

Ideological Paradox of the United National Party

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Thesis for the Master of Arts (Research) in Political Science for the University of Sri
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Declaration by the Candidate

This work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Piyadasa Athukorala, Department of Political Science, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or part to any university for the award of any degree or diploma.

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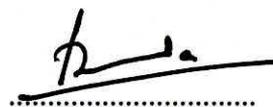
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I certify that the candidate has incorporated all corrections, amendments and additions recommended by the examiners.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'P' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Supervisor

Contents

Contents	v
Contents of Charts, Tables and Illustrations	viii
Acknowledgement	xii
Abstract	xiii

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Background	2
1.2. Research problem	8
1.3. Hypothesis	8
1.4. The objective and importance of the research	9
1.5. Research methodology	12
1.6. Limitations and delimitations	15
2. Political Parties, Ideologies and the Left-Right Divide	16
2.1. Ideologies: The beginning and growth	22
2.1.1. The beginning: Origin of Liberalism	24
2.1.2. The growth of ideologies: A battle between world views	32
2.1.2.1. Conservatism: Response to change	33
2.1.2.2. Socialism: For a greater change	36

2.1.3.	The Liberal triumph over other ideologies	38
2.2.	Left-Right politics of the cotemporary world	49
2.2.1.	Different values of the Left and Right	49
2.2.2.	Policy Differences between the Left and Right	62
2.2.2.1.	Economic policies	64
2.2.2.2.	Ethnic policy	70
2.2.2.3.	State and power	79
2.3.	The coherence of these policies	84
2.4.	Sri Lankan discourse on ideology and the left-right division in politics	85
3.	The Ideology of the United National Party	91
3.1.	Economic policy of the United National Party	97
3.2.	Political aspect of the United National Party	102
3.2.1.	Voter base	102
3.2.2.	Political and social alliances	117
3.2.2.1.	The 1956 General Election	117
3.2.2.2.	1962 coup d'état and UNP's relationship with Christians	122
3.2.2.3.	Tamil parties in coalition governments	127
3.2.3.	Alliances during the Civil War	130
3.2.3.1.	Mawbima Surakeeme Vyaparaya	130

3.2.3.2.	The SLFP-JVP government	132
3.2.3.3.	The 2005 presidential election	135
3.2.4.	Political and social policies of the two main parties	138
3.2.4.1.	Policies of the two main parties until 1983	139
3.2.4.2.	Policy differences during the Civil War	147
3.2.4.2.1.	Policy differences during Jayewardene administration	148
3.2.4.2.2.	Policy differences during the Premadasa government	150
3.2.4.2.3.	Policies of Kumaratunga and Wickramasinghe	152
3.2.4.2.4.	Policies of Rajapakse and Wickramasinghe	161
3.2.5.	Cultural differences of the leaders	164
3.3.	The left and right in Sri Lanka: a special case	167
4.	Causes of the ideological paradox of the United National Party	170
4.1.	The historical background to the founding years of the UNP	170
4.1.1.	The history of state and religion in Sri Lanka	171
4.1.2.	Discrimination against Buddhists during colonial times	174
4.1.3.	The Buddhist revival	180
4.1.4.	The elite and its politics	190
4.1.5.	The Temperance Movement: the lost opportunity	197

4.1.6.	1915: as the turning point of politics in Sri Lanka	200
4.2.	D. S. Senanayake's personal characteristics, beliefs and politics	208
4.2.1.	Reasons for Senanayake's personal characteristics, beliefs and politics	208
4.2.1.1.	D. S. Senanayake's social and cultural upbringing	209
4.2.1.2.	The political impact of the 1915 riots	217
4.2.1.3.	D. S. Senanayake's experience of and faith in British justice	221
4.2.2.	The success of his political formula	224
4.2.3.	Impact of Senanayake's politics	229
4.2.3.1.	The nature of the independence	229
4.2.3.2.	The nature of the new party	238
4.3.	Political developments that followed the founding of the party	245
4.3.1.	Political developments from 1948 to 1956	246
4.3.2.	Political developments after 1956	263
5.	Conclusion	273
	References	284

