

THE POLITRIX OF RAJAPAKSE HORDES AND THE REALITY OF ECONOMICS



Shyamon Jayasinghe

"They rode out over the Asian steppes their ponies hooves flashing Their arrows taking wing their blades brutally slashing A river of blood they left in their horrid wake To conquer all before them their terror to behold"

Re-taking Power for What?

The poem is about Genghis Khan, the mighty Mongolian warrior who by the year 1227 created the world's biggest empire before the British Empire.

The Mahinda Rajapakse forces, like the malevolent armies of Genghis Khan, are hell-bent on invading Colombo, dislodging the democratically elected government and retaking power once again. For what? One is compelled to ask. Genghis Khan had a purpose. But Mahinda?

The government has another one and half years to go to complete its duly won mandate. It isn't seeking to extend its hold as Rajapakse did by his autocratic 18th Amendment. The UNP government has no siblings to pass on power to as Rajapakse has. Democratically, the electorate can ask the government to account before it for promises made only at the end of its period. Yet, Mahinda Rajapakse must invade and surround and capture. For what?

This question keeps coming up like a rubber ball pressed into water. What on earth does Mahinda want to do now that he couldn't do during his decade-long regime with all the power of a dictator.

Offenders as Liberators?

Offenders can mask as liberators. Mahinda and his men are suspect before the law for countless alleged offences. Personally, Mahinda can escape court because of the legal immunity the Constitution gave him. Those who took orders are in trouble like Lalith Weeratunge. The men he put in charge of his government's key institutions were mostly his kith and kin and close stooges and they all have played riot with their jobs. His brother-in-law who worked as US Ambassador is at large over serious allegations of fraud. His other brother-in-law who ran Sri Lanka's airline is faring too badly at the

Presidential Commission. The amount of money involved in both instances runs into millions. An embassy cannot go broke but the Sri Lanka Airlines, instead of flying in the air, ran down to the ground-dead broke! Then, we have Mahinda's other relative, Udayanga Weeratunge, who was Ambassador in Russia, who has to answer prima facie evidence of serious fraud presented by his accusers. Udayanga is also said to have been in the controversial deal of the MIG jets purchased by the brother of Mahinda- the powerful Gotabhaya of Viyathmaga and Eliya and whatnot. If these accused feel innocent why do they abscond and dodge court?

Gota himself is seriously suspect over high profile murders and brutal assaults said to have been carried by a hit-squad he is supposed to have operated. We had disfigured pictures of Keth Noyair recently over social media.

The list is too long, but we cannot miss Basil, the other powerful brother, who is also before court. Basil is said to have built a luxurious house with unaccountable money. His only defence is denial although the building is materially there. His wife is supposed to have been overseeing the construction but now both claim they have had nothing to do with that bungalow. That is one of the mysteries left behind by the regime. The other hilarious mystery is over a house bought by Mahinda's son, Yoshiha. We have to believe that the house was paid for by the grandma who, in turn, was visited by an angel from heaven with a bag of gems that she sold to get the money for her adorable grandson. This kind of story beats Aesop's fables by heaps and bounds!

The money said to have been played out by the Rajapakse cohorts run into millions. Mahinda's private secretary Gamini Senerath is now before the Special Court Trial-at Bar and the money involved is simply over millions. Apparently, the Rajapakse hordes never took small amounts. The fact that President Mahinda Rajapakse watched over all these misdemeanours for ten years without even making a pretence to be fighting corruption or swaying his sword against that as a threat, speaks volumes in support of the sub-text that he did benefit by all these.

The same also applies to the range of murderous activity that took place under that regime. The brutal killings and disappearances of numerous journalists and others are well on record and are under investigation. If anything comes off these enquiries, those who carried out orders will get caught and those who gave orders will stand immune. What a weird sense of justice does this constitution have? Mahinda Rajapakse lied

when he promised to rid the country of that constitution and now he opposes the current move to change it. Mahinda wants power back together with that constitution.

