure of parliamentary politics led several left leaders to opportunist politics in the 1950s (Trotskyist leader Philip Gunawardena joined the SLFP-led MEP coalition in 1956). The decay worsened after the split in the international communist movement in the 1960s. (The LSSP in 1964 and the CP in 1970 formed alliances with the SLFP.) It got worse after the fall of socialism in Europe in 1990; and the parliamentary left, which once took a brave stand on the rights of the minorities, and from the late 1980's were effectively bonded slaves of the Sinhala nationalist SLFP.

Thus it is still only the Marxist revolutionary left that can be relied on to come up with solutions.

## **Nation and its Definition**

It will help to discuss the concepts of nationhood and self determination at this point. Some, including 'leftists', stubbornly cling to definitions. A definition can help to understand and creative apply a concept by explaining the term than by restricting its meaning. Definition of a nation



gives an idea of what a nation could be. It cannot legislate whether a specific group of people constitute a nation. Definitions should offer guidelines to address political questions. But a rigid and dogmatic approach will have disastrous consequences. A widely used definition of a nation has been a people with a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and common culture.

Stalin's definition that "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" emphasizes history, stability of the community and psychological makeup. Weakness in one aspect can be compensated by the strength of others (like the lack of a common language in the national identity of India and Indonesia during their independence struggles). In any event Stalin's definition covers entities with potential to form a stable and economically feasible nation state.

However, nations do not wait for definitions to justify their emergence. While shared features like race, language, tribe, culture and even religion can bring a people together as a nation, a nation is most importantly a product of history, and nations like South Sudan and Nicaragua cut across racial, linguistic, cultural and tribal differences. We also know that people of the Arabian Peninsula and Spanish Latin America with many

In such context, using the concept of a nationality rather than nation to deal with addressing the national question avoids the pitfall of blindly linking 'nation' with 'the right to self determination'.

### **Nation, Nationality and National Minorities**

The national question today mostly concerns groups of people who do not fully qualify as nations based on widely accepted definitions. Many ethnic groups (like Muslims and Hill Country Tamils of Sri Lanka, with history and culture as distinguishing features) distinguish themselves from others based on all criteria for a nation but for lack of geographic

contiguity. This makes it difficult or even impossible to have a nation exclusively comprising them.

Can they be denied the right to autonomy to protect their linguistic and cultural identity, their right to pursue their way of life and an economy to suit their needs? Thus the concept of nationality as an identity for populations that would qualify as nations if not for geographic constraints will apply to a large number of indigenous groups (like the Aththo of Sri Lanka, the First Nations of Canada, aboriginal people of Australia and the USA, and tribal communities in Central India) besides Muslims and Hill Country Tamils of Sri Lanka and even Blacks and Hispanics of the USA.

We may define as a nationality any ethnic group with several of the following features: a common language (or family of languages), territory or territories with a significant proportion of the population, a common economic life within its territories, and common culture. What matters most is awareness as 'nationality', without which self determination is irrelevant.

## **Applying Self Determination**

The right to self determination is the right of a nation to become a separate state. (Self determination is discussed in detail in the last section.) However, even if a group of people is eligible for nationhood, such eligibility is meaningless if separate existence is impracticable. The ability of a nation to survive is more important than license to nationhood based on any criterion. Size is important, but not critical. What matters is a socio-political system that can unite a people and give them a sense of belonging.

Restricting the right to self determination to 'nations' denies many ethnic groups the right to defend their identity and way of life, and seek freedom from national oppression unless they are nations. That is the

main shortcoming of viewing self determination as just the right to secession.

If right to self determination is viewed in its true spirit, namely a means to unite people of distinct identities together, that purpose is best served by making self determination a right to choose the mode of existence of a people, secession being only one option. This view will address the needs of not just nations, but also nationalities. It can be extended to smaller ethnic groups without a territory to claim and moderately small populations, whom we may call national minorities.

Such an approach will make redundant the need to claim nationhood and follow it up with a demand for secession simply because there is a right to secede. Addressing serious grievances at the back of a demand to secede eliminates the wish to secede. Systematic failure to address grievances and adding to grievances by acts of discrimination and oppression initiate and strengthen calls for secession.

There is another matter that the right to secession in itself will not resolve. Secession of what was a minority nation will create new minorities in the new nation, who may be members of the majority nation from which it separated. Thus the right to secession also goes with the need to protect the rights of minority groups be they nationalities or national minorities.

## **Call for Secession Sri Lanka**

Nations emerge of socio-political awareness, often as response to discrimination and oppression. This is true of Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka. The 'Tamil nation' that Tamil nationalists refer to is neither the successor to the Jaffna Kingdom that existed up to late 16<sup>th</sup> Century nor does it comprise all Tamil speaking people in the island. Tracing links to Tamil kingdoms of earlier periods makes no sense. But Tamils have lived on this island for about as long as the Sinhalese, but both for less time than the indigenous people.

Awareness of ethnic identity became nationalism because of a series of pre-independence events. But, it took more than the Citizenship Act of 1948, the Official Language Act of 1956, continuous planned colonization of the North and the East, “standardization” of GCE-AL marks in 1971, and instances of anti-Tamil violence to reach the 1976 resolution for a separate state. The impressive vote for the TULF in 1977 was not for a separate state, and that for the Federal Party in 1956 was not for a federal state. The overwhelming votes represented deep resentment about the language issue, discrimination in employment and higher education and colonization of Tamil areas with intention to make them a minority in their ‘traditional homeland’. The tragic turn of events since 1977 leading to the murderous anti-Tamil violence in July 1983 and the cynical attitude of the state challenged the right of Tamils to live in peace even in their traditional homeland. That pushed many Tamils youth into a liberation struggle for a separate state.

Strangely, Tamil nationalists hesitate to accept that the Muslims consider themselves distinct from Tamils. The reasons for such assertion are historical and go back to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Muslims spoke of their eligibility to autonomy in the mid-1950s. (Kariappar, Federal Party MP for Kalmunai raised the issue in the presence of FP leader Chelvanayakam at a public meeting in 1956.) But it was in the 1980s that Muslims asserted themselves strongly as a distinct nationality. While religion by itself does not offer distinct national identity, political circumstances could create conditions that favour the emergence of a distinct national identity based on religious identity as in the case of the Muslims of Yugoslavia and the Hui in China.

Sinhala (or Sinhala Buddhist) chauvinists who still argue that Sri Lanka can have only one national identity, namely Sinhala, denied the Tamil people identity as a nation (or a nationality). Whether a separate Tamil state is desirable is a matter apart from its feasibility. But denial of a

Tamil homeland in the North and the East of the country is historical mischief.

A vast majority of each nationality believe that a united Sri Lanka is in the best interest of all citizens. But unity cannot be taken for granted amid a string of unpleasant memories of minority nationalities. Preserving the integrity of Sri Lanka is conditional upon dispelling the fears of the minority nationalities about their being refused treatment as equals by the majority. The assertion of nationhood and (more dangerously) seeking foreign meddling by the Tamils of the North and East has been a result of such fear.

In the past four decades Muslims and Hill Country Tamils have asserted an identity distinct from the Tamils. As the term “nation” appears to suggest the call for secession, and since neither the Sinhalese nor the Tamils in the island have historically been a nation in the modern sense and assertion of “Tamil nationhood” is a result of political developments since the 1970s, it makes sense to call the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils nationalities without prejudice to their eligibility for self determination.

## **2. New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party's Position on the National Question**

Over thirty years ago, the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party recognized four nationalities in the country, two (Sinhalese and Tamils) with contiguous territory and two without (Muslims and Hill Country Tamils who live in isolated patches of considerable area where the nationality is predominant).

The position of the Party on the national question is based on the above recognition of four nationalities as well as national minorities including the Aththo, Burghers and Malays who are communities with a long

presence in the island and whose contributions to the Sri Lankan society and culture have been very significant.

## **Proposals for a Solution to the Sri Lankan National Question**

The position of the party on the national question has always been consistent with the Marxist Leninist stand on the right of a nation to self determination. Much of the awareness of national consciousness in the country came about in the decades before independence. What were matters of elitist rivalry for position and profit were transformed into mass political issues in the context of parliamentary electoral politics.

Sinhala chauvinism and Tamil narrow nationalism fed each other by whipping up emotion. What was wrongly seen as the language problem had deeper roots tied up with ruling class interests.

The thinking of much of the Old Left was fossilized in the language problem and took the line that solving the language problem was the key, until the separatist demand came up in 1976. The Party and several Marxist Leninists opposed secession and thought in terms of a solution within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. The outcome of that approach consisted of extensive studies of the national question in the local context as well as in general terms, and consistent proposals for a solution to the national question put forward periodically by the Party. The proposal put forward in 2016 will clarify the stand of the Party.

1. The Northern and Eastern Provinces which comprise the traditional regions of the Tamil-speaking people of Sri Lanka should be merged permanently and a fully-empowered Autonomous Regional Structures should be established along with Autonomous Inner Structures within it.
2. The Structure so established should be named the North-East Regional Autonomous Territory, and its borders should be that of the existing Northern and Eastern Provinces.

3. The powers and activities of this Regional Autonomy and of the Autonomous Inner Structures within it should be clearly defined. At the same time, regulations should be drafted and clarified to ensure that there is no conflict between the respective powers and activities of the Centre and of the Region; and the powers and the right to activities referred to here should be constitutionally guaranteed.
4. Room should be allowed for the self-reliant economic development based on agriculture and industry within the North-East Autonomous Regional Structure and legal guarantee provided for its administration without hindrance or interference.
5. The North-East Regional Autonomy should be given full powers to undertake land distribution, organize irrigation and arrange settlements in the North-East Regional Autonomous Territory. The Central Government and the Regional Autonomy should discuss the matter of colonization undertaken with ulterior motives and arrive at a conclusion based on good understanding. At the same time, the Regional Autonomy should have the right to accept or reject any colonization scheme proposed by the Central Government.
6. The North-East Regional Autonomy should have the right to undertake matters relating to finance, judicial administration, language, education, employment and cultural affairs in accordance with the needs of the people of the region, and in accordance with the Constitution.
7. Responsibility for local security should rest with the administration of the Regional Autonomy for purpose of maintaining law and order in the North-East Regional Autonomous Territory. In the absence of foreign threat or aggression, the Central Government should take decisions about maintaining or expanding military bases in the Autonomous Territory in consultation with the Regional Autonomy.

8. At the National level and at the level of the Regional Autonomy, firm action against discrimination based on race, language, caste, religion and gender should be clearly defined based on fundamental and human rights and trade union and democratic rights.
9. Official use of Sinhala, Tamil and English, the three official languages of Sri Lanka, should be fully implemented in practice; and the Constitution should guarantee each citizen the right to communicate with the Central Government or with the Regional Autonomy in his/her mother tongue and receive a reply in the same language.
10. The Regional Autonomy should provide with due guarantee s facilities and concessions for the social advancement of the oppressed people in various parts of the country who still remain economically, educationally, socially and culturally backward and deprived of land, health care and employment.
11. Muslims should be recognized as a distinct nationality and, on that basis, one or several Autonomous Internal Structures should be set up in regions which have been the traditional home to the Muslims, comprising individual territories in each District or across Districts. The Muslims should through such structures be enabled to fully enjoy full rights in matters including their economy, resources, employment opportunities and education.
12. Powers and rights of Autonomous Inner Structures should be clearly formulated and guaranteed in a way that neither the Central Government nor the Regional Autonomy could interfere or intervene in matters within the purview of an Autonomous Inner Structure for the Muslims.
13. Autonomous Inner Structures should be established firmly for the Sinhalese living in the North-East Autonomous Region so that their rights and aspirations are duly attended to; and the powers and



rights of such Autonomous Inner Structures are clearly formulated and guaranteed.

14. Autonomous Inner Structures should be set up in every region according to population concentration to protect the rights and aspirations of the Tamil people living outside the North-East Autonomous Region; and the powers and rights of such Autonomous Inner Structures should be clearly formulated and guaranteed.
15. Autonomous Inner Structures should be set up in every region according to population concentration to protect the rights and aspirations of the Muslims living outside the North-East Autonomous Region; and the powers and rights of such Autonomous Inner Structures should be clearly formulated and guaranteed.
16. The Hill Country Tamil community which has existed in this country for over 200 years with distinct political, socio-economic and cultural identities should be recognized as a distinct nationality of the country, and their ethnic identity should be affirmed as Hill Country Tamils in all legal documents including certificates of birth, death and marriage.
17. An exclusive Autonomous Structure should be established for the Hill Country Tamil nationality in order that it could cherish its unique ethnic and cultural identities and develop them further and thereby fulfil its aspirations and expectations.
18. As a prelude to establishing an exclusive Autonomous Structure for the Hill Country Tamils, village structures should be established incorporating their right to housing combined with the confirmation of their right to land. Such villages should be brought together to form Village Officer Divisions (Grama Niladhari Divisions) with at

least one Divisional Secretariat for 40,000 persons as their administrative centres.

