

Understanding the Sri Lankan Conflict

Pre-Amble

In starting this paper, I had wanted to explain the conflict in Sri Lanka as an ethnic one, by iterating and describing the series of discriminatory practices enacted against the Tamil¹ minority by the Sinhalese² majority over the years since Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. This would have been a relatively simple exercise and motivation behind the formation of what has become the principal secessionist insurgency group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) or “Tamil Tigers” would have been explicit without recourse to primordialist claims to a 2,500 year-old ethnic hatred. My personal interest in Sri Lanka began during a three month stay from March to early June 2002 during which I worked as an intern at the state-owned newspaper, the (*Ceylon*) *Daily News*, and was able on 10th April to attend a press conference held by Velupillai Prabhakaran and Anton Balasingham, the military leader and theoretician respectively of the LTTE³. At the time my response towards the behaviour of the LTTE was that not enough was being done to understand the strength of feeling that motivated their cadres to sacrifice their lives – the empathetic leap was not being made.

¹ See “Conventions in this Paper” for arguments that explain my choice of appellations: p.52

² as above

³ My account of this event can be read at: <<http://origin.dailynews.lk/2002/04/20/fea05.html>>, *Daily News*, posted: 20th April 2002, retrieved: 1st May 2003

My position has changed. Whilst rational-choice theories seem in some instances to lose sight of the emotional dimension that underpins human motivation, I have been particularly struck by conclusions drawn from the large-N statistical work of James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin. Nonetheless, I have generally been inclined, despite my limited familiarity with the field, to favour institutionalist accounts of the formation of identity. Yet many of the theoretical models which I have encountered that seek to account for conflict, seem to focus on primary factors to the exclusion of others – here I would single out Daniel Treisman’s account of ‘Russia’s “Ethnic Revival”’⁴. Still others include many factors but without making clear structures apparent to my limited faculties (Dennis Chong⁵, Russell Hardin⁶). When Ashutosh Varshney proposes an understanding of rioting based on the preponderance of civic networks – albeit highly historicised – this theory of localised identity-based conflict ought, I believe, to have some bearing upon how conflicts are enabled at the state level. It should be conceded that the theoretical models I have studied are intentionally varied in scope: some provide a classificatory system or help to us understand specific phenomenon (e.g. post-Soviet “nationalism”), others claim to offer an analytical framework for existing conflict, still other types aspire to a predicative aspect. Within this assortment of goals, it must also be conceded that some kind of prioritisation of factors makes good sense in order to propound a clear argument and redress existing analytical imbalances.

I claim that four tests are applicable to theories of conflict. Firstly, is the theory generalisable? If it is a theory, then to some extent it is bound to be. Second, does the theory help us to answer the question “Why are they fighting?” with some kind of

⁴ Daniel S. Treisman, ‘Russia’s “Ethnic Revival”: The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order’, *World Politics*, Vol. 49.2 (1997), pp.212 – 249

⁵ Dennis Chong, *Rational Lives*, (Chicago, 2000)

⁶ Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

framework which ethnic conflicts have in common? Thirdly, does it have a degree of predicative power? And finally, following on from the factors in part two, does the theory offer a better understanding of how conflict reduction might be achieved? These are not proposed as necessary and sufficient criteria, yet they do provide a framework for evaluating theories of conflict.

In this paper, the most important question I hope to go some way towards answering is the somewhat naïve one, “Why are they fighting?”. Although there have been conflicts and sporadic episodes of violence between Tamils and Muslims on the island of Sri Lanka both predating the 1983-2001 conflict, during it, and during the “ceasefire”, it is the Sinhalese / Tamil conflict which I will focus on as it is the most sustained and because it is well-documented.

1: Tension

Ethnic consciousness is one kind of identity-consciousness, none of which are primordial or genetic. As Kenneth Bush argues in his comparative analysis of the Northern Irish and Sri Lankan conflicts, “*“identity” does not mobilise individuals ... rather individuals mobilise identity – from among a menu of possible identities*”⁷. He continues, “the “content” of that mobilized identity (specific beliefs, language, and so on)

⁷ Kenneth David Bush, ‘Cracking Open the Ethnic Billiard Ball: Bringing the Intra-Group Dimensions into Ethnic Conflict Studies – with Special Reference to Sri Lanka and Northern Island’, *Occasional Paper Series*, (University of Notre Dame: Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, May 1995), 9: OP:1, p.19, his italics

in ethnic conflicts becomes incidental to the function of that identity”⁸. My argument in this section is that during a time of relative peace certain sociological factors can increase identity-consciousness and thereby increase the likelihood that identity-based appeals will be used with success by political entrepreneurs. By identity-consciousness, I conceive of a relative term which describes the degree to which individuals identify with and invest emotional attachment to a given way of perceiving of themselves⁹. I use “identity-based appeals” to refer to a rhetoric of favouring the interests of one social group over another as used to determine political campaign platforms and subsequent public policy initiatives – in the case of Sri Lanka’s democracy – or legitimising frames of reference in the case of regimes which depend more on compliance than support.

Identity-based differences are more likely to be used with success by political entrepreneurs – I posit – only if first of all the society can be divided up into groups along tangible lines of difference which have already generated some grounds for suspicion. Identity-centric appeals must have an out-group. Yet although general levels of suspicion and epistemological discomfort¹⁰ may derive from merely visual cues of difference in faith or audible cues of difference in language for instance, it is not even necessary for such differences to be overt. Donald Horowitz relates the studies of James Sebring who described how effectively North Indian village shopkeepers used “posture, bearing, gesticulation, clothing and grammatical usage, in addition to physical features”¹¹ to identify and discriminate against low-caste strangers. To this list, Chaim Kaufmann adds

⁸ id.

⁹ An example from the literature would be of a Bosnian Muslim school teacher, Mikica Babić:

We never, until the war, *thought of ourselves* as Muslims. We were Yugoslavs. But when we began to be murdered, because we are Muslims, thing changed. The definition of who we are today has been determined by our killers. [sic, my italics]

Cited by Chaim Kaufmann, ‘Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, 2001) p.273

¹⁰ “Isaiah Berlin argues, to be human means something like having the epistemological comforts of home, of being among your own kind”, id., p.152

¹¹ Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (California: 1985, 2000)

that “surname ... ritual mutilation, diet, habits, occupation, region or neighbourhood within urban areas, or certain possessions may give clues”¹².

In Sri Lanka, in many cases, the Tamils and the Sinhalese are facially and linguistically distinguishable. The Sinhalese generally have lighter skin and possess facial features distinct from the minority and Tamils commonly misplace retroflexes and do not aspirate “h”s, if speaking Sinhala as a second or third language¹³. Yet E. Valentine Daniel points out – as does Horowitz – the precariousness of these cues as ascriptive identifiers: Daniel relates the anecdotal instance of a Tamil in the July 1983 riots, who escaped a confrontation with a rioter because his accent was possibly thought to be “an understandable speech impediment becoming of one in fright”¹⁴. Together with those Sinhalese attacked or killed by fellow Sinhalese for being a “Tamil trying to pass as Sinhala”¹⁵, these incidents came to constitute what became known darkly, as “Jokes of the July Riots”¹⁶. Horowitz cautions against overestimating the necessity of visible differentiation in enabling discrimination and tension, yet his Sri Lankan examples from Vittachi’s study of the 1958 riots demonstrate the impediments to escalating tension without tangible differences. The rioters relied upon finding “men who wore their shirts over their *vertis*, Tamil fashion”, those who has earring holes in their ears – a Tamil sign of “early parental affection” – and those who when challenged in the midst of a riot, could not extemporaneously “read and explain a piece from a Sinhalese newspaper”¹⁷. Fewer tangible differences reduce the potential for certain kinds of discrimination and consequently lower the potential for tension.

¹² Kaufman (1997, 2001) p.275

¹³ E. Valentine Daniel, ‘Afterword: sacred places, violent spaces’, *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.235

¹⁴ *id.*, p.236

¹⁵ *id.*, p.235

¹⁶ *id.*

¹⁷ Horowitz (1985, 2000), p.46

The availability of information networks affects the rate at which ideas are exchanged and the extent to which differing perceptions of events and groups are encountered. Although some theorists have argued that the less two ethnic groups interact the lower the likelihood of tension between them, at the local level Varshney has stressed the role of civic structures in performing the following functions in the face of exogenous shocks: as forums for perception formation which are able to break down stereotypes; as networks for the rapid dissemination of information concerning false rumour, distorted reports and destabilising individuals; as commercial facilitators promoting the accretion of vested interests through trade and business relations; and as social groups which foster individual personal investment in emotional bonds¹⁸. The degree to which tension is pre-empted, contained, managed and dissipated at a national level must surely therefore depend upon factors which could encourage the formation of civic networks at its grassroots. The overall amount of social interaction between groups at the state level must furthermore be affected by the proportionality of groups and their interspersal, as well as the spatial mobility, social intermixing, and intermarriage between them.

Following widespread rioting in Manchester, Salford and Burnley, England in the summer of 2001, segregation commencing at state-supported faith-based schools between Asian and Caucasian children was charged with establishing a trend of low inter-group interaction which was perpetuated through the life-cycle of the community. Communal housing patterns – albeit related to price differentials – exacerbated matters. On this, Hardin writes, “It may be false to infer from a group’s exclusive identification with its own members that others are held to be not only different, but also wrong. But it may

¹⁸ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, (Yale, 2002)

also be very natural to do so”¹⁹. Whilst this may be correct, it would also be useful to consider how group practices and cultural proclivities in themselves can generate antagonism and resentment. A Sri Lankan example peripheral to this study would be the manner by which an Islamic prohibition against receiving interest upon capital has caused tension between Muslim and Tamil communities in the (majority Tamil) Northern and Eastern Provinces. Successive reinvestments of merchant capital into animal husbandry²⁰ and the fishing industry by successful traders in the Muslim community have resulted in a near monopoly of control over the fishing trade on the Northern Province coast and significant land purchases in the Eastern Province, by Muslims.

The most recent ethnic population data available for the entirety of Sri Lanka comes from the 1981 government census, which showed the Sinhalese as comprising 74% of the population with “Sri Lankan Tamils” and “Indian Tamils” comprising 12.6% and 5.6% of the population respectively and the Muslims representing 7.1%²¹. The designation “Indian Tamils” will be returned to later. Most “Sri Lankan Tamils” in 1981 were concentrated in the Jaffna Peninsular at the north of the island – where there was minimal habitation by other ethnicities, with smaller concentrations at Trincomalee and Batticaloa on the eastern coast living in less homogenous populations²². 2001 figures for the Eastern Province – which consists of the three administrative districts of Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee – show an overall composition of Sinhalese: 15.6%, Tamils: 41.6% and Muslims: 35%, with other ethnic groups representing only 0.2%. Although

¹⁹ Hardin (1995) p.211

²⁰ Kumar Rupesinghe, ‘Enhancing Human Security in the Eastern Province’, *The Road Map Programme on Negotiating a Political Settlement and Promoting Conflict Transformation in Sri Lanka*, joint initiative: Centre for Policy Alternatives, Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies, workshop paper presented 16th October 2002, retrieved: 1st May 2003, available at: <http://www.cpalanka.org/research_papers/Road_Map_Paper_4.pdf>

²¹ A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *The Break-Up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), p.xiv.

²² K. M. de Silva, *Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies: Sri Lanka 1880 – 1985*, (USA: University Press of America, 1986), p.xv - xvii

violent disturbances since the ceasefire in this relatively heterogeneous Eastern Province would tend to contradict a thesis that more ethnically diverse populations act to reduce some causes of apprehension between groups, the most serious rioting incident of Valaichenai in June 2002 cannot be used as an example of such. Firstly, this part of my argument only attempts to account for sources of pre-conflict tension (as opposed to the Valaichenai incident regarding which, in the analysis of Kumar Rupesinghe, “There is reason to believe that the events that precipitated the escalation of violence in Muttur and Vallachenai were not spontaneous but manipulated to achieve political objectives”²³) and secondly, the Batticaloa district (which contains both Muttur, Valaichenai, and those towns to which violence spread: Kattankudi, Kalmunai, Akkaraipattu and Batticaloa itself) is the least heterogeneous of the Eastern Province districts with a 2001 population of Sinhalese: 0.1%, Tamils: 74.4% and Muslims: 25.4%²⁴. Compare this for instance with the comparatively peaceful Trincomalee which has a three-way split of Sinhalese: 29.9%, Tamils: 31.9% and Muslims: 37.9%²⁵.

