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Full Length Research Paper

On the brink of an Arab spring-style conflict: Zimbabwe's quagmire and policy options

Torque Mude

Midlands State University Lecturer of International Relations, Zimbabwe.

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The aim of this study is to examine the political and economic challenges facing Zimbabwe in relation to the potential of generating a violent uprising resembling the Arab Spring civil conflicts. Zimbabwe is in a quagmire due to security, political and economic upheavals that have bedeviled the Southern African country since the end of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2013. The government seems to be reluctant to acknowledge the magnitude of the situation and let alone address it. That is the most worrisome thing. If the situation continues unabated, these problems have a potential of generating a violent uprising whose course and effects could equate those that hit North African states since 2010. Data for this study was gathered from secondary data sources including desktop research, books, newspapers and journal articles.

Key words: Arab Spring, peace, security, Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has been in a crisis since the end of the inclusive government in 2013. The crisis is largely attributable to the misplacement of priorities by the new government and it continues to display a carefree attitude, there is a high risk of implosion into a civil conflict like what happened in the Arab Spring. Since the year 2000, Zimbabwe has been on the international radar largely due to the political and economic crisis that affected the country to 2008. The crisis was blamed on Zanu PF's bad governance, corruption, alleged human rights abuses and sanctions. The emergence of the Government of National Unity between Zanu PF and the two MDC formations ushered in a new political and economic dispensation that saw economic transformation and political stability. The end of the inclusive

government saw Zanu PF winning elections in 2013 attracted discontentment as people predicted doom due Zanu PF's record of misrule. As have been said and predicted, Zanu PF serious misrule is plunging the country into a comatose state.

However, if action is taken now things might return to normalcy. The present situation has a potential of generating an uprising because the politico-economic atmosphere in the country is conducive for a rebellion. Usually, Zimbabwean citizens are relatively peaceful and passive to an extent they hardly resort to confrontational politics. But opposition parties, civil society organisations, disgruntled expelled former Zanu PF members and external actors such as foreign governments and embassies seem to be working overtime to influence

E-mail: mudetorque@gmail.com.

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social, economic and political change. They are doing that not for the sake of doing it, but they are just taking advantage of the present crisis, hence government should address the problem urgently. Civil unrest is degenerative, hence the need map progressive strategies to curb the current state of affairs.

Economically, the rate of unemployment is skyrocketing; estimated to be above 80%, civil servants are not getting their wages and salaries on time, service delivery is very poor, infrastructure is deteriorating at an alarming rate and poverty is on the rise. Furthermore, there is huge youth bulge in the country. Politically, the political temperature in the country is high due to political bickering between and within political parties, power struggles, bad governance, human rights abuses, lack of rule of law and economic downturn. While majority of these problems maybe recognised as issues of low politics, it is high time the government acknowledges being in a dilemma and come up with relevant progressive policy options as alternatives to realist oriented politics. If the situation is not addressed with urgency, Zimbabwe would be heading for a conflict between the government on one side and opposition parties, civil society organisations and the general populace. Opposition parties and civil society organisations have the critical mass to institute a rebellion against the government; a scenario that is detrimental to peace and security in the country.

In terms of security, there seems to be a real threats to national security in Zimbabwe posed by disgruntled people who were expelled from the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). Opposition parties are also posing a security threat to peace and security in the country. Ever since their expulsion from the government and Zanu PF party in December 2014, former Presidential Affairs minister Didymus Mutasa, former Agriculture minister Rugare Gumbo, former War Veterans leader Jabulani Sibanda and former Mashonaland West parliamentarian Temba Mliswa have been issuing public statements inciting violence. Movement for Democratic Change-T (MDC-T) leader Morgan Tsvangirai has also been issuing statements relating to instigating a nationwide revolt for political and economic change.

To address the earlier mentioned problems before they spiral out of control, a lot needs to be done as a matter of urgency to curb the occurrence of a civil conflict. There is need to map a way forward characterised by policies promoting good governance, good service delivery, employment creation, human rights protection, rule of law and an end to unnecessary power struggles. Above all, the government should prioritise address the concerns of the citizens in a manner that is acceptable and in line with international minimum standard. A state of the nation address by the head of state or other high ranking official or officials acknowledging the problems facing the nation and promising to rectify the situation would also work to avoid civil unrest in the country.

Contextual analysis

The Arab Spring refers to a wave of violent and no violent democratic uprisings characterised by demonstrations, protests, riots and civil wars which began on 18 December 2010 in Tunisia and spread across the Arab world¹. The uprisings were triggered by discontentment which arose from economic woes, bad governance and human rights abuses among other factors. These are the same problems prevalent in Zimbabwe at the present moment and there are elements within the country calling for revolting against the government. In case people decide to revolt against the government, the scenario would resemble the Arab Spring and it may spill over into neighboring states.

On 7 March 2015, the Daily News reported that the MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai was plotting massive peaceful demonstrations “to force President Robert Mugabe’s government to act on the plight of millions of desperate Zimbabweans who are plagued by rising poverty, hunger and disease” amid economic meltdown in the country². Tsvangirai was quoted saying:

“We have the capacity to mobilise and there is no doubt that we have the capacity to exploit the current state of affairs”³.

