

Voice of Shakthi Thursday 12 July 2001

The decision by President Chandrika Kumaranatunge to prorogue Parliament and hold a Referendum on August 21 indicates her determination to cling to power at any cost. Faced with a no-[confidence](#) motion filed by the Opposition and uncertain about the loyalty of her own MPs, she has determined to tough it out.

In an eerie parallel with the actions of her less than noble predecessors, the President is hoping that by stifling whatever democracy there is left in [Sri Lanka](#), she will be able to prevail against this latest and most potent assault against her [administration](#).

It was not many years ago that the late J R Jayewardene launched his infamous Referendum to put off general elections, a feat repeated by the late R Premadasa against his impeachment. While the odds stacked against President Kumaranatunge seem greater when compared to her predecessors, there is no doubt that she will pull out all stops and promise heaven and earth to anyone and everyone to defeat the ranks which are assembling against her.

The fact that the carrots she has dangled before Opposition MPs up to now has not brought her the support she needs will not deter her. According to her statement about the proposed Referendum, she has promised Constitutional amendments to ensure a just and reasonable solution to the ethnic crisis.

Whether the minority Tamil [parties](#), which has now deserted her, accept her assurance is open to doubt. This is not the first time she has made these promises after all. It remains to be seen whether the Tamil parties will afford her the same credulity that she obtained in the first flush of her appointment.

There is no doubt the President is trying to kill two birds with one [stone](#) with her latest decision. The Constitutional amendments also include an attempt to neutralise the power of small parties in a future election. Under these circumstances, expecting to rally the small Left parties to her cause seems far-fetched. Which explains why the JVP has spurned her attempts to woo them. It seems incredible to believe that they will support a President who is determined that any future Government will be in the hands of one of the two major political parties in Sri Lanka.

Yet there is still the possibility of her winning against all the odds. And that can only happen if the United National [Party](#) fails to produce a viable solution to the Tamil parties to settle the ethnic crisis instead of the vague statements they have made so far. If they fail in this, the Tamil groups may have no option but to cling to the hope that President Kumaranatunge may be the best of a bad lot.