If the extensive railway network of Sri Lanka is thought of as a form of communications technology, promoting the exchange of ideas and differing perceptions of groups and events, then the newspaper, distributed by road and rail, is as Benedict Anderson has remarked, a mode of imagined community in which “each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion”²⁶. Yet in the Sri Lankan case, the imagined community of the readership is quite clear. Newspapers in Tamil will be read almost exclusively by

²³ Rupesinghe (2003), p.6

²⁴ *id.*, p5

²⁵ *id.*

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), p.35

Tamils and newspapers in Sinhala are aimed at the Sinhalese and may cater for the Theravada Buddhist faith of its readership in particularly overt ways. In 1906, the influential Buddhist revivalist activist, Anagarika Dharmapala, who argued that “under the influence of [Buddha’s] religion of righteousness, the people flourished”²⁷ coined a term with the founding of the newspaper *Sinhala Bauddhaya* (Sinhala Buddhist)²⁸. Although the weekly paper was banned by the British following rioting in 1915 for its anti-Muslim diatribes²⁹, it resumed and continued to publish until 1979³⁰, along with other Sinhala newspapers which Shelton Gunaratne has observed “exuded a remarkable pro-nationalistic and pro-Buddhist bias”³¹. Serena Tennekoon, writing of ‘Newspaper Nationalism’, refers to a 1985 market survey, in which the most popular Sinhala newspapers were *Divaina* and (the Sunday edition) *Divaina Irida Sangrahaya*. Tennekoon argues that “the success of *Divayina* may be attributed partly to its selective criticism of government policies which is coloured with a strong sense of Sinhala nationalism”³². Similarly, Gunaratne comments, “Most Tamil papers take a Tamil-Hindu stand on issues, and this is particularly so with *Virakesari* (Express)”³³. Except for the state-owned *Daily News* (which outsells the Tamil newspapers), the circulation figures for the four daily English-language newspaper titles (*Daily News*, *Observer*, *The Island*, *Daily Mirror*) are significantly lower than their counterpart daily vernacular publications

²⁷ David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*, (Washington: The United States Institute of Peace, 1994), p.25

²⁸ *id.*, p.24

²⁹ *id.*, p.35

³⁰ Shelton A. Gunaratne and Chanuka Wategama, ‘Sri Lanka’, *The Handbook of the Media in Asia*, ed. Shelton A. Gunaratne, (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000), draft chapter available at <<http://www.mnstate.edu/gunarat/SLChapter.htm>>, retrieved: 1st May 2003

³¹ Shelton A. Gunaratne, ‘The taming of the press in Sri Lanka’, *Journalism Monographs*, 39, (1975, May), p.3; cited by Shelton A. Gunaratne and Chanuka Wategama, ‘Sri Lanka’, *The Handbook of the Media in Asia*, ed. Shelton A. Gunaratne, (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000), draft chapter available at <<http://www.mnstate.edu/gunarat/SLChapter.htm>>, retrieved: 1st May 2003

³² Serena Tennekoon, ‘Newspaper Nationalism: Sinhala identity as historical discourse’, *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, ed. Jonathan Spencer, (London: Routledge, 1990), p.207

³³ Gunaratne and Wategama (2000)

(based on available 1999 figures)³⁴. In Sri Lanka, despite the provision of free education, a 90.7% adult literacy rate³⁵, and slow but extensive transport infrastructure, the language barrier creates an obstacle to networks of information-sharing which might otherwise assist in pre-empting, managing, containing and dissipating tension in a more broadly imagined community.

Partisan external support provides a psychological and physical adjunct to the fostering of tension between two intra-state groups. In the case of Sri Lanka, Bush encapsulates the “double-minority syndrome”³⁶ – the Tamils may feel threatened as a Sri Lankan minority, but the Sinhalese, in Erin K. Jenne’s words also betray a “minority complex ... largely driven by the close proximity of the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu – home to 60 million Tamils”³⁷. The presence of such a large population of Tamil-speakers separated by only 32 kilometres at the narrowest point of the Palk Straits, with political influence over the regional superpower’s coalition government and a history of vocal Tamil nationalist parties commencing in the early 20th century which have included those voicing the agenda of Tamil secession from India (the Justice Party, 1949)³⁸, was a cause for Sinhalese unease. It has transpired since that there is evidence for extensive direct support for the Tamil insurgency movement once it had cohered, from both Tamil Nadu and the Indian government. RAW (the Indian intelligence agency) is said to have trained LTTE cadres at the beginning of the movement³⁹, and Tamil Nadu supplied financial assistance, arms, safe houses and training camps for LTTE cadres in the 1970s

³⁴ id.

³⁵ id.

³⁶ Bush (1995), p.1

³⁷ Erin K. Jenne, ‘Sri Lanka: A Fragmented State’, *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg, (Massachusetts: The World Peace Foundation, 2003), pp.227 - 228

³⁸ Little (1994), p.39

³⁹ The LTTE was founded in 1976, according to the Federation of American Scientists’ Intelligence Resource Program website, available at: <<http://fas.org/irp/world/para/ltte.htm>> updated: April 30th 2003, retrieved: May 1st 2003.

and 1980s⁴⁰. This does not include the political role that an India constrained by the threat of Tamil nationalism and concerned by western interest in its neighbour, played in peace negotiations, refusal to jointly patrol the Palk Straits, in the Indian Peace Keeping Force intervention (IPKF 1987 - 1990) and in applying political pressure on Colombo.

Access to resources is a major factor in determining the level of tension between two intra-state groups. The psychological impact of inequitable access – based on discrimination along ascribed-identity lines – to resources such as political power, natural resources, career prospects, social advancement and the benefits of modernisation will, I claim, generate personal frustration and can form the foundation for its subsequent expression in the form of inter-group resentment. Pluralism, principles of inclusivism and merit-based social mobility on the other hand, are said in this argument to promote the vested interests and “ownership” of stake-holder society.

The nature of access to Sri Lanka’s political power requires a brief history of the salient legislation. During the British colonial era (1815 – 1948), indigenous Tamils gained a disproportionate representation in the administration, particularly as Britain sought to reduce its dependence upon expatriate civil servants, and during the last thirty years as Britain prepared the country’s elite for independence. Reasons given for this “disproportionate share of wealth and status that Tamils have at certain times been able to achieve”⁴¹ include: the route of institutional collaboration⁴² chosen by the Tamil people who favoured education over the Sinhalese people’s more market-oriented agrarian response; that this was enabled by the historic concentration of missionaries on the Jaffna Peninsular whose teaching of English allowed particularly the high-caste local Tamils to

⁴⁰ Jenne (2003)

⁴¹ Little (1994), p.106

⁴² Lakshmanan Sabaratnam, *Ethnic Attachments in Sri Lanka: Social Change and Cultural Continuity*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p.118

“enhance their value as carriers of necessary skills for the colonial rulers”⁴³; and that “the British had favored ethnic Tamils as functionaries in the colonial government”⁴⁴. Some of the earlier acts of the newly independent Sri Lankan parliament fundamentally altered a democracy which was originally to some degree consociational (“Donoughmore Constitution” 1931 – 47, based on the then London County Council model⁴⁵, Soulbury Constitution 1947), replacing it with a majoritarian system. Partly motivated by a fear of Marxism, the Sinhalese majority moved to rescind citizenship (and therefore the franchise) from the Tamil plantation workers using the following legislation: The Ceylon Citizenship Act No. 18 (1948), The Indians and Pakistani Residents’ (Citizenship) Act No. 3 (1949), and The Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act No. 48 (1949)⁴⁶. The Soulbury Constitution had provided a two-thirds minority safeguard on major issues, but the disenfranchisement of “Indian Tamils” and the resultant election of their eight to 14 seats by the Hill Country Sinhalese, meant that the Muslim and Tamil minorities would no longer be able to muster a veto⁴⁷. One explanation for how such legislation was numerically passed comes from Little: “The two groups have never been close, and in fact some Sri Lankan Tamil politicians at the time revealed their contempt toward the immigrant population by voting with Senanayake in favor of the legislation”⁴⁸.

Following this retraction of the franchise, legislative developments are telling of the fact that a fundamental constitutional shift had taken place. The Official Language Act of 1956 - which came to be known as the “Sinhala Only Act” – made Sinhala the official language of Sri Lanka. Sinhala would thus theoretically come to replace English

⁴³ id.

⁴⁴ Jenne (2003), p.225

⁴⁵ Wilson (1988), p.xi

⁴⁶ V. Nithi Nithyanandam, ‘The Political Economy of Ethnonationalism in Asia: Some Lessons from Sri Lanka’s Experience’, available at: <<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/aspac/papers/scholars/nithyanandam/nithyanandam.html>>, retrieved 1st May 2003.

⁴⁷ Wilson (1988), p.19

⁴⁸ Little (1994), p.56

in the conduct of government business – it is estimated that a small urban elite of only 10% to 15% of the population spoke English at the time – and whilst provision would be made for Tamils to join government service without Sinhala-proficiency, such recruits were required to pass a language test within a set time or be barred from promotion and salary increases, eventually facing dismissal⁴⁹. However, it was the constitutions proposed in 1972 and 1978 that implemented the corollaries of the 1956 act, stipulating that all law enactment and judicial matters be carried out in Sinhala throughout the island, and as Wilson relates of the 1972 Constitution, “Section 9(3) required that the law, as published in Sinhalese only, was to be definitive”⁵⁰. The 1972 Constitution was adopted in May by the coalition government led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) with Sirimavo Bandaranaike⁵¹ as prime minister; and it also included the declaration in chapter II that: “The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Section 18(1)(d)⁵²”. Section 18(2) however, in turn allowed for those “rights granted” to be subsequently restricted in the interests of such considerations as “national unity and integrity, national security, national economy”⁵³. Also in 1972, the United Front (UF) party managed successfully to introduce legislation which would limit the number of Tamils in higher education by enforcing a district quota system which enabled Sinhalese students to gain admission to universities with lower comparable

⁴⁹ S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe cited by Little (1994), p.144

⁵⁰ Wilson (1988), p.128

⁵¹ Sirimavo Bandaranaike was elected prime minister on July 20th 1960. She was the world’s first elected female prime minister and the widow of prime minister Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike who had been assassinated months before on September 25th 1959 by a nationalist Buddhist monk and ex-supporter, for reneging on his 1956 political platform and adopting a more moderate position.

⁵² cited by Little (1994) p.76

⁵³ cited by Wilson (1988), p.129

qualifying marks⁵⁴. In response to this legislation, new, generally inferior institutions were established in the north for minority students, and many wealthy Tamils sent their children to overseas universities⁵⁵ perhaps contributing to the Tamil diaspora. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act of 1979 was in practice used to arbitrarily arrest and indefinitely detain individuals⁵⁶ and the 1983 emergency law, Regulation 15A permitted security forces to dispose of bodies secretly⁵⁷. Also following the unprecedented scale and violence of the July / August 1983 riots, a constitutional amendment required all officers of the state to take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution and thereby to eschew separatism. At this point, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) forfeited their membership of the legislative assembly⁵⁸.