19. While the Autonomous Structure for the Hill Country Tamils will include regions of the Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa Provinces and have guarantees for the land and housing rights of the people, self-reliant economy, employment opportunity, education, healthcare, language rights and the protection and development of their culture, there should also be provision for setting up Autonomous Inner Structures, with guarantees of their powers and rights, outside the above Autonomous Structure, combining regions of other provinces where the Hill Country Tamils live in significant concentration.
20. Minorities including Burghers, Malays and the Aththo (Vedda), irrespective of whether live in significant concentration or sparsely among the population of the country, should be acknowledged as National Minorities according to their preference, and Autonomous Inner Structures set up suitably combining regions in which they live, defining clearly their powers and rights and guaranteeing them in order that their identity, culture and all rights are protected.
21. Steps should be taken to ensure that all Autonomous Structures and Autonomous Inner Structures and have Constitutional guarantee to operate independently with language rights and to undertake financial, judicial and administrative measures.
22. In the event of those who left the country under conditions of conflict wishing to return to the country, they should be offered full citizenship irrespective of their race, religion, language and region; and those needing dual citizenship should be allowed that right.

*(Courtesy: Marxist Leninist New Democracy 60, October 2016)*

## **3. Enriching Self determination**

### **Right to Self Determination**

The notion of right to self determination is rooted in the Russian October Revolution. In 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics united over 120 linguistically and culturally diverse people oppressed by the Russian Empire. The forerunner to the right to self determination was Marx's recognition in the late 1860s of the potential of the Irish nation and its workers to liberate itself from British colonial rule. Marx challenged the English workers to support Irish independence, without which their own freedom is not possible. This Marxist stand was upheld with regard to all freedom struggles against colonial rule, consistently and regardless of the class demanding independence. Lenin applied the principle to nations that were held captive by the Russian Empire.

### **Defining Self Determination**

Lenin declared in 1914 that the right to self determination was the right of nations to independence in a political sense, the right to free, political secession from the oppressing nation. He emphasised that the wish for such right was not a wish to secede and fragment into small states. He argued that greater freedom to secede will in practice weaken the clamour for secession, as large states offer greater economic and social advantages with growth of capitalism. Lenin's definition of the right to self determination was followed in 1918 by Woodrow Wilson, who defined it as the right of people to govern themselves, but not explicitly supporting the right to secede.

Lenin was bold and explicit, and compared right to secession with the right to divorce. Right to divorce does not mean that every marriage will necessarily be dissolved. One joins in marriage reserving one's right to divorce. Denying that right weakens the relationship. The right to divorce makes the relationship more equal

and stable than without the right. Lenin thus explained that the right to secession enables nations in a union to explore ways for secure coexistence.

Lenin in his essay "The Right of Nations to Self Determination" defined that right as follows:

..."self determination of nations" in the Marxists' Programme cannot, from a historico-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self determination, state independence, and the formation of a national state."

[<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/ch01.htm>]

He further added:

"...international Social-Democracy stands for the recognition of the right of nations to self determination."

[<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/ch06.htm>]

## **Defining a Nation**

The nation state is a product of capitalism and the matter of the right to self determination came up in the context of capitalist development. The need arose from there to define a nation, and Stalin extensively studied the national question to offer a definition:

"A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."

[*Marxism and the National Question,*

[<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03a.htm#s1>]

This definition is essentially valid and agrees with common definitions of a nation. But rigid use of any definition to deny nationhood to a people is unscientific. What matters is for a people to hold together as a stable socio-political unit with a sustainable economy. What decide whether a group of people become a nation are the course of historical event that

lead to the formation of the nation and the sustainability of the nation as a nation state. Definitions only identify key criteria.

The October Revolution freed nations from the Russian Empire, a Prison of Nations (as noted in Lenin's "On the Question of National Policy"). The recognition of the right of nations to self determination changed a prison of nations into a voluntary union of equal nations.

## **Post-Colonial Self Determination**

Self determination in the colonial era was about the right of a nation to be free from being ruled by a more powerful nation. It took two forms. In Europe it concerned freeing small or weak nations from domination by big powers. In what would be the Third World comprising colonies and semi colonies it was mostly about being free of colonial rule.

As already explained earlier, the right to secession means the right to secede but not secession itself. The post-colonial situation, however, created, especially in Asia, situations in which there are conflicts about the status different identities of groups of people. Some which were highly eligible to be nations did not want to secede and some calls for secession just faded out (like those for a Dravidian state and a Sikh state in India). Partition of India was based on religious identity and led to an unstable state of Pakistan with two parts that were 2000 km apart. In India, oppression based on caste and religion is more serious than national oppression except in Kashmir, Manipur and Nagaland. Now there is more serious ethnic oppression of Indigenous people by the state serving the interests of big capitalists.

Pakistan has five major ethno-linguistic groups each making over 5% of the population. Notably, the British divided the Pashtoons between Pakistan, where they are the second biggest ethno-linguistic group, and Afghanistan, where they are the biggest, but only a third of their number in Pakistan. While ethnic rivalries exist in both countries, oppression and conflict are driven by religion.

There are several ethnic groups in Myanmar demanding national rights if not secession. The Sri Lankan national question, once seen as ethno-linguistic, has now a religious dimension too. Indonesia's complex mix of ethno-linguistic and religious groups is comparable to India's. Colonial rule itself has added to the complexity of ethnicity in many countries.

We can find many ethnic groups eligible to be nations that do not demand nationhood while there as many ethnic groups that demand nationhood although they may not qualify as nations based on any strict definition of a nation. Thus there can be no simple solution based on definitions of nations and their self determination.

### **Risks of Restricting Self Determination**

Thus the concept of nation to resolve the national question can be inadequate or even inappropriate in many post-colonial contexts. Also, secession of nations cannot be an adequate answer to the national question. Concepts of nationality and national minority and devolution of power based on autonomy offer wiser options.

Successful solutions to the national question in several countries after the Second World War (WWII) offer ways of combining their methods with the principle and practice of the right to self determination.

Oppression by a nationalist exploiting class triggers resistance and struggle by the oppressed group to defend and ensure their existence as a socio-political entity in its own right. Mostly, no ethnic group waits for permission to secede, and the denial of the right to secede only promotes the urge to secede.

Thus, limiting self determination only to groups of people who can be considered as a nation adversely affects many ethnic groups, some with bigger populations than several nation states. The rights of many Native American races and tribes in North America and in some states of South America like Brazil continue to erode. The aboriginal people of Australia

are homeless in their land. Carving up of Africa by the colonial rulers has complicated the national question in the continent. Border conflicts were averted by the wisdom of African states to accept the colonial borders than quarrel over them. The arbitrary borders still hurt the way of life of nomadic people who never knew national boundaries. Imperialism is, however, stirring nationalist sentiments in northern Africa. European Gypsies and Jews were victims of nationalism for centuries. The problems of the tribal people of India that drew attention during the Naxalbari uprising in the 1960s have returned to haunt Indian politics in more than one way. Then there are micro states comprising small islands or groups of islands in the Pacific, the prospects of whose developing into a federation of island states is hampered by imperialist interests.

It is not feasible to create a nation state for any of the oppressed groups mentioned above. Can we deny self determination to them? If self determination is understood only as the right to secession, they will not have that right. That will be against the spirit of self determination.

Denial of self determination haunts tribal populations. The creation of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were for political and capitalist exigency and the plight of the tribal people has not changed much. The tribal people in any region sharing a socio-political heritage comprise tribes with different languages and cultural traditions. No tribe will be a nation in a strict sense of the word. Apart from the politics of tribal homelands, genuine multi-tribal homelands are viable and desirable. While secession is not feasible, there is cause for the highest degree of autonomy for each tribal community, in view of tribal rivalries that are vulnerable to exploitation by the state, the capitalist classes as well as imperialism. The risk of a strong tribe seeking hegemony weaker tribes within an autonomous tribal region is high under capitalism.

The plight of tribal populations in many Asian and Latin American countries is like that of tribal minorities of India. There is more awareness of the issues especially after the leftward political drift in Latin America

in the past quarter century. But unless guided by progressive ideology such awareness can be abused by imperialism to subvert the gains of mass struggle. Empowerment of a nationality or an ethnic group needs to be accompanied by anti-imperialist political awareness. There are lessons to learn from Latin American experiences on the correct handling of such contradictions.

Self determination of nations will include the right to secession as the highest level at which a nation exercises its right to choose its mode of existence. If option to secede is impractical, a people should have a fair alternative, taking into account the socio-political and geographic restraints to secession.

India is the world's most complex mix of nationalities and ethnic minorities. Some ultra-leftists wish the disintegration of the Indian union and prescribe secession even where the nationality concerned is not interested. On the other hand, Indian nationalists, including some Marxists, miss the reality that India is a multi-national, multi-ethnic state that is unable to fulfil the aspirations of minority nations, nationalities, tribes and other ethnic minorities in the face of surging Hindi-Hindu chauvinism and capitalist greed wedded to imperialism. Carving up India into several nation states is not desirable. But the stability and unity of India, however desirable, will be unattainable without addressing the national question based on the equality of national, tribal and other ethnic communities as well as allowing secession especially where there has been a historical claim to separate existence.

## **Expanding the Scope of Self Determination**

Self determination entered international law in 1945 by Articles 1 and 55 of the UN Charter. The UN General Assembly followed it with the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960. In 1970, self determination was extended beyond decolonisation.



Extension of the principle of self determination so that it applies to ethnic groups that are not recognized as nations is an important step towards social justice. Recently it was proposed that right to self determination can be exercised 'internally' to allow a people broader control over their political, economic, and cultural development, without right to secession. [<https://minorityrights.org/law/self-determination/>]. The concept of "internal self determination" adopted recently by the UN in "*Equality of Ethnic Identity Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation 21, The right to self determination (Forty-eighth session, 1996), U.N. Doc. A/51/18, annex VIII at 125 (1996)*" seems is a ploy by UN member states to deny the right of a people with a claim to nationhood to secede from a member country. Such internal self determination violates the Leninist idea of self determination as the right of a nation to secede.

Nations are outcomes of history, not definitions. What makes a group of people a nation may not seem rational or sensible. Individually and collectively, national awareness of a people is historical and contextual. Ethnic or national consciousness was not always the main force behind assertion of nationhood and creation of a nation state by a group of people. Foreign inducement and genuine fears of survival have often enabled the emergence of new nation states in recent times.

Internal and external self determination are located as opposites because if the reluctance of the dominant (not always a majority) nation or nationality that exercised the right to self determination in freeing itself from colonial domination to allow that right to a nation coming under its own domination. Such dishonesty can be defeated by adopting the spirit of the right to self determination as declared by Lenin.

Self determination can still be defended as the right of a nation (or nationality) to secession by studying how that right may be exercised. Where secession is impractical or undesirable, what choices are before the nationalities concerned? Choices will comprise ways to eliminate concerns that induce a people to seek secession. That was how the

Soviet Union addressed the national question. Setting up autonomous regions and autonomous structures can protect the identity, linguistic, cultural and religious rights as well as territorial and economic rights of not only nationalities but also national minorities, without challenging the unity of a country while simultaneously protecting the country against neo-colonial encroachment of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, which can be considered a multi-ethnic state.

The above approach offers scope for the right to self determination to be expanded to include options in the absence of secession while preempting the temptation to demand secession.

### **Nation, Nationality and National Minority**

The terms refer to socio-ethnic groups of people who distinguish themselves from others by their language, culture (at times including religion), economic life and territory.

*Nationality* is a broad term referring to a socio-ethnic group with a common language, common culture and common economic life, and lives in a significantly large territory in which they are predominant. *Nation* refers to a nationality with potential to be a stable and independently sustainable nation state. It is otherwise like any other nationality. A *national minority* is a socio-ethnic group with common language, common culture and even common aspects of economic life, but lacks a sufficiently big territory where it comprises the majority. A national minority cannot support an autonomous region exclusive to it.

### **Minority Nationalities and National Minorities**

Revolutionary China, population 600 million then, recognized over fifty national minorities with some of population of the order of 100,000 or less. There are individual autonomous regions or units for each of the larger ethnic groups. Otherwise, the interests of several ethnic groups are served by a single autonomous unit.

