

Who is the real enemy?

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This is in response to Dr Dayan Jayatilleka's article titled *May Day 2017; SLPP & SLPP; enemies, rivals or allies?* Dated 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017 in the Colombo telegraph.

Dr Dayan Jayatilleka's problem is identifying Sirisena and Wickremesinghe as two separate entities, as they actually remain one, perhaps the two sides of the same coin. Dayan sees Mr Sirisena and his SLFP as one that stands between Ranil's UNP and Mahinda's Joint opposition. The middleman. The intermediate! This is a factual lie, given the recent political history of Mr. Sirisena. In fact, Dr Dayan marshals this argument without presenting a single bit of evidence in his support? What leads him to separate Mr Sirisena from Mr Wickremesinghe? True that Sirisena was projected during the election campaign as a middleman, as a neutral executive president capable of seeing beyond the petty political party differences. But, that romanticism ends immediately with his election to office. There, Mr Sirisena betrayed for the second time the aspirations of the same political formation that brought him into power just within two months of his ill-famous "Hoppers" betrayal of his leader Mahinda Rajapaksa and becoming a typical party man, an SLFP leader, worse than any in the history !

In spite of the fact that Sirisena and Wickremesinghe come from two separate political backgrounds, but they were elected, at least Sirisena was elected as the so called common candidate of a formation that comprised mainly of the UNP, JVP, TNA and Muslim congress and many other NGO affiliated fronts. On the other side, except a very few, the entire SLFP electorate sided with Mahinda, not being a party to the present government at any stage. They voted Mahinda Rajapaksa at presidential election and then voted again Mahinda and his people at parliamentary elections giving them 95 seats, despite Sirisena's so many acts of sabotage at the eve of elections (don't forget Mr Sirisena's SLFP leadership). So, the boundary lines of electorate are very clearly demonstrated, and why not political enemies?

Dayan charges in the article that "Basil Rajapaksa and the SLPP's line is that the main enemy is Maithripala Sirisena, rather than Ranil Wickremesinghe, and that the main target (of SLPP) should be the official SLFP." Again he says "CBK and President Sirisena, albeit to different degrees, push the line that the main enemy is Mahinda Rajapaksa; that the main danger facing the country is a Rajapaksa return; and that the main task is to prevent it." Dayan successfully contradicts himself in the above two sentences. Under what circumstances, cannot Basil Rajapaksa and SLPP see Sirisena as the main enemy, when, according to Dayan himself, "the CBK and President Sirisena push the line that main enemy is Mahinda Rajapaksa?" Besides Basil Rajapaksa being Mahinda's younger Brother and his political administrator, isn't it Basil's right to see CBK and Sirisena as Mahinda's enemy and obviously his own enemy. Let us not turn the brunt of Dayan's contradiction above against himself, Dr Dayan's proposition is still wrong. Neither Basil nor SLPP, for that matter even the JO have privileged no one over the other in their assault against the current regime in the post-8<sup>th</sup> January event. In going against that, Basil/Podujana Peramuna/JO were unanimous and unwavering in their determination. In fact, their enemy is neither Sirisena nor Ranil, but the government.

Not only Basil and the JO's political folks, the people who voted Mahinda were and are clear and unambiguous to date in their identification of the enemy. They see in front of them a government and an opposition. Government is Sirisena and Wickremesinghe. Opposition is Mahinda, (easily overlooking R. Sampanthan's TNA, the government proxy under the guise of opposition). In this view, they do not differentiate between a Sirisena government and Ranil Government, for they are aware of the fact that they suffer at the

hands of both, actually not both, but their one single government. This is the ground situation.

