



*From the MixCache.com library*

SAMPLE COPY

# The Politics of Sri Lanka

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

## Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** The Island Nation: Geography and Demography of Sri Lanka
- **Chapter 2** Foundations of Sri Lankan Politics: Colonial Legacies
- **Chapter 3** Path to Independence: Political Movements and 1948
- **Chapter 4** The Colebrooke-Cameron and Donoughmore Reforms
- **Chapter 5** The Soulbury Constitution and Early Parliamentary Democracy
- **Chapter 6** The Transition to Republicanism: The 1972 Constitution
- **Chapter 7** The 1978 Constitution: Establishing the Executive Presidency
- **Chapter 8** The Legislative Branch: Parliament, Powers, and Procedures
- **Chapter 9** The Executive Branch: Role and Powers of the President
- **Chapter 10** The Prime Minister and the Cabinet: Functions and Responsibilities
- **Chapter 11** The Judiciary of Sri Lanka: Structure, Independence, and Challenges
- **Chapter 12** Provincial Councils and the Devolution of Power
- **Chapter 13** Local Government: Councils, Sabhas, and Grassroots Democracy
- **Chapter 14** Electoral Systems: From First-Past-the-Post to Proportional Representation
- **Chapter 15** Major Political Parties: UNP, SLFP, and the Rise of New Forces
- **Chapter 16** Minority Representation: Tamil, Muslim, and Other Parties
- **Chapter 17** Ethnic Politics and the Road to Conflict
- **Chapter 18** The Civil War: Causes, Course, and Consequences
- **Chapter 19** Post-War Politics: Reconciliation and Accountability
- **Chapter 20** Economic Policy and the Politics of Development
- **Chapter 21** Corruption and Governance: Institutions and Public Trust
- **Chapter 22** Human Rights, Civil Liberties, and the Law
- **Chapter 23** Media, Freedom of Expression, and Political Discourse
- **Chapter 24** Women in Sri Lankan Politics: Representation and Challenges
- **Chapter 25** Contemporary Issues and the Future of Sri Lankan Politics

## Introduction

Sri Lanka, often described as the "Pearl of the Indian Ocean," is a nation whose political landscape is deeply intertwined with its rich tapestry of history, geography, and cultures. Since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1948, Sri Lanka has undertaken a complex journey in shaping its political identity—one marked by constitutional experimentation, shifting balances of power, and the ongoing challenge of managing diversity within a single national polity. This book, "The Politics of Sri Lanka: A Guide to Politics and the Political System in Sri Lanka," offers a comprehensive exploration of how historical legacies, institutional frameworks, and contemporary challenges have forged the unique contours of Sri Lanka's political system.

The evolution of Sri Lanka's constitutional order reveals much about its social and political fabric. From the advent of British-crafted constitutions to the emergence of homegrown republican models, each phase has left enduring imprints on the country's governance structures and collective consciousness. The 1978 Constitution, in particular, introduced a powerful executive presidency—a development that fundamentally altered the dynamics of executive-legislative relations and continues to shape the exercise of political power today. Yet, the frequent constitutional amendments and debates over devolution of power also reflect the nation's ongoing struggle to reconcile demands for unity with respect for its diverse communities.

Ethnicity and identity have played an outsized role in shaping Sri Lankan politics. Home to a majority Sinhala Buddhist population alongside significant Tamil, Muslim, and other minority groups, the island has long grappled with the challenges of inclusive governance. Policies perceived as majoritarian, such as the Sinhala Only Act, contributed to the rise of ethnic tensions and ultimately culminated in a devastating civil conflict that stretched across decades. While the end of the war in 2009 has allowed for relative peace and reconstruction, the legacy of this conflict still reverberates in debates over reconciliation, justice, and the future of intercommunal relations.

The multi-layered structure of government in Sri Lanka encompasses central, provincial, and local levels, each with its specific role and scope. Efforts at decentralization—most notably through the creation of Provincial Councils—sought to address demands for regional autonomy and minority inclusion. However, central government dominance and practical limitations have often hindered full realization of genuine power-sharing, leaving questions of autonomy and self-governance open and hotly contested.

Sri Lanka's vibrant but often turbulent political scene is also marked by robust electoral competition, a multi-party system, and a highly engaged citizenry. While traditional parties such as the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) have been mainstays of post-independence politics, recent years have witnessed the emergence of new political movements and alliances, reflecting shifting demands and the electorate's desire for change. Alongside these developments, longstanding issues—ranging from economic instability, corruption, and governance deficits to human rights, media freedom, and women's political participation—continue to challenge and define the nation's political trajectory.

Through an examination of Sri Lanka's political system, this book aims not only to elucidate the constitutional structures and party landscape but also to offer insights into the interplay of social forces, policy debates, and the ongoing quest for a more equitable and representative democracy. As Sri Lanka stands at a crossroads—facing old dilemmas and new opportunities—understanding the country's political dynamics is essential for citizens, policymakers, and global observers alike.

SAMPLE COPY

## CHAPTER ONE: The Island Nation: Geography and Demography of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, a teardrop-shaped island in the vast Indian Ocean, lies just southeast of the Indian subcontinent, separated by the narrow Palk Strait. Its strategic location has, for centuries, made it a vital **نقطه** for trade and a coveted prize for colonial powers. This geographical reality has profoundly shaped the island's history and continues to influence its political landscape. The island's total area is approximately 65,610 square kilometers, making it roughly the size of the state of West Virginia in the United States, or a little smaller than Tasmania. Despite its relatively small size, Sri Lanka boasts a remarkable diversity of landscapes, from sun-drenched coastal plains to mist-shrouded central highlands.