In Nicaragua, the revolutionary government of the Sandinista alliance, consulted the people on constitutional reform from 1984 to 1986, and in 1987 adopted a constitution that declared Nicaragua as a multi-ethnic nation. It proceeded to set up autonomous regions on the Atlantic Coast which was home to six ethnic minorities, the largest numbering 120,000 and the smallest a mere 800.

There are other options worth exploring based on the purpose of the autonomous regions. Autonomies should not be regions where a politically or economically dominant ethnic group or a majority ethnic group suppresses other nationalities and national minorities in the region. Sub-autonomies or autonomous structures may be established to ensure the rights of other nationalities and national minorities.

Where the purpose is to extend the right to self determination to all nationalities and national minorities, the right to secede will apply only to nationalities that qualify as a nation. But that is not to recommend secession. It also would be required to ensure that secession is peaceful and ensures the basic rights of each minority in the seceded state.

Autonomous structures with maximum possible devolution of power without threat to the unity of the country will be desirable for all nationalities whose geography does not support secession.

Special autonomous units would need to be designed for national minorities to protect their identity, cultural, linguistic and religious rights and ensure economic survival in harmony with communities among whom they live.

## **The Case of Sri Lanka**

A united Sri Lanka is most feasible as a union of nations (or nationalities) and a stable union needs to be voluntary and hence incorporate the right to secession.

Both oppressor and oppressed can, for opposed reasons, insist that the right to self-determination means secession and achieve their shared objective, namely escalation of conflict. Once, many Tamil nationalists of Sri Lanka insisted that self-determination is secession. Hard-line Sinhala nationalists, to whom any form of devolution of power will lead to secession, echoed that view.

It is the duty of the progressives among the Sinhalese to explain the full implications of self-determination to the Sinhala masses so that they are not misled by chauvinists. People should know that self-determination is more than the right to secession. It should be explained that it is about the right of nationalities to seek solutions to the national question within the framework of a united country. Whether the answer is a federal state, regional autonomy or self-government of some form or a mix of these within a unitary state must be discussed honestly. It is essential to appreciate that any solution will be made stable by maximum devolution of power to give ordinary people a voice and strengthen democracy.

If progressives fail to explain to the public that self-determination is about free choice of the nationalities about their mode of existence and is the only way to a lasting, stable and just solution to the national question, they will only help to destroy the prospects of a united Sri Lanka. It will be worse than the mistakes of the parliamentary left between 1956 and 1977, when leaders of the left failed to correct the Sinhala chauvinist lie that a demand for a federal state is a secessionist demand. The parliamentary left learned neither the lessons of the seventeen years of UNP rule of 1977-1994 nor the lessons of its disastrous alliance with the SLFP in 1994-2022 especially under the Rajapakses. They need to salvage their left credibility and avert total political irrelevance, and rectifying their errors on the national question could be a good starting point.

## **Imperialism and Self Determination**

Issues of human and democratic rights matter to imperialism only to bully states that challenge its domination of the world. Thus oppressed people can depend on themselves alone for their emancipation and it is important that issues of class, race, national liberation, women's struggle for equality, and environment are interlinked and unity forged on the widest possible scale among victims of imperialist exploitation and plunder. Extension of the principle of self determination in a way that it applies to ethnic groups that are not recognized as nations is an important step towards achieving that unity. But imperialism has facilitated secession in several instances by actively encouraging secessionist forces and militarily intervening in the name of defending human rights, now under the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) which has UN acceptance. Thus imperialism is able to play self determination both ways, allowing friendly states to practice unhindered national oppression and to enable secession to punish or humiliate 'hostile' states.

Advocates of centralized state power and large and powerful states resent the idea of devolution. Their notions of economic integration of the world, like their ideas about science, technology and development are flawed. Mankind cannot be united based on the negation of the identity of any people and rejection of different forms of human knowledge, even with only a limited amount of "scientific truth". Such views of knowledge are characteristic of the arrogant and patronizing missionaries of the colonial era. Thus the current urge to unify all human knowledge and skills under one umbrella is based on imperialist design to rob the Third World of its right to its traditional achievements, especially through the privatization of knowledge in the public domain as intellectual property.

The struggle of the oppressed people of the Third World is inseparable from the demand for devolution and self determination in that it is struggle for global democracy in the ultimate sense. The practicality and

feasibility of the extension of the principle of self determination are questioned mainly by the advocates of global integration as one happy family under imperialism.

Self determination cannot exist in isolation from the international situation; and imperialism, while encouraging secession and civil war in some national questions, turns a blind eye to national oppression in its own backyard and in countries controlled by its stooges. A close study of inconsistent US policy on the national question and its encouraging, if not provoking, ethnic conflict in certain 'unfriendly' countries will show that the US and its allies have cynically manipulated national sentiment to imperialist advantage. It is therefore hard to separate the national question from the struggle against imperialism. The left has to take the initiative in defending the rights of oppressed nationalities and minorities so that imperialism does not gain a foothold in any country on the pretext of defending the rights of oppressed minorities.

The case for unity and closer collaboration between the peoples of the Third World is strong. Such unity is not possible with national oppression, and the expansion of the scope of self determination to cover ethnic minorities will reinforce democracy, enable devolution of power and strengthen the struggle of the Third World for political and economic freedom from imperialist exploitation and domination.

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# New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party and the Ukraine Conflict

*Discussion paper by the party's study group on the Ukraine crisis*

**Communists must always go into the whys and wherefores of anything, use their own heads and carefully think over whether or not it corresponds to reality and is really well founded; on no account should they follow blindly and encourage slavishness.**

*Mao Zedong*

*Rectify the Party's Style of Work" (February 1, 1942)*

To take the correct stand on any problem we should study the information before us and identify the core issues, and thereby recognize the true nature of the problem and visualize what the implications of our stand will be not only for the problem at hand but also a number of related matters which could be of far greater significance.

Let us face a few questions before we address the problem at hand.

- Is the conflict in Ukraine one mainly between Russia and Ukraine?
- What are the main contending forces?
- What are the interests at stake?
- Is it a conflict between two 'imperialisms'?
- Even if it is between two 'imperialisms' can Marxist Leninists simply denounce the contending parties and refuse to take sides?

To answer these questions, we should be clear about certain matters which the Party has repeatedly discussed and arrived at a clear position. If our findings contradict the stand of the Party, the Party should critically review its position.

There is common tendency to locate Putin at the core and based on that adopt a stand to support or oppose Russia. The Party has no illusions about Putin or his politics. Putin is a strong nationalist hostile to communism. He has harshly criticized communism and rejected Lenin and Stalin. He resents the breakup of the Soviet Union from a Russian nationalist perspective while also rejecting what the Soviet Union stood for before or after revisionism took hold.

We know that the fall of the Soviet Union led to Russia becoming a kleptocracy and face economic ruin under Yeltsin. Putin inherited it and made deals with the oligarchs without fundamentally changing the scheme of things. But the partnership between the state and the oligarchs was re-balanced to stabilise the Russian economy.

What is at stake right now, to a Marxist Leninist, is not Putin, regardless of how he is painted by others, for better or worse. The fight for socialism in Russia is for the Marxist Leninists and other progressive allies there, who are still a force in Russia. But that is not the central issue here.

*What is central is what US imperialism has been up to with the former Soviet Union, Russia in particular.* That has to be seen in the context of what the US did to Yugoslavia and later to Serbia, and still does in the Middle East and North Africa, and of course Latin America.

The US undermined the Russian economy with ease under Yeltsin so that Russia would soon be a vassal of the US. Russia was in the process also militarily weakened. But things changed since Putin assumed power. The economy recovered, thanks to the oil boom and fair management of state finances. Putin also resurrected Russia's defence. Some could see Russian imperialism at work. The party declined to take a dogmatic view and studied what Russia is and what imperialism is in the new context. *The Party is clear that Russia is capitalist, even a kleptocracy. But Russia's prospects to develop into an imperialist power are poor right now.* Much has been written on the subject in the Party's quarterly journal.

The Party should view events in Ukraine in the context of US imperialism closing in on Russia using NATO. Ukraine and Belarus are the last European



defence frontiers of Russia. *What is involved is not a matter of two superpowers racing to capture a piece of land.*

The US has since 1991 worked on isolating Russia and surrounding it with its servile NATO allies. By 1999, three former Warsaw Pact allies joined NATO. In 2004, three more Warsaw Pact countries and the three Baltic States, formerly of the Soviet Union, and one member of former Yugoslavia joined. The process continued. All former Warsaw Pact partners of the Soviet Union are now in NATO. Of countries born of Yugoslavia only Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia are not yet in NATO, and in a few years only Serbia may keep out.

Of former European Soviet Republics, Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus that adjoin Russia and Moldova are not in NATO. The US caused regime changes in the first two using its agents of subversion. But the colour revolution in Ukraine led to a corrupt regime that was electorally defeated soon after. A government friendly to Russia followed.

Moves by the US to draw Georgia into NATO were hampered by internal troubles amid which the autonomous Georgian states of South Ossetia and Abkhazia sought to secede in 2008. Russia retarded Georgia's NATO bid by recognizing their independence and militarily backing them.

### **US meddling and Ukraine**

In 2014 Obama's government got active in Ukraine to facilitate a fascist coup called the Maidan revolution. (Ukraine is the only former Soviet state in which neo fascists are a strong political force.) The coup government promptly declared its intention to join NATO (which it strangely got written into the new constitution). The neo-fascists acted to crush by force pro-Russian Crimean 'autonomists' and ethnic Russians and other minorities, especially in the industrialized south and east, and to downgrade the status of the Russian language (spoken by 30% of the people) and widely used in the country. Russia responded by encouraging Crimea (a strategic peninsula, once part of Russia 'gifted' to Ukraine in 1954 by the pioneering revisionist Khrushchev, himself a Ukrainian) to hold a referendum to secede from

Ukraine. Predominantly Russian-speaking Crimea voted overwhelmingly to leave Ukraine.

Today's Ukraine crisis grew out of US policy to isolate and weaken Russia since 1990. The idea was that Ukraine, controlled by US clients, will be a NATO military springboard to strike at the heart of the Russian Federation, while Ukraine's industrial and agricultural resources enrich Western investors. Thus, from early on, the US invested heavily in client-building among 'civil society groups' and malleable political parties and leaders, in western Ukraine, around Kiev especially. It paid early dividends in 2004: the 'Orange Revolution' installed a pro-US-EU regime. But corruption scandals and mismanagement brought the regime to an early end in 2006. The West lost its foothold in Ukraine in the elections of 2010, and reactivated its 'direct action' fronts with a fresh agenda. Neo-fascists seized power in 2014 through violent demonstrations, vandalism, armed assaults and mob violence to establish a dictatorial junta, comprising neo-liberal politicians seeking closer ties with NATO and neo-fascists and violent nationalists out to persecute ethnic Russians and other minorities.

The coup, besides leading to Crimean independence and reunion with Russia, also led to the predominantly Russian speaking Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic in Donbas region declaring independence. In that context, the West resorted to dirty tricks to discredit both the separatists and Russia. <sup>2</sup>

Russia sought to settle with Ukraine based on assurances of security and arrived at the Minsk Protocol of 2014, whose ineffectiveness led to Minsk II in 2015. But the Ukrainian attitude was negative, while Russia as late as 2022 January called for fulfilment of the Protocol of 2015. <sup>2</sup>

## **Concluding Summary**

Let us now return to the questions raised earlier:

- Is the conflict in Ukraine mainly between Russia and Ukraine?
- What are the main contending forces?
- What are the interests at stake?

- Is it a conflict between two ‘imperialisms’?
- Even if conflict is between two ‘imperialisms’ can Marxist Leninists simply denounce the contending parties and refuse to take a stand?

*The conflict is between the US and Russia, with the Ukraine government as a US proxy.*

*The Russian interest at stake is the security of Russia against encirclement by NATO rather than control of all or part of Ukraine.*

*The US-sponsored coup of 2014 was designed to use Ukraine to intensify military pressure against Russia*

*It will be dogmatic to define Russia an imperialist and based on that treat any conflict with the US or its proxy as conflict between two imperialisms.*

The Party has rejected the thesis that Russia is imperialist, and is aware that Russia is at present not in a position to adopt an expansionist agenda. Even, for argument’s sake one considers it to be imperialist, its actions have to be seen in context.

Russia does not use socialist logic or language in its foreign affairs. When it failed to take the correct stand (as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya this century) imperialism gained (although to its eventual peril and great cost to its victims of aggression). Had it not been for Russian intervention in Syria, the US will now have a client state in Syria and be well placed to bully Iran and further humiliate Iraq. Russian backing for Nicaragua and Venezuela, regardless of Russian motives, is as important from an anti-imperialist perspective.

