

Founding of the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (Federal Party), 1949

The 1949 split from the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress over the Citizenship Acts produced the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi — the Federal Party — whose foundational demand was federal autonomy for the Tamil-speaking northern and eastern provinces within a united Ceylon. This is the second Tamil-side resolution attempt on the narrowing timeline.

The Federal Party was founded explicitly as a constitutional, parliamentary, non-violent vehicle for federal autonomy within a unitary Ceylon that was, by 1949, already legislating Tamil-speaking estate workers off the voter rolls. Its political programme — territorial federalism, language parity, regional autonomy — was the framework every later Tamil-side resolution attempt (1957 Pact, 1965 Pact, 1976 Vaddukoddai Resolution, 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord, 2002 ceasefire) restated in updated form. The narrowing timeline reads the failure of each of those attempts as state-side rejection of an offer the Tamil polity kept tabling.

§1 What it asked for

Federal autonomy for the Tamil-speaking northern and eastern provinces within a united Ceylon. Parity of status for Tamil and Sinhala as official languages. Restoration of citizenship to Up-country Tamils stripped by the 1948 and 1949 Citizenship Acts. Constitutional protection against majoritarian legislation targeting the Tamil-speaking community.

§2 Why it matters on the narrowing timeline

The Federal Party's programme is the baseline against which every subsequent Tamil resolution attempt is measured. Each later attempt asked for less — more limited autonomy, more limited language rights, more limited reversal of the citizenship strip — and was rejected anyway. The 1976 Vaddukoddai Resolution (twenty-seven years later) declared the federal route exhausted not on Tamil-side ideological grounds but on the empirical record of 1949–1976 state-side rejections.

Sources

- DeVotta, Blowback (2004), Stanford University Press.
- A. J. Wilson, The Break-Up of Sri Lanka (1988), Hurst.
- Tambiah, Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy (1986).

What this is not

- This article does not name any individual still living without their public Tier-A documentary footprint.
- This article does not endorse any later armed organisation. It documents a non-violent constitutional resolution attempt.