It should be noted that uprisings in some of the Arab countries in the wake of the Arab Spring began as mere peaceful protests which later became violent. The same could happen in Zimbabwe. Peaceful protests are permitted in accordance the Zimbabwean law, but there is no guarantee that if anti-governments protests begin as peaceful they will end peacefully. Human nature is known to be violent unless and until it restrained by fear or death. In this regard, the police or army may be sent to restore order in the event of the outbreak of protests and demonstrations in Zimbabwe. In response, the protesters may clash with the security personnel and this could trigger unprecedented civil unrest.

Politicians who were expelled from Zanu PF in the run-up to the December 2014 congress have also issued statements implying challenging the government for failing to improve the economy. Rugare Gumbo, Jabulani Sibanda and Didymus Mutasa have been making such statements since their expulsion and they have also insinuated joining forces with opposition parties and other political actors. Former Presidential Affairs minister Didymus Mutasa was quoted saying:

“The economy is in a very bad shape and we need to bring all democratic forces together so as to save the country, which they (ZANU PF) are failing to rescue from

¹ www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/ArabSpring

² <http://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2015/03/07/tsvangirai-plots-massive-demos>

³ Ibid

complete implosion. We have been in talks with other like-minded people like MDC Renewal Team leader Tendai Biti, Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) leader Dumiso Dabengwa and Mavambo/Kusile/Dawn leader Simba Makoni. The idea is for all forces to come together and challenge the illegal post-congress ZANU PF⁴.

Two things can be deduced from these statements. First, the state of the economy is the grievance propelling the proposed resort to protest against the government. Indeed, the state of the economy in Zimbabwe leaves a lot to be desired. Unemployment is rising, companies are closing down, health services have deteriorated and service delivery is poor. The cause for a violent nationwide revolt is indeed justifiable. Second and most important, there are indications that the expelled politicians want to take advantage of the state of affairs to pursue their political interests. If the last statement is anything to go by, one can safely conclude that there is an element of power politics and disgruntlement. The last statement reads,

"The idea is for all forces to come together and challenge the illegal post-congress Zanu PF"⁵.

Coupled with other economic challenges, the high rate of unemployment especially among the youth in Zimbabwe is one factor that poses the risk of violent protests and demonstrations. Independent economists estimate the overall rate of unemployment in Zimbabwe to be over 80%. The most affected people are the youth who constitute majority of the populations in the country and the most disgruntled are graduates from tertiary institutions. It is argued that more than 300 000 students are graduating from schools, colleges and universities annually to join millions who are already jobless⁶. Many graduates have been turned into vendors selling recharge cards, vegetables and fruits among other things⁷. A large population of youth out of employment is dangerous because they can be easily recruited or mobilised to start a rebellion. According to the youth bulge theory, "societies with rapidly growing young populations often end up with rampant unemployment and large pools of disaffected youths who are more susceptible to recruitment into rebel or terrorist groups" (Beehner, 2007)⁸. To go by this theory, the existence of a youth bulge in Zimbabwe increases the chance of the occurrence of a violent revolt in the country the same way it triggered the Arab Spring.

Furthermore, failing to pay wages and salaries of civil

servants on time presents a time that could explode anytime generating civil unrest in the country. A revolution almost started in mid-March when university lecturers downed tools and students staged violent campus demonstrations against the government's failure to pay their lecturers. On the 16th of March 2015, lecturers from Midlands State University (MSU), University of Zimbabwe (UZ), Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) and National University of Science (NUST) went on strike over unpaid February salaries and December bonuses⁹. There was chaos at UZ as students destroyed infrastructure in response to lecturers' strike. Putting the blame on the government, Gilbert Mutubuki the president of the Zimbabwe National Students Union expressed discontented;

"We are not happy with the strike by the lecturers because it is compromising our education and is happening when we have struggled to pay fees... the issue of food and grants remain unresolved and we are saying the time is now for the government to address and take us seriously"¹⁰.

Had others joined the student demonstrations, the situation could have generated into an internal strife. Moreover, service delivery in Zimbabwe is below standard and poverty is obliterating millions of people in the country. In both urban and rural areas, majority of people are living below the poverty datum line. Food insecurity is affecting the country due to unemployment, drought, poor wages and salaries as well as other economic hardships.

More so, roads, buildings and other infrastructure are deteriorating and the government is not paying attention to maintain and renovate the country's infrastructure. Coupled with other grievances, these socio-economic problems have a potential of causing a revolution in Zimbabwe. The Chikurubi prison uprising in March 2015 which was triggered by hunger and poor living conditions in the prison was a clear sign of disaster to come. Political and economic analysts in the country have also warned of the likelihood of civil unrest in the country. The Daily News on 15 March 2015 reported that, "Unrest and a morbid spirit of lawlessness among Zimbabweans, fed up by escalating anger against President Robert Mugabe and his Zanu PF government, is fast spreading around the country"¹¹. Political analyst Maxwell Saungwene warned that:

"Things are not well, with hunger and desperation everywhere in the country. We are really reaching the boiling point now, with the least events including the prison riots and the abduction of Itai Dzamara likely

⁴ www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2015/03/27/gumbo-mutasa-court-tsvangirai

⁵ Ibid

⁶ <http://www.thestandard.co.zw/2014/02/09/unemployment-turns-graduates-vendors>

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Beehner, L. 2007. The Effects of 'Youth Bulge on Civil Conflicts'. Available at www.cfr.org/world/effects-youth-bulge-civil-conflicts/p13093

