THE POLITICS OF THE SOUTH
Part of the Sri Lanka Strategic Conflict Assessment 2005
2000 – 2005

David Rampton and Asanga Welikala
# Contents

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. | 2
About the Authors .................................................................................................................... | 3
Acronyms .................................................................................................................................... | 4
Executive Summary .................................................................................................................... | 5

1. Understanding Nationalism in Sri Lanka: Actors and Trajectories ........................................... | 11
   2. The Political Actors ............................................................................................................. | 15
       Overview of the UNP ........................................................................................................... | 15
       Overview of the SLFP ......................................................................................................... | 19
       The SLFP, the UNP, and Contemporary Peace Processes in Comparative Perspective ........ | 21
       Overview of the JVP ........................................................................................................... | 28
       Political Constituency and Sources of Marginality ............................................................. | 29
       The JVP’s Nationalist ideology and Attitudes to the Peace Process and Constitutional Reform | 33
       Attitude to International and Civil Society Actors .............................................................. | 35
       The Post-Tsunami Context and the JVP’s Long-Term Political Prospects ......................... | 37
       Incentives for the JVP as a Peace Stakeholder ................................................................... | 39
       The Patriotic National Movement: Aims and Constituents ............................................... | 42
       Overview of the Sihala Urumaya/Jathika Hela Urumaya combine .................................. | 43
       The JHU’s Socio-Political Constituency ............................................................................ | 44
       The JHU, Sihala Nationalism and Attitudes to the “Ethnic Conflict” and the Peace Process.... | 46
       The Rise and Fall of The JHU as a Sinhala Nationalist Organ ........................................... | 48
       Incentives for the JHU/Sihala Urumaya as a Peace Stakeholder ......................................... | 50
       Jathika Chintanaya: Aims and Strategies for Sinhala Nationalism ....................................... | 52
       Overview of the Upcountry People’s Front ........................................................................ | 53
       Organization and Constituency Base .................................................................................. | 53
       The UPF, CWC, Upcountry Tamil Nationalism and the Peace Process ............................... | 54
       Incentives for the Peace Process ....................................................................................... | 56

3. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ | 57

4. Implications for International Donors ..................................................................................... | 61
   Political Knowledge .............................................................................................................. | 61
   Aid Frameworks .................................................................................................................. | 61
   Engagement with Political Actors and Capacities for Peace ................................................... | 62
   Civil Society, Education, Participation, and Confidence-Building .......................................... | 63
   Transparency, Consultation, and Inclusivity .......................................................................... | 64

Bibliography ................................................................................................................................ | 65
Acknowledgements

All views expressed in this study are the authors' and do not represent those of the commissioning agencies, the facilitators of this study, or those who were interviewed. We would nevertheless like to thank the following for their contributions to this study. First, Nilan Fernando, Jonathan Goodhand, Bart Klem, and Anthea Mulakala who provided feedback on earlier drafts of this report. Second, Alan Martin and Gina Genovese, who provided valuable editorial assistance.
About the Authors

David Rampton is a visiting lecturer in the Development Studies and Politics Departments at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in history and politics and a Master of Science in political studies at SOAS, where he is currently engaged in doctoral research on the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and nationalism in Sri Lanka.

Asanga Welikala studied for his LLB at the University of Hull. Since March 2000, he has worked as a research associate in the Legal and Constitutional Unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives in Colombo. He is also an occasional contributor to local and international magazines and newspapers.
Acronyms