Dayan proposes to Mahinda camp to form a “united front” with Sirisena against the UNP as against what he calls the “polarization strategy” of Basil Rajapaksa. Let me ask this; is there anything left to polarize in the current political ground reality? As shown above, the battle is very clearly demarcated between Government and anti-government forces. There are no romantically created middlemen above the binary. The Creation of Podujana Peramuna in this backdrop, by Basil Rajapaksa is the much sought after replacement for the members of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, who were even deprived of a political party after 8<sup>th</sup> January by Sirisena and his henchmen. Had that not been created on time, given the factual truth that JO is only a parliamentary group sans party status, what could have acted as the legitimate organization of opposition on the ground and faced an election? Does Dayan expect Mahinda camp to rally around Sirisena and battle against Ranil? Oh dear Dr Jayatilleka !

Let me ask; what is the Dayan’s justification to say that Mr Sirisena is closer to Mahinda than to the UNP. Let me tell him a series of “services” that Mr Sirisena did to Mahinda and his own SLFP after his famous “hoppers” betrayal. It was Mr Sirisena who completely destroyed the SLFP nomination list at August 17 election by removing popular SLFP candidates like Samanmalee Sakalasuriya and many other young and people’s friendly candidates from the list and replacing them with corrupt and ‘unwinnable’ personalities, thereby tacitly helping the UNP to win. Then, Mr Sirisena who scuttled the entire UPFA national list by pruning the names of abled characters like Wasantha Karannagoda, Nalin De Silva, and even Dayan Jayathilleka himself. Even the finalized list too was dishonored by Sirisena by appointing seven defeated candidate to parliament at the cost of personalities of Calibre of Prof Colvin Gunarathna, Prof Kapila Gunasekara, Prof GL Peiris and Prof Tissa Vitarana etc. Again, it was Sirisena who deprived the SLFP of its provincial and village level political power by dissolving the Pradeshiya Sabhas and Municipal councils at UNP’s Ranils request. Isn’t it he who delays the same elections again preventing SLFP from regaining lost power? What Sirisena did and does now is similar to killing somebody and helping the family of killed man with buying coffin etc and then sleep with the widow. Now Dr Dayan proposes a united front with him!

Dr Dayan says, Basil favours “to transfer power from Sirisena to Ranil via the abolition of the executive Presidency”, for his (BRs) enemy is Sirisena, not Ranil. Again, the veteran political analyst fails to see the big picture, perhaps blinded by unfounded opposition to BR, the only abled political manipulator in the Mahinda camp. Basil’s argument for abolishing the executive presidency does not derive from his identification of political enemies, but by the conveniently forgotten question; what if that omnipotent presidency goes to a person like Ranil Wickremesinghe, much in the same way, Mr Wickremesinghe got more than half of the powers vested in it through Mr Sirisena? His other obvious intention might be giving Mahinda the opportunity to run for prime ministerial candidates in 2020 elections!

For the record, let me straighten the facts; we are for a front with Mr Sirisena. But, let him first initiate that front and then invite the rest to join it. Let alone forming a front! Can Dr Dayan ask Mr Sirisena, if he has guts and willing to go against Ranil, to carry out the much publicized cabinet reshuffle first?

Meanwhile, Dr Jayatilleka mixes his arguments in his article with this year’s May Day rally, to be held at Galle face green. He wants “Ranil’s handing of Trincomalee oil tanks farm to be the key slogan of that rally.” Of course, that should be obviously a prominent slogan. But, there are many significant slogans in the line. The handing of Hambantota port plus a large swathe of rural lands to China, just to offset the destructive consequences of foreign

policy and the economic debacle of Sirisena/Wickremesinghe government, should be equally treated. And why not the constitution, that seeks to pit people of this country against each other, leading to unending ethnic conflicts and finally to geographical secession from each other.

I conclude; Project of separating Mr Sirisena from his own government and giving him a different value derive from same strategy that brought Mr Sirisena into power in 2015. He acted there as the unspoiled, Sinhala Buddhist mask as against the worn out and 'unusable' Wickremesinghe. Now he is being used for the same purpose. Mr Sirisena helps Mr Ranil to maintain the power by giving the electorate a false security. Should Mahinda and his camp fall prey to this strategy?