⁹ <http://www.zimeye.com/breaking-news-uz-students-stage-demo-over-striking-lectures>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ <http://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2015/03/15/deadly-unrest-rocks-zim>

signaling the beginning of the end".¹²

Given the current state of affairs, the government should take seriously the predictions from analysts. On the political front, the political temperature in Zimbabwe is rising due to political bickering between and within political parties in the country. Factional fighting within the MDC-T in 2014 resulted in fist fights between senior party members and the subsequent splitting of the party. Serious factional tensions also broke out in ZANU PF in November 2014. They resulted in the expulsion of Vice President Joice Mujuru from both the party and government along with other senior government officials including Rugare Gumbo, Didymus Mutasa, Jabulani Sibanda, Nicholas Goche, Olivia Muchena, Kudakwashe Bhasikiti, Dzikamai Mavhaire, Ray Kaukonde and many others. Most recently, the expelled politicians have hinted forming their own political party called Zanu PF 'People First'. According to Rugare Gumbo:

"We are saying that we don't recognise the ZANU PF of 2014 because they are pretenders and have no legitimacy. They don't put people first. People are suffering, there is no rule of law and there is misery everywhere while they are living in their big houses"¹³.

The formation of a sprinter Zanu PF party seem to have increased power struggles within the party and if the situation continue as it is, some elements will within the party could resort to assassination, intimidation or torture of the members of the other group resulting in violent clashes which could generate into a civil strife.

Bad governance is another serious factor that could cause an Arab Spring style uprising in Zimbabwe. The manner in which decisions are made and implemented in Zimbabwe has so many shortcomings. Decisions are sometimes made without consulting the people, relevant ministries or departments. For instance, decisions to shift pay dates for civil servants is done unilaterally. The issue might appear minute, but it is tantamount to violation of labor laws and has the potential of causing protests which may lead to political instability. For instance, in March university lecturers went on strike over delays in February salaries and students responded by staging violent protests against the government. Arab Spring protests in Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Tunisia among other states began with youths especially university students and graduates. They started as mere protests and became 'war zones' which saw governments overthrown.

Human rights abuses and lack of rule of law were among the list of the causes of the Arab Spring conflicts. The government in Zimbabwe has a record of abusing its citizens through intimidation, torture and abduction of those who criticise the government. On 9 March 2015, a pro-democracy activist Itai Dzamara was abducted by

unknown men for allegedly planning to influence massive demonstration countrywide. The abducting individuals are suspected to be members of the secret service. Similar abductions took place in 2008 when activist Jestina Mukoko was abducted and severely tortured by government agents for allegedly planning to overthrow the government. The government should, if it is truly responsible, put an end to such activities as they may wreck havoc leading to civil unrest in the country. Rule of law is also lacking in the country. The government has a tendency of undermining the constitution in favor of *realpolitik* issues. For instance, the torture of citizens is serious violation of the country bill of rights as well as international human rights legal instruments.

More so, the emergence of a new political party in has the potential of raising political temperatures from both the ruling party and the opposition domain. The party was formed by former Zanu PF members who were expelled from the party in 2014. It was registered in January 2016 and named Zimbabwe People First (ZPF). The party is led by former vice president, Joice Mujuru. Zanu PF has a record of using torture, intimidation and other repressive measures to silence the opposition and their supporters if they threaten its survival. The formation of the Movement for Democratic Change in 2000 gave rise to politically motivated violence, intimidation and torture of party members and their supporters by state security agents, ZANU PF militia and their sympathisers. The reasons for the persecution of opposition members were the rising popularity of the party among the electorate thereby posing a threat to Zanu PF's political survival. Chances are high that the emergence of the new political party will trigger intense political violence in the upcoming elections scheduled for 2018.

The political climate in Zimbabwe will be worse if opposition parties form a grand coalition against Zanu PF. Political analysts, political activists and their equivalents have been calling for a united front by the opposition to deal with zanu pf in 2018. If that materializes Zanu PF could use force to suppress the united opposition. The force Zanu PF could use range from unleashing the state security machinery including soldiers, secret agents and police to intimidate and torture opposition parties' leaders and supporters. That is how the party has been surviving since the turn of the 21st century when MDC emerged as a popular party threatening the ruling party. Zanu PF could also enact repressive legislation designed to suppress the opposition and derail their chances of winning the upcoming elections. Following the rise of the MDC, a Zanu PF dominated parliament adopted the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Privacy Act (AIPA) in 2002 to curtail freedom of assembly, information dissemination and other political rights of especially opposition members.

The laws were designed to legitimise and legalise the arrest and torture of opposition leaders and supporters for instituting rallies and other public meetings without

¹² Ibid

¹³ <http://nehanda.com/2015/04/09/squabble-over-zanu-pf-name>

approval by the police who were instructed to limit such approvals especially if they had to do with political campaigns and awareness issues by and for the benefit of those from the MDC. There is doubt that more or less of these tactics will be used to suppress ZPF or the grand coalition of the new party and other opposition players. If the opposition decide to retaliate or resist conflicts may erupt in Zimbabwe.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the challenges facing Zimbabwe since 2013 with a view to highlight the likelihood of the culmination of the political and economic crisis into a violent revolt against the government as people will be agitating for economic and political change. Rising levels of unemployment especially among the youth, poverty, political bickering between and within political parties, human rights abuses, poor service delivery and Zanu PF's serious misrule present a recipe for violent resistance from the people. The current (July 2016) state of affairs is fragile to the extent that it's only a matter of time before the situation gets out of control. Anti-government protests have been witnessed across the country as people agitate for political and economic change, but the government seems to be committed to crushing protests than addressing the political and economic crisis. Against this background, if the state of affairs continues unabated the likelihood of the occurrence of violent uprisings remains high.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Like war, internal strife is degenerative and counterproductive with regard to development in a country. The wave of revolutions in Arab countries in the wake of the Arab spring plunged the countries into political and socio-economic turmoil whose legacy is still haunting the likes of Egypt, Syria and Libya among others. In Libya, political instability that erupted in the wake of the uprising is still persisting. Zimbabwe should draw lessons from these states and avoid the occurrence of an uprising. Efforts should be made to prevent by all means, peaceful and policy oriented, to the eruption of civil unrest in the country. To remedy the current state of affairs, the government should consider the following policy options:

1. Formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies designed to improve the economy. The Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainability Socioeconomic Transformation (ZIMASSET) policy which the government formulated in 2013 is promising, but its implementation is not desirable. A lot needs to be done in term of monitoring the implementation of the policy to improve the economy.

Transforming the economy would mean reducing the rate of unemployment as closed companies would open and employ the unemployed. Poverty will also be reduced. In a nutshell, economic transformation will eliminate the likelihood of civil unrest.

2. The government should adhere to human rights law. Adherence to human rights law means the government will put an end to abduction, torture and intimidation of citizens.

3. Dissent voices should not be silenced by use of violence. In fact the government should address the concerns of the citizens to eliminate the possibility of violent resistance against the economic and political crisis.

4. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) should consider the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe as early warning signs of conflict that require urgent attention. In the event of the occurrence of violent revolt against the government in Zimbabwe, the whole Southern Africa's peace and security will be at stake.

Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Authoritarian trends and their continuity in Sri Lankan politics: A study of operationalizing of authoritarianism from 2005 to 2015 Period

Upul Abeyrathne^{1*}, Upali Pannilage¹, Nelum Ranawaka³

¹Department of Public Policy, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka.

²Department of Sociology, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka.

³Conflict, Peace and Development Studies Project, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka.

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This study talks about the authoritarian trends and their continuity in Sri Lankan Politics since 2005. Sri Lanka was considered a model Third World Democracy at the initial phase of political independence from colonial rule. However, the country has been converted into a constitutionally established authoritarian type regime through constitution making exercise. This trend was increased in galloping speed with Mahinda Rajapakshe regimes since 2005 to 2015. The defeat of Rajapakshe regime in an unexpected electoral defeat where election was calculated as an opportunity to extend the regime with the possibility of eroding democratic values forever made the possibility of democracy in the country a clear sign. The regime went beyond authoritarianism type and embraced many features of a totalitarian type regime. However, totalitarian trends long last event after initial defeat of such regimes. This trend remains largely unexplored and non-theorized within the Sri Lankan scholarship. The objective of the present study was to fill the aforementioned gap in the scholarship. The methodology of the study has been the observations made by the three authors for the said period and they have been critically reflected upon and presented. The study concluded that the biggest political challenge ahead of Sri Lanka is to do away with the ethnic consciousness nurtured among the majority Sinhalese as a political tool of maintaining totalitarian culture and those legacies need to be address in harnessing democratic culture

Key words: Authoritarianism, totalitarian, Mahinda Rajapakshe, Sri Lanka, Third World totalitarian.

INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka had been treated a model “Third World Democracy” at the early stage as a new state. However, its democratic structure as well as practices inherited from British Colonial Legacy has been transformed into a constitutionally established powerful rule with the enactment of first autochthonous constitution in 1972 and

culminated with the enactment of Second Republican constitution in 1978 and subsequent amendments to the constitution except 13 and 19th Amendments. The protracted ethnic war and government propaganda on absolute necessity of powerful government, by extension, of the executive presidential form of government has

*Corresponding author. E-mail: abeyrathne.upul@gmail.com.

provided for legitimation of mono-centric power concentration.

The time period covered under the present study is the Rajapakse Regime of Sri Lanka from 2005 to 2015. The research also had covered the period from 2015 to date to identify continuity and discontinuity of authoritarian legacies in the co-habitation government led by President Maithreepala Sirisena and Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe.

The few scholars on Sri Lanka have characterized Rajapakse regime differently. However, there is a general agreement that Rajapakse Regime shared many features of an authoritarian regime (DeVotta, 2010), sometimes, even passing the phase of authoritarianism and entering the phase of totalitarian rule¹ features. The specificity of Mahinda Rajapakse Regime was that the regime had steered Sri Lanka towards a totalitarian rule through legal and constitutional means while using a cultural mechanism to totalize power in and around the executive presidency and its occupant Mahinda Rajapakse and attempted to perpetuate his rule forever.

The political development that took place during Rajapakse regime go beyond authoritarian type of government and has incorporated features a totalitarian rule. The regime since 2005 had sought to gain total control over all aspects of almost everything, both public and private sectors. The ruling regime has taken steps to perpetuate totalitarian regime headed by him together with his kith-and- kin since 2005. The second level leaders of the political party which he chaired become loyal and timid appraisers of not only him but also of his family members. However, his rule abruptly ended on 08th January 2015 to the dismay of many people that had been trained to the Mahinda Cult and corrupted politicians who have been patronized by the regime.

This study belonged to the normative tradition of political science and critical sociology and it is based on the critical reflection of socio-political process and events of the country since 2005. The objectives of this article were two fold. The first was to look into the mechanism of totalizing power during Rajapakse rule and to explore well-planned totalizing power mechanism in each and every sphere of lives of the people of the country. Second objective has been to examine the democratic challenges that the Post Totalitarian Sri Lanka has to face. The article had organized into five sections. In the first section of the article, an attempt was made to clarify the concepts of totalitarianism and post totalitarianism.