The results of these legislative developments are stark in their bearing upon group access to resources. In the 14 years following the 1956 Official Language Act, “government employment of ethnic Tamils”⁵⁹ fell from 50% to 5% in the clerical service, from 30% to 5% in the administrative service and from 40% to 1% in the armed forces⁶⁰. It should be noted that figures available for the general clerical service employment vary whilst reflecting this trend, but that they also show that between independence and 1956, an annual decline in the recruitment of Tamils was already taking place (at a slower rate)⁶¹. As of 1984, an instance of police recruitment of Tamils was disproportionately low, standing at less than 5% for “a recent group” and the state’s employment of teachers was

⁵⁴ de Silva (1986), pp.266 – 267

⁵⁵ Jenne (2003), p.227

⁵⁶ Nithyanandam, available at: <<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/aspac/papers/scholars/nithyanandam/nithyanandam.html>>

⁵⁷ Little (1994), p.89

⁵⁸ Nithyanandam, available at: <<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/aspac/papers/scholars/nithyanandam/nithyanandam.html>>

⁵⁹ Unclear if these are annual recruitment ratios or cumulative employment ratios, Jenne (2003), p.227

⁶⁰ id.

⁶¹ S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe cited by Little (1994) pp. 144 – 145, although Samarasinghe’s 1955 percentage figures, as printed in the unpublished version, exceed 100% in total.

at only 6.1% for 1977 – 1979⁶². Meanwhile, in universities, the proportion of Tamils in science-based disciplines fell from 35.3% in 1970 to 19% by 1975. Access to the resources of political power, social influence, career advancement, social status and university education was being curtailed for Tamils. The cumulative effect of personal grievances and frustrated ability and ambitions as a result of such public policy must be combined with emergent intra-group empathy towards those facing inequitable treatment, in considering how a growing identity-consciousness could provide the basis for inter-group tension and subsequently favour potential identity-centric political appeals.

Clustered access to the benefits of modernisation has been argued by Robert H. Bates to be a reason why, as modernity is spatially diffused from a node, socio-economic competition comes to be seen as ethnic competition⁶³. In the case of Sri Lanka, the peripheral north and east – those areas now claimed as “Tamil Eelam”⁶⁴ – certainly developed more slowly than the administrative and shipping hub of Colombo during the Portuguese and Dutch colonial eras, especially as Jaffna’s trade with Indian ports declined⁶⁵. Yet, citing Sumanasekara, N. Islam and C. Sivanesan, Shantha Kumara Hennayake argues that by the end of the 1980s, “Uneven development exists in Sri Lanka, but it has not followed ethnoregional boundaries”⁶⁶. He does, however quote Islam’s thesis that there exists a “sense of relative deprivation” among Tamils, a perception which may not have had substantial economic grounding before the conflict was underway, but which nonetheless can be posited as a tension-building perception.

⁶² id., p.146

⁶³ Robert H. Bates, ‘Modernisation, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa’, *States Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas*, ed. Donald Rothchild and Victoria A. Olorunsola, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 152 – 171

⁶⁴ meaning: “Tamil Homeland”

⁶⁵ Sabaratnam (2001), p.70

⁶⁶ Shantha Kumara Hennayake, *Interactive Ethnonationalism: Explaining Tamil Ethnonationalism in Contemporary Sri Lanka*, (Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1991), p.235

Regarding other resources, the large, deep-water natural harbour of Trincomalee was a source of interest to the British who had equipped it with 99 oil storage tanks and who made sure to secure their continued use of the island as a naval base in the Defence Agreement of 1947, assuring them dominance of the vast expanse of ocean between Madagascar and Singapore⁶⁷. More recently, the United States is said to be interested in Trincomalee as a naval base and the harbour is strategically well-situated for multinational import-export firms with relation to international shipping lanes and major ports. Access to such a resource is arguably an additional factor in the calculus of interests behind the build-up of tension.

Another way in which access to political resources has arguably led to a “sense of relative deprivation”, this time for Sinhalese individuals, has been manifest in the role that a small section of Buddhist clergy has played in fostering this conflict – particularly since the late 1950s. The ancient legacy of political Buddhism in parts of South Asia is an assumption that since it is the *sangha* which “guarantees the dignity and authenticity of the whole” of the lay population, it is the duty of the ruler to “institutionally support, materially nurture, and physically protect the *sangha*”⁶⁸. Yet with each of the waves of Portuguese (1505 – 68), Dutch (1568 – 1796) and British (1796 – 1948) occupation, the Buddhist clergy had gradually lost influence; with British colonialism finally stripping them of their political privileges and imposing the “separation of church and state” in a manner that – in Jenne’s words – “unwittingly laid the groundwork for a backlash against Tamil Hindus by disgruntled Buddhist monks”⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Wilson (1988), p.25

⁶⁸ Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, cited by Little (1994), p.108

⁶⁹ Jenne (2003), p.224 – 225.

One phenomenon of lower diversity of stakeholding in administrative institutions is that such institutions are less able to enact and enforce legislation in a manner which is perceived as equitable or indeed actually accounts for minority interests. In Sri Lanka the figures above, indicating Tamil representation in the army and the police force, must surely have some explanatory worth in accounting for the behaviour of enforcement agencies during the 1983 riots: “thousands more lost their property and became refugees as the result of rampaging Sinhala crowds who were indulged and here and there incited by security forces”⁷⁰. Yet beneficial diversity in enforcement institutions extends to other disinterested buffer groups. De Silva describes how following the abortive Christian-led coup d’état in 1962, the resulting purge of the officer corps was directed towards removing non-Buddhists, and it served to eliminate Christians from the military just as the political appointment of a Buddhist Inspector General of Police had done four years previously for the police force⁷¹. By 1970, the rank and file of the police and the armed forces were in de Silva’s words, “largely Sinhalese and Buddhist”⁷² – thereby limiting the potential for perceived impartiality of enforcement or for in-group policing.

A stark example of the loss of control over the tools of identity formation in Sri Lanka directly stems from the diminished access to political power of non-Sinhalese groups. On March 2nd 1951, after a two day debate in parliament, the national flag of Sri Lanka (only provisional at the time of independence due to committee deliberation) was modified to include two bands of green (Muslim) and orange (Tamil) on its left side. Whilst an inclusivist gesture, the symbolic impact of the modified flag would still be a 4:7 area ratio in favour of the striking Sinhala cultural symbol – the lion-with-sword

⁷⁰ Little (1994), p.7

⁷¹ de Silva (1986), pp.270 – 271.

⁷² id., p.271

emblem of the Kandyan Kingdom hemmed by four Buddhist finials (or, after 1972, leaves of the Bo / Bodhi / Pipul / Peepul tree (*Ficus religiosa*)) – whilst the presence of the minorities is merely represented by a colour⁷³. Anderson lists the census, the map and the museum as nation-building tools⁷⁴, and in Sri Lanka, ownership of control over the nature of the nation under-construction could be derived from the bureaucratic designation of Tamil tea plantation workers living in the Hill Country as “Indian Tamils”⁷⁵ as late as the 1981 government census.

Recent migration takes two forms in Sri Lanka, both of which have generated group identity-consciousness and inter-group tension. The first mass population movement began during the latter half of the 19th century under the British cultivation of the Hill Country for coffee, rubber and subsequently tea plantations. The movement of workers from Tamil Nadu was encouraged by the British administration, who required cheap labour in the face of Sinhalese intransigence – and by 1946, the nearly one million Tamils⁷⁶, some third or fourth-generation residents, had exceeded the indigenous Tamil population in number, to constitute 11.72% of the island’s total population⁷⁷. Originally seasonal residents and subject to being frequently moved between plantations, this large-scale population influx created apprehension amongst Hill Country Sinhalese.

Similarly, following an earlier 1935 scheme (the Land Development Ordinance⁷⁸) for cultivating the “Dry Zone” (north and east of the central highlands), in 1977 the Accelerated Mahaweli Program came to be seen by Tamils in these regions as a

⁷³ Flags of the World website, updated: March 12th 2003, retrieved: May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/lk.html>>; and K T Rajasingham, ‘Sri Lanka: The Untold Story: Chapter 14: Post-colonial realignment of political forces’, *Asia Times Online*, posted: November 10th 2001, retrieved: May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/CK10Df03.html>>

⁷⁴ Anderson (1991), p.163

⁷⁵ Wilson (1988), p.xiv

⁷⁶ Little (1994), p.56

⁷⁷ Department of Census and Statistics, *Census of Ceylon 1946, Vol. I, Part II – Statistical Digest* (Colombo: Government Press, 1951), p.113; cited by Nithiyandam, available at: <<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/aspac/papers/scholars/nithiyandam/nithiyandam.html>>

⁷⁸ Little (1994), p.57

colonisation by the Sinhalese of Tamil majority areas. Although since scaled-down, the diversion of the Mahaweli River through five dams now irrigates the Mahaweli and adjacent Madura Oy basins, mostly in the Eastern Province, on which 140,000 families were expected to settle⁷⁹. Patrick Peebles claims that between 1946 and 1976, the Sinhalese population of the Eastern Dry Zone increased tenfold, with the ethnic balance of the region shifting from 19.2% Sinhalese to 83.4% Sinhalese in 30 years⁸⁰. The effect of both large-scale population migrations is to cause apprehension regardless of the political rhetoric that accompanies them (sometimes misjudged in the case of the Dry Zone cultivation programs⁸¹) simply due to the psychological discomfort that arises from engaging with an epistemically foreign culture, especially one which threatens to numerically overwhelm existing social norms.

To conclude, the sociological factors that I argue have caused an increase in identity-consciousness in Sri Lanka, thereby developing inter-group tension are: tangible differences, the limited availability of information networks, cultural practices, social interaction levels, spatial distribution, access to resources (including a sense of relative deprivation), limited “ownership” of administrative institutions, partisan external support and recent migrations. These factors and their interrelationships are displayed in figure 1.

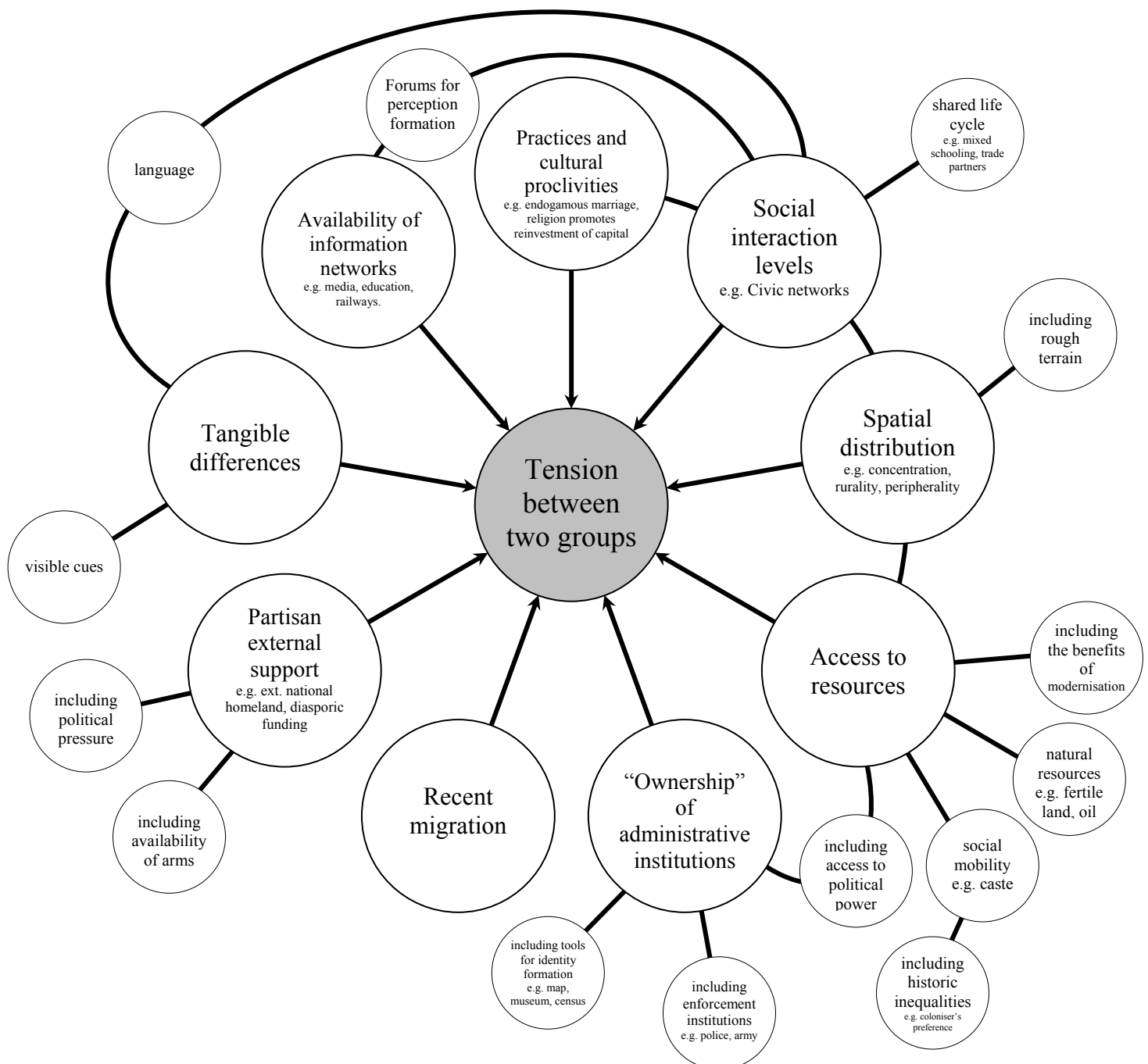
⁷⁹ Patrick Peebles, cited by Little (1994), p.82, p.150