Financial Crisis

Mahinda's regime left a severe financial crisis behind them. National indebtedness rose to 82 per cent of GDP! None of the projects, even the useful ones like the highways, could be payed back out of earnings from the projects. The Airport without flights and the harbour without ships were only flattering to Mahinda's ego at the expense of the people. They are illustrations of foolery and stupidity.

No Purpose

Mahinda's army unlike the army of Genghis Khan, is fighting without national purpose. The danger is that Mahinda shows no remorse for what transpired under his watch. He cannot honestly do so as he is an amoral individual to whom moral values are empties. Nor does he present to the population a new style of government. There is a purpose but that is personal, namely, to get the court cases abandoned; his guilty men released of their worries. The other purpose is to continue to amass fortune. Even Hitler had a purpose and that was to rid the land of Jews. To be fair, Mahinda aims at no such genocide. On the other hand, he wouldn't budge at setting off one ethnic group against another as a measure of being in power. In this sense, his slogans of Sinhala nationalism resonate with the Fascist times.

Politrix

It is clear the Rajapakse forces focus on the politrix of the situation. They bring out all the tricks under their hat to swerve the political game in Sri Lanka in their favour. Ever since they were dislodged twice they adopted a two-fold strategy. First was to create a fear among persons at decision-making level that they will make a comeback soon. This was to discourage officials and politicians from carrying out action against the Rajapakses. Even a few UNP Ministers got trapped into that-not to speak of officials. The second strategy was to hurl back the accusation of corruption onto the government side. Rogues try to escape calling their accusers rogues. Unfortunately, they could not call them murderers as the government has not killed any opponent and protoesters are allowed to obstruct normal traffic all the time without getting anything more than a water bullet. This is wisdom on the part of the government.

Politrix Hasn't Plans for The Economy

In the game of politrix there isn't any space for economics. On the other hand, the Sri Lanka economy cannot wait anymore for rectification. Bad econom-

ics is the root cause for most ills in Sri Lanka. Unless the economy is rectified Sri Lankan society will collapse. But Mahinda's hordes have no solutions presented for that. There was of, course Gota's economic plan, said to have been borrowed entirely from that of Ranil Wickremasinghe.

The weakness of the Sri Lanka economy is derived from two sources. First, we have a persistent fiscal deficit arising out our national habit of going for endlessly expanding expenditure without commensurate increase in revenue. Politrix has been playing a role here. Our politicians cry halt at taxation but keep wanting to spend. The population has also come to believe that the government of the day must give them all the services they want but are unwilling to let the government find revenue through taxation. The economic truism that expenditure can come only where revenues are available has never been realized by the politicians and the public. Political populism feeds into a syndrome. The second source of weakness comes from a basic structural disorder in the economy in that we have become a debt economy. Almost every year since independence, Sri Lanka has had adverse trade balances. Our imports keep growing but the growth of exports is insufficient to meet the import demand. Over the last three years, we have achieved a definite growth in exports but the import bill has climbed even further. A resulting balance of payments crisis has been averted only by foreign remittances and tourism. This condition cannot go on without causing serious damage to our standard of living and the quality of public services like education, health etc. The need for intense investment in economic growth ventures is paramount.

In this connection, the government's encouragement of enterprises at local level is commendable.

Enterprise Lanka Program

The yahapalayana government, avoiding politrix, is focussing seriously in economy remodelling. The Prime Minister and the Finance Minister must be commended over the recently opened "Enterprise Lanka," program where loans are given at low interest to young entrepreneurs to start ventures at local level. The program started off in Moneragala district and will spread to Anuradhapura, Jaffna etc soon. It is clear the government is on the right path here. Having restored the lost democratic liberties the yahapalanaya government has at last got into the right path as far as the economy is concerned.

Rajapakse's politrix runs counter to the serious economic realities that the government is currently giving attention to. Mahinda Rajapakse must be serious about economics and not politrix.

sjturaus@optusnet.com.au