The specificity of Rajapakse Regime and associated totalizing of power mechanism is explored in the second section of this study. The third section of the article is dedicated to examine the causes of the collapse of the totalitarian regime within a time span of around ten years.

The fourth section of the article has dealt with post totalitarian legacies and challenges. Finally, an attempt was made to point out the way out of legacies of

totalitarian practices.

Totalitarianism and post totalitarianism

Before venturing into an examination of totalitarian characteristics of Mahinda Rajapakse Regime during the stipulated time period, brief deliberation on what is meant by the concepts of totalitarianism and post-totalitarianism is pertinent.

There is a vast literature on totalitarianism. Many have dealt with the ideological and political dimensions of the phenomenon. Scholars that studied the phenomenon have discussed its different dimensions, analyzed its origins and aims, examined its ideas, and described its institutions (Arendt, 1951; Friedrich, 1954; Talmon, 1952; Friedrich and Brzezinski, 1956; Eisenstein, 1962; Korchak, 1993).

Totalitarianism is also a socio-psychological phenomenon and this dimension of totalitarianism remains less investigated within the mainstream scholars (Vainshtein, 1994). Totalitarianism is defined as the political regime in which all forms of social control is centralized in and around one person or one institution using the logic of instrumental rationality (Buechler, 2008). The instrumental rationality emerged with the effort of applying techniques of natural sciences to the study of social phenomenon and heading towards progress with social engineering. In this context, a few scholars have attempted at studying the possibility of properly assessing the prospects for totalitarianism as a form of government in the modern world. There are a good number of studies that predict the possibility of emerging totalitarian regimes in societies of Post-Communist Block in the former Soviet Union and its allies (Siegel, 1998). However, Totalitarian regimes' chief objectives are to rule unimpeded by legal restraint, civic pluralism, and party competition, and to refashion human nature itself.

Many of the South Asian Societies had witnessed a kind of totalitarian rule (Tambiah, 1986). However, there are little studies in the context of South Asian Societies and especially in the case of Sri Lanka which had passed a phase of totalitarian rule since 2005 and ending on 8th of January 2015. For the purpose of present study, totalitarianism is defined as a form of government which aims at and also achieves complete, absolute control and total control over all aspects of everything that is either public or private, or political or non-political in a society (Peijuan, undated, 32). The scholars that studied totalitarian regimes had highlighted different socio-political, cultural and economic aspects associated with totalitarian regimes in slightly different ways. Hannah Arendt highlighted closeness of the society, a regime characterized by ideology and movement aiming at and succeeding in organizing 'masses' not as class but citizens and giving them a feeling of super flushness in a classless society (Ibid).

The closed society, regimes characterized by ideology and terror as well as movements aiming at and succeeding

¹ .www.asianews.it/.../Sri-Lanka,-political-industry-at-the-service-of-a-totalitarian-regim.

in organizing 'Masses' (not class but citizens) and giving them a feeling of "super-flousness" in a classless society (Hannah Arendt). Charl J Friedrich in his the Unique Character in Totalitarian Society (1954) and Dictatorship and Autocracy (1956 with Zbigniew K Brzezinski) pointed out those factors that characterize and define totalitarian regimes were to be taken as mutually supportive organic entity composed of the followings:

1. An elaborating official guiding ideology focused on a perfect state of human kind, to which everyone is supposed to adhere.
2. A Single mass party typically led by one person, hierarchically organized and superior to or intertwined with the state bureaucracy
3. A System of terror, physical or psychic effected by party or secret policy,
4. A technologically conditioned, near complete control means of effective mass communication
5. A similar control of all weapons of armed combat and
6. A central control and direction of the entire economy through state planning (Thompson, 2010).
7. It has to be noted that totalitarianism involves ideology, political and socio-psychological aspects.

When totalitarianism is understood, in the sense of ideology which refers to a particular set of views, myths and symbols are intended to indoctrinate the citizens for the necessity of totalitarian rule and to justify its practice. In the political sense, totalitarianism implies a form of social and political order characterized both by particular politica l institutions and the specific means used to achieve their goals and to preserve their domination, as well as the peculiar relations of supremacy and subordination between the government and civil society.

In the socio-psychological sense, totalitarianism is a form of mass social consciousness which legitimates these relations of domination and subordination. Such consciousness is distinguished by the existence of a certain composition of various stereotypes, ideological common-places, prejudices, and attitudes concerning politics, economics, and society (Vainshtein, 1994). Totalitarian rulers strive their best to create ideologies, prejudices and belief system through culture industry and fear psychosis though the imminent physical threats of secret policing of dissent.

Etymologically, post totalitarianism implies a situation after the end of totalitarian rule. However, post totalitarian regime is understood in the present context not just a historical category which describes a particular type of regime after its totalitarian phase. It is a political category representing a particular type of political regime still seeking total control over its citizens even after losing some indispensable foundation and features of totalitarianism such as attraction of its official ideology, legitimacy and charisma of its leader (Peijuan, *ibid*). It must be noted that totalitarian legacies simply does not fade away and vanish immediately after the collapse of

totalitarian regimes. Studies have revealed that totalitarian ideology, institutions and psychology persist for long and have got the capacity of re-germinating totalitarianism in some other forms (Linz and Stepan, 1996).