Let us consider the options before Russia.

1. *Do nothing and allow Ukraine to join NATO*
2. *Persuade Ukraine diplomatically or by threat to abandon the thought of joining NATO*
3. *Invade Ukraine in the event of its joining NATO*
4. *Launch a pre-emptive attack*

Russia was pushed to a defensive position by the expansion of NATO and ceaseless US attempts at regime change in former Soviet republics. In that

context the first option would be suicidal. The second was explored unsuccessfully by Russia since 2014. The third will be too late and too expensive. Thus Russia had no choice but launch a pre-emptive strike in Ukraine, without which Russia would face slow strangulation by US using NATO.

Defending Russian military action in Ukraine is not defending Putin or Russian capitalism. What is defended is action by a state that is under escalating threat from the US on several fronts, the most crucial being the military front.

NATO should have been disbanded in 1991, when there was no more a case for its existence. It has only served to destroy countries outside Europe and North America besides prolonging instability in Europe. It is the root cause of the Ukraine crisis and elimination of NATO is top priority for peace in Europe and elsewhere. A NATO declaration that it will not covet Ukraine should precede any call for Russian forces to withdraw.

It will be good for a Marxist of any description to look at the totality and prescribe possible options with their implications and subject it to discussion among anti-imperialists before rushing to praise or denounce the Russian action.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Party strongly urges an early end to the conflict based on:

- 1. Neutrality of Ukraine with necessary assurances of its not joining any military alliance that could threaten Russian security*
- 2. Ukraine recognizing the free will of the people of Crimea to re-join Russia, while the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics will be controlled by a joint Russia-Ukraine administration for a limited period and let them decide their future on the basis of right to self determination.*

3. *Russian assurance that it will not intervene in Ukraine or forcefully seize Ukrainian territory subject to Ukraine's protection of Russian speaking minorities against neo-fascists and the 'far right'*
4. *A Russia–Ukraine peace accord free of meddling by US imperialists or its agencies*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There was also the conspiracy to bring down the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 July 2014 just across the rebel held territory and blame it on the separatist rebels and Russia, although there was little for Russia or the pro-Russian Donbas rebels to gain from it. In 2018 Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad challenged the objectivity of investigations into the 2014 disaster. He rejected the findings of Dutch-led international team and asserted that Russia was being made a scapegoat for the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, in January 2022, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council said: "The fulfilment of the Minsk agreement means the country's destruction. When they were signed under the Russian gun barrel — and the German and the French watched — it was already clear for all rational people that it's impossible to implement those documents."

In February 2022, the Finnish President said "the most possible solution (to the current situation) could be the Minsk agreement to be fulfilled or that there would be significant progress in its implementation."

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# The Current Political Crisis in Sri Lanka

*S. Sivasegaram*

## **Origins of the Economic Crisis**

The main source of the crisis is the neoliberal economic policy adopted in 1978. The country has not looked back since, for its all-powerful executive presidency would put down all protest lawfully where it could and unlawfully where it could not.

The economy has been distorted by neoliberalism and its manifestations, including the total wrecking of the prospect of building a national economy by privatization of state enterprises, practice of open economy allowing unlimited import of luxury goods, and unrestricted inflow of private capital that did little to develop the country industrially. Free Trade Zones (now Export Processing Zones) followed encouragement of labour to seek employment in the Middle East. In 2020, two million out of a population of 22 million were employed abroad and around 200 thousand served in EPZs, denying the country of a quarter of its labour power, comprising a good part of the skilled and semi-skilled workers who could have contributed to industrial development.

Since 1978 the country's external debt rose owing to the open economic policy which boosted consumerism while failing to match it with industrial economic growth. Much of the foreign currency earnings went to consumer goods and luxury items, with direct and indirect impact on consumerism. Consumerism based on foreign credit and exported labour denied opportunity for investment in agriculture or industry.

Several economic and geopolitical commentators now say that opening up of the economy was premature, although once many overwhelmingly endorsed the open economic policy by contrasting it with the preceding frugal policy designed to conserve foreign exchange causing a dearth of

luxury goods besides shortages of staple food and fuel precipitated by a seven fold rise in petroleum price and two years of global drought in the 1970s. The policy of frugality was essentially wise and even necessary in the context of a country relying mainly on export of plantation produce to earn foreign exchange. Sri Lanka was also a net importer of grain and pulses. The government's notion of self-sufficiency had inherent weaknesses and created issues because it was interpreted as a clamp on all manner of imports, including some material essential for the industry.

The government was mauled at the polls in 1977 because of fresh public memory of shortages and long queues for bread and other goods amid false promises by the UNP including the pledge of 8 kg of cereal per week in place of the then uncertain 2 kg per head per week. The splits in the ruling coalition in 1975 and 1976 with the left going it alone at the elections that followed in 1977 humiliated the SLFP that led the now dead UF. The parliamentary left was decimated, but for Sarath Mutthetuwegama who entered parliament on a successful election petition, despite Jayewardene playing all the tricks in his book to avert it.

The UNP took full advantage of its 5/6 majority to introduce a new constitution with a powerful executive presidency and to systematically privatize the state controlled economic sector. To retain its huge parliamentary majority it prolonged the life of parliament by a full term, by a 'referendum' in 1982. While opening up the country to foreign businesses under a liberal import policy continued unhindered, there was little fresh investment in industry. Most investments were commercial ventures with short term profit in mind. Even the EPZs were dominated by foreign apparel manufacturers who sought to take advantage of the concessional import quota allocated to the country as well as the highly competitive manual skills in the region. Results of the reckless economic development policy took time to show. Local industry, including the state sector, withered and privatization and free trade strangulated any that withstood.

The government also targeted the Tamil minority using discrimination, police brutality and communal violence to foster communal tension, and with it grew Tamil militancy. In the name of fighting separatism and terrorism it distracted the population from worrisome economic issues.

The government quickly put down the trade union movement and working class protest by taking advantage of the state of shell shock of the opposition since the electoral defeat of 1977. The net outcome was a rise in ethnic tension, prolonged war, suppression of democracy, ruin of the economy and more privatization to fund the war. The political crisis made long term investors even more reluctant. Escalation of the war in the North-East was encouraged by India and resulted in Indian intervention and a weak solution to the national question in the form of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment which is still to be implemented properly, and has been undermined in various ways since passage through parliament.

Popular frustration with the prolonging of the war, aggravation of economic problems and the assertive executive presidency led to change of government in 1994. But that change altered very little nationally. The executive presidency remained, war escalated and economy stagnated. After the humiliation of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces in 1990, India kept a distance. War soon resumed in 1991, and India's then rival the US sneaked in under pretext of backing a peace process in 2001, while India did its mighty best to wreck the peace talks. Peace talks failed, thanks to the intransigence and dishonesty of both the LTTE and the government, besides Indian intrigue. A furious US used the pretext of its War on Terrorism to support the government against the LTTE, and India, now warming up to the US after the collapse of the USSR, joined in.

None of these helped to revive the weakening economy. War continued to slow down the economy, drain resources and escalate debt. Borrowing until 2006 was confined to government to government lending and loans by bodies such as ADB, IMF etc.

The Mahinda Rajapaksa government looked to capital markets in 2006 when IMF refused to help with loan commitments, and Sri Lanka issued international sovereign bonds (ISBs) to secure dollar-denominated loans, a method encouraged by powerful global interests since interest rates fell in the Global North. ISBs allowed financial autonomy, but at high interest rates and short repayment periods. As there was no restriction on spending the money borrowed, which could be used to carry out any project to the government's liking, successive governments made ISBs the chosen way to obtain foreign loans, particularly since the upgrade of



Sri Lanka to middle income status in 2007, which restricted the volume of concessionary loans on offer. In 2019 ISBs comprised approximately 47% of the total foreign loans of the country.

The US and India strongly supported Mahinda Rajapaksa government's war efforts that resumed in 2006. But the US held back on supply of arms in 2007 in order to exercise control over Sri Lanka. China came to the rescue at a critical moment in the war to subvert US plans and reinforce goodwill with Sri Lanka. This infuriated the US, already obsessed with a fear of rising Chinese influence in Asia. Its desire to punish Sri Lanka for war crimes soon after the end of the war had little to do with US interest in democracy or human rights.

The annually staged UNHCR's human rights theatre in Geneva has been a means to harass the government, which has not been free of grave fault, whenever it seemed to lack loyalty to the US. But human rights were soft pedalled during 2015–2019, when the UNP was in power. Tamil political leaders, however, insist that the US will secure justice for the Tamils in Geneva and elsewhere. India walked the tight rope of raising the hopes of Tamils without letting down the Sri Lankan government in Geneva.

### **The Current Crisis**

It was to be anticipated that the economy would face difficulties relating to the global economic impact of the COVID-19 'pandemic'. The government should have been ready for a fall in income from tourism, regardless of how well the country withstood the infection. The government took unduly harsh measures to control infection, thereby seriously hurting the local economy. It inflated mortality and infection rates to persuade people to vaccinate, for it to claim success in infection control. Bigger mistakes were made, like offering tax cuts when the economy faced trouble and thoughtlessly banning the import of synthetic fertilizer overnight, ostensibly to transit to organic farming. The import ban led to fertilizer shortage when farmers needed it most. Farmers protested in anger and, to placate them, the government ordered organic fertilizer from a reputed Chinese manufacturer, which the Agricultural Department analysts declared as contaminated with a hazardous bacterium. The supplier contested the claim with test reports by

independent European laboratories and took the matter to an international arbitrator. The government beat a retreat and paid compensation to the supplier, but without accepting fault and, interestingly, ordered a fresh consignment from the same supplier. Meantime, an Indian supplier of 'organic fertilizer' was identified, who really supplied pelletized ammonia fertilizer. Unfamiliar with the fertilizer, the farmers could not apply it properly and their paddy crop suffered. The catalogue of mistakes by the government was mostly the making of the President who counted on his circle of ill-informed advisors (the Viyathmaga group of 'intellectuals') and using armed forces to deliver civilian tasks including infection control.

It in the context of the huge foreign debt of the order of US\$ 50 billion with US\$ 7 billion needed to service the loan in 2022, foreign reserves were down to \$1.6 billion in March 2022 and fell to 0.5 billion in April, a bailout by the IMF was widely considered the only way out, regardless of the austerities that IMF credit entails.

Shortage of foreign reserves and mismanagement of funds meant that vessels carrying shipments of food, fuel and medicines were stranded in the harbour for shortage of funds to unload the cargo. Amid the chaos, the government messed up the schedule of import of fuel, while the petroleum refinery remained closed down. Uninterrupted supply of petroleum based fuel and coal is essential to sustain electric power and road transport, while households rely on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and kerosene for cooking. Mishandling of LPG import by securing a large stock of a highly volatile LPG mix led to a string of fire accidents at homes and restaurants. Withdrawal of unsafe LPG cylinders caused a huge shortage of LPG, while switching to kerosene was hard for shortage of equipment and kerosene, and use of firewood was impractical in urban areas. Production and supply chains of food items were severely disrupted by shortage of fuel.

There seemed to be an inexplicable change of heart of the US towards the Gotabaya Rajapaksa government, which has in turn worked hard to please the US and India since mid-2021. India grabbed the opportunity of the financial crisis to offer generous credit to purchase essential goods from India besides some currency swap deals in return for strategic

projects in Sri Lanka. However, downgrading of Sri Lanka by rating agencies such as Moody's added to difficulty in further borrowing to meet debt repayments. The devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee since early March and flotation of the currency has raised the cost of a US dollar from around 200 rupees to 350 rupees by late May. The move made in the hope of rescue by the IMF exacerbated the plight of the people, with soaring prices adding to persistent shortages of food, fuel and medicines.

Shortages and endless queues led to urban protest which struck root on the Galle Face Green (GFG), Colombo, close to the old Parliament, now Presidential Secretariat. Its slogan "Gota Go Home" demanded that the President and with him the Parliament should resign. Protests starting in early March with modest numbers swelled to thousands by the end of the month. Having failed to disperse protesters with tear gas, the President on 2<sup>nd</sup> April declared a nationwide public emergency. In fairness, the police and armed forces were instructed to refrain from use of excessive violence. Continuing shortages and long queues aggravated public anger, and countrywide mass protests met with a few instances of excessive police violence. Protests persisted with even private bus drivers, carpenters and fishers joining in. A 36-hour island-wide curfew failed to intimidate protesters, and other urban centres of protest sprang up. Trade unions threw their weight behind the protests in the island wide hartal (shut down) of 28<sup>th</sup> April and pledged a general strike starting May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Part of the protest moved close to the Prime Minister's official residence, the Temple Trees, on Galle Road near the GFG. The Prime Minister perhaps lost his calm. On 9<sup>th</sup> May, busloads of his supporters arrived at Temple Trees. Following a provocative address by him, they swooped on the protesters near Temple Trees and went on to attack the main site of the protest. There were injuries to protesters. Shelters and other constructions at the site were destroyed, while, not surprisingly, the police stood and watched. The Prime Minister promptly resigned.