CFA  Ceasefire Agreement
CWC  Ceylon Workers Congress
CP   Communist Party
CPI  Communist Party of India
CPI(M) Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CBM  Confidence Building Measures
PNM  Deshahithaishi Jathika Vyaparaya (Patriotic National Movement)
DJV  Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya (Patriotic People's Movement)
EPDP  Eelam People's Democratic Party
EPRLF  Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front
GoSL  Government of Sri Lanka
IGOs  Inter-Governmental Organizations
ISGA  Interim Self-Governing Authority
IRs  International Financial Institutions
INGOs  International Non-Governmental Organizations
JVP  Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People’s Liberation Front)
JHU  Jathika Hela Urumaya (National Sinhala Heritage)
JSS  Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya (National Workers Union)
LSSP  Lanka Sama Samaja Party
LTTE  Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MEP  Mahajana Eksath Peramuna
MSS  Maubima Surakima Sanvidhanaya (Movement for the Protection of the Motherland)
MSV  Maubima Surakima Vyaparaya (Force for the Protection of the Motherland)
NMAT  National Movement Against Terrorism
NSSP  Nava Sama Samaja Party (The New Equal Society Party)
NGOs  Non-Governmental Organizations
PA  People’s Alliance
PLOTE  People’s Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam
P-TOMS  Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure
PR  Proportional Representation
SU  Sihala Urumaya (Sinhala Heritage)
SVV  Sinhala Veera Vidhana (Sinhala Heroes Forum)
SLFP  Sri Lanka Freedom Party
TNA  Tamil National Alliance
TULF  Tamil United Liberation Front
UF  United Front
UNF  United National Front
UNP  United National Party
UPFA  United People’s Freedom Alliance
UPF  Upcountry People’s Front
This report is a contribution to a broader study entitled "Aid, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka" (Goodhand and Klem, 2005), which examines the peace process in Sri Lanka with a particular focus on international engagement. The report outlines the contemporary political dynamics of the "southern polity" in Sri Lanka through a map of the most significant political actors and analyses the diverse and varying stances and incentives these actors have toward the current and future directions of the peace process. The historical development of these political forces and parties is also charted in relation to their positions on past and current attempts to reform what has widely been conceived as an overly-centralized and unitary state structure, which has acted as a battleground of social, economic, political, and cultural conflict encompassing ethnic and other socio-political dimensions. The study also focuses on the organizational capacities, mobilizing strategies, and social constituencies of these actors, pinpointing how shifts within these areas have impacted their ideological approaches to formulating measures for peace in Sri Lanka.

We argue that the general trajectory in Sri Lanka, especially since the 1990s, has been for mainstream actors to accept the necessity of constitutional reform as a means for resolving Sri Lanka's political crises. This has resulted in a shift from more overt and consistent articulations of Sinhala nationalist majoritarianism for political legitimacy toward a theoretical, albeit not practical, consensus on measures for political devolution. The report also highlights the way in which Sinhala nationalist majoritarianism—while having been dropped to some extent by the United National Party (UNP) and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)—has been vigorously taken up by more overtly nationalist actors like the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the Sihala Urumaya (SU), and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU). The capacity of these nationalist actors to mobilize Sinhala nationalist sentiments poses deep problems for the future of the peace process as it threatens to draw mainstream political actors back into more nationalist strategies for political survival. It also serves to challenge the legitimacy of governing coalitions or, through the use of a coalitional veto, bring about governmental collapse for those attempting to move the peace process forward.

The fieldwork and the bulk of the research for this report took place over a three-week period between March and April 2005, and involved interviews with representatives and leaders of the political parties and movements discussed herein. Fieldwork trips to the Nuwara Eliya, Galle, and Matara districts were also carried out, and interviews with residents of camps for the post-tsunami displaced were conducted. The research also included interviews with academics and representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other civil society actors.

UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF NATIONALISM IN SRI LANKA

When we investigate the role nationalism has played in disrupting the peace process, constitutional reform and, subsequently, the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka, it is important to appreciate that the phenomenon has not been written in stone throughout the last several decades. Rather, one must recognize the constantly shifting force of this dynamic among different socio-economic forces and political actors at varying historical junctures. Nonetheless, one broad historical pattern that can be identified over the past 50 years is
that Sinhala nationalism first emerged as a link between the center—dominated by the ruling elites—and the rural and village-level elites. This nationalist process did not fully emerge until the 1950s, when it gained currency among the socio-cultural forces led by SWRD Bandaranaike’s pancha maha balavegaya.