⁸⁰ *id.*, pp.150 – 151

⁸¹ Little (1994), p.86

Fig. 1: Tension

A radial diagram displaying sociological factors which are posited to cause the increase of identity-consciousness – expressed as inter-group tension – and thereby factors which indicate the potential success of identity-based appeals when used by political entrepreneurs as legitimising frames of reference and as political platforms. (Derived from a cross-section of contemporary writings in political science, with the Sri Lankan conflict 1983 – 2001 in mind; arranged according to type and interrelationship; may be generalisable to intra-state conflicts in general: ethnic conflicts, insurgencies and civil wars.)



2: Political Climate

I have argued that during a time of relative peace in Sri Lanka certain sociological factors functioned to increase identity-consciousness and thereby to increase the likelihood that identity-based appeals would be used with success by political entrepreneurs. What factors then, can we posit in order to explain why political entrepreneurs actually capitalised upon this inter-group tension in order to gain support and legitimacy? In theoretical terms, what political factors can we argue would limit or encourage the extent to which individuals would go about turning tension into support? This phase is critical because judging from the example of Sri Lanka, discourse can quickly and quite easily descend into increasingly radicalised political appeals in which competitors attempt to “ethnically outbid”⁸² each other. This chapter is largely generalised and theoretical but I have applied inferences to the Sri Lankan conflict where possible.

Latent cultural discourses of group superiority are posited to affect the chances of success, for identity-centric appeals. The question of agency becomes problematic, yet in Sri Lanka, certain political actors have undeniably benefited from being able to draw upon a pre-existing reserve of discourses about Sinhalese supremacy and legitimacy. Are such histories latent in every culture, ready to be favoured as a hegemony requires? Perhaps, yet in the case of Sri Lanka they have a particularly long pedigree. The ancient Pali chronicles of the island, the *Dipavamsa* (Island Chronicle), the *Mahavamsa* (Great Chronicle), and the *Culavamsa* (Little Chronicle) compiled by Buddhist monks (where

⁸² Jenne (2003), p.226

verifiable) from the 4th century CE onwards, have shaped the way in which many Sinhalese have looked upon Sri Lanka. The chronicles have a mythical aspect which Bardwell L. Smith characterises as “the sacred history of a people destined with a sacred mission”⁸³ in which – Walpola Rahula claims – “secular history is subservient to religious history”⁸⁴. The *Dipavamsa* describes how the Buddha originally displaced the inhabitants of Sri Lanka in order to allow a north Indian to make the island a “fit dwelling place for men” where “his doctrine should (thereafter) shine in glory”⁸⁵. Subsequently, a well-known episode in the *Mahavamsa* recounts how the Sinhalese Dutthagamani Abhaya (or “Ghamini the enraged”) subdued the Tamil king of Anuradhapura, Ellalan (in Sinhala: “Elara”), and in the process killed millions of non-Buddhists with the help of hundreds of monks⁸⁶ during a 15 year campaign (circa 161 – 137 BCE)⁸⁷. Sabaratnam calls this a “mythomoteur” in which “There seems to have been a willingness on the part of the narrator, at different times in Sinhala history, to emphasize the religious loyalty of this hero and downplay the contradictions, while building a bridge with the past through the religious imagination”⁸⁸. Although the chronicle also reports that Ellalan had considerable Sinhalese and Buddhist support⁸⁹, the *Mahavamsa* narrative is clearly a resonant one for both colonial and post-colonial times – when the vision of the island as a shining exemplar of Buddhism has seemed imperilled, with the *Dipavamsa* founding story also conferring upon the Sinhalese people a legitimacy of rule “invested with sacred political authority by the Buddhist tradition”⁹⁰.

⁸³ cited by Little (1994), p.26

⁸⁴ id., p.125

⁸⁵ quoted by Little (1994), p.27

⁸⁶ Little (1994), pp.28 – 29

⁸⁷ de Silva (1986), p.11

⁸⁸ Sabaratnam (2001), p.19

⁸⁹ id.

⁹⁰ Little (1994), p.105

This must be combined from 1861 onwards with the influence⁹¹ of German scholars, as well as the ongoing improvised moral legitimisation for British colonialism as a “civilising mission”⁹². The ideas propounded during this time were susceptible to interpretations of cultural and racial superiority. Beginning with Max Müller’s *Lectures on the Science of Language*, Sinhala – with its link to Sanskrit – became considered a part of the Indo-European linguistic family which thus granted the Sinhalese an Aryan kinship, in contradistinction to the supposedly inferior Dravidian Tamil racial-linguistic stock. A simultaneous western surge of interest in Buddhism gave the faith some additional kudos from the “civilised world”. The English educationalist C.W. Leadbeater, and in particular two theosophists from America, Colonel Henry Steele Olcott and Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky – had a profound effect upon Anagarika Dharmapala, considered to be “undoubtedly the most influential individual in the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka” by George D. Bond⁹³. In this context, a Buddhist revival could invoke the idea of a righteous return to Sinhalese predominance.

Conversely, the philologist and Protestant missionary Reverend Robert Caldwell (1819 – 91) provided another western discourse of superiority, in this case in favour of the Tamils. The south Indian Brahmans, Dravidians or Saivite Hindus were shown to be at least equal, and arguably superior in language and culture by Caldwell and subsequent adherents from the ranks of colonial officials such as J.H. Nelson, as well as other missionaries⁹⁴. Such discourses would come to bolster 1930s Tamil Nadu nationalism movements and arguably remained ambient, just as discourses of Tamil legitimacy would

⁹¹ Wilson (1988), pp.26 – 29; and Little (1994), pp.21 – 24.

⁹² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994)

⁹³ Author of *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation, and Response*, (1988); cited by Little (1994), p.25

⁹⁴ Little (1994), p.38

continue to be recycled. Whilst it is unfortunate that the central historical sources for Sri Lanka are so prone to bias, even these Buddhist texts were successfully co-opted by Tamil advocates from 1930 onwards. Instead of claiming to have been present in Sri Lanka from around the 3rd century BCE, some Tamils used mentions of the original indigenous Naga and Yakkha people in the *Dipavamsa* to argue that Nagas were south Indians who therefore pre-dated the 543 BCE inhabitation by the Sinhalese of the Pali chronicles. In the context of a populace which had long been exposed to many of these discourses of superiority and legitimacy, I would posit that political entrepreneurs making identity-centric appeals already shared possession of well-circulated building blocks with which to build such platforms – making these strategies a more viable consideration.

Higher levels of education amongst individuals are said by Horowitz in some studies actually to correlate to an increase in ethnocentrism⁹⁵. However alarming this may seem, it is suggested that once one accounts for a deracinated intelligentsia which “becomes radicalized by their failure to secure social advancement”⁹⁶, higher levels of education amongst the populace should lead to lower overall receptivity to marginalising appeals by political actors – all other things being equal. So far, so theoretical. In practice, given the free state provision of education in Sri Lanka and the high adult literacy rate, doubts arise about the efficacy and even the validity of such a variable being imputed preventative influence in the case of Sri Lanka. It is included nonetheless, merely on the theoretical principle.

The age of a political entity is held to be an important bulwark against a slide towards identity-centrism. Establishment connotes its own legitimacy and obviousness,

⁹⁵ Donald L. Horowitz, ‘Constitutional Design: An Oxymoron?’, *Designing Democratic Institutions*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Stephen Macedo, Nomos XLII, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p.258

⁹⁶ Anthony D. Smith, cited by Hennyake (1991), p.75

and traditions quietly become “sacred”. Conversely, in newer states thinking the unthinkable is easier, as many more aspects of the political entity are open to contention. Furthermore, as political institutions mature, they develop their own threefold internal wisdom. Firstly, the people within them ideally pass down the lessons of experience; secondly procedural subtleties are developed and codified in legislation or enshrined in tradition and ritual; thirdly, language more appropriate to the locale is developed. An example of the second would be the adoption of institutional safeguards against loopholes, majoritarian tyranny or extremist parties. Sri Lanka did have an institutional safeguard against majoritarianism through its two-thirds majority, it ought even to have been difficult to remove – that it was removed bespeaks a certain lack of political experience on the part of the minority political actors and a lack of established legitimacy on the part of the institution. An example of the third feature – development of a more nuanced language, better-suited to the idiosyncrasies of the locale – could be remarked by the alleged absence in Sinhala of clear distinctions between concepts of nationhood. Little cites de Silva: “Dharmapala and his associates capitalized, in effect on one fundamental point: “In the Sinhala language, the words for nation, race and people are practically synonymous”⁹⁷.

Media bodies as well as political institutions can sometimes function as the societal motors of vernacular language, to enable thought and discussion of more finely differentiated issues in a more politically sensitive language. My argument in this case is that a non-market driven media body with relative political independence can serve to raise the standards of political discourse, thereby making identity-centric appeals less likely to be initiated by political entrepreneurs. The reasoning is thus. Media organs

⁹⁷ Little (1994), p.36

which are entirely led by the dictates of the marketplace will at least initially tend towards the lowest common consumption-motivators of sensationalism, fear (and chauvinism in a language-split polity). Conversely, government-owned media institutions will have less political leeway to raise the standard of debate. In Sri Lanka, Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. (ANCL), also known as Lake House, has been government-controlled since 1973 and publishes in three languages, owning Sri Lanka's largest circulation morning dailies in Sinhala and English, but not in Tamil⁹⁸. It has had a poor record of political autonomy since 1973.