This was followed by well-timed arson that destroyed properties including the ancestral home of the Rajapaksas and several key personalities of the ruling SLPP. In the aftermath of this orgy of anti-

government violence of dubious origin, with arson not hurting even a fly, the President who never agreed to resign slightly recovered courage. Amid political chaos that started weeks earlier with resignation of ministers and infighting in both the government and the main opposition parties, he found a new Prime Minister in Ranil Wickremesinghe, the sole (unelected) MP of the UNP. Ranil's appointment was received with glee by both the US and India, and one wonders who threw this buoy at the seemingly sinking President.

The President agreed to certain political terms including the repeal of the obnoxious 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment and restoration of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and thereby agreeing to slacken the Rajapaksa family's hold on power. But the debt crisis is far from over and the ragtag army of new ministers with scant reputation for integrity are unlikely to show a way out of the more crucial political crisis that is brewing.

### **Debt Crisis and Geopolitical Rivalry**

Economic crises open opportunities for external powers to expand economic exploitation and gain geopolitical control. In Sri Lanka's context, this implies India, the US and China, and of course US proxies.

The country is in the grip of a foreign debt trap, which was never an issue until the US chose to attack Chinese development loans to Sri Lanka. About half of the total foreign debt of the country comprises market borrowings through US- and EU-based ISBs. Other major lenders are Asian Development Bank (13%), World Bank (9%), China and Japan (10% each). Information on ownership of ISBs is not publicly revealed.

Sri Lanka has recently been under US and Indian pressure to negotiate with the IMF on restructuring and repaying its massive debt. But IMF structural adjustment demands the usual prescription of privatization, cutbacks in social safety nets and alignment of economic policy with Western interests, to the detriment of standard of living of the local working people, while widening the wealth and earnings disparity. The country will be eternally stuck in debt as the IMF is hostile to the concept of protective economic policies.

India extended a \$1 billion credit line to supply essential food and medicine. While the Sri Lankan government claimed that there no

conditions are attached to the loans, local analysts suspect a strong link with agreements offering Indian companies exclusive access to investments in the island.

The US with the open-ended Acquisition and Cross Services Agreement under its belt in August 2017, is still seeking to sign a Status of Forces Agreement, which would in effect make Sri Lanka a US military base. While US attempts to foist the US Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact failed owing to local protests, attempts at US control over land, transportation and communication infrastructure in Sri Lanka persist.

Sri Lanka's strategic location amid sea lanes of the Indian Ocean makes it vulnerable to the cold war now between China and the Quadrilateral Alliance (or Quad, comprising US, Japan, Australia and India) over curtailing China's influence in Sri Lanka and its right to navigation in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka is part of China's trillion dollar Belt and Road Initiative that includes the Hambantota Port and Colombo Port City.

Sinister motives cannot be attributed to inclusion of Sri Lanka in China's Belt and Road Initiative (B&R) involving over 140 countries and regions, with India, Japan and Taiwan as notable Asian absentees. The Quad has a special interest in Sri Lanka, mainly to disrupt Chinese influence, especially the B&R, besides US plans to encircle China and Indian paranoia about China threaten peace in the region, regardless of China's assurance that it has no military intentions in its harbour projects in Sri Lanka. But China is a potential imperialist power and its military presence is best avoided at any cost, while all aid programmes should like in all cases not be undertaken at the expense of Sri Lanka's national interests or at cost to its environment.

In this context of Sri Lanka as a potential theatre of geopolitical rivalry, the debt crisis is not just an economic crisis. The fear that a "staged default" could push Sri Lanka into an IMF bailout is real, with the added prospect of completing the island's integration with the US-dominated geopolitical and economic agenda.

Mahinda Rajapaksa governments' reputation of for corruption and their warmth towards China are twinned by pro-West ideologues and media persons. Warmth towards China has more to do with Chinese diplomacy

based on non-interference and unwavering support to friendly countries. But India readily attributes each of its failures to secure contracts in Sri Lanka to Chinese influence. Attacks on China for “supporting” the Rajapaksas in past years are somehow not barely matched in comments on the influence held by the US and India since Basil Rajapaksa, a US citizen, was brought in from the US to be made Minister of Finance, only to create a financial mess with his ill-advised monetary and tax policies and step down when he could not face Parliament.

### **The Protest Movement**

Government supporters readily claim that the entire protest was a conspiracy in which NGOs had a big hand. Not just NGOs, even dubious business and media sectors too had for undeclared reasons financially assisted the protest. But that cannot characterize the protest movement as it is a common vulnerability of any ‘apolitical’ mass protest movement. The undoubtedly spontaneous protest gathered a momentum of its own. There is predominance of urban middle class youth, and there has been, from the very outset moves from within to depoliticize protest. While that saved the protest from being hijacked by opportunist politicians, it also denied the protest opportunity to develop into a mass movement for democracy and social justice. Support and sympathy from trade unions and the general public from other parts of the country could not transform it into an all island movement.

A commendable feature of the protest movement is that it has in no way been parochial or unwilling to see the country as multi ethnic and multi religious. Nevertheless, the GFG protesters and adherents elsewhere could thus far not offer an alternative leadership with a vision or a viable political roadmap for mass mobilization. The country, amid growing confusion and chaos, risks heading towards a volatile political impasse. The protest movement to understand the complexity of the economic issues involved and break out of the paralyzing debt cycle need to see beyond domestic issues and the incessant news cycles of corporate media to study the oft overlooked but important global economic and geopolitical aspects of our problem.

Leaders of narrow nationalist political parties, while expressing support for the demand for the President to resign, had no thoughts for developing parallel movements among their respective electorates to dovetail into a national democratic movement for social justice. They remain hidebound by their parochialism and chained to their loyalty to foreign patrons.

### **Alternative sustainable approaches**

The young protesters who still demand President Rajapaksa's resignation are not alert to the global dimension of the Sri Lankan crisis. They have an oversimplified image of corruption and theft as the main causes of the problem, and it helps the local and foreign interests who still have a say in steering the course of the protests to keep it that way so that the campaign is not diverted by other political issues that could create problems in the aftermath the regime change that they desire.

The protesters are not encouraged to join growing global calls for debt cancellation, and restriction of capital market and for protective economic policies to save fragile economies and above all measures to prevent debt crises from occurring.

The GFG campaign has secured partial victory with the resignation of the Prime Minister. But the US has manoeuvred to replace him and his cabinet with its client and a pro-West cabinet. The government could be stabilized in the short run and there is no long term prospect for a stable government with the consumerist economic policies.

Redefining development is essential and its delivery demands the resolution of the national and democratic crises facing the country. It is not an easy task, but is essential for building a democratic anti-imperialist movement for national unity and social justice. Enabling that is the challenge facing the genuine left.

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# **National Report**

**Presented by the General Secretary of the Party at  
the 7<sup>th</sup> All Sri Lanka Congress of  
the Marxist Leninist New Democratic Party NDMLP**

15, 16, 17 April 2022, Matale, Sri Lanka

Comrades of the Presidium!

Comrade Delegates to the Congress!

Revolutionary Greetings to All

The 7<sup>th</sup> All Sri Lanka Congress of the Marxist Leninist New Democratic Party commences today. The Congress according to the Constitution of the party should have been held in mid-2020. But since the whole country has been clamped down in the name of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the holding of the parliamentary elections the Congress in mid-2020 prevented convening the Congress as scheduled in due time. The Party thus decided to hold the Congress in Matale in the Hill Country. The Central Committee appeals to the delegates who have arrived from various parts of the country to make this 7<sup>th</sup> Congress a success to debate the reports and proposals placed here and arrive at conclusions and resolutions.

## **Current Situation of the Country**

Severe crises in the political, economic and cultural spheres have aggravated to subject the people to grave consequences. The most affected are the vast majority of the population comprising the toiling masses of workers, peasants, fishers, daily wage earners and state and private sector employees. It is they who suffer the greatest pain to have access to their daily bread and other needs if life Essential food items and daily consumables suffer shortages and price hikes. Fuel and electricity are distanced from the people.



Education, health and hygiene are in disarray. The Rajapaksa family regime that projected Sinhala Buddhism to secure power is now desperate, and has reached the stage of admitting inability to do anything. We adherents of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought should view the causes for this pathetic situation through our global outlook. We should view the past development of the political, economic and cultural developments from a dialectical materialist standpoint.

## **The Sri Lankan Social Structure and its Development**

Sri Lanka has been an island nation in the Indian Ocean region with a three thousand years' history. It has been an agricultural country endowed with land, water and human resources, and had for long a feudal structure ruled over by monarchs. The Portuguese, Dutch and the British invaders in that order had since 1505 until 1948 held the people under colonial rule. The British, the last of them, had the entire island under their control for almost a century and a half. They planted tea and rubber on a large scale Indian labour to establish a massive exploitative economy and rake in huge profits.

Notably, there was no anti-colonial campaign or national liberation struggle worth a mention in Sri Lanka. A section of the population socially elevated itself by loyally serving the colonial rulers to become socially dominant among the Sinhalese and Tamils based on lands acquired by them and their elevated position in the caste hierarchy. They were the classes that backed the monarchies to become the descendants of the ruling clans and loyal subordinates of the colonial masters. They and their descendants later joined hands with imperialists and neo-colonialists to serve as their vassals and thus be loyalists of imperialism and comprador capitalist ruling classes.

The trade union movement that was born early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century grew alongside the multi-faceted growth of the working population. Besides, the left movement sprouted and flourished in the country. It was that left movement that initiated the anti-colonial movement in unprecedented fashion. During the time, Indian workers and peasants carried forward the independence struggle opposing British colonial domination over India.

Meantime, led by the Communist Party of China, the armed liberation struggle surged ahead in China. Likewise anti-imperialist struggles were going on in South and Southeast Asian countries as well.

What gave all of these struggles force and vigour was the victory of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia led by Comrade Lenin followed by the birth of the Soviet Union. The tremendous task carried out by Comrade Stalin and the people of the Soviet Union in socialist construction and in fighting fascism during the Second World War was memorable. Their impact helped to weaken the grip of British colonial-imperialist rule. As a result, the British rulers who were reputed for their divide and rule methods handed over state power in the name of independence to the upper class elite who were their local allies in order that they could sustain their exploitative plantation business in the long term. They provided and implemented the Soulbury Constitution and put into effect the bourgeois parliamentary system in order to protect it. The United National Party representing Sinhala and Tamil comprador capitalist classes took power after the 1947 General Elections.

The so-called independence transferred power to the UNP with feudal roots and loyalty to imperialism. The UNP surged forward as the comprador capitalist force in the bourgeois parliamentary system. Foreign imperialists nurtured and protected that party and the conservative Tamil elite classes.

By the mid-1940s changes began in the political landscape. The trade union movement expanded of and the influence of the left movement in it rose. The left movement was rooted in two competing ideological bases, and policies reflected the respective ideological bases. One was based on Trotskyism and the other on Marxism-Leninism. The former rejected the Soviet Union led by Comrade Stalin. The latter supported Soviet Union and Stalin. These two left approaches can be seen to persist in the ideological positions to this day.

From the early 1950s a group that left the UNP under the leadership of SWRD Bandaranaike, also from a feudal family, founded the Sri Lanka freedom Party. While the UNP had alien loyalties the SLFP was nationalist in stand. The SLFP adopted a national bourgeois class stand and came to power in parliament. Bandaranaike and later his wife Sirimavo Bandaranayake,

during the period of their rule, they took steps consistent with their class positions in upholding anti-imperialism and in eliminating the remnants of colonialism. They yielded benefits in the political and economic spheres. But they erred in their handling of the emerging national question. Nationalisation of foreign controlled businesses, economic self-sufficiency and non-alignment were need by the country. But imperialist forces joined hands with local comprador bourgeoisie to obstruct and deflect the trend.

