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GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

A  Publication

The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the newsletter.

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Sri Lanka's Political Transformation: NPP's Anura Kumara Dissanayake's Historic Presidential Victory and the Challenges Ahead in 2024

Debi Karmakar



In Sri Lanka's historic 2024 presidential election, Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the National People's Power (NPP) became the ninth Executive President, winning 42.31% of votes in an unprecedented second-round counting. Following the 2022 Aragalaya uprising, the election saw 79.46% voter turnout with 38 candidates competing. While Dissanayake's victory marks a shift from traditional leadership, the majority (57.69%) who didn't vote for him indicates some public skepticism about NPP's capability to implement effective changes. However, the new administration's post-election conduct is gradually building trust. The outlook for India-Sri Lanka relations appears promising under the new leadership.

The immediate challenge for the NPP is to fulfil the expectations of the people who voted for them, and winning the trust of the people who did not vote for Anura and seek majority support during the forthcoming parliamentary election. The second challenge will be to get the support of the IMF to renegotiate some crucial clauses and continuing the debt restructuring processes while making the economy progress toward the path of recovery. The third and the most crucial challenge will be achieving economic recovery.

After Sri Lanka's 2022 economic crisis, the Ranil administration's austerity measures and increased taxes further burdened common people. The newly elected President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has promised to address these issues through increased public investment in health, education, transportation, food security, and constitutional reforms for a united Sri Lanka.

The former President had called for parliamentary elections on September 21, 2024. However, NPP's current vote share may not secure the two-thirds majority needed to implement major reforms. The coming weeks are crucial as the administration must gain public confidence and seek support from other political parties without compromising its image as an alternative to traditional politics.

The new administration has shown promising signs through peaceful power transition and immediate actions against corruption, wasteful spending, and political interference in law enforcement. Despite poor performance in Tamil areas, President Anura's inclusive approach toward all communities and commitment to ending racial, religious, and caste-based divisions has been well-received. While analysts suggest growing public support, the key challenge remains securing a two-thirds parliamentary majority necessary for implementing promised reforms.

President Dissanayake's government agrees with IMF program objectives but seeks alternative implementation methods to reduce public burden. He promised increased public investment in education, health, and transportation. The administration faces the challenge of maintaining IMF's 2.5% GDP budget deficit target while reducing taxes and increasing social welfare spending. The NPP government, led by Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya, claims they've calculated costs and can achieve this by cutting unnecessary expenditures and preventing public fund wastage. However, implementing these plans after the parliamentary election may prove more challenging than anticipated.

Despite initial concerns about India-Sri Lanka relations under the NPP government due to JVP's (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) past anti-India stance and Anura's comments on the Adani project, early indicators suggest a positive diplomatic trajectory. The new administration has adopted a pragmatic approach, seeking to maintain strong bilateral ties while ensuring Sri Lanka's sovereign equality in negotiations.

India was first to congratulate President Dissanayake, and Foreign Minister Jaishankar's prompt visit demonstrated continued diplomatic engagement. Their discussions covered crucial areas including fisheries, national unity, and economic cooperation, with India offering its market access to support Sri Lanka's economic recovery and assistance in anti-corruption digitalization efforts.

The exchange of visit invitations between President Dissanayake and PM Modi further signals warming relations. While controversial projects with Indian companies may face review, the NPP government appears committed to resolving issues through dialogue and negotiation, suggesting a stable future for bilateral relations.

Ambivalent General Assembly on Middle East Wars Conflict Mitigation: A Fundamental Flaw of The United Nations

Really Chakma

The United Nations faces serious problems due to its extensive membership, hindering its ability to exert political leverage effectively. Moreover, a lack of resources further undermines its capacity to influence global affairs, ultimately eroding the credibility of its commitments. The problems are getting serious because of the geopolitical influence over international politics. The United Nations General Assembly has become a medium of "blame game" over the Palestine-Israel war in recent years. There is a trend going on every year that Israel blames Palestine, Hamas, and the countries that support Palestine. Meanwhile, Palestine calls for help to stop the genocide in Gaza and blame Israel.