International ideological trends can profoundly influence the likelihood that tensions will be capitalised upon by political actors. As Horowitz argues, "Although international conditions cannot create a conflict where one does not exist – for contagion is not the source of ethnic conflict – they can create a setting in which ethnic demands seem timely and realistic"⁹⁹. Similarly, writing on the collapse of the Soviet state, Mark Beissinger argues for "the ways in which the opening and closing of opportunities alter the sense of possibility for contesting a political order"¹⁰⁰. To illustrate with oppositional political climatic extremes, Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric of self-determination in 1914 at Versailles could be said to have subsequently favoured the initiation of secessionist movements, whereas political entrepreneurs may be less likely to capitalise upon identity-based tensions to initiate a violent separatist struggle in the context of recent more heightened rhetorical gestures regarding terrorism. Clearly Sri Lanka from 1948 onwards lies somewhere between these two points, but what international factors could have made ethnic demands by both Sinhalese and Tamils seem timely and realistic? Following the

⁹⁸ As of 1999, figures cited by Gunaratne and Wategama (2000)

⁹⁹ Horowitz (1985, 2000), p.5

¹⁰⁰ Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.14

colonial onslaughts of Catholicism, Calvinism and Anglican Protestantism, independence presented itself for some Sinhalese as the opportune time to rebuild a state out of the global post-colonial disorder, in which Buddhism and Sinhala culture were given their proper place, and for some others it was the opportune time to return the Sinhalese to their rightful state. Suspicion of Marxism – represented in Sri Lanka by the Maoist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) – culminating during the Cold War, originally provided a rallying-call for some of the more discriminatory legislation against the Tamil plantation workers, and may help to account for some of the urgency and fervour with which the nation-building project was undertaken. As regards the Tamils’ ethnic demands, the phrase “Tamil Eelam” was used as early as 1923 by Ponnambalam Arunachalam although it seems unlikely that he was advocating a separate state¹⁰¹. Nonetheless, calling into question the legitimacy of a post-colonial state would hardly seem a remarkable idea at any stage during the second half of the 20th century, given that the aftermath of the British and French empires were marked by protracted civil conflicts and that subsequently, following 1989, the collapse of the Soviet state offered widespread examples of secessionist politics.

Coalition demographics are those identity grouping proportions that would tend to promote workable yet fluid coalition government. Commenting upon Arend Lijphart’s models of consociational democracy, Kaufman counters that “Only a balance of power among the competing groups can provide a “hard” veto – one which the majority must respect”¹⁰². Failing this – he continues – only a credible threat of secession could suffice to overcome a power imbalance. Horowitz’ critique of consociational theory is that the

¹⁰¹ Wilson (1988), p.8

¹⁰² Kaufman (1997, 2001), p.285

very formation of a “grand coalition” in free elections “gives rise” to ethnic opposition parties: “It is no accident that not one of the four developing countries asserted by Lijphart to be consociational in the 1970s – Lebanon, Malaysia, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles – had a grand coalition. Each had a coalition of parties”¹⁰³. Based Horowitz’ premise, it becomes clear that a coalition of parties may be less vulnerable to identity-centric outbidding and result in a more pluralist political discourse than a “coalition of segments”. It follows that those demographics in which identity-groupings necessitate that the governing party must always provisionally ally itself with one of at least two other parties to carry a majority – such coalition demographics will create disincentives for exploiting more extreme identity-centric appeals that might alienate potentially vital support. Whilst such a state of affairs would provide a structural bulwark to identity-centrism, Sri Lanka’s demographics certainly have not presented such disincentives.

Greater intra-group social stratification promises a broader array of possible individual identifications, thereby reducing the credibility and ascribed relevance which purely group-identity-centred appeals may be attributed. Such a situation is more likely to arise amongst what Horowitz terms parallel or “unranked groups”, or – citing David H. Marlowe – in polydomainal societies¹⁰⁴. An example of greater stratification displacing effective tribal self-identification would be the manner by which young urban Kenyans are reported by Stephen Buckley increasingly to conceive of themselves according to non-ethnic groupings: “Their working-class, middle-class and upper-middle-class experiences have anchored them in urban centers, pulling them away from the rural links

¹⁰³ Horowitz (2000), p.258

¹⁰⁴ Horowitz (1985, 2000), p.23

that shaped their parents and grandparents”¹⁰⁵. Sri Lanka is a society in which income disparity is considerable with the highest-paid 10% of the population accruing 43% of the nation’s total personal income – this constitutes the eleventh highest national income disparity in the world as of the mid-1990s¹⁰⁶. Yet whilst I posit that this stratification should generate more complex para-ethnic identifications, which are therefore less amenable to being addressed en masse by political entrepreneurs, it would be difficult to demonstrate that existing levels of stratification have acted in such a way as to limit identity-centric appeals in Sri Lanka. Stratification may be a factor – all other influences on identity-centric discourse being equal – or stratification may not have been extensive enough before 1983 to counterbalance ethnic identification, or intra-group stratification may simply not be a relevant variable to the limiting of group-identity-based appeals, in practice.

In conclusion, I contend that – at least in theory – some of the factors which are likely to limit or to encourage the extent to which political entrepreneurs will actually capitalise on existing inter-group tension – exploiting tension for support by using identity-centric political appeals – are as follows: the existence of latent discourses of group superiority, the education levels of the populace, the age of the political entity, institutional safeguards, the sophistication of political language, the influence of non-market-centred media bodies, international ideological trends, coalition demographics and intra-group stratification. By moving past the bulwarks above, towards more identity-centric appeals, political entrepreneurs may potentially initiate a downward spiral of

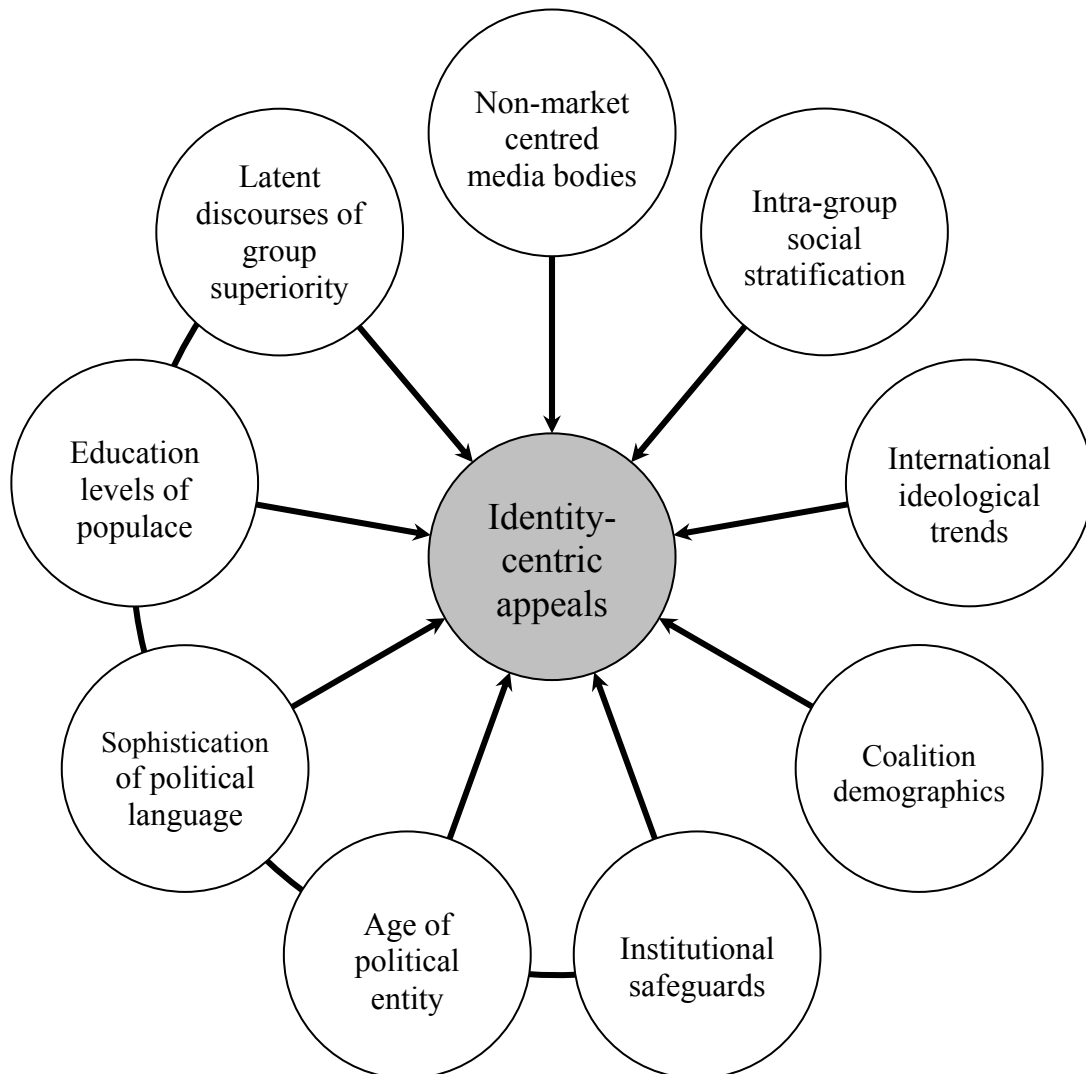
¹⁰⁵ Stephen Buckley, ‘Young Urban Kenyans: Youth in Kenya Feel Few Tribal Ties’, *washingtonpost.com*, posted: September 28th 1997, retrieved: May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/africanlives/kenya/kenya.htm>>, p.A01

¹⁰⁶ Kai Müller, ‘Income Inequality / Income Disparity’, *Global Policy Forum*, posted: March 18th 2000, retrieved May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/inequal/kaislist.htm>>

discourse into radicalised identity-centric outbidding from which the legitimacy derived of pluralism is difficult to recover. These factors and their interrelationships are displayed in figure 2.

Fig. 2: Political Climate

A radial diagram displaying political factors which are posited as determining to what extent political entrepreneurs will capitalise upon identity-centric appeals, given existing inter-group tension. Identity-centricity is regarded as a question of degree, yet a sliding scale which moves more easily in the direction of radicalisation than towards pluralism, once initiated. I shall be explicit about the value-judgement being made here: that identity-centrism constitutes an impoverishment of political discourse against which structural bulwarks may exist, but from which it is difficult to recover. (Derived from a cross-section of contemporary writings in political science, with the Sri Lankan conflict 1983 – 2001 in mind; also showing interrelationships; may be generalisable to intra-state conflicts in general: ethnic conflicts, insurgencies and civil wars.)



3: Recruitment

Certain variables favour recruitment to violent conflict participation. This chapter is largely derived from the findings of Fearon and Laitin in their joint papers ‘Weak States, Rough Terrain, and Large-Scale Ethnic Violence Since 1945’¹⁰⁷ and ‘Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War’¹⁰⁸ with their statistical findings compared against the Sri Lankan conflict. I deliberately conflate those factors said to favour protracted and large-scale insurgency with those which influence the success of recruitment, since the existence of the former presupposes some degree of the latter. I have paid particular attention to the reasoning for positing causal mechanisms – since they do not follow even from substantially significant correlations and cannot be decisively proven.

Based on the empirical large-N statistical analyses of Fearon and Laitin, factors which favour insurgency are said to include “poverty and slow growth, which favor rebel recruitment and mark financially and bureaucratically weak states, rough terrain, and large populations”¹⁰⁹. Furthermore, at least for the period 1976 – 1994, “government human rights performance in the prior year is a relatively powerful predictor of the odds of subsequent civil war”¹¹⁰ and “urban and widely dispersed minority groups are far less likely to see large-scale violence than are groups that have some sort of rural base”¹¹¹.

Whilst these variables are predicative, they have a limited explanatory power. Therefore,

¹⁰⁷ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, ‘Weak States, Rough Terrain and Large-Scale Ethnic Violence Since 1945’, paper prepared for delivery at the 1999 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, September 2nd – 5th 1999, Atlanta, GA, first draft, August 19th 1999

¹⁰⁸ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, ‘Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War’, paper to be presented at the 2001 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA, August 30th – September 2nd 2001, August 20

¹⁰⁹ Fearon and Laitin (2001), Abstract, p.i

¹¹⁰ *id.*, p.26

¹¹¹ Fearon and Laitin (1999), p.21

to these variables, I add “weak economic alternatives for young males” and “expectation / opportunities dissonance” as meriting consideration in their bearing upon the success of recruitment.