## **The Rise of Neocolonialism in Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka has been under feudalism for many centuries before it went under European colonial rule for 4½ centuries to become a semi-colonial semi-feudal country in the name of independence. However, as said earlier, when the national bourgeois who came to power in the 1950s the political and economic reforms undertaken by them led to changes in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal structures. Meanwhile their positions of dominance were captured by neo-colonialism. US imperialism and neo-colonialism took the place held by British colonial imperialism. Under the guidance of the US, the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, World Trade Organization, the UN and its organs became operational spheres of neo-colonialism.

US imperialism guided the working of these operational spheres of neo-colonialism. Their toxic schemes made way for robbing the resources of Third World countries in novel ways. Weakened from within and without, the Soviet Union collapsed. Following that, neoliberalism made liberalization and privatization the practice in Third World countries. Individual countries became markets for monopoly capitalism. Paths were opened for the plunder of the resources of the countries. The resources needed by each country for its development, especially human resources, were blatantly plundered by multinational corporations under imperialist guidance.

## **The Constitution and Neoliberal Economics**

The constitution of 1978 which has been in effect for 44 years protects a neoliberal economy. It is under this constitution that presidential rule and personal dictatorship have been implemented. It was under this 44 years

long constitutional rule that liberalization and privatization were fulfilled. We have explained this in detail in each of the past six Party Congresses. The Party has continuously made public its views on the constitution and the accompanying economic ruin, and has resisted them.

In that respect, in the seven years since the Sixth Congress of the Party, Presidents have changed, but the constitution and the neoliberal economy that it engendered and the fascistic actions of the state to protect it have not changed. The Sirisena-Wickremasinghe government that came to power in 2015 introduced an amendment that allowed the Prime Minister to share some powers of the President. But it changed nothing. Liberalization and privatization continued. The country's existing debt burden increased further. Imports and consumption rose to make the country the hunting ground of market economics,

During the time, comprador capitalists and big capitalists accumulated more and more wealth. That was helped directly and indirectly by the Sirisena-Wickremasinghe led Good Governance regime. Like before, corruption proliferated with the assistance of state officials in high positions. The well-known Central Bank scandal worth 500 million rupees was presided over by the Governor of the Central Bank. Those involved in the scandal have been released and political elite who facilitated the act were not exposed or charged. Besides those hauled before the courts have been released. This fully exposed how law and justice function under capitalist rule.

## **The Decline and Crises of the Economy**

The Sri Lankan economy has not shown any advance in the past 44 years. Instead it has been on decline and has struck rock bottom. Besides, the mass of working people who constitute the majority are severely affected. Those who ate two meals a day are facing a situation in which they will eat just one meal and daily wage earners who were half starved with just a meal a day face the prospect of full starvation.

In 1978, Jayewardene openly declared his loyalty to imperialism by imposing on the people a new constitution, an open economy and privatization. None

who succeeded him deviated from his path. What is amusing is that the Chandrika Kumaratunga government that replaced the UNP governments led by Jayewardene and Premadasa and the Mahinda Rajapaksa government that came next followed on the footsteps of Jayewardene economically and politically. While there was a change in the family name of the Sinhala Buddhist ruling class elite in control, the path and the journey were just the same. At its peak, today the people have been pushed into a climate of grave economic crisis. The Gotabaya Rajapaksa government is going on along the path laid by Jayewardene, but more chaotically,

None of it is by chance or an act of revenge. The whole thing comprises systematic economic exploitation and political oppression imposed on the working people by the entire pro-imperialist capitalist ruling classes, implemented in the name of democracy, independence, right to vote and elections. This is what we call dictatorship under a bourgeois democracy.

## **The Total Collapse of the Economy**

We should view the reasons for the face down fall of the economy after forty four years of government under the Constitution of 1978 from a socio-economic stand point. The country has been agricultural with paddy as the main produce along with various subsidiary crops. Land, water and labour resources and climatic factors have been mostly favourable to the fulfilment of the food requirements of the country. Such a self-reliant economy was wrecked in a planned way during colonial rule, and lands in the hill country seized by White land owners. The British raked in massive profit by planting land to profit gathering tea, rubber and coconut in place of food crops. Meantime, they engaged workers of Indian origin in tea and rubber plantations. The plantations of the hill country, the workers there and their hard toil and very low wages bear witness even today to illustrate what the great genius Karl Marx explained about labour, wage, price and profit.

The colonialists while they destroyed agriculture did not introduce or develop industry in our country. They gave subsidized rice on ration to cheat the people and thereby destroyed local production and economic self-

reliance in a planned way. Meanwhile they imported for sale products of their capitalist enterprises, and propagated the view that this was a small country with a small population whose needs could be met by our commercial means. Such methodology was used not just here but also in other Asian, African and Latin American countries. Plundering resources and plundering people into poverty is the natural basis of imperialist capitalism. The growth and development of such capitalism is what we see before us as neo-colonialism with its gigantic crises.

At the time the country lost industrial production, and saw a gradual decline of its export economy. Exports of small industries, unable to compete, decayed and perished. This country, surrounded by an ocean and seas with fisheries resources in abundance, remains unable to develop them and profit from them. Its considerable progress in textile manufacture, that sector was allowed to fall to ruin with the arrival of privatization and liberalization.

Likewise through the import of some raw materials small factories were enabled to produce glass and metal ware for the use of the people. Employment opportunity and local industry advanced thereby. Likewise, there was advancement and growth in the manufacture of cement and paper. These are but a few examples. All of them were destroyed by the domination of imported foreign goods. The country was pushed into a state where it totally relied on import and consumerism. The people, pleased by liberal imports, failed to recognize the future effects and potential dangers. Our Party included, all genuine left forces repeatedly explained the dangers and raised objections.

It was through this liberalization and privatization that foreign capital entered the country. There are 14 Export Processing Zones operating in the region around Colombo, directly employing around 200 thousand, with many others who depend on the EPZs for a livelihood. Investment is by foreign capitalists in partnership with local big capitalists. Of the many goods produced in the EPZs the most important are made garments. Many young women and a considerable number of men work there for low wages and long hours. None of the Sri Lankan labour laws apply to them. The

right to a trade union is still denied to them. These matters have been discussed in the reports of earlier congresses.

Thus, the export of made garments leads export trade in recent years, pushing behind tea and rubber which occupied the top two spots previously. Likewise the export of fish and other seafood exports which were once significant have fallen considerably. Export of graphite with potential to earn foreign exchange too had fallen into decline. Likewise the manufacture of cement, chemicals, paper and rolled steel and handloom fabrics including batiks have been allowed to fall off only to be replaced by imported goods.

Planned cultivation and production could have fulfilled the national need for sugar. Sugar supply has been handed over to sugar importers with kickbacks for ministers and high officials in the same way paddy cultivation was undermined for the benefit of the rice import mafias. Likewise they made money out of import of garlic. The powerful corrupt hands of high ups in government are there in most imports. The truth is that the money thus made is money belonging to the people.

Thus, the tens of billions of rupees looted by those in the seats of power from ministers to high officials is invested at home and abroad in buildings and businesses and earnings are gathered on the quiet. Such people are like daylight robbers. Clad in clean white and seated in power, they would preach patriotism and Buddhist Dhamma, and rush to lecture on democracy, freedom and exercise of the ballot to toiling half alive masses who suffer hunger and starvation.

## **Sale of National Resources**

While liberal imports and consumption proceeded unchecked, massive indebtedness to foreign countries and their banks built up in the name of development. Besides investment in fields in which income could not be generated, leaders of government and ministers swindled large sums. A situation was created where capital and interest had to be paid back for the loans so accumulated. It became habitual for every government that came to

power to blame the previous government. The burden of credit escalated to bring us to this economic crisis.

Statistics say that the foreign debt of the country alone is US\$ 51 billion. But the total internal debt stood at US\$ 81 billion at the end of 2021.

It is impossible to settle this loan soon. Foreign loans are mostly obtained based on various kinds of advice and guidance. Selling the country's resources to secure loans has gone on without interruption. Many sectors that should have been developed to serve the country and people have been sold to foreign powers. They are moves for more such with the US, India, China and Japan in competition. With China granted control over Hambantota Harbour and Colombo Port City, India used them as pretext to obtain the West Container Terminal of the Colombo Harbour. Besides, it has recently made agreement to initiate projects in Trincomalee and three islands in the north worth a billion rupees. Likewise the US has made moves to take control over the Kerewalapitiya Power Station. As the present government has rejected the Millennium Challenge Corporation compact, the US is seeking to achieve those goals by other means.

Indian and US media conducted intense propaganda claiming Chinese dominance in the sale of such resources, investments and credit and claiming that Sri Lanka was becoming a Chinese colony. Imperialist and regional hegemonic designs were behind it. India and the US worked hard to point at Chinese domination to secure their respective spheres of dominance, and even succeeded in it. If a state fails to take the position that it is not willing to accommodate any power, it will only be granting permission for powers to dominate. What is deep in the minds of those who shout about Chinese dominance and the country becoming a Chinese colony is hostility to socialism and communism. Despite China and Russia having taken the capitalist path, they make false accusations against them based on anti-socialist thinking. The narratives are shamelessly repeated by local media.

The war caused by the national question was very expensive and contributed to the current crisis as much as the above actions and their consequences. The 30-year long cruel war was as wished by India and the West. Once their



aims were fulfilled they came together to guide and to contribute to the final conflict, and then pose off as pacifists and democrats. And not just the Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamils but also ordinary Sinhalese suffered much loss of life, destruction of property and displacement. The manpower of the armed forces was meanwhile raised to over 200, 000. Weapons were purchased to the value of trillions of rupees. While the 30-year war added substantially to the debt burden, the highest annual budget allocation is still for defence. It is all of these together that have become massive burdens on the people and affect them and their livelihood. Among them, workers, peasants, fishers and daily wage earners as well as private and state sector employees face a range of issues. Yet there is reluctance to think of their political and economic causes and of alternative policies.

After all the calamity, there is only talk about change of government and change of personality but nothing about changing the ruinous constitution. The major parties are only interested in transforming it into the voice of the masses who have taken to the streets. It should be noted that the opposition parties are concentrating on the seats of power and not about the salvation of the country and the people.

Examining the foregoing will confirm that the basic contradiction of the country is the class contradiction and that the main contradiction is the national question. The economic crises that have swollen to gigantic proportions and their underlying factors illustrate the main contradiction i.e. the contradiction between capitalism and the vast majority comprising the toiling masses. We have clarified the development of these contradictions during the All Sri Lanka Congresses of the Party.

## **The National Question**

Sri Lanka is an instance of how imperialism and the capitalist classes have used the national question to serve their interests. We have seen in our own experience how imperialism has developed contradictions among the people of the countries of the Third World into hostile contradictions and conflicts in order to exploit their resources.

The Party has clarified that there are four nationalities, namely the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Hill Country Tamils, and other national minority communities. It has also emphasised that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic country and urged the importance of secularism. Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism has been well used by the ruling classes to serve their needs and interests. The contradictions have evolved from communal violence to military oppression to cruel war. These matters have been debated and conclusions arrived at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> congresses held after the war ended.

The position of the Party has been that the basic rights to livelihood of minority nationalities can be assured in their traditional homelands through regional autonomy, autonomous regional structures and other such arrangements based on the right to self determination within a united Sri Lanka. This stand of the Party on the national question should be taken among the Sinhalese people who have been misled by chauvinism. Likewise, the stand of the Party should be emphasised among the Tamil people immersed into Tamil narrow nationalism. Further, the stand of the Party on the Hill Country Tamil nationality should be taken amid the Hill Country Tamil people to expose their reactionary leaders who persuade them to line up behind chauvinistic ruling class parties. It should also be taken among the Muslim working classes through a sensitive approach to expose the identity politics that is being propagated among them based on religious culture. The position of the Party should also be clarified to national minorities such as Malays, Burghers and the Aththo.

Thus, it is important that the stand of the policy on the national question at conceptual, theoretical and practical levels and its experiences are expanded upon and taken among working people. The consistent defiance of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist opposition and rejection of Tamil narrow nationalism by the Party should be firmly carried forward. Likewise it is important to make clear that regionalism and identity political outlook are hostile to the ideology of Marxism Leninism and class struggle.

Making political gain by sharpening religious contradictions to cultivate bitterness among people also continues in practice. There are instances when

Sinhala Buddhist religious sentiments have been whipped up to launch attacks on people of other faiths and kill them. It is forces serving capitalist interests and political parties representing them that are behind the events.

The Party has always taken the stand of class struggle in devising its policies. We can see that, in practice, all factions that highlight racial, religious and regional interests to build vote banks have their elitist class interests in common. Each parliamentary political party decides policies with racist, religious and regionalist thinking in mind and in accordance with its class interests. Thus, we should arrive at decisions in any issue with our class stand as basis and yardstick. We should at the same time be alive to the identity and uniqueness of the races, languages and regions.