As a result, Sri Lanka witnessed the emergence of an elite reformism coalescing around conceptions of liberal democratic politics that remain ambivalent about, but not divorced from, expressions of ethno-politics. A more overt and forceful Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, inextricably tied to the notion of liberal democratic majoritarianism, also developed. Such majoritarianism disqualified minority rights and grievances, leading Tamil nationalists to react to the dominance of their Sinhala counterparts. It is from these origins that Sinhala nationalism attained hegemonic status in the South until at least the 1990s, and continues to influence political events today.

THE SLFP, THE UNP, AND CONTEMPORARY PEACE PROCESSES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

A crude history of Sri Lanka might well conclude that the two mainstream political actors can be ideologically contrasted: the more Sinhala nationalist, statist, and social democratic vehicle of the SLFP and the more Western-oriented, liberal, and free-market UNP. Such a conception of the political landscape would not necessarily be wrong, but would be an analytical and a historical oversimplification. For while the SLFP played the central role in the institutionalization of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism’s claims to social and political dominance from 1956 onward, the UNP’s response to the SLFP was that of imitation rather than an attempt to provide democratic leadership that would foster ethnic reconciliation and pluralism. In that sense Sinhala majoritarian nationalism was taken up by both of the mainstream political actors out of political expediency, and very swiftly assumed hegemonic proportions.

It is for this reason that both UNP and SLFP politicians have been guilty of inciting Sinhala nationalist passions and legislating from a standpoint that discriminates against minorities. Constitutional changes introduced by the United Front (UF) in 1972 and later in 1978 by JR Jayawardene both infringed upon minority rights and formalized Sinhala Buddhist nationalism constitutionally. That these were drawn up by SLFP-led and UNP governments respectively is testament to the complicity of both parties in "ethnic outbidding" in their pursuit of state power.

While the legacy of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism remained with the SLFP well into the early 1990s, the political rise of Chandrika Kumaratunga was to effect a far-reaching change in the SLFP’s stance on the ethnic conflict. Kumaratunga was able to persuade the southern constituency not only that Tamil grievances were legitimate, but that a process of negotiation and constitutional power-sharing would be necessary to sustain a durable peace. In its early stages, the SLFP-led People’s Alliance (PA) government was successful in promoting its agenda of a non-nationalistic, rights-based resolution to the conflict - thanks in large part to the support of the media and civil society actors.

The SLFP/PA peace later unraveled due largely to the pursuit of the dual-track “war-for peace” strategy and a failure to win support for necessary constitutional changes; however, its considerable shift in political direction was to have far-reaching ramifications for the country. The mainstream parties both moved toward the center and distanced themselves, to some extent, from the more overt Sinhala nationalism that once suffused mainstream political discourse. A wide consensus gradually grew, including among the UNP, for a negotiated settlement and substantive political devolution and constitutional change. Though consecutive elections saw power change hands to new coalition governments, advances continued to be made - including the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) brokered by the UNP-led United National Front (UNF). More recently, the PA-led United People’s Freedom Alliance
(UPFA) won office in 2004, with the SLFP sections of the government making it clear they have not relinquished their desire to institute the far-reaching constitutional and devolutionary reforms that they had unsuccessfully attempted to table in Parliament in August 2000.

There are essentially three reasons to explain the political shift by mainstream parties. First, there was a realization that pursuing a war strategy had led to a military stalemate between the LTTE and the government - with considerable detrimental effects on long-term economic growth. Second, there was recognition that a lack of proposals granting autonomy to the Tamil-speaking areas threatened the larger unity of the country. And finally, the proportional voting system increasingly benefited the smaller and minority-based parties, making it harder for mainstream parties to depend upon Sinhala nationalist sentiments to win and maintain power.

