

Biden congratulates Sri Lanka's new president

Saman Gunadasa
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US President Joe Biden, in an X message posted on Thursday, congratulated Sri Lanka's new president, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, the leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)/National People's Power (NPP), declaring: "I look forward to working with you to advance peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific."

Biden's comment has nothing to do with peace, security or prosperity which the aggressive US-led confrontation and war drive throughout Asia against China is rapidly undermining. Rather it is a declaration that the new government in Colombo has to continue Sri Lanka's integration into the Pentagon's war plans.

Significantly the JVP/NPP leader responded promptly, thanking Biden for his "kind good wishes," adding: "Sri Lanka under my leadership will be working closely with the US for strengthening our long-standing friendly relations. I also reiterate my government's commitment to a peaceful, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region."

What Dissanayake is pledging to continue are the close military ties with US developed by successive governments in Colombo, particularly his predecessor the well-known US-stooge Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Sri Lanka already has two military agreements with the US—the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)—which allow US military access to the country's facilities, including sea and air ports and the presence of US military personnel, respectively. The US is pushing Sri Lanka to enhance the SOFA.

The JVP, founded on an eclectic mix of Castroism, Maoism and Sinhala populism, has long ago abandoned the "armed struggle," jettisoned its anti-imperialist demagoguery and integrated itself into the Colombo political establishment.

Over the past two years, Dissanayake and JVP/NPP leaders have had extended talks with US ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie Chung. While the JVP/NPP has kept silent on these discussions, Chung expressed her confidence on a future JVP/ NPP government, saying that it was "a significant party" that resonated with the public.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also congratulated Dissanayake on September 22 on his win, saying, "Sri Lanka holds a special place in India's Neighborhood First Policy" and that he is looking forward to "working closely" with Colombo.

India is Washington's chief strategic partner in South Asia as the US steps up its preparations for war with China. It also has its own ambitions to become a significant regional power and regards Sri Lanka as part of its "neighborhood" or sphere of influence. India is also a member of the anti-China Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, a de facto US-led pact involving Japan and Australia as well.

Dissanayake and JVP/NPP leaders visited India several times prior to the presidential election and met with top officials, including Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar, to reassure the Modi government that its interests would be protected if the party took power. They also met with India's ambassador in Colombo, Santos Jha, who was the first among foreign envoys to congratulate Dissanayake.

China has also congratulated Dissanayake. President Xi Jinping praised the new president, saying Beijing was "ready to work with President Dissanayake to carry forward the traditional friendship." He also expressed confidence in a "more fruitful high-quality Belt and Road cooperation (BRI)"—China's flagship infrastructure to integrate with the global economy.

China is the largest bilateral creditor to Sri Lanka and

has been involved in 300 projects in Sri Lanka since 2000 involving \$US20 billion. One of China's main projects was the strategic Hambantota port on the southern tip of the island close to major shipping routes connecting East Asia with Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Sri Lanka's closer alignment with the US and India jeopardizes these investments.

In his address to the nation after being sworn into office, Dissanayake stated: "Our country needs international support. Therefore, it is our expectation to deal with each state in the most advantageous way for the country, regardless of the divisions of power in the world."

Far from simply balancing between different powers, the Dissanayake regime will continue the pro-US line followed by Wickremesinghe.

The JVP/NPP election manifesto clearly tilted towards India and thus US imperialism. It declared that the party would not allow the use of Sri Lankan "land, sky or the sea for any activity that will threaten the region, including India."

Dissanayake's foreign policy orientation was also underscored by his reappointment of Aruni Wijewardane as the Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—the post he held under Wickremesinghe.

During the two years from 2022 that Wickremesinghe was in office, the JVP/NPP made no objection or criticism of his pro-US policies. These included banning Chinese research ships coming to Sri Lankan ports after Washington and New Delhi vehemently opposed such visits and this year's dispatch of a Sri Lankan warship to the Red Sea as part of the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian to defend shipments to Israel from attack by pro-Palestinian Houthi rebels in Yemen.

The Israeli regime's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and now its barbaric military attacks in Lebanon, are part of a widening war in the Middle East backed by the US and its allies. At the same time, the US and its allies are ramping up the war against Russia in Ukraine and preparations for war with China—three fronts in a rapidly emerging and potentially catastrophic global war.

During the presidential election campaign, Dissanayake and the other establishment candidates were completely silent on this existential threat to

humanity, keeping the masses in the dark.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) warned of the grave dangers and campaigned to unite workers and youths in Sri Lanka with their class brothers and sisters in South Asia and worldwide to build an international anti-war movement based on socialist policies.

As a part of that campaign, we demanded:

- The publication of all secret agreements with the US such as ACSA and SOFA!
- The abrogation of all defence agreements with the imperialist powers and other countries, including India!

The SEP insists that the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, and its reactionary division of the globe into rival nation states, through the struggle of the working class is the only way to prevent a third world war and nuclear conflagration.



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