## **The Five Contradictions of Sri Lanka**

We have during earlier Party Congresses clearly debated contradictions concerning class, race, caste and gender related contradictions in Sri Lanka and put forward our position on those contradictions and oppression based on them.

We have acted according to policy based on those positions. Although the Party has gained experience in carrying them forward, when looking at specific instances, we can recognize shortcomings in our work. We also see the impact of neoliberal thinking based on globalization on our work.

The class contradiction and class oppression are handled very subtly by capitalism. Class exploitation and oppression among Hill Country plantation workers is blatant. The dark skinned people who took the place of the White companies that were nationalised did not show any mercy in their exploitation. Although it is claimed that the demand for thousand rupees wage and the struggle for it have succeeded, capitalist exploitation and domination have not changed in any way.

Likewise is the plight of female and male workers in the Free Trade Zones. They are subject to much exploitation through low wages and long hours. Women workers in garment manufacture are cruelly exploited. These are important instances. But class exploitation and oppression are severe

throughout Sri Lanka. Capitalism uses hundreds of ways to conceal and deflect them. Theoretical lessons of Marxism on wage, price and profit clearly point out capitalist exploitation. Hence it is important to gain proper explanations and practical experience of them

On the matter of national contradiction and oppression, we have in all earlier congresses addressed it as a main contradiction and unambiguously placed our position ideologically and politically. However, it should be noted that in carrying forward our policies we have had to clash with Tamil nationalism which persists as a mot reactionary entity. It is important to draw a distinction between reactionary Tamil nationalism and national oppression. Meantime, our practice should be to mobilize on the basis of the right to self determination the working classes among oppressed nationalities and bring to fore those forces as a class.

The Party has ample experience on caste contradiction and oppression, and has a clear outlook based on class struggle in the struggle against caste oppression. The party has acted with much prudence in overcoming casteist dominance, especially in the North, and overcoming it.

There has nevertheless been the criticism that the Party has erred based on a parliamentary electoral outlook. Criticism has arisen in certain quarters that such errors had occurred during its involvement in elections. It is important to debate these matters. A dialectical view of caste contradiction and a class struggle based stand are essential to such debate. In this context, a close look is necessary on the caste structure, the persistence of casteist thought and their social impact. A clear view of the changes that took place in the past 50 years is also important.

Another contradiction that the Party has clarified is gender oppression faced by women as a whole. Marxism has clearly expounded the origin and development of oppression of women from a historical materialist perspective. Comrade Lenin has explained gender contradiction and oppression in depth and from a clear perspective of class struggle. Besides, the status of women in every respect in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic was cultivated towards heights of excellence via the socialist structure.

Likewise in under socialism in China during the era of Mao, the status of women was upheld as “holders of half the heaven’.

But in the capitalist world, under post-feudal capitalism and under imperialism, women continued to face harsh class oppression besides discrimination, inequality, exploitation of labour and repression, Capitalism at every level rejects and deflects Marxism, socialism and class struggle. In the process concepts of ‘pure feminism’ and NGOs for their propagation proliferate. It should be noted that there is thus obstruction of politicization of women and prevention of their entry to working class politics.

Marxism clarified that capitalism which emphasises on exploitation of the labour of women and their sexual exploitation grew out of private property while male chauvinism struck root in class contradictions. This state of affairs was linked with religious culture under feudalism to become male chauvinist practice. Their impact on social thought persists, and it can be seen that women are granted secondary status in every sphere. Only through a Marxist world outlook can these be seen clearly, and alternative practices developed. Debate on these matters is important within the Party.

## **Cultural Hegemony in Our Context**

When we consider the four contradictions named above, the oppression relating to them and their spheres of operation we can see the dominant role of culture in establishing them. Utterances like “Whatever said, we cannot change or lose our culture” can ordinarily be heard in common conversation. What such culture has to be seen through a Marxist perspective. Nothing is wrong with adopting cultural feature that emphasise humanism and human equality.

But it is the duty of Marxist Leninists to oppose and repudiate ideas that seek to protect reactionary thought in the name of ancient tradition. That is necessary in the current situation. It is through conducting such activity that we can gain a multi-faceted view of the grip of the dominant ideology in the different spheres of our society, and identify the class origins of that ideology. In this matter it is important for Marxist Leninists to gain a clear

view of the matter and generate a Marxist understanding of the relevant theory and practice.

In our social environment with conservatism and traditionalist cultural still dominant, imperialist cultural hegemony, aided by modern technology, began to penetrate forty four years ago as part of the open, privatized neo-colonial economic thrust. Under the appealing slogan “the whole world is a global village” neoliberal capitalist thoughts were taken to the people through the media of art and literature. National literature and art forms were gradually enfeebled. Their dominance was developed through modern means such as social media and mobile phones. While they also became platforms for social decay, misconduct and criminal acts, they are carried forward jointly with traditionalist culture and serve to destroy social interest and humanism. Be it the cinema, video or mobile text, the content is delivered to intoxicate people and obstruct thinking. It is important to create awareness against these trends. Meantime, decisions need to be taken about using modern scientific and technological advances in the journey towards the liberation of working people.

Art and cultural resources in Tamil, Sinhala and English have developed in abundance in Sri Lanka and have belonged to the country and the people. While they represented our cultural features, there has been the practice of identifying their progressive pro-people aspects and deliver them to the people. It is necessary for us to conduct people’s art, literature and cultural activities on a wider basis to defend them against demolition by the poisonous hands of imperialist neocolonial culture.

## **Environmental Pollution and its Cause**

The contradiction between the environment and capitalism is a fifth contradiction that we need to pay particular attention to. The earth has been polluted as never before so that its impact adversely affects humanity in many ways. Imperialist media conducts the propaganda that human conduct is responsible for environmental pollution. By this they attempt to conceal that capitalist production driven by urge for profit and super profit is the

basis of environmental pollution. Capitalist and imperialist forces do not hesitate to plunder human resources and vandalise nature. As a result they pollute the earth in many ways. They sacrifice land, water, air and the sky to their greed for profit, thereby causing pollution and shortages.

Natural resources have been the fundamental contributors to human development. But their exploitation and depletion for capitalist greed for profit has badly affected humanity. But, to deflect attention away from its own plunder of resources and ruining of nature, capitalism points to population and fiercely campaigns that it is the cause of the problem. Beyond the lie that human conduct is responsible for global warming and its ruining of the human condition is the truth that capitalist production and its poisonous emissions that are responsible. Besides, the cruel wars and the proliferation of weapons that happen in the interest of imperialist plunder of resources have played a leading role in the deterioration of the environment. Thus we should recognize that imperialism is the prime cause for the pollution and ruination of the environment.

Comrades!

Thus far the situation concerning matters pertaining to the economic, political and social spheres of Sri Lanka have been put forward. The reason why they have been presented briefly is that we have in the six all Sri Lanka Congresses thus far have put forward the basic policies and the ideological positions relating to them. This report considers that there is no need to change their bases. But their course of development and the new conditions that they have led to should be debated by this Congress based on this report. Likewise new and alternative ideas if any should also be debated.

### **National Democracy – National Economy – Self Determination**

In past Congresses, we identified the current period as one of New Democratic revolution based on the Sri Lankan social structure and the class forces in action. We also declared that it was only through the completion of that phase that we can secure and sustain socialism as identified by Marxism

Leninism Mao Zedong Thought. There can be no alternative to the Party's ultimate goal of Communism as envisaged by Marxism through socialism.

Hence, in the long journey to secure and sustain socialism, firstly the period of New Democratic revolution should be enabled and established. The path of mass revolutionary struggle is the basis for it. The fundamental force for its delivery comprises the workers, peasants, agricultural labour, daily wage earners, fishers and state and private sector employees. Mobilization of these working people and mass struggle will play a strategic role in the long journey for social change.

While traversing the long path towards the goal, it is important to unite all working people and their socio-political forces among them. Thus, there is need for a common programme through which National Democratic forces can be united. Also, there are three matters, namely national democracy, national economy and national self determination, that need be emphasized in the common programme. Other matters will be supporting features.

National democracy cannot be the bourgeois democracy put forward by the ruling elite forces. It has to be a democracy for the entire people. It is important that such a people's democracy should invite views from among the people, i.e. the vast majority of the population comprising the working people. Thereby, views have to be obtained from the entire people of Sri Lanka, regardless of race, religion, language, region, caste and gender.

Using those views, a national council comprising patriots, educationalists, specialists and political party representatives should be established. The council should get the new draft constitution produced by competent experts in a way that it fully reflects the aspirations of all people and nationalities. The draft should be taken among the people to secure due approval. Our stand is that only a constitution that is created by such methodology can be fruitful and beneficial to the country and the people of country, especially the working people.

The representatives emerging under such a constitution should be elected by democratic means and administer government democratically. The new constitution should be free from the clutches of neocolonial liberalism and



have provisions for the people of the country to manage their resources. Progressive and democratic forces should be particularly cautious that the country should in no way be guided by big capitalists and comprador capitalists.

An economic programme should be drawn up that could mobilize all the resources of the country under such conditions and be implemented with public approval. Steps should be taken to restore to the country all its wealth that has been taken out of the country. Likewise, the human labour resources of the country should be restored to the country. All agriculture, industry and small industry that once contributed to national production should be resumed. Local production, including those by agriculture, fisheries and small industry should be advanced through modern technological developments.

Tea and rubber cultivation which once dominated the export economy should be reformed. Foreign currency earnings should be enhanced through the collaborative participation of the plantation workers by elimination of hindrances by the obstacles and disruptive activities of the private sector.

Likewise, the exploitation of the labour of our workers by multinational companies to make super profits should be brought under control, and fair wages and welfare of the workers should be legally protected. Meantime all land granted to foreign companies should be recovered and put to use for production.

Thus, a climate should be created which transcends differences of race, religion and region in the drafting of a plan for a national economy.

In order to define national democracy and design a national economy, the national question should be politically resolved. The national question has for long been part of Sri Lankan history. It has been cultivated by foreign colonists and local ruling classes from time to time to serve their needs of political power. The response in the North to Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism in the south was to use it to cultivate Tamil nationalism as narrow nationalism. The tragedy caused by them in the South and in the North and

East is still in fresh memory. Their effect on working people continues as a long saga.

The fallout of the 30 years long war has also contributed to the current crises. Thus we urge a solution based on the right to self determination for the national question confronting the nationalities. Chauvinists tell the Sinhalese public that self determination is secession. The JVP which parades with a leftist mask and some who call themselves leftists too fear self determination by failing to understand the national question in terms of class struggle. They tend to adopt a Trotskyist approach to self determination.

But the Party, with Marxism Leninism Mao Zedong thought as ideology, endorses the principle of self determination. It has recognized the national question as the main contradiction and source of national oppression and has constantly urged the solution of the national question. It reiterates in this Congress too that position, which has been explained in the journals, books and other publications of the Party.

In the context of the spread of the current crisis and the rising expectations of the people, the parliamentary system of the past has not shown an ability to solve the problems of the country and the people. The third constitution that has been in existence since 1978 and the executive presidential system that came with it have failed. The programme of the Party to explain this to the people needs to be carried forward. This Report appeals to the Seventh All Sri Lanka Congress to conduct the relevant broad based debates and decisions for that purpose.

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# Resisting MCC in Nepal

The Communist Party of Nepal (Revolutionary Maoist) sent us a copy of its statement on MCC in Nepal. We publish it here as it is most relevant to Sri Lanka, on which the US is still keen to impose an MCC compact, despite repeated rejection by governments in the face of public protest.

On 27<sup>th</sup> February 2022, the Nepal Parliament ratified the \$500 million compact between MCC and the Government of Nepal despite mass protests against it. Mass protest was jointly organised by the Communist Party of Nepal, NCP Mashal, CPN Revolutionary Maoist, Nepal Communist Party, Scientific Socialist Communist Party, NCP Maoist Centre Socialist, Deshbhakta Janaganatrantrik Morcha and Rastriya Janamorcha United. Support grows for resistance to the MCC along with dissent in parties of the 'Left' that are partners in government. The compact was pushed through by US arm twisting with senior US officials warning in February 2022 that the US would be forced to review relations with Nepal unless the MCC grant was approved by the Nepali parliament, prompting the generally reticent China to ridicule the grant as a gift with an ultimatum. But opposition persists. On 15<sup>th</sup> June, nine Nepali communist parties demanded cancellation of PM Deuba's visit to the US. [<https://english.khabarhub.com/2022/15/257669/>]

The statement by CPN Revolutionary Maoist is preceded below by excerpts from a comment by Dipak Gyawali, a hydropower engineer, political economist, academician of the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, Minister of Water Resources (2002–2003) and former chair of the Nepal Water Conservation Foundation in 'The Third Pole' of 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022 [<https://www.thethirdpole.net/en/energy/biggest-us-aid-project-mcc-nepal-created-turmoil/>].