NATIONALIST ACTORS IN THE SOUTHERN POLITY

Though Sinhala nationalism has dominated Sri Lankan politics since the 1950s, marginalized and underprivileged groups who have been educated and socialized into this hegemonic ideology have increasingly embraced it for their purposes as well. In this respect, nationalism has become a political vehicle increasingly emerging from the “marchlands and countryside” rather than necessarily from the center. It is frequently tied to unequal development and the politics of poverty, and as a reaction to the economic liberalization initiated by JR Jayewardene’s 1977 UNP government. This process has intensified rather than diminished over the years as the smaller parties take over the nationalist agenda increasingly abandoned by the mainstream parties—contributing to a significant, and potentially destabilizing, nationalist resurgence in response to prospective solutions to the ethnic conflict.

As a response to such Sinhala nationalist resurgence, the southern polity has also seen comparatively recent shifts in Hill Country politics. The Upcountry People’s Front (UPF), for example, has brought about a more militant attitude to the ethnic conflict. While this positions the UPF as a strong stakeholder in the peace process, it may well herald the spread of further destabilizing and fragmenting dynamics to the Hill Country if measures are not taken to dismantle the colonial legacy of Sri Lanka’s unitary and over-centralized state.

CONCLUSION: NATIONALISM’S RETURN JOURNEY

While the nationalist baton has been passed from the mainstream parties to the more marginalized parties, the existing and widening inequalities of the South are also increasingly being expressed through the nationalism of such parties as the JHU and JVP. There are no current schemes for alleviating the kinds of inequality and poverty that feed into the JVP’s support base. The mainstream parties, especially the SLFP, will face diminishing electoral returns as long as they continue to fail to improve democratic and fiscal accountability or expand development priorities beyond the Colombo-centric and elitist networks that exist at present.

Despite this, mainstream parties will fight tooth and nail to keep their constituencies (and their traditional clientelistic hold on power). In doing so, there is a danger they might rely on the corruption and violent intimidation of patronage-based politics or resort once again to more extreme nationalist mobilizations to compete with their more overtly nationalist counterparts. As a result, the mainstream parties often become willing parties to further rounds of ethnic-outbidding and zero-sum politics. Examples of this include the failure of the Constitutional Bill of 2000, and the post-CFA negotiations of the UNF in 2002-2004.

While the peace process is a necessary first step toward solving many of the aforementioned political and social problems, it is clear that there are limits to the extent
mainstream parties are prepared to shift away from Sinhala majoritarianism. Much of this failure by the political leadership to find durable solutions to the current crisis lies in maintaining a patron-client political system that provides little scope for ideological or social transformation.

Most frameworks for constitutional change and peace have been developed on a narrow functional basis, most noticeably by the UNP/UNF under Ranil Wickremasinghe, whose main concern appears to be to create a stable business environment for global and local capital within Sri Lanka. The result is that peace efforts and reforms favored by political elites have failed to find purchase among wide sections of the South where Sinhala nationalism is still a potent dynamic.

Consequently, while the JVP and the JHU can be viewed as the most significant potential obstacles to the peace process and political reform, we must be wary of treating Sinhala nationalism as the sole domain of any political party. Nationalism in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere, is far too diffuse and volatile for such an analysis. Sinhala nationalist politics is still a vibrant phenomenon that continues to impact upon mainstream actors while at the same time emerging from currents of enduring marginalization and counter-nationalist reaction by minorities. Unless some form of devolution can break the deadlock of this ethnic outbidding, the growth of nationalism will continue unabated - a tendency that may tear at the diverse socio-political fabric not just of Sri Lanka but of the southern polity itself.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DONORS**

These findings have the following implications for international donors aiming to support peacebuilding processes:

1. **Political Knowledge:**
   - The donor community must develop mechanisms to ensure a more extensive and up-to-date knowledge of the political processes at work in the southern polity and among the diaspora.

2. **Aid Frameworks:**
   - The donor community needs to take account of the effects aid and attached conditionalities have in fostering nationalist sentiments and anti-globalization reactions that can debilitate the state and undermine the prospects for peace.

