

## PREFACE

*Reforming Sri Lankan Presidentialism: Provenance, Problems and Prospects* is the second in a series of volumes published by the Centre For Policy Alternatives (CPA) on the structure of the state, the first being *The Sri Lankan Republic at 40: Reflections on Constitutional History, Theory and Practice* also edited by Dr Asanga Welikala, currently ESRC Teaching Fellow in Public Law at the School of Law, University of Edinburgh, Associate Director of the Edinburgh Centre for Constitutional Law, and CPA's Senior Researcher in Constitutional Affairs.

This volume on presidentialism comes out some thirty-seven years after the executive presidency was introduced to the constitutional architecture of Sri Lanka and in the midst of yet another attempt to reduce the powers of that office, if not abolish it altogether. Abolition of the executive presidency has been a persistent theme in presidential elections with the last two winning candidates – in 1994 and 2005 – promising to do so on election: a promise never kept. In the recently concluded presidential election of 8<sup>th</sup> January 2105, in which democratic governance, corruption, and the abuse of power were the main elements of the opposition campaign, abolition of the executive presidency served as the centrepiece of the campaign, drawing support from political actors across the country.

This book comes out as the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution reducing the powers of the Executive President, restoring the balance of executive powers in favour of the Prime Minister and Parliament, and restoring the oversight committees of the Seventeenth Amendment is being finalised. The CPA, which has since its inception consistently advocated and supported constitutional reform for liberal democratic governance, including challenging the Eighteenth Amendment in the Supreme Court, is both pleased and proud to publish this volume as an integral component of its core research and advocacy programme. CPA hopes that this book will serve both as an intellectual resource that will inform the debate that follows and as a reference work into the future for policymakers, scholars,

and indeed, the citizens of Sri Lanka who are the primary stakeholders in the constitution-making process.

The book contains contributions from eminent Sri Lankan and foreign scholars and activists, many of who have been identified with constitutional reform in this country. CPA thanks them for their commitment, acknowledges and is greatly appreciative of the quality and richness of their contributions, clearly informed and underpinned by considerable expertise and experience in the field. Special thanks are due to Dr Welikala. He conceived and designed this series, has now edited four volumes in it, notwithstanding the pressures of writing and receiving his doctorate in the process. The series is a testament to his commitment to the organisation and its extensive research and advocacy in the field of constitutional reform.

CPA expresses its thanks to its initial funding partner in the series, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNF), who were effectively shut down in Sri Lanka by the previous regime. We gratefully acknowledge their support to us throughout the years in advancing liberal democracy in Sri Lanka. Likewise, CPA expresses its special thanks to the Swiss Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which supported us thereafter to the successful launch and publication of the book. This support enabled Professor José Antonio Cheibub of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a leading expert on presidentialism, to deliver the keynote address at the online launch of the volume and to participate in a roundtable discussion on the subject with leading Sri Lankan stakeholders.

Constitutional reform has been on the public policy agenda of Sri Lanka for decades and may well now be entering a decisive phase. CPA hopes that in pursuance of its mandate, this book too will serve as a valuable and constructive resource in this process and for scholars in the years to come.

Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu  
Executive Director  
Centre for Policy Alternatives