

Tamil nationalist groups adopt pro-imperialist policy in Sri Lankan elections

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Amid growing disaffection among Tamil workers with the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the perspective of Tamil nationalism, the Tamil National People's Front (TNPF) and Crusaders for Democracy (CD) are advancing a nationalist, pro-imperialist program in the Sri Lankan elections.

In the January elections, most Tamil voters followed the TNA's call for a vote for the US-backed candidate, Maithripala Sirisena, against incumbent President Mahinda Rajapakse. The TNA was manipulating broad anger against Rajapakse—for his role in overseeing the slaughter of tens of thousands of Tamils at the end of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009—to serve Washington's "pivot to Asia" and its plans for regime change in Sri Lanka. Washington ousted Rajapakse because he oriented his foreign and economic policies too closely towards China.

The promises of reforms made by Sirisena and the TNA have been rapidly exposed as a political fraud. Since Sirisena was forced to dissolve the parliament in June, the TNPF and CD are promoting Tamil nationalism and posturing as an alternative to the now discredited TNA, which has been unable to attract significant support.

The TNPF election manifesto states that its solution for conflict between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamil ethnicities in Sri Lanka is "one country, two nations in the alliance. Based on homeland, nationhood, and self-determination, the unique sovereign nation must be recognized."

The TNPF manifesto proposes to realise these objectives based on the same rotten appeal to imperialism as that made by the TNA. It seeks to turn "the international opinion towards the interests of the Tamils through properly making use of the island's global politics and the role of Tamils in it," it writes.

"On this background with international mediation we would engage in negotiations with the Sri Lankan government."

The TNPF's promises of prosperity and good will based on a political deal with US imperialism and the Sinhalese bourgeoisie are empty frauds. To fight growing sentiment among Tamils for the unification of Tamil and Sinhalese workers, the TNPF is aligning itself with US imperialism's plans to turn Sri Lanka into a naval base aimed at vital Chinese shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean, which threatens to provoke a devastating global war.

The TNPF has only tactical differences with the TNA on how to reach a deal with US imperialism and the Sri Lankan government in the interests of the Tamil bourgeoisie.

The TNPF manifesto blames the TNA for not "properly using" Sri Lanka's geo-strategic significance in talks with foreign powers. It is totally silent on the US-engineered regime change operation in Sri Lanka during the January elections.

In a backhanded admission of the bankruptcy of its perspective of relying on imperialism for aid, the TNPF manifesto complains that the "international community" failed to intervene to halt the massacre of Tamils at the end of the civil war, between 2006 and 2009.

It writes, "The international community has a responsibility to protect the Tamil nation, which is forced into a crisis without its protective shield," referring to the defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the main Tamil fighting force in the Sri Lankan civil war. It adds, "We would take all necessary steps to turn the attention of the international community towards our democratic struggle, ensuring their support and protection."

The TNPF's blind faith in imperialism is matched only by its pathetic distortion of the final bloody years of the war. The political, diplomatic and military intervention of the "international community" conclusively helped Rajapakse to restart the war in July 2006. Canada imposed a ban on the LTTE as a "terrorist organisation" in April 2006, and the European Union followed the next month. During the last three years of war, Britain and India supplied military hardware to the Sri Lankan government.

The TNPF was formed in February 2010 as a breakaway faction of the TNA, which was itself founded in 2001 as a political proxy for the LTTE. The TNA-TNPF split was driven by the defeat of the LTTE. TNPF leader Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam initiated the split, accusing the TNA of deviating from the LTTE's politics by giving up the demand for a separate Tamil state. The main difference he presented was the "infirmity of the TNA asserting the sovereignty of the Eelam Tamils in the island."

The Crusaders for Democracy (CD) group is an outfit formed this year, consisting of "rehabilitated" LTTE cadres. Its coordinator, Nadesapillai Vithiyatharan, is the former editor of the Tamil daily *Uthayan*, which is owned by a leading TNA member.

Before standing their own candidates, the CD attempted to negotiate a deal to present joint slates with the TNA. After the talks, however, Vithiyatharan declared, "TNA leader Sampathan told us that he will not take decisions that could spoil his party's attempts at the international level to solve the ethnic issue." The TNA apparently considered that nominating former LTTE cadre might irritate the US State Department. The LTTE is still listed as a terrorist organization in the United States.

The CD's line is broadly similar to that of the TNA and TNPF, though the CD is perhaps even more explicit in its worship of US imperialism and its enthusiasm for the US war drive against China. The CD writes, "Crusaders for Democracy understand the political and economic significance of the Indian Ocean region. We respect the interests of the United States in the region, a country which is the biggest economic and political power in the world."

The CD also backs the reactionary government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India, writing, "Crusaders for Democracy are giving importance to the

interests of India."

The reactionary perspectives of the Tamil nationalist groups reflect the interests of a narrow layer of Tamil capitalists and the affluent middle class that are eager to advance their financial interests by cutting deals with the major powers. A class gulf separates them from the impoverished workers and oppressed masses of Sri Lanka, both Tamil and Sinhala.



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