The economic growth rate of Sri Lanka has averaged 4.6% since 1966¹¹², despite the deleterious effects of the conflict. This is unusually high in the context of Fearon and Laitin’s findings, but the country’s per capita annual income of US\$820, whilst higher than most of its South Asian neighbours, is far lower than the per capita incomes in Korea, Malaysia and Singapore - economies which Sri Lanka only seriously began to lag behind in the early 1970s¹¹³. In bureaucratic terms, Sri Lanka has become what Jenne terms a “fragmented state” as opposed to a weak or failed state¹¹⁴, with high provision of public services but low territorial control, having lost state monopoly over coercive force in significant areas. Before the conflict, was Sri Lanka bureaucratically weak? The World Bank Group points to “a gradual weakening of public institutions and governance since the early 1970s and the country’s heavy dependence on the public sector in the creation of jobs and transfer of resources across groups”¹¹⁵ as characterising the country’s economic situation regardless of the conflict.

Sri Lanka’s small population size of 19.1 million does not fit well with Fearon and Laitin’s variables and neither can the 12.6% Tamil population be considered an especially large “group size (relative to country population)”¹¹⁶ even with the addition of the 5.6% of Tamil plantation workers, some of whom have settled on State lands in the

¹¹² Jenne (2003), p.221

¹¹³ The World Bank Group, *Sri Lanka Country Brief*, posted: September 2002, retrieved: May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/sar/sa.nsf/a22044d0c4877a3e852567de0052e0fa/1e1d42f4e1fdb918852567fa005026eb?OpenDocument>>

¹¹⁴ Jenne (2003), pp.221 – 223

¹¹⁵ The World Bank Group (2002), available at:

<<http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/sar/sa.nsf/a22044d0c4877a3e852567de0052e0fa/1e1d42f4e1fdb918852567fa005026eb?OpenDocument>>

¹¹⁶ Fearon and Laitin (1999), p.21

north since 1981¹¹⁷. However, the nature of the insurgent recruitment which takes place in Sri Lanka is not inconsistent with Fearon and Laitin's reasoning. They hypothesise that insurgency will be militarily and politically favoured, thus making civil war more likely, when potential rebels have "A large country population, which makes it more difficult for the center to keep close tabs on who is doing what at the local level, and also increases the number of potential recruits to an insurgency for a given level of per capita income"¹¹⁸. Recruitment to the various Tamil insurgency organisations has come from the Tamil population which, aside from Colombo, mainly inhabits the north and east of the country and is thus predominantly infrastructurally peripheral to the administrative centre and economic hub of Colombo and which – if assessed by areas of ethnic majority rather than by concentration – represent areas which are overwhelmingly rural and less well-developed:

Ninety percent of Sri Lanka's poor live in rural areas, where access to basic services is limited. Among the poorest households, only 38 percent have electricity, 55 percent sanitation, and 61 percent access to safe drinking water. These conditions discourage economic growth in poorer areas and exacerbate inequality within the country.¹¹⁹

In rural Sri Lanka, it is true that economic growth has been slow, per capita income is low, economic alternatives are few, and weak infrastructure exacerbates peripherality in such a way as to parallel the effects of large population in making these areas "more difficult for the centre to keep close tabs on". Whilst Fearon and Laitin's research did not return conclusive results for the statistical significance of the number of young males as a variable¹²⁰, I would argue that what contributes to reducing the rational incentives for

¹¹⁷ *Inter-Racial Equity and National Unity in Sri Lanka*, (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1985), p.40. Cited, with reservations (p.147) by Little (1994), p.85

¹¹⁸ Fearon and Laitin (2001), p.10

¹¹⁹ The World Bank Group (2002), available at:

<<http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/sar/sa.nsf/a22044d0c4877a3e852567de0052e0fa/1e1d42f4e1fdb918852567fa005026eb?OpenDocument>>

¹²⁰ Fearon and Laitin (2001), p.24

recruitment to violent conflict participation for young men (and in the case of the LTTE, young women, teenagers and pre-teens) is the availability of good economic alternatives: as Fearon and Laitin put it, “recruiting young men to the life of a guerrilla will be easier when the economic alternatives are worse”¹²¹.

It is not merely economic realities which could generate rational-choice incentives to participate in violent conflict. The gap between socially-imagined expectations for economic furtherance and the opportunities actually available can in itself motivate in favour of recruitment. Sri Lanka has high numbers of both Tamil and Sinhalese university graduates who are unemployed. Having been promised good economic opportunities and held high hopes upon graduation, the inclination of such groups in the context particularly of 1970s legislation on the one hand, and post-colonial political rhetoric on the other, would be to regard the failure of themselves and of their ethnic brethren to secure public sector jobs, as the result of unassailable structural inequalities. In this argument, high expectations dissonant with economic realities (not merely the economic realities themselves) can fuel recruitment to violent conflict participation – for both insurgency organisations and security forces or paramilitary groups.

As well as inciting reprisals, human rights violations by the state undermine its legitimacy and alter the perceived rules of acceptable engagement, favouring recruitment to violent conflict participation. As late as 1966, Sri Lanka was widely considered a model of stability for the region¹²² for its peaceful transition to democratic self-rule with regular, free elections, broad civic freedoms and an internationally competitive export economy. Yet as mentioned earlier, by 1979, human rights were being severely infringed

¹²¹ *id.*, p.10

¹²² Donald R. Snodgrass, cited by Jenne (2003), p.225

by the government under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and in the year the conflict began, legislation such as Regulation 15A of the 1983 emergency laws legitimised already routine violations.

The variable of rough terrain deserves particular attention. Fearon and Laitin propose that rough terrain – jungles, mountainous regions, swamps, marshland – is one factor which precludes the need for large-scale recruitment or local compliance, by providing an insurgent movement with strategic military advantages, with the consequence that “rebels will have less incentive to push for public goods in their declared objectives and policies”¹²³. On the other hand, in terrain which provides little resistance or camouflage – desert, plains, savannah, tundra, altiplano, agriculturally developed areas – counterinsurgency is more efficacious and large-scale or prolonged civil conflict is less sustainable¹²⁴. This points towards the emerging criterion being somewhere between these extremes – semi-rough terrain favours identity-centric recruitment to violent conflict participation. Out of this consideration comes an interesting conception of the determinants behind the ideology of successful mobilised groups, as involving a process akin to natural selection. Critically Fearon and Laitin crystallise an interpretation of insurgency as “a particular form of military practice that can be harnessed to diverse political agendas”¹²⁵ and make the following distinction:

This is not to claim that rebel leaders are all just political opportunists who strike a nationalist pose to fulfil other goals, like personal ambition and power within the minority group. Rather, when the environment makes social support an important determinant of rebel success, it will select for rebel movements that credibly espouse a commitment to obtaining public goods for the minority.¹²⁶

¹²³ Fearon and Laitin (1999), p.40

¹²⁴ *id.*, p.19

¹²⁵ Fearon and Laitin (2001), Abstract, p.i

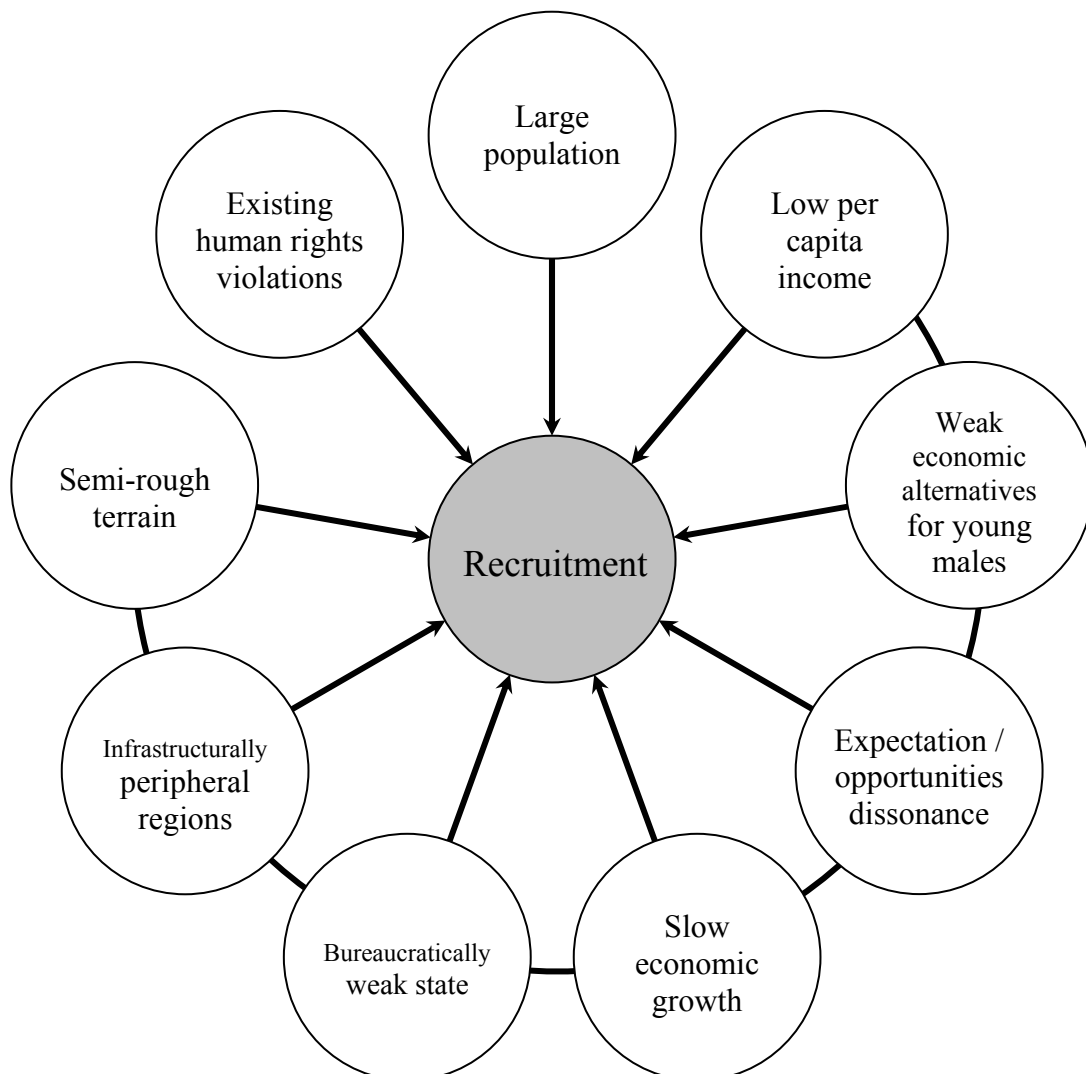
¹²⁶ Fearon and Laitin (1999), p.40

The terrain of the north and east of Sri Lanka and particularly the LTTE stronghold of the Vanni region, contains jungle and seasonal monsoon swamps. In the east, there is a salt-water marsh between Trincomalee and Batticaloa. However, given that in general the topography of the north and east of the island is characterised by low, flat to rolling plain, the relevant terrain could, therefore, justly be termed semi-rough.

In conclusion, the following factors are said to favour recruitment to violent intra-state conflict participation: slow economic growth, bureaucratic weakness, large population, infrastructural peripherality, weak economic alternatives for young males, high expectations dissonant with economic realities, existing human rights violations and rough terrain. These factors and their interrelationships are displayed in figure 3.

Fig. 3: Recruitment

A radial diagram displaying the economic, political and geographical variables which favour recruitment to violent conflict participation in the name of one identity group, once inter-group tension has been politically capitalised. (Derived from a selection of James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin's rational-choice writings; also showing interrelationships; generalisable to intra-state conflicts in general: ethnic conflicts, insurgencies and civil wars.)



4: Mobilisation

Once mobilisation of an identity-based movement occurs, the nature of the conflict changes substantially. Structural features which stem from the formation of the group, work to reinforce it and the mobilisation perpetuates its own logic. Asking our starting question “Why are they fighting?” now could result in confusion between the factors which contributed to the development of conflict to this point – and are still relevant to varying degrees – and the separate factors, which could be called institutional incentives, taking “the conflict as a whole” as the institution, that favour perpetuation of the conflict. This chapter is largely theoretical and examples from Sri Lanka are used for illustrative purposes where possible.

