

D147

**CHANGING DYNAMICS OF THE SRI LANKA  
FREEDOM PARTY: POLICIES AND POLITICS  
TOWARDS TAMIL MINORITY  
IN THE CONTEXT OF ETHNIC CONFLICT  
AND CIVIL WAR: 1983-2005**

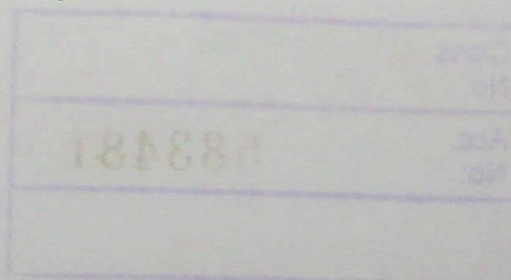
**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
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**BY**

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### **Abstract**

The main focus of this study is to examine the ideology driven policy and political response of the SLFP to Tamil minority politics within the context of the ethnic conflict and the ethnic civil war during the years 1983-2005. In looking at the chronological progression of events, and the data relevant to the study a case-study methodology and a synchronic approach is followed. The material for the study comprises of the official pronouncements, party manifestos publications and statements, parliamentary debates as well as popular utterances gathered from a variety of available sources- formal, and non-formal - and interviews with key SLFP leaders, A major concern of this study is to discover under what conditions the SLFP, while being a political party with a Sinhala Buddhist ethno-nationalist identity, changed its policy stance from time to time in respect of Tamil minority politics. Accordingly this study explores under five broad time segments the specific responses of the SLFP to contemporary politics, Tamil minority ethnic politics and the ethnic conflict. While drawing attention to the policy discourse formulating around such events of the 1980s decade such the Indo-Lanka Accord, the establishment of provincial councils, attention is focused on policy discourse building up around the events of the 1990s decade such as the peace effort initiated by Chandrika Kumaratunga and its collapse. At the same time while attention is given to the policy stance expressed by the SLFP to the peace effort of the UNP in the first half of the 2000 decade, the nature of the policy discourse arising around the 2004 general election and the 2005 presidential election is scrutinized. The formulation of the policy discourse of the SLFP in response to coalition politics, changes in the leadership and the setting up of new alliances is also scrutinized. Furthermore taking into reckoning the unfolding changes, shifts and oscillations in the policy responses of the SLFP during this period, an attempt is also made to identify the different party forms assumed by the SLFP applying the theoretical concepts adopted in the existing body of literature on political parties to analyze and categorize political parties into ethnic, non-ethnic, multi-ethnic, catch-all party forms.