3. **Engagement with Political Actors and Capacities for Peace:**
   - "Ethnic outbidding" continues to undermine peace bids and attempts at constitutional reform by mainstream political parties. Donors need to be aware that nationalism is not the monopoly of any one party but a tactic often deployed to undermine peace processes and the political legitimacy of opponents. Rather than privileging certain political actors, the donor community should concentrate efforts on encouraging inter-party dialogue that prevents the use of "ethnic outbidding" and encourages mechanisms for power-sharing and greater openness.
   - Past peace processes have concentrated too heavily on either Confidence Building Measures (CBM) or the preparation of transparent constitutional proposals, each at the expense of the other. Political actors engaged in finding long-term solutions to the conflict should craft interventions that address these areas simultaneously.
   - The institutional capacities of traditional parties to mobilize in support of peace suffer when intra-party governance frameworks are weak. Helping traditional parties overcome institutional limitations would enhance the quality of democracy in terms of participation, deliberation, and informed choice.
   - As the JVP, and to a lesser extent the JHU, remain unreceptive to the frameworks of present peace
efforts, we cautiously recommend the wider participation and consultation of external and internal actors that might be able to exert influence on such parties. Doing so could confer greater transparency, consensus, and legitimacy on a viable and enduring framework for peace.

4. Civil Society, Education, Participation, and Confidence-Building:

• Over the last two decades, public policy research and advocacy organizations have become key actors in the peace process. Programmatic support for such civil society actors is essential to ensure that they continue to generate policy options and act as rights watchdogs.

5. Transparency, Consultation, and Inclusivity:

• Nationalist discontent with the peace process by some opposition groups and segments of civil society has been fuelled by feelings that peace efforts lack transparency, consultation, and inclusivity. These feelings must be addressed, as they feed suspicion and destroy trust and confidence among opposition groups and civil society as a whole. This in turn can serve to legitimize antagonism toward peace and reform proposals and ultimately fan the flames of Sinhala nationalist protest.
1. Understanding Nationalism in Sri Lanka: Actors and Trajectories

This report forms a thematic contribution to the broader study, "Aid, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka" (Goodhand and Klem, 2005) and focuses on the political dynamics of the "southern polity", particularly on nationalist undercurrents which continue to influence a wide range of political actors and their attitudes towards the peace process, devolution and constitutional reform and the cyclical impact that these dynamics in turn have upon their social constituencies. Although, we argue that the mainstream parties, the UNP and the SLFP, have by-and-large recognized and accepted the need for federalism and/or political devolution in order to break with the colonial legacy of an over-centralized state, our perspective also stresses the capacity of smaller Sinhala nationalist parties like the JVP and the JHU to foment and draw sustenance from nationalist mobilization. This results in the recycling of nationalist dynamics that can once again recapture mainstream political actors as they seek to mobilize and secure electoral support and legitimacy. As a result, the major focus of this report lies in the historical background, development and contemporary trajectory of both Sinhala nationalism and the counter-nationalist reactions that it provokes amongst the minority parties surveyed.

Yet, when we investigate the role nationalism has played in disrupting the peace process, constitutional reform and, subsequently, the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka, it is necessary to appreciate that the phenomenon has not remained written in stone or unchanged in the political vicissitudes of the island over the last few decades. Rather, one must recognize the constantly shifting force of this dynamic among different socio-economic forces and political actors at varying historical junctures. Nonetheless, one broad historical pattern that can be identified over the past 50 years is that Sinhala nationalism first emerged as a link between the center and the state, dominated by the ruling elites, with the rural and village-level elites. This nationalist process did not emerge with full force until the 1950s, when the void left by counter-colonial discourse which had imbued the reformism of Sri Lanka's political elites prior to Independence, began to be filled with the socio-cultural forces led by SWRD Bandaranaike's pancha maha balavegaya. It should be noted that this nationalist dynamic operated through conceptions of a Sinhala Buddhist nation and not, as in India, through a wider, Nehruvian, secular, all-India nationalism articulated against a colonial power.

As a result, two political trends emerged in Sri Lanka. First, an elite reformism coalescing around conceptions of liberal democratic politics that remain ambivalent about, but not divorced from, expressions of ethno-politics; and second, a