The institutional incentives of a mobilised identity-centric group can favour perpetuation of the conflict. Bush cites John Darby in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland: “The Irish conflict, it has often been observed, is a very contrary one. Every time the English find an answer, the Irish change the question”¹²⁷. Whether or not this is a historically accurate assessment in the case of Northern Ireland, it introduces the notion that once mobilised, institutional incentives pertain to sustaining or strengthening the group through recruitment by altering its agenda if necessary, such that it can continue to function as a financial, political and social structure. In this way, an insurgent group can be thought of as behaving in a manner similar to a company in a free-market economy, with the environment selecting for the ideological agenda which will be

¹²⁷ Bush (1995), p.10

successful and altering the core competencies which will be focussed upon at any one time by an organisation. To extend the metaphor, the political landscape offers up gaps in the marketplace over which competing groups will attempt to gain a monopoly. Why might such a view be appropriate to Sri Lanka, if at all?

The LTTE has been fiercely competitive in its suppression of alternative Tamil secessionist insurgent groups and the organisation has “consistently “spoiled” talks from which they were excluded using terror and intimidation to prevent moderate Tamil organisations from concluding pacts with the government”¹²⁸. In 1995 the LTTE were responsible for assassinating the leader of a rival group, the People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), after he had agreed to disarm and negotiate peacefully with the government¹²⁹. As a financial structure, the LTTE receives a great deal of financial support from the Tamil diaspora overseas and 80 – 90% of its funds were estimated to originate abroad in 1996¹³⁰. By the late 1990s the LTTE was thought to own a fleet of at least 10 freighters and engage in drugs trafficking, as well as being known to gain the bulk of its revenue from “investing, freight shipping, human trafficking, munitions smuggling, money laundering, extortion” and a de facto taxation system¹³¹. As well as taxing goods and vehicles which pass through the areas under its control, the LTTE accrues money from teachers (at 12% as of 2002¹³²) and other state employees, using extortion where necessary. Furthermore, the investment of monetary, time-intensive, and political support by individuals, not to mention instances of personal

¹²⁸ Jenne (2003), p.229

¹²⁹ id.

¹³⁰ Peter Chalk, ‘Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam’s (LTTE) International Organization and Operations – A Preliminary Analysis, winter commentary no. 77, *Canadian Security Intelligence Service*, (1999), posted: March 17th 2000, retrieved May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/com77e.htm>>

¹³¹ Peter Chalk (1999), available at: <<http://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/com77e.htm>>, cited by Jenne (2003), pp.228 – 230

¹³² Frances Harrison, ‘Tiger rebels ‘dragoon Tamil teenagers’’, *BBC News*, posted: February 1st 2002, retrieved May 1st 2003, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1795443.stm>

sacrifice and the sacrifices of significant others involved in the organisation, collectively generate for organisation members an accountability to investors and thus foster an intransigent commitment to the professed goals of the organisation – which makes conflict-reduction based on compromise less likely. Whilst few insurgency groups are as well-managed or diversified as the LTTE, their case illustrates the institutional incentives favouring the perpetuation of conflict once a mobilised organisation has formed. Charles King analyses the consequences of this phenomenon in Eurasia¹³³.

Other factors are relevant. The “action-reaction cycle”, as coined by the Basque separatist movement Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA), functions as a result of inaccurate or indiscriminate counterinsurgency reprisals against a mobilised group increasing support for and recruitment to the group, despite the collective costs¹³⁴. The formation of the organisation itself as an active mobilised entity can increase perceived chances of success – and increase awareness – thereby creating a bandwagoning that strengthens the movement; and successful outcomes in conflict can not only further increase perceived chances of success, but also attract more members wishing to share the triumph, as well as increasing the potential “gratification”¹³⁵ and reflected glory for those who support the organisation indirectly. Mobilisation reduces economic alternatives, because of its effect upon the domestic economy and more immediately upon foreign investment, thus increasing one of the factors posited to benefit recruitment. Another self-perpetuating aspect of mobilisation is that it can create security dilemmas, whereby “one or more

¹³³ Charles King, ‘The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia’s Unrecognized States’, *World Politics*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (2001), pp. 524-552

¹³⁴ Fearon and Laitin (1999), p.41

¹³⁵ id., p.37

disputing parties have incentives to resort to preemptive uses of force”¹³⁶ thereby increasing the likelihood of continued conflict as a succession of pre-emptive attacks. In such a context, and in the absence of mediating institutions to ensure credible commitment, “even the most well intentioned leaders would be irrational to seek a negotiated settlement”¹³⁷ between two groups, as King paraphrases three neorealist theorists.

Two theoretical grounds for believing that mobilisation creates factors furthering its own perpetuation, stem from the work of Beissinger. Mobilisation of individuals and groups to violent conflict prompts and furthers a shift in social norms whereby violence becomes more quotidian and perhaps more acceptable. More protracted civil conflicts change social attitudes as individuals tend to engage in cognitive dissonance reduction¹³⁸, until the limits of the possible have shifted to suggest that a situation has a certain necessity simply because no credible alternatives can be plausibly entertained. Beissinger argues in particular that social norms come to shift especially quickly during periods of ““thickened” history”¹³⁹ in which the pace of challenging events comes “to constitute an increasingly significant part of their own causal structure”¹⁴⁰. Secondly, the events which active mobilisation instigates have the potential to beget further mobilisation on both sides by polarising opinion through transformative spectatorship. In Beissinger’s formulation, an event “invites the “observer” to become an agent” and, in so doing, “throws into sharp relief the complex issues of compliance, loyalty, and identity that

¹³⁶ David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, ‘Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000), p.108

¹³⁷ King (2001), p.527

¹³⁸ Beissinger (2002), p.20

¹³⁹ id., p.27

¹⁴⁰ id.

underlie any order, but which, in the absence of the event, are not ordinarily subject to contemplation”¹⁴¹.

By reconceiving protracted intra-state civil conflict as the result of a collective action failure on the part of the “*nonrebel*” majority of a minority group, Fearon and Laitin have argued that at the individual level, support for the insurgent organisation – or even mere compliance – need not be thought of as costly, since although it may generally result in poorly targeted counter-insurgency measures and in perpetuation of the conflict, and may specifically result in making oneself a target for the state’s forces or censure, “there is the same danger from the rebels, who are closer at hand and typically better informed about village politics”¹⁴². Thus, although collectively “Individuals or families might be better off if they could somehow collectively commit to resist the pressure of rebels, their own nationalist urges, or their anger at the state”¹⁴³, once mobilisation has resulted in an organised movement, individual fear of sanctions intensifies the collective action problem and increases disincentives for intra-group opposition to continued mobilisation – and in the context of intimidation tactics used by groups such as the LTTE, actually favours support.

In conclusion, regarding “the conflict as a whole” as an institutional structure in itself, the following factors can combine to reinforce its perpetuation or favour its escalation, following mobilisation: an insurgency organisation has financial, political and social incentives to sustain its own structure once initiated and to adhere to its goals, mobilisation leads to bandwagoning, can lead to changes in the perceived chances of success and reflected glory gratification, decreases economic alternatives, creates security

¹⁴¹ *id.*, p.16

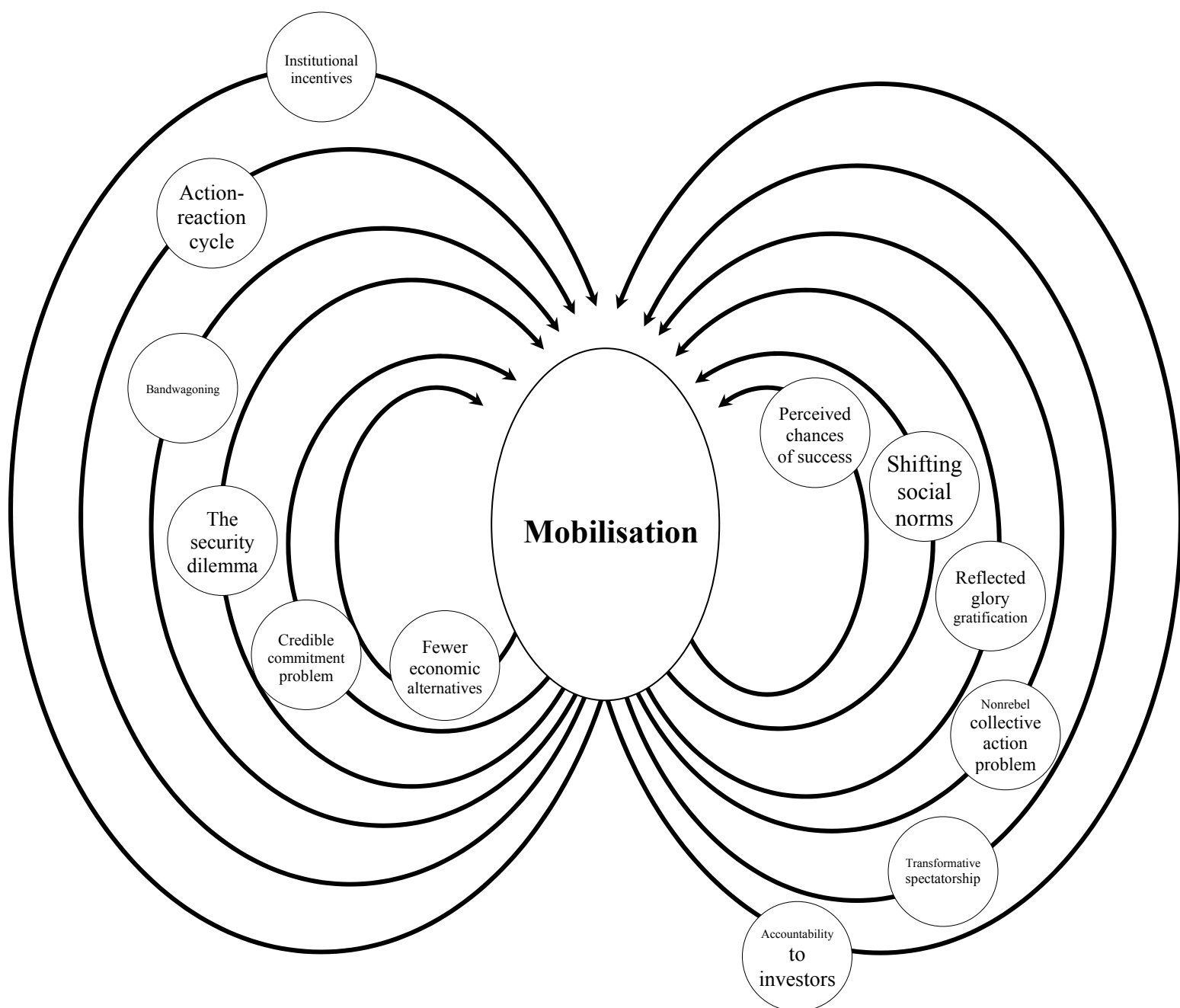
¹⁴² Fearon and Laitin (1999), p.39

¹⁴³ *id.*, p.38

dilemmas and credible commitment problems, causes a shift in social norms, polarises opinion through transformative spectatorship, and intensifies the nonrebel collective action problem. These factors are displayed in figure 4.