In the case of Sri Lanka, political development since the defeat of Mahinda Rajapakse and attempt to bring him back to power by chauvinist forces that were fostered by Rajapakse Regime suggest the long durability of totalitarian legacy in Sri Lanka.

Elements of totalitarian practices in Sri Lanka

Observation on political development since 2005 to 2015 revealed a process of totalizing of power which has got the key features of totalitarian regimes that had been discussed earlier. In the process of finding an elaborating official guiding ideology focused on a perfect state of human kind, to which everyone is supposed to adhere, the regime had sought the help of historical past which is comprised of legends of benevolent kings of the Sri Lankan Dynasties. The benevolence of old kings were thought of something that has to do with virtues of Buddhist teaching. The propaganda mechanism had propagated ruler as an equal to those benevolent kings of ancient period of Sri Lanka. Michael Robert captured the essence of this process as follows:

"President Rajapakse is the epitome of sovereign power vested with the rights of clemency on high like Sinhalese kings of the past who could be supplicated by connected subjects who crawled on their knees to the palace gate and begged pardon for their evil doings or crimes" (2015).

It portrayed him "akin to manorial lords of the past, a patrimonial figure who is readily accessible on his veranda to subordinate officials, tenants and other people seeking favours from this font of noblesse oblige. He is also portrayed as a son of the soil, native to core. After all, he is therefore, as personable as approachable. This imagery helps in incorporating and reproducing the status and power of the superior person and/or positions. This portrayal is helpful in creating a mechanism in which those subordinate and inferior participate in their own subordination" (*ibid*). This superior and inferior relationship is constructed through populism. It is a political current which places the masses within a nation-state on a pedestal and claims to work for their greater good (*ibid*).

Populism is the cult of the masses which vest the figure espousing and embodying the popular cause with an enormous concentration of power (*ibid*). In the case of Sri Lanka, this populism found its support base in ethicized majority Sinhalese that have been indoctrinated to seek emancipation through constitutional monism (Uyangoda, 2013).

In the context of the totalizing power project, xenophobia over ethnic other (minorities) became the central feature of totalizing power mechanism. The regime has effectively

coopted intellectual current known as *Jatika Chinthanaya* in the process of extreme chauvinism to which it has resorted to gain political power and legitimize totalizing of power in and around him and his family. The regime also had strived its best to weaken other political parties through offering political spoils to leading figures of small parties especially to the ones who were vocal to the needs and fancies of majority community. This process has resulted in potential portrayal of Rajapaksa Regime as the top most protector of dominant Sinhalese heritage and power in Sri Lankan Politics. The ethicized politics in post-colonial Sri Lanka helped Rajapakse Regime to sustain a system of terror and justify and legitimate use of terror to achieve political objectives such as law and order. Extra juridical killings of suspects of crime and kidnapping, torturing and killing of political opponents became order of the day. In essence, it had taken steps to create a surveillance state (Sunday Observer, July 19th 2015, Revealing Surveillance in Sri Lanka, p, 11).

The regime also had concerned with means and methods of controlling media both state and public, and print and electronic. The mechanism ranges from legal instruments such as Sri Lanka Telecommunication Commission and physical threats to political patronage of many kinds. Rajapaksa regime did not abandon the open economy policy. Yet, it has attempted to control and regulate economy through various means. The members of the Rajapaksa Family had controlled overall government budget while relegating rest of the Ministers to mere enjoying persons of official privileges and ceremonial dignity. Another dimension to totalitarian regime of Rajapaksa had to be added. That was the capturing of entire social, political and administrative structure by kith-and-kin of Mahinda. It has been reported that the regime offered political appointments to highest positions as well as to lowest echelons of bureaucracy.

Specificity of the regime

Power totalizing mechanism of Rajapakse regime, was composed of two mutually interactive elements, that is, law and culture industry. In fact, the constitution making exercises in Sri Lanka were not meant for democratizing the polity but to strengthen the vision of one centre of legislative, executive and judicial power (Uyangoda, *ibid*). This vision of monistic constitutionalism entered into official constitutional philosophy with the enactment of First Republican Constitution in 1972 giving prominence to the culture of the majority Sinhalese. The Second Republican Constitution of 1978, shared everything in essence of Monistic Constitutionalism while constitutionally establishing a dictatorial rule of the president of the republic. The character of government in Sri Lanka became dependent upon the mentality and personality of the individual president of the country with the enactment of Second Republican Constitution.

A study conducted in a different context revealed that

puritanical rigidity, narrowing of emotional life, massive use of defense projection, denial and fear of his own passions combined with fantasies of violence all set within the matrix of clear paranoid and obsessive personality traits which ultimately results in denial of rights to the citizens as individual and groups (Thompson, 2004). The 19th amendment introduced after the defeat of Mahinda Rajapaksa, has curbed the power of president to a certain extent². However, totalitarian legacies left by Rajapakse regime and cultured ethos of constitutional monism had diluted the essence of constitutional proposed amendment and prevented an opportunity to democratize political process in the country.

