

Sole Representatives in Tamil Politics: A Case Study of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in Post-Conflict Sri Lanka

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This paper examines the hitherto unexplored subject of a political party seeking the status of sole political representatives. Why do some political parties seek the status of sole political representatives? What strategies do they employ to achieve the status of sole political representatives? Is the status merely symbolic, or does it fetch tangible benefits? These research questions are explored by treating Sri Lanka's Tamil political party TNA as a case study. Primary and secondary data formed the basis of the analysis. The TNA seems to use three strategies to achieve a dominant character within Tamil politics. They are (1) disproportion of rival political groups, (2) incorporation of some political parties/alliances, and (3) efficiency of political manifesto. The TNA used sole Tamil political representation to ensure bilateral talks with the government and foreign representatives, get the Tamil diaspora support, and dominate the administrative structure, especially in the north. The strategy worked to a great extent in post-conflict Tamil politics since the end of the armed conflict in 2009, but it partially experienced a downfall in the 2020 general election. This research analyses the level of optimism of the TNA that it is the sole political representative of Sri Lankan Tamils and its political future.

Keywords: *sole political representative, TNA, post-conflict Tamil politics*