## Observations by Dipak Gyawali

The MCC has to be looked at against this global background. US political and foreign policy circles had often criticised the ineffectiveness of both

USAID and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank – even though US interests were dominant within them, especially after the end of the cold war. But it was only after the September 2001 attacks that US President George Bush formalised the MCC as a new aid agency, bypassing USAID and other Bretton Woods 1 outfits. Documents...make it amply clear that MCC is the soft arm of an Indo-Pacific Strategy aimed at isolating China, Russia and Iran.

Neither Nepal's aid-addicted finance ministry nor its politicians leading the government bothered to seriously examine the weaponisation of aid as they signed multiple MoUs and agreements...in 2012. They woke up only after civic voices began to protest against its many provisions that....ranged from clauses putting the agreement above Nepali laws; of exempting MCC officials from prosecution under Nepali laws; of not going against US policies...; of subscribing to US values such as economic liberalism even though Nepal's constitution defines the country as "socialism-oriented"; of exporting Nepali hydropower to a monopsony market in India, rather than using it for Nepal's own commerce and industry; and of bypassing Nepal's established transmission line building authority – the Nepal Electricity Authority – to create a new US-controlled outfit.

Given the wide social and political polarisation the MCC story has generated ...it is hard to say if it has achieved any of its objectives, or what those objectives even were. The economics of the project make little sense. The diplomatic pressure by the US, Chinese taunts and the extraordinary clauses that seemingly override Nepal's sovereignty present obvious problems for accountability and transparency. Most problematically, the opaque manner in which it has been shoved through makes a mockery of democracy.

As the single biggest aid project in Nepal in recent years, the transmission line has already become a lightning rod for strong opinions. As it progresses, and the many issues of implementation, financing and accountability become more apparent, it is likely to raise more controversy, not less. This is an ominous start for the US's Indo-Pacific strategy in Nepal, and even more problematic for Nepal itself.

## **Statement by CPN Revolutionary Maoist:**

### **To repeal the treacherous MCC agreement Let's raise the struggle to a new height!**

Respected Masses of the People,

The Government of Nepal and the MCC (Millennium Challenge Corporation) of the United States signed in 2017 a treacherous agreement that said to provide Rs fifty-six billion for the expansion of power transmission lines and roads in Nepal. And, the drum was beaten that this agreement is a very much advantageous, infallible medicine and the cure for Nepal's development and poverty alleviation.

There has been a lot of conspiracy and manoeuvring to get this compact approved by the parliament.

The protests against the agreement have been going on continuously all across the country. Now, the situation has reached a turning point.

Why is the MCC compact a treacherous one? It is because:

1. This compact is not intended for the prosperity and poverty alleviation of Nepal. The so-called grant is based on the objective of attacking Nepalese national independence and looting Nepal's national wealth by entrapping her in the web of neo-colonialism.
2. The MCC is an integral part of the Indo-Pacific strategy related to the US Department of Defense and the security umbrella, not a pure financial grant. This is what the US officials themselves have been saying. The main purpose of this agreement is to misuse Nepali land to encircle China and to make Nepal a military battlefield.
3. This treacherous compact is against Nepal's non-aligned foreign policy and the principles of Panchasheel. If it is approved by the parliament, it could pose a serious threat that Nepal may have to remain under the US security umbrella forever.
4. The MCC compact is above the law of Nepal. It states that the compact laws will prevail over the Nepalese laws, in case there is a conflict

between them, and it will also be applicable for future US laws as well. This is a serious challenge to Nepal's national sovereignty and self-respect.

5. Extremely stringent conditions have been imposed on Nepal in this compact. For example, Indian acknowledgment has been made mandatory to implement this compact, Nepal is made ineligible to audit the MCC account, some provisions of the project will continue even after the expiry of the project period, the Nepalese law cannot punish any MCC staff in case of unlawful offenses, and no amendment will be made to this compact, etc. These are severe challenges to our national sovereignty.
6. When opposition to such an agreement is growing in Nepal, the US officials including the US Assistant Secretary of State have openly warned that, if the Nepalese parliament does not ratify it, they will see the Chinese hand in it and will cut off all aids and grants to Nepal.

Thus, given the above facts, it is clear that the MCC compact is against the people and the nation. But the Prime Minister of the coalition government led by the Nepali Congress, subservient to the US imperialism, has turned a blind eye to the MCC compact and says that it is a purely economic aid and, if not ratified, will tarnish the international image of the country.

Patriotic masses of the people,

At present, the question of the protection of national independence has become desperately serious and sensitive. In this situation, our party heartily appeals to all the patriotic people and leftist parties who have taken to the streets to raise the struggle to a new height. At the same time, we request the patriotic parliament members to stand firm for the repeal of the treasonous MCC compact.

*Date: February 26, 2022.*

*Central Office*

*CPN (Revolutionary Maoist)*

### **NDMLP's Revolutionary May Day Call Mobilize to defeat the ruinous economic structure and achieve working people's power**

The New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party has planned to hold its May Day activities on 1<sup>st</sup> of May in Vavuniya giving primacy to the Party slogan "Working people unite, let us destroy the disastrous economic structure and mobilize on this Revolutionary May Day for working people's power"

The May Day procession will start at 2.30 p.m. from the Old Bus Station, Vavuniya and proceed to the Lions Sports Club grounds where the May Day rally will commence at 4.00 p.m.

The meeting will be chaired by Comrade K Selvam Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary of the Party and Independent Group member of the Valikamam East Pradehyasabha. Addresses will be by Comrades SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the Party, V Mahendran, National Organizer, S Thevarajah, Politburo member, SN Krishnapriyan, International Organizer, N. Pradeepan, Secretary of Vanni Districts, David Suren, Hill Country Regional Secretary, Mohanadharshini representing the Hill Country Mass Organization for Women's Liberation Thought, Seba Mohan representing the Hill Country Mass Organisation for Human Rights, S Pannerselvam representing the Progressive Democratic Teachers Union, Saba Thanujan, representing the Jaffna District Mass Organisation for Human Rights, P Chandrapathman representing the Vavuniya District Mass Organisation for Human Rights, and S Mahendran, representing the Road Maintenance Workers Union. Revolutionary songs will be sung following the. Comrades T Sriprakas and S Mohanraj will comper the programme.

The Party declared the following as May Day demands.

- Drive out the rulers who wrecked the manufacturing economy.

- Drive out the Gota-Mahinda rule that represses the people by increasing the prices of essential goods.
- Let us unite to create a constitution for the working people.
- Let us struggle for the right of workers to an 8-hour work day, rest and health.
- Let us unite all working people by emphasising the right of nationalities to self determination.
- Let us oppose all chauvinist oppression of the Tamil nationality including the seizure of land in the North and East.
- Let us struggle for the land and housing rights of the Hill Country Tamils by emphasising their rights as a nationality.
- Let us oppose the chauvinist oppression of the Muslim nationality.
- Let us struggle hard to oppose all forms of oppression of women.
- Let us continue in our struggles against all oppressive laws including the Prevention of terrorism Act.
- Let us struggle for a government scheme to safeguard the rights of peasants and fishers.
- Let us struggle to create a new system that will place the plantation sector in the hands of the plantation workers.
- Let us struggle for food security, essential needs and democracy.
- Let us drive away the Rajapaksas who rob the Employees Provident Fund and the Employees Trust Fund of the workers.
- Let us drive away the comprador-big capitalist government that sells the national resources to the US, Indian and Chinese big powers.

## **Is it luxury life for you and death by hunger for us?**

A call was made for massive mass struggle in the morning of Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April opposite the main Jaffna bus station. The Secretariat of the Northern Regional New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party expressed its support and participation in the protest with slogans and banners on the theme “Is it luxury life for you and death by hunger for us?” drawing attention to shortages and price hikes of essential goods.



4<sup>th</sup> February 2022

## **The Position of the New Democratic Marxist Leninist Party on Events in Ukraine**

The Party views events in Ukraine in the historical context of US imperialist efforts to bully Russia using NATO since the fall of the Soviet Union. In this context the Party takes serious note of what US imperialism did to Yugoslavia and later Serbia, and still does to countries of the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America. The Party identifies the conflict in Ukraine as one between the US and Russia, with the Ukraine government as a US proxy.

The Party is of the view that Russia was forced to a defensive position by ceaseless expansion of NATO and US-backed regime change in former Soviet republics. It views the neo-fascist coup of 2014 in Ukraine as the direct source of the current crisis. It notes that the coup government encouraged anti-Russia, anti-Russian activities of its neo-fascist partners, and has been encouraged by the US and NATO to join NATO. The bid to join was heavily encouraged under President Biden since early 2021.

Russia, based on its security concerns, consistently urged Ukraine to abandon plans to join NATO. It also wanted Ukraine to honour the Minsk Protocol of 2014-15 especially in the interest of peace in the predominantly Russian-speaking Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic in the Donbas region, which declared independence following the coup. Russia which recognized the secession of Crimea after a referendum refrained from recognising Donetsk and Luhansk Republics in the interest of peace. Increased provocation since early 2021 in breach of the Minsk Protocol and assertion of will to join NATO precipitated a crisis leaving Russia with four options:

- 1. Do nothing and let Ukraine to join NATO*
- 2. Persuade Ukraine diplomatically or by threat to give up on NATO*
- 3. Invade Ukraine if it joins NATO.*

#### *4. Launch a pre-emptive attack.*

The first meant surrender to US imperialism. The second pursued since 2014 proved futile. The third would be too late and too costly in lives. Thus Russia had no choice but launch a pre-emptive strike, without which it would face slow strangulation by US using NATO.

The party recognises as genuine Russia's concern about encirclement by NATO in the context of actions by US imperialism and about US intentions in Ukraine. The Party supports the desire of the majority of Ukrainian people for peace, and warns against viewing the issue as Russian expansionist aggression or as rivalry of two superpowers to capture a piece of land.

The Party is clear that Russia is capitalist and does not endorse Putin or capitalist Russia. It only defends an inevitable response of a state facing rising threat from the US on several fronts, most crucially the military front. The Party thus strongly urges an early end to the conflict based on:

- 1. Neutrality of Ukraine with assurance of its not joining any military alliance that could threaten Russian security;*
- 2. Ukraine's acceptance of the freewill of the people of Crimea to re-join Russia, while the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics are monitored by a joint Russia-Ukraine administration for a limited period to let them decide their future based on their right to self determination;*
- 3. Russian assurance that it will not intervene in Ukraine subject to Ukraine's protection of the rights of Russian speaking minorities against neo-fascists and the 'far right';*
- 4. A Russia-Ukraine peace accord free of meddling by US imperialism or its agencies.*

[Statement issued by Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the NDMLP on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022]

# *St Anthony*

*S Sivasegaram*

One needs not make an appointment to see him  
for he is always there, standing.  
His name is famed in the neighbourhood and beyond.  
Many go to him to tell him their woes.  
Much has been said about him  
but he is a man of few words.  
I have never heard him speak.  
They say he is a Catholic.  
Yet Hindus, Buddhists, Protestants, Muslims  
and even nonbelievers approach him.  
There is ample room in his ears  
for everyone's sorrows.  
Whether they got what they asked for or not  
they go to him again and again.  
Such is their affection for him.

\*

You who exploded a bomb in the house he protects  
in the hope that you will go to heaven  
by killing infidels,  
had you lit a candle  
and pleaded reverently  
St Anthony would more certainly than that  
have reserved a place in heaven  
for not just you  
but your murderous partners as well.

*(Written in May 2019, author's translation)*

## The Sacred War

*(lyrics by Vasily Lebedev-Kumach)*

Arise! Arise! Great motherland!  
And gird yourself to fight!  
Against the brutal, fascist hordes!  
The terrors of the night!

Then let your noble anger rise,  
And cry both near and far:  
This is the battle for our motherland;  
The people's sacred war!

We will repulse the enemy,  
Who dares invade our land!  
Against their bloody tyranny  
Defiantly we stand!

Their wings of darkness will not fly,  
Above our Motherland,  
Upon her hills and spacious fields,  
No enemy shall stand!

We shall destroy the enemy;  
No remnant shall we save,  
The scum of all humanity,  
We'll send them to the grave!

*(A very famous Soviet song of the Second World War)*

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