The identities of people of a country are constructed and maintained through mediated means according to insights of the critical theory. The construction and maintenance of polarized ethnic identities is very beneficial for totalitarian political regimes in "state nation" where a big ethnic majority is available. In Sri Lanka, ethnic Sinhalese are more than 70% of the total population of the country. Strengthening "we they" mentality is instrumental for totalitarian regimes where democratic rituals such as elections and referendum and plebiscite are available to harness the undemocratic rule of single individual or extended political families. This was true, particularly, of countries in South Asia. The link between culture industry, media and capital had become significant in this context. Media is the main tool of culture industry and it is extensively used by totalitarian regimes in contemporary world in favour of the group who held the governmental power. For instance, the researchers of the present study had observed since 2005, gradual decline of even news bulletins of electronic media owned by the state. 60% of news broadcasting after 2005, is devoted to portrait the image of the president by way of extensively showing benevolent acts of president such as continuous alms giving to pilgrims who arrived at the holy city of Anuradhapura and gestures of paternal love towards small kids by way of caressing them at development showing public ceremonies. The media had been used to seduce people in development projects while the very same projects remained very oppressive in reality. The balance sheet of development efforts raised the issue whether they had benefited the rank-and-file of the society. The development indicator substantiate that Sri Lanka had been heading from an egalitarian society to none-egalitarian one with mega development projects.

The highway express ways and other development projects had resulted in envelopment rather than development. However, mega projects which did not benefit the worse off sections of the society such as Hambantota Harbour and express ways were presented

² The cult created in and around Mahinda Rajapakse is still alive in Sri Lankan Politics. Sri Lanka Broadcasting Cooperation has recorded that Ex Minister, a Staunch Supporter of Rajapaksa, the United Freedom Alliance is planning to introduce an Executive Prime Minister System under the Defeated Rajapaksa through the Parliamentary Election of 17th August 2015.

as essential for development of the poor and they were being directed to get imagined as symbols of society's march towards prosperous and bright future even though those development projects lack any immediate impact on the betterment of lives of many people while increasing the burden of living through indirect taxes (Abeyrathne, 2000). The mega development projects introduced in the Southern Sri Lanka has not reached the poor and marginalized in the region as expected (Pannilage et al., 2015). The people were invited to become passive audience of development and people were given the opportunity to taste development benefits before ceremonial limitation of benefits of infrastructure development projects to the better off of few through acts such as walking with president on highways etc. There were chosen and trained mouth pieces to speak of imaginary benefits and necessity of such projects³.

Electronic media had directed to give wide circulation of such views with the objective of creating false consciousness of the goodness of the ruler and needs of infrastructure projects which did not have any immediacy on the lives of the people. The leisure time of the people meant for enjoyment of literature and performing arts had converted to political propaganda of the ruling ideology. The *Kopi Kade* (It Is a serial telecasted in the Independent Television Network (ITN)) which promotes the image of the ruling ideology and persons in power, and it was used to disgrace politically opposing views to the dominant ideology. The very objective of such broadcasting and telecasting was to hallucinate the people.

There had been very few people who dared to question the rationality of the ends of development projects perused by the political regime. The media has used to disgrace whoever questioned the regime as traitors of the nation. "Betrayers of Mother Sri Lanka" was the label and mobs had been employed to humiliate whoever become critical of government policy. Both public and private media is used in this strategic move of silencing dissent.

Media was used to make people enjoy cruelties meted upon dissenting persons of the ruling regime. Both public and private media were justified, and gave wider publicity to cruelties meted upon such persons. The instrumental rationality behind those practices aimed at justifying extra-judicial judgments and killings as necessary to maintain an ordered society. The result had been the general acceptance of the correctness of punishing

³ . Divaina 12th August 2009. An author Danesh Kodippili Aracci, has written an article to the Wednesday Supplement of the Divaina on Ultimate Factor of the Victory of War. In summary, the idea that this article promotes is that the leaders who happened to grapple with the ethnic problem of Sri Lanka is that majority of them were not true descendant of warrior caste i.e. Kshashtriya (Kingly Caste). They were Brahmin and related to Tamil Stock. D.B. Wijetunga and Ranasinghe Premadas are exceptions. In the case of D.B. Wijetunga, he does not belong to a pure Kingly Caste. Ranasinghe Premadasa is not from the Kingly Caste. The Low Country Govi Sinhalese are the true and Pure descendent of Nepalese Warrior Caste. The Low Country Sinhalese are the majority too. The ultimate factor of military victory over the LTTE was the belonging of President Rajapakse to the Low Country, Pure Govi (Cultivator) Caste which is the true warrior caste in Sri Lanka.

political dissenters and harassing and killing of ethnic others and criminals by the police and armed forces without following the due procedure of law.

Media to a certain extent portrays such incidence as unavoidable and necessary for a developing nation⁴. The media justifies such incidences as something done for the law and order, and conducive for development and good society. Other arts forms such as tele-dramas (like *Kopi Kade*) were used to promote the status apparatus of the totalitarian regime and they aimed at promoting, propagating and inculcating archaic, outdated and hierarchy friendly values such as un-questioned belief in the goodness of the kings of ancient Sri Lanka and their benevolent acts and resemblances of the present regime with that of ancient political order by pseudo pundits who were paid out of public pocket through the power given to government by law. The law enforcing authorities had become the judges themselves and suspects were shot to death and they had been justified (Rivira News on murder and rape case of a young girl and the death of the suspect on 20th September 2014). The remaining 40% of the news bulletin was devoted to educate and socialized majority Sinhalese on ethnic others by reminding by broadcasting and telecasting atrocities done over them by imagined enemy other in chronological order during protracted war since 1983 while paying scant attention to international news of democratic importance and the rest of the time was allocated to sport news.