Content of Charts, Tables and Illustrations

Number	Title	Page Number
2.1	Growth of liberal democracies in the world	43
2.2	Percentage distribution of the popular vote, Great Britain 1900-55	45
2.3	Left Right divide in the world	47
2.4	Left, Right and the tradition of political division in France	62
2.5	The size of the government (USA)	67
2.6	Occupation and Party Affiliation	69
2.7	Voter base patterns in the United Kingdom (Ethnicity)	71
2.8	Voter base patterns in the United States (Ethnicity)	72
2.9	Percentages of Protestant and Catholics Voting Republican Party (USA)	74
2.10	Policies of the centre right parties	81
2.11	The common criticisms about and defences of the right	83

3.1	Political support for different parties among different communities	103
3.2	Ethnic support for the SLFP and the UNP in 2011 in Sri Lanka	104
3.3	Ethnic support for the Democratic and Republican parties in the 2012 elections in the US	105
3.4	Map of the United Kingdom	106
3.5	Winning parties of the different seats of 1997 General Election in United Kingdom	107
3.6	Winning parties of the different seats of 2001 General Election in United Kingdom	108
3.7	Sri Lanka presidential election 1999	109
3.8	Sri Lanka parliamentary election 2004	110
3.9	Sri Lanka presidential election 2005	111
3.10	2005 Presidential Election – Colombo District	112
3.11	2005 Presidential Election – Ampara District	113
3.12	2005 Presidential Election – Trincomalee District	114
3.13	1999 Presidential Election – Colombo District	114

3.14	2005 Presidential Election – Gampaha District	116
3.15	Mara Yuddhaya (Poster)	121

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Ideological Paradox of the United National Party

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Abstract

In almost all democratic countries where there are competitive electoral systems of two parties or two coalitions, the political parties, especially the main two parties, can be seen to be divided as the left wing and the right wing. These left and right wing parties have their own distinguishing characteristics and ideological positions and values different from each other which clearly demonstrate the differences between them. The right wing parties in the world, thus, by and large share the ideological positions which are described as right wing and these differentiate them from their rival left wing parties which have their own ideological positions common among them. Party ideologies of the left are modern liberalism, the contemporary form of liberalism and social democracy, the moderate version of socialism that can be practised in democracies. The ideologies of the right are conservatism and its other forms. Because of this difference in ideological foundation, the policies which stem from these foundations are clearly different from each other.

All left wing social democratic or modern liberal parties are proponents of social equality and hence they are less enthusiastic about the market economy than their right wing counterparts and they are very much concerned about the minority and less privileged sections of society such as ethnic minorities, religious minorities, the poor, homosexuals and women. Right wing parties, by contrast, support pro market economic policies and politically and socially they are nationalist or ethno-nationalist. Almost all right wing and

conservative parties in the world have a solid link with the majority ethnic and religious community of their respective countries and they represent and uphold the interests of those communities.

Although the United National Party is considered the right wing and conservative party in Sri Lanka, it is not difficult to see that the UNP lacks the political and social aspect of right wing politics. The UNP is no doubt the party which advocates pro market policies more than any other major party in the country, being the right wing economic policy. However, it is different when it comes to political and social policies. Although the UNP should have been the 'Sinhala nationalist' party of the country, if it is to fit the pattern of other right wing parties in the world, it is the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) that enjoys that position now. It is not the SLFP, the social democratic party of the country that is more appealing to ethnic and religious minorities, but the 'right wing' UNP, which should have been the pro Sinhala party.

This research studies this unique nature of the ideological background and political position of one of the two main parties, the United National Party, since it is the oldest among them and its policies and positions have had a great impact to the other main party, the SLFP, to have a similar ideological mixture in it. This study, unlike all the previous studies on the UNP is mainly focused on the ideological aspect of the party and it is conducted in three main steps: 1) studying the left-right political divide in the world and ideologies related to them; 2) studying the ideological basis of the UNP; and 3) studying the causes of that unique ideological basis of the party.