

The Political Influence of Easter Sunday Terror Attacks

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Abstract

ISIS-inspired Easter Sunday terror attacks on several churches and luxury hotels claimed more than two hundred lives. Sri Lanka's presidential election took place approximately seven months after the terror attacks and it was deemed unprecedentedly fierce since a son of former president and a brother of former president were the front runners. While Mr. Sajith Premadasa, the former deputy leader of UNP contested from United Democratic Front as the presidential candidate, Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, former Secretary, Ministry of Defense during Rajapaksa regime contested under Sri Lanka Podu Jana Peramuna. The political manifestos of the two front runners highlighted many principal areas such as uplifting the country's stagnant economy by reducing poverty, uplifting the health and education sectors, and predominantly, curtailing religious extremism. After Easter Sunday attacks, the depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar was high. Especially the tourism industry inclusive of tourism-oriented entrepreneurships, had taken a massive descend. Although S. Premadasa is politically experienced than his opponent, the votes of the majority proved that the national security concern is the foremost precedence. While, many scholars confirmed that PM Modi exploited Sri Lanka's recent terror attacks to ensure BJP's Lok Sabha victory by implying the vigilance of RAW, the study examines whether there is an influence of Easter Sunday attacks to Gotabaya Rajapaksa's victory. The research problem focuses on the influence of the terror attacks on the presidential election results. To achieve aforesaid objective, qualitative approach has been adopted predominantly based on secondary data obtained from various sources such as e-books, research articles, journals, reports, and political manifestos. The research findings suggest that the indecisiveness of the Yahapalana coalition government led to the successful execution of April terror attacks, which negatively affected Premadasa's political campaign. Furthermore, this study concludes that the public's disappointment towards the former government in light of its failure to guarantee the national security prior to Easter attacks was an incentive towards Gotabhaya's victory.

Keywords: *Easter Attacks, Presidential Election, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Political Manifestos, National Security*

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