The politics of cultural industry in Sri Lanka and particularly during the Rajapakse created a mindset of being a permanent minority in South Asia. The Buddhist Sinhalese regard themselves as a minority in Southeast Asia and perceive their ethno-religious identity to be threatened. Hence, the fight against, the Hindu Tamils in Northern Sri Lanka could be interpreted as a violent defensive reaction by the Buddhist Sinhalese. The constitutional monism and strong single person was the necessity to defend the Sinhalese nation. This was the recurrent theme found during Mahinda Rajapakse regime in news items, seemingly serious academic discussion in media, Cinema and other forms of arts.

The other dimension of making Buddhist Sinhalese imagining a minority in South Asia was that making citizens lesser citizens and inculcating of a mindset of absolute necessity of legally established executive where power was totalized in single institution and single person for a long time. Consequently, the legally established totalitarian political set up and culture resulted in apolitical community and it contributed to further and further strengthening of totalitarian tendencies in the country. The suspension of certain rights of the people during war under emergency laws and laws enacted to deal with war and certain politically decided cases by the judiciary had made

⁴ .Gotabaya Rajapakse had warned media on media coverage of police atrocities and taking law into their hand. He was of the opinion that such publicity had been detrimental to silence the Underworld (Divaina, 24th August 2009)

People to lose faith in judiciary as an impartial body that could adjudicate disputes among them and between the government and them. Well planned media campaign had helped people to get hallucinated in developmentalism and ethnic hatred in the political community that comprised of a big ethnic majority group which believed them to be a minority. The controlling capacity of mass media through political patronage had gone hand-in-hand with cultural industry of a totalitarian regime and media had been extensively used for totalizing power. The cumulative result was that of effectively discouraging people in imagining a better future for them which was a precondition of functioning democracy.

The regime also had strived its best to use education to inculcate patriotism and by extension, the ethnic superiority mentality among different layers of student ranging from university students to student of primary level of Education. The researchers had observed a famous folk play among the primary students of Galle area where Mahinda Rajapakse was made equal to divine figure. (It goes as follows, *plain ekak Awa. Janadipathi Bassa. Ethana Malak Pipuna*, (There arrived a plane and President happened to land there and there blossom a flower) ahead of the folk song sung by small kids where the hand of the child is off at particular pause of the song). The researchers also had experienced the difficulty in including the patriotism in the curriculum which was dictated by the University Grants Commission during the Regime.

Post totalitarian legacies

The ending of or abrupt downfall of totalitarian regimes did not result necessarily in democratic governance. The inability to deliver expected result of getting rid of the totalitarian regimes and the new rich that benefited from the previous regime had continued to challenge democratic reforms of the new government by promoting and propagating archaic values and rebreeding of ethnic hatred among the people. The attempt made by the ex-president and certain ethnic minded politicians and parties at August 2015 Parliamentary Election on extreme ethnic line and attempt made to belittle the presidential election victory by the common opposition candidate as one sponsored by imperial forces and conspiracy made by ethnic minorities to divide the country substantiate the fact that mindset created by totalitarian rulers continued to last long. Sometimes, the new elected rulers might follow the path of its predecessor to remain in power.

The success of the propaganda on necessity of going beyond the law of the country to deal with the criminals and terrorists had continued to haunt the mindset of the public. It was visible by popular outcry to hang the suspects of rapist and murders promptly and immediately on many occasions largely promoted by electronic media in recent past. The mouth pieces of people had often express their anguish and displeasure on government.

Following rule of law to deal with such socially disgraced behavior had been presented as inefficiency of the post totalitarian regime. The post totalitarian regime election results substantiate the fact that totalitarian parties and groups still found strong support base among the majority community.

The liberal democratic parties and political left had been reluctant to publicly acknowledge that they were ready to opt for reforming the state-nation structure which was framed after the cultural artifacts of the majority Sinhalese. The pact between United National Party and Jathika Hela Urumaya (Sinhalese National Heritage Party) and Some Members of Sri Lanka Freedom Party that supported the Common Presidential Candidate in 8th January 2015 election against the their own party leader, Mahinda Rajapakse had agreed to continue with the unitary structure of the state while reforming the constitution. It was because the power of ethnized nature of the Sri Lankan Politics and improved chauvinism under the totalitarian regime lasted from 2005 to 2015.

Conclusions

Political challenges of democratization

The critical reflection upon the totalitarian and post totalitarian phase of Sri Lankan society was helpful to recognize key political challenges that is needed to be politically dealt with in democratic governance process. The first challenge is related to doing away with the public mindset among the majority Sinhalese of them being a minority in South Asian context of demography. The historiography within Sri Lankan universities and school curriculum had turned into histories of ethnic difference at the cost of shared history. As identities were cultured and nurtured ones, finding an alternative identity for Sri Lankan political community in which differences of identities remained a political challenge in reforming the post totalitarian phase of political history of Sri Lanka. The cultivated mindset of the people on the necessity of strong and powerful uni-centre for governing given in the particular ethnic geography of Sri Lanka needs to be addressed through reforming the life world of the people of Sri Lanka. In this context, government has to have a holistic approach to politics and culture which implies the requirements of addressing needs of reform in public institution and private life world of the people simultaneously.

Conflicts of Interests

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The background of the entire page is a dark, starry night sky. In the center, a person is shown from the waist up, holding a large, glowing globe of the Earth. The person's arms are raised, and they appear to be presenting the globe. The globe has a grid of latitude and longitude lines. The overall scene is illuminated by the light from the stars and the globe itself.

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