

Foreword

Four decades is a long time, for some perhaps even a lifetime. A lifetime should be sufficient to learn from past mistakes and realise that the way forward is to instil political pluralism, democratic governance and constitutionalism in our country. Unfortunately, this is not the reality. Tom G. Palmer says in his book *After the Welfare State*, “the younger generation is being robbed of their rights, their freedom, their dignity and their future.” This is true for the young generation of Sri Lanka as well. The culprits are our generation and our predecessors, who did either too little too late or nothing at all to change course when constitutionalism was being ignored and even abused.

When Asanga Welikala, Senior Researcher of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), currently completing his PhD at the School of Law, University of Edinburgh, came to me with a project proposal for a comprehensive publication that will reflect on Sri Lankan constitutional history, theory and practice, I saw it as a wonderful opportunity to make a contribution to the younger generation who are open-minded, and for those who believe in political pluralism and constitutionalism.

In the absence of maturity and vigilance on the part of the Sri Lankan polity and civil society in safeguarding its own democratic and fundamental rights, we have seen amendments brought in to the Sri Lankan constitution which have fundamentally altered the constitutional landscape in Sri Lanka in favour of excessive politicisation of critical public services, majoritarianism, populism, centralisation and even authoritarianism.

We have witnessed the non-questioning and blind acceptance of so-called ‘good intentions’ of those who promote the welfare state, leading to slowing down and stalling of economies, reversing growth as well as creating

a debt crisis, from which Europe and America are still struggling to come out. Likewise, history has shown us over and over again that when societies have mindlessly complied with constitutional interferences, it has led to heavy curtailment of liberal democratic principles, and finally, their own freedom and self-interests.

Therefore, at a time when Sri Lanka is at a crucial constitutional crossroad, bringing out a substantial and topical publication of this nature will certainly make a meaningful and worthy contribution to our constitutional debate.

Asanga Welikala deserves high praise and commendation for not only editing such a high calibre scholarly manuscript, but also single-handedly being able to get the participation of an array of highly respected academics and practitioners from different parts of the world to contribute articles. Thus, his formidable effort and relentless commitment has resulted in a unique publication. The Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit is proud to be a partner of this project.

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