Fig. 4: Mobilisation

*A central premise of my argument is that once political entrepreneurs have capitalised upon heightened identity-consciousness through greater identity-centric discourse, and once variables conducive to recruitment have enabled the formation of an organisation which acts in the name of one identity group, then structural features of the conflict begin to enforce their own distinctive logic. When organisations within a conflict have entered such a stage, the nature of the conflict is fundamentally transformed. This feedback-loop diagram delineates **structural features of a mobilised identity-based movement which act to sustain or escalate the mobilisation** of individuals and groups within the conflict. (Derived from a cross-section of contemporary writings in political science, with the Sri Lankan conflict 1983 – 2001 in mind; may be generalisable to intra-state conflicts in general: ethnic conflicts, insurgencies and civil wars.)*

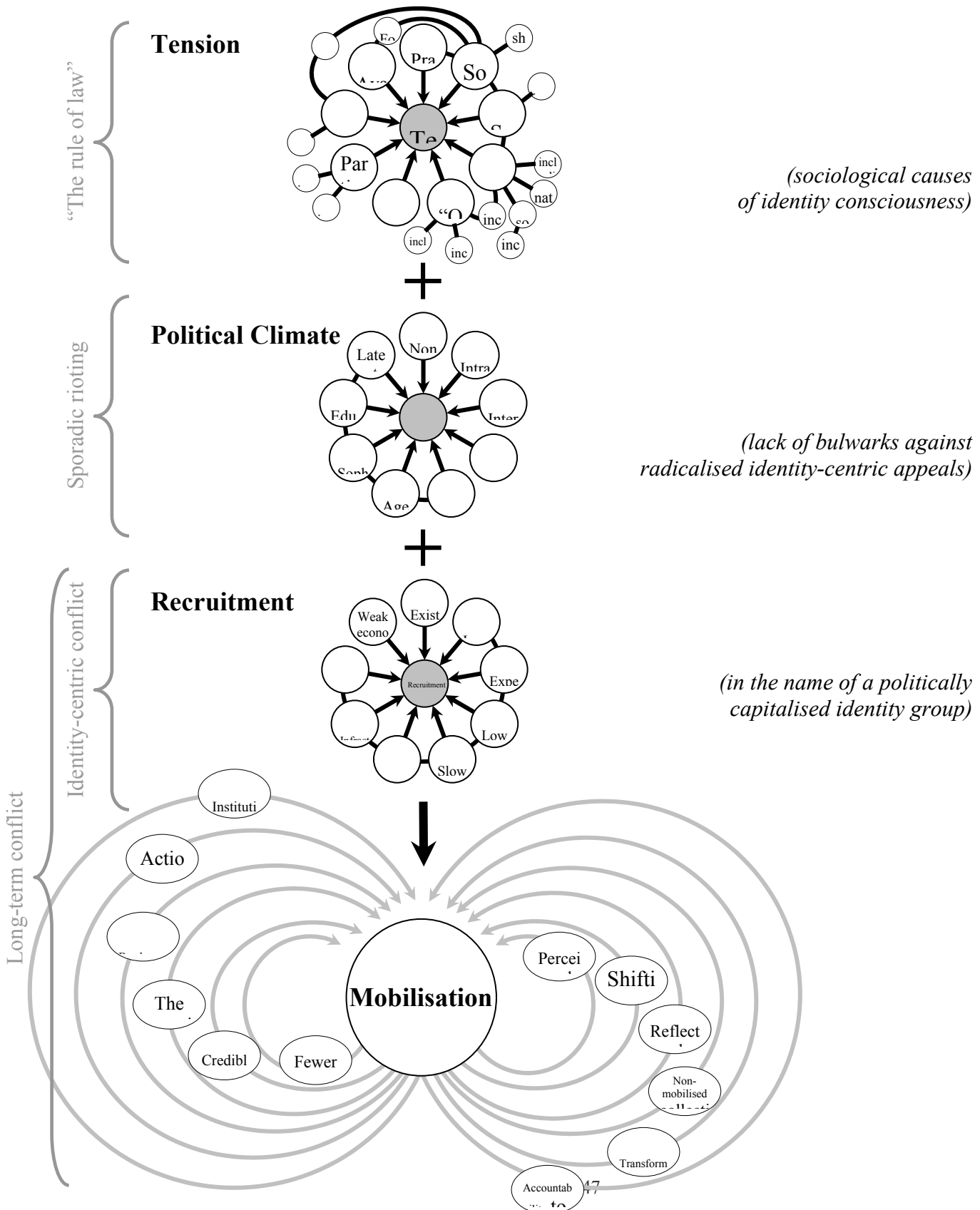


5: Conclusion

Once political entrepreneurs have capitalised upon heightened identity consciousness through greater identity-centric discourse, and once variables conducive to recruitment have enabled the formation of an organisation which acts in the name of one identity group, then structural features of the conflict begin to enforce their own distinctive logic. The apparently simple question, “Why are they fighting?”, has a complex answer. Based on my study of the Sri Lankan conflict 1983 – 2001 between Sinhalese and Tamil groups, I have amalgamated the factors which I believe help us to understand this conflict better, into one model. This theoretical model is shown in figure 5. The ascription of temporal phases indicating periods when “the rule of law” can be said to apply, instances of sporadic rioting occur, identity-centric conflict emerges and long-term conflict is underway, are not intended to imply that each of the factors which themselves influence tension, political climate, recruitment and mobilisation are necessary and sufficient conditions for the development of the conflict through such stages, in other contexts.

Fig. 5: Theoretical Model

*A model showing the considerations necessary to answer the question “Why are they fighting?”
Based upon analysis of the Sri Lankan conflict 1983 – 2001, and combining Figures 1 – 4.*



Bibliography

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991)

Bates, Robert H., 'Modernisation, Ethnic Competition, and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa', *States Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas*, ed. Donald Rothchild and Victoria A. Olorunsola, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 152 – 171

Beissinger, Mark R., *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Buckley, Stephen, 'Young Urban Kenyans: Youth in Kenya Feel Few Tribal Ties', *washingtonpost.com*, posted: September 28th 1997, retrieved: May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/africanlives/kenya/kenya.htm>>, p.A01

Bush, Kenneth David, 'Cracking Open the Ethnic Billiard Ball: Bringing the Intra-Group Dimensions into Ethnic Conflict Studies – with Special Reference to Sri Lanka and Northern Island', *Occasional Paper Series*, (University of Notre Dame: Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, May 1995), 9: OP:1

Chalk, Peter, 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) International Organization and Operations – A Preliminary Analysis, winter commentary no. 77, *Canadian Security Intelligence Service*, (1999), posted: March 17th 2000, retrieved May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/com77e.htm>>

Chong, Dennis, *Rational Lives*, (Chicago, 2000)

Daniel, E. Valentine, 'Afterword: sacred places, violent spaces', *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, (London: Routledge, 1999)

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin, 'Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War', paper to be presented at the 2001 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA, August 30th – September 2nd 2001, August 20

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin, 'Weak States, Rough Terrain and Large-Scale Ethnic Violence Since 1945', paper prepared for delivery at the 1999 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, September 2nd – 5th 1999, Atlanta, GA, first draft, August 19th 1999

Federation of American Scientists' Intelligence Resource Program website, available at: <<http://fas.org/irp/world/para/ltte.htm>> updated: April 30th 2003, retrieved: May 1st 2003

Flags of the World website, updated: March 12th 2003, retrieved: May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/lk.html>>

Gunaratne, Shelton A. and Chanuka Wattagama, 'Sri Lanka', *The Handbook of the Media in Asia*, ed. Shelton A. Gunaratne, (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000), draft chapter available at <<http://www.mnstate.edu/gunarat/SLChapter.htm>>, retrieved: 1st May 2003

Hardin, Russell, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

Harrison, Frances, 'Tiger rebels 'dragoon Tamil teenagers'', *BBC News*, posted: February 1st 2002, retrieved May 1st 2003, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1795443.stm>

Hennayake, Shantha Kumara, *Interactive Ethnonationalism: Explaining Tamil Ethnonationalism in Contemporary Sri Lanka*, (Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1991)

Horowitz, Donald L., 'Constitutional Design: An Oxymoron?', *Designing Democratic Institutions*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Stephen Macedo, Nomos XLII, (New York: New York University Press, 2000)

Horowitz, Donald, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (California: 1985, 2000)

Jenne, Erin K., 'Sri Lanka: A Fragmented State', *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg, (Massachusetts: The World Peace Foundation, 2003)

Kaufmann, Chaim, 'Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars', *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, 2001)

King, Charles, 'The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States', *World Politics*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (2001), pp. 524-552

Lake, David A. and Donald Rothchild, 'Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict', *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000)

Lakshmanan Sabaratnam, *Ethnic Attachments in Sri Lanka: Social Change and Cultural Continuity*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001)

Little, David, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*, (Washington: The United States Institute of Peace, 1994)

Müller, Kai, 'Income Inequality / Income Disparity', *Global Policy Forum*, posted: March 18th 2000, retrieved May 1st 2003, available at:
<<http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/inequal/kaislist.htm>>

Nithiyanandam, V. Nithi, 'The Political Economy of Ethnonationalism in Asia: Some Lessons from Sri Lanka's Experience', available at:
<<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/aspac/papers/scholars/nithiyanandam/nithiyanandam.html>>, retrieved 1st May 2003

Peebles, Patrick, *The Plantation Tamils of Ceylon*, (London: Leicester University Press, 2002)

Rajasingham, K T, 'Sri Lanka: The Untold Story: Chapter 14: Post-colonial realignment of political forces', *Asia Times Online*, posted: November 10th 2001, retrieved: May 1st 2003, available at: <<http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/CK10Df03.html>>

Rupesinghe, Kumar, 'Enhancing Human Security in the Eastern Province', *The Road Map Programme on Negotiating a Political Settlement and Promoting Conflict Transformation in Sri Lanka*, joint initiative: Centre for Policy Alternatives, Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies, workshop paper presented 16th October 2002, retrieved: 1st May 2003, available at:
<http://www.cpalanka.org/research_papers/Road_Map_Paper_4.pdf>

Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994)

Tennekoon, Serena, 'Newspaper Nationalism: Sinhala identity as historical discourse', *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, ed. Jonathan Spencer, (London: Routledge, 1990)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, ed. J. B. Sykes, seventh edition, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1982)

The World Bank Group, *Sri Lanka Country Brief*, posted: September 2002, retrieved: May 1st 2003, available at:
<<http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/sar/sa.nsf/a22044d0c4877a3e852567de0052e0fa/1e1d42f4e1fdb918852567fa005026eb?OpenDocument>>

Treisman, Daniel S., 'Russia's "Ethnic Revival": The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order', *World Politics*, Vol. 49.2 (1997), pp.212 – 249
Varshney, Ashutosh, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, (Yale, 2002)

Wilson, A. Jeyaratnam, *The Break-Up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict*,
(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988)

Conventions in this Paper

I have chosen the following conventions:

Of

Sinhala / Singhala / Sinhalese / Singhalese: Sinhala is used for the language.
Sinhalese or the Sinhalese people.
Sinhala as an adjective of culture.

Of

Tamil / Tamils / Tamilese / Tamilian: Tamil is used for the language.
Tamils or the Tamil people.
Tamil as an adjective of culture.

To talk of the Sinhalese people instead of the Sinhala people is arguably to favour an ascriptive ethnic category over of an emotive and historically resonant self-identification. Sinhala is retained for adjectives of cultural form to emphasise cultural-historical implications over suggestions of nation statehood. An example of this would be the Sri Lankan national newspaper established in 1906 by Anagarika Dharmapala: *Sinhala Bauddhaya*. The title of this publication is accordingly translated as “Sinhala Buddhist”, a phrase which subsequently entered the lexicon. I would argue that to use phrases such as “Sinhalese Buddhist”, would tend linguistically to confer an implied nation-state legitimacy upon the cultural identity. Thus the principle is that “Sinhalese” is a less-fraught ascriptive ethnicity but “Sinhala” has more relevant connotations for sub-Sri Lankan cultural products.

“Tamilian”, from the native name Tamil of Tamil Nadu and cognate with Dravidian¹⁴⁴, seems to be more common in India than Sri Lanka – hence the choices above.

Place names and personages are spelled according to the alternative with higher returned results using the Google Advanced Search¹⁴⁵ feature of the Google search engine. These have invariably returned a ratio of greater than 3:1 in favour of one spelling over others. In rare situations which demonstrate less clear-cut consensus, I have chosen the conventions adopted by sources I consider to be more authoritative. Place names and personages in quotations remain unchanged.

¹⁴⁴ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, ed. J. B. Sykes, seventh edition, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1982) p.636

¹⁴⁵ Available at <http://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en>, retrieved May 2003.