This year the 79th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) commenced on 10 September 2024 at UN headquarters with a warning about how a decaying rules-based order has handed several countries a "get out of jail free card," referring to the wars in Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine by the UN secretary general Antonio Guterres. He directly addressed Israel's war in Gaza and the killing of Palestinian civilians. He condemned the countries involved in war directly and indirectly to invade another country or utterly disregard the welfare of the people. He also highlighted the violation of United Nations Charters and International Laws. He called for immediate ceasefire, unconditional release of all hostages, the end of murders, and the unlawful occupations in the foreign lands.



Turkey's president, Tayyip Erdogan, took sides with Palestine. He demanded the freedom of Palestine and pointed out the failure of the ceasefire in the Palestine-Israel war by saying, "The UN has failed to fulfill its founding mission and has gradually become dysfunctional." He blamed the world's big five nations for their bias during wars to fulfill their interest. He highlighted the destruction of infrastructure and the loss of lives by Israeli attacks. He compared Netanyahu with Hitler for his murderous actions and claimed that Hamas and other Palestinian groups are resistant to the unlawful occupation of Israel to protect their people.

The Iranian president shows solidarity with Turkey and said that they don't seek any war or quarrel, they seek peace and stability in the region. He said that the Israeli attack on Gaza and the killings must not be leveled as self-defense. Qatar, Colombia, Sweden, Jordan, Brazil, South Africa, Pakistan, and the majority of the nations emphasized humanitarian issues and called for the implementation of a ceasefire resolutions.

In response to those harsh words, Israel's ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, called the General Assembly debate an "annual charade of hypocrisy" because of the opening speech of Antonio Guterres for condemning Israel on the attacks on Gaza. He argued that UN member countries stay silent about releasing the hostages, murders, and Israeli migration issues but acknowledge the sufferings of Gaza.

Benzamine Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, also strongly disagreed with Guterres and the Palestine supporters by claiming Israel as a victim of lies and slanders of the world. He claimed they are in the real threat of destruction, eviction, and terrorist attacks. He added that Hamas still exercise some governing power in Gaza causing price hikes to extort money from people to stay in power. Netanyahu stated Israel's determination to put an end to Hamas because of their nonstop attacks on Israel. He claims that the only condition to end this war is the surrender of Hamas with their arms, and the release of the hostages. He openly threatened Hamas and the supporters of Palestine to stop their unlawful involvement; otherwise, they will have to suffer the consequences. He highlighted that 174 resolutions had passed against Israel since 2014, twice as many as against the entire world combined. He added that the real war criminals are not in Israel; they are in Iran, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. He threatened Iran by saying if they continue to support Hamas they will face attacks which they can't escape.

Meanwhile, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas emphasized the failure of cease fire despite repeated international calls to stop Israel's war crimes, genocide, and massive destructions. Almost 75% of Gaza is fully destroyed and immediate solutions are needed to ensure peace, stability, and security for both Palestine and Israel.

The world's nations are divided into three groups: those supporting Israel, Palestine, and neutral. The reasons behind this are not easy to understand. Geopolitical reasons, religious sentiment, and pressure from the neighboring countries or powerful nations of the world are the driving factors for those stances. Those who chose to stay silent are trying to avoid the evil eye of the powerful nations or any conflict. The first two groups are fighting an invisible war between them.

This year, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution that demands Israel to end the 'unlawful presence' in the occupied Palestinian Territory within 12 months. It calls for Israel to comply with international law and withdraw its military forces, immediately cease all new settlement activity, evacuate all settlers from occupied land, and dismantle parts of the separation wall it constructed inside the occupied West Bank. It was not a surprise that the resolution got a vote of 124 nations in favor, 14 against, and 43 abstentions. The resolution is based on an advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in July 2024, where they emphasized Israeli presence as illegal. Prior to this year, many resolutions were taken to stop the war between Palestine and Israel. But none of them could stop the war and the conflict between the countries involved in this war. This year, the world leaders are openly threatening one another in the UNGA.

So, the question remains: what are the roles of the UN in this matter? Is it still the "peace-making organization or just a helpless audience" of the world's wars and conflicts?

Striking the Heart: Waning the Strength of Hezbollah?

Nuzhat Tabassum



Israel yet again strikes on top commanders. Taking the Middle East to the brink of regional war again. On September 27, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was killed in Beirut, Lebanon in an Israeli air strike code-named New Order. He was a charismatic yet fearsome leader who wielded power beyond Lebanon. Supported by Iran, Hezbollah is a Shiite group that Nasrallah transformed into a potent political force, a network of social services as well as the most heavily armed non-state group in the world, thirty-two years ago from covert terrorist cells. His death is not only going to shake Hezbollah and the Middle East but could have negative implications for the USA and Israel. However, in reality, Nasrallah's death is a short-term tactical win for Israel. Even when Israel assassinated Abbas al-Musawi, Hezbollah's co-founder and Secretary-General in 1992, they thought that was the end of Hezbollah. But Hezbollah did become stronger than in 1992 under the leadership of Nasrallah. His death might weaken the group but it will not eliminate it or the threat it poses to Israel.

Israel's reason for assassinating Hezbollah leaders is based on two reasons. Firstly, the group depends on the hierarchy to function, and the group will become weak without a head. Secondly, by killing them, it will act as an effective deterrence. But yet, Hezbollah's rockets have not stopped even after the death of Nasrallah. Israel wants to demoralize the Hezbollah fighters. Additionally, Israel is making it quite evident by these assaults that it will no longer tolerate tit-for-tat attacks on its northern border. Israel wholeheartedly believes that to defeat Hezbollah; they need to bomb Lebanon indiscriminately. However, they are in a delusion; rather it might increase the threat to Israel. Hezbollah might exercise strategic patience.

Nasrallah was the most iconic Arab leader. His murder represents an open conflict between Israel and Iran for Lebanon's and the Levant's destiny. This is probably not the conclusion, but rather the beginning of a conflict. Locally, among the Shia population in Lebanon, Nasrallah was also the most influential leader. His murder leaves a significant gap, and it begs important concerns about the community's future under Lebanon's antiquated sectarian structure. It is probably going to deepen political division and add to the vulnerability of a nation with a feeble central authority, which will fuel further instability. The breakdown of Hezbollah threatens to further impoverish thousands of families and make the economic situation more vulnerable. There is fear that Hezbollah's political rivals would try to take advantage of the situation, further escalating sectarian tensions at a time when the Shia population in the nation is bearing the brunt of Israel's assault. The death of Nasrallah may offer a way to resolve the presidential dispute that has stalled the nation's government for almost two years but it depends on the political parties how they will respond.

It is not clear who will take over the position of Nasrallah now. There will be pressure on the incoming leader to employ Hezbollah's weapons to a far greater extent. The US saw that in both Iraq and Afghanistan, even after killing top leaders, these types of groups are designed in such a way that there will always be someone to take over. After the assassination of Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda didn't perish. Rather it became strong. A similar thing is going to happen in the case of Hezbollah. The group may become more radical, and dangerous, mostly to Israel. Hezbollah could be even less inclined to negotiate with Israel than it was before Nasrallah's assassination if Israel's invasion of Lebanon turns into a lengthy conflict.

Israel, for a long time, wanted to drag Hezbollah and Iran into an all-out war and they might be able to do so. Since then, the US has already doubled its support for Israel. However, if Israel thinks that the situation has calmed down, then that is wrong. Iran has threatened to retaliate against Israel. If Hezbollah truly becomes weak, Iran might turn to Houthis in Yemen to continue its operation.