

Sri Lanka's Parliamentary Election: The NPP Wins Historic Super Majority

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Summary

In Sri Lanka's parliamentary election on 14 November 2024, the National People's Power (NPP) won 159 seats of the 225-member parliament. The election follows the NPP's win in the presidential election in September this year. The NPP's leader, Anura Kumara Disسانayake, secured 42 per cent of the vote to become the country's ninth Executive President. This was a significant feat, as the NPP has been, at best, a third political force, not being able to secure more than three per cent of the vote in the previous election. The current victory was possible due to the angry, anti-establishment sentiment that the NPP successfully mobilised since the 2022 economic crisis.

In the November 2024 parliamentary election in Sri Lanka, the National People's Power (NPP) achieved a historic super-majority, [winning](#) 159 seats. The NPP sought a mandate to 'clean the parliament' and usher in a new political culture. The NPP promised to deliver economic democracy in the form of inclusive and fair redistribution of the national economy. The NPP's strategy to finance its economic plan includes ending political corruption and privileging a domestic production economy. This sits well with the centre-left political ideology that the NPP has been trying to identify itself with. The NPP is an [alliance](#) of 21 groups, comprising mainly civil society and trade unions, and its main political party is the Marxist-Leninist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). The JVP's more left-revolutionary ideology has been compromised over time, especially with the formation of the NPP as a big-tent party that is able to attract a broader electoral base, mainly among the centre-left voters, that the Rajapaksa-led political camp once [mobilised](#) successfully.

In its nearly 50 days in power, the NPP has been able to dispel the 'red scare' narratives that gained traction during the presidential election. Despite promising to renegotiate the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Debt Sustainability Analysis that underpins the present IMF bailout programme, the NPP government has largely [continued](#) the previous administration's economic policies and key appointments in economic decision-making. The NPP has also reinforced its anti-corruption mandate, with highly publicised reports of [arrests](#) and seizure of illegal assets held by members of the former political elite. The NPP also attempts to present itself as a 'government of the people' by embracing a narrative of austerity and simplicity, in stark contrast to its portrayal of past governments' excesses.

On the economic front, the NPP has made several populist promises such as reducing fuel prices, increasing public sector salaries and increasing [tax](#) eligibility thresholds. However, given the practical economic limitations, it has only managed to meet some of these promises, such as marginal [reduction](#) of fuel prices and distribution of [subsidies](#) to farmers and fishermen (which had been already gazetted by the previous government). In its early days, the NPP government also faces the challenge of balancing between the more liberal

economic requirements of the IMF programme and the more centre-left oriented demands of trade unions and civil society groups linked to the NPP and its core JVP. This is seen at present in the government signalling that it will reverse privatisation moves initiated by the previous government, with regard to Sri Lankan [Airlines](#) and the Ceylon Electricity [Board](#).

In the parliamentary election, the NPP rode its wave of political popularity to secure a majority of seats and form a government without a coalition with any other party – a stance it assumed in the presidential election as well. This exclusivism helps it consolidate a powerful us-versus-them campaign narrative. A two-thirds majority is required for the constitutional reforms it has promised. The NPP has indicated that it will [abolish](#) the Executive Presidency, whose centralisation of power had been blamed for the country's series of crises and implement a devolution of power that goes beyond the Indian-backed 13th Amendment and Provincial Council system. In contrast to the presidential election, the NPP made significant [gains](#) in the minority-dominant North and East and hill-country areas.

The opposition political camps' performance in the parliamentary election indicates their growing delegitimisation in the aftermath of the 2022 crisis. The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) and the New Democratic (NDF) are unpopular as they are lumped together as part of the 'old political guard', and as a result, their relative experience in governance does not appear to give them an edge over the relatively inexperienced NPP. Moreover, the inability of the 'old guard' to form a united front and the low voter turnout during the election increased the margin of an NPP victory. The former main opposition, the SJB, secured only 40 seats. In its campaign, it was unable to distinguish itself significantly from the centre-left credentials of the NPP and the centre-right, liberal credentials of the other main political camp led by Ranil Wickremesinghe (who is not running as a candidate) – the NDF, also dubbed as the 'gas cylinder alliance'. The NDF secured five seats and the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, the Rajapaksa's political party, won only three seats. The largest Tamil political party, the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi secured eight seats.

On the foreign policy and security fronts, the new government already faced a major test last month. On 23 October 2024, the United States' (US) embassy in Sri Lanka issued a travel advisory on a terror [attack](#) targeting popular tourist locations in the Arugam Bay area in Sri Lanka's Eastern coast. While the situation was brought under control by the government, it indicated how the country's foreign policy challenges would no longer be mainly relegated to balancing the needs of the two major Asian superpowers – India and China. Sri Lanka is also particularly exposed to the brewing tensions and war in the Middle East, as the national economy is highly reliant on oil imports and foreign remittances from, and tea exports, to the Middle East and North Africa region.

In the midst of growing global volatility and regional geopolitics, Sri Lanka's parliamentary election outcomes are significant for external players who wish to secure strategic interests in the country and region.

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