The physical geography of Sri Lanka is dominated by a central massif of hills and mountains in the south-central part of the island. This highland region, often referred to as the Central Highlands, rises to over 2,500 meters (8,200 feet) at its highest point, Pidurutalagala. Other notable peaks in this area include Kirigalpotta and Adam's Peak, the latter holding religious significance for several faiths. The highlands are characterized by a rugged terrain of ridges, peaks, plateaus, and valleys.

Radiating outwards from the Central Highlands are a series of plains that cover the majority of the island's surface area. These plains generally range in elevation from sea level to about 300 meters (1,000 feet). The northern part of the island, in particular, is largely flat and gently rolling. This varied topography contributes to distinct regional climates and ecosystems across the island.

Sri Lanka's climate is tropical, influenced by its proximity to the equator and the surrounding Indian Ocean. Temperatures are generally warm year-round, with average daily maximums around 31°C (88°F), though temperatures in the highlands are considerably cooler due to the altitude. The island experiences two main monsoon seasons: the southwest monsoon from May to August brings heavy rains to the southwest, while the northeast monsoon from October to January affects the northeast. These monsoons are crucial for the island's agriculture, particularly the cultivation of rice, the staple food.

The distribution of rainfall divides the island into three climatic zones: the wet zone in the southwest, the dry zone covering the north and east, and an intermediate zone in between. The wet zone receives abundant rainfall, while the dry zone, despite being the agricultural heartland where most rice is grown, experiences periods of drought. This vulnerability to climate variability and extreme weather events like floods and

droughts poses significant challenges, particularly for rural communities and food security. Climate change is an increasing concern, with rising sea levels threatening coastal areas and shifting rainfall patterns impacting agriculture.

A network of rivers originates in the Central Highlands and flows radially towards the coast. There are an estimated 103 rivers and streams in Sri Lanka. The longest of these is the Mahaweli River, which flows northeast for 335 kilometers (208 miles) and is vital for irrigation and hydroelectric power generation. Other significant rivers include the Kelani, Kalu, and Walawe rivers. These river systems are a critical natural resource, supporting agriculture and providing water for a significant portion of the population.

The island's coastline is diverse, featuring sandy beaches, lagoons, and mangrove swamps. Coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including sea-level rise and increased storm surges. The destruction of coastal wetlands and deforestation in other areas are ongoing environmental challenges that threaten the island's rich biodiversity. Sri Lanka is recognized as a biodiversity hotspot, home to a wealth of endemic species.

Moving from the physical landscape to its human inhabitants, Sri Lanka is home to a population of over 22 million people. The population density is relatively high, particularly in the southwestern parts of the island where the capital city of Colombo is located. The population is concentrated in the southwest and center of the island. While a significant portion of the population still resides in rural areas, urbanization is increasing.

Sri Lanka's population is characterized by its ethnic and religious diversity. The majority ethnic group is the Sinhalese, who constitute around 74.9% of the population. They are predominantly Buddhist. The Tamils are the largest ethnic minority, making up approximately 11.2% of the population. Tamil communities are further divided into Sri Lankan Tamils, who have a long history on the island, and Indian Tamils, whose ancestors were brought from India by the British to work on plantations. Most Tamils are Hindu.

Another significant ethnic group is the Sri Lankan Moors, who are primarily Muslim and account for about 9.3% of the population. They are dispersed throughout the island, with a notable concentration in the eastern province. Other minority groups include Malays, Burghers (descendants of European colonists), and indigenous Wanniyala-Aetto (Veddhas).

In terms of religion, Buddhism is the majority religion, followed by around 70.1% of the population. Hinduism is the second largest religion, practiced by about 12.6% of the population. Islam is the religion of approximately 9.7% of Sri Lankans, while Christians, including Roman Catholics and other denominations, make up about 7.4%. Christianity

is followed by both Sinhala and Tamil people. While the constitution grants Buddhism the "foremost place," it also guarantees freedom of religion for all communities.

The overlap between ethnicity and religion is a significant aspect of Sri Lanka's demographic makeup. The majority of Sinhalese are Buddhist, and the majority of Tamils are Hindu. The Muslim community is primarily composed of Sri Lankan Moors. This close link between ethno-religious identities has played a crucial role in the country's social and political dynamics.

The distribution of ethnic and religious groups across the island is not uniform. Sinhalese are concentrated in the southern, western, and central parts of the island. Sri Lankan Tamils are historically concentrated in the northern and eastern provinces, while Indian Tamils are largely found in the central highlands where the tea plantations are located. Muslim communities are present in various parts of the island, with a significant presence in the east and in urban centers. This regional distribution of communities has contributed to distinct cultural landscapes and, at times, to regional political aspirations and tensions.

The demographic composition of Sri Lanka has undergone gradual changes over time due to factors such as population growth, migration, and conflict. The population has grown significantly since independence. The age structure of the population indicates a gradually aging society, with a growing proportion of older people.

Literacy rates in Sri Lanka are relatively high, reflecting a historical emphasis on education. However, disparities in educational attainment and economic status exist between different communities and regions. Poverty remains a challenge for a significant portion of the population, and economic vulnerability can exacerbate existing social and political tensions.

Understanding the interplay of Sri Lanka's geography and demography is crucial for comprehending its political landscape. The island's physical features have influenced settlement patterns, economic activities, and regional identities. The diversity of its people, while a source of cultural richness, has also been a historical source of political tension and conflict. The distribution and concentration of different ethnic and religious groups have shaped political constituencies and continue to influence power-sharing arrangements and debates about national identity. The environmental challenges the island faces, from climate change to resource management, also have political implications, impacting livelihoods, driving migration, and requiring policy responses.

---

*This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.*

Visit [MixCache.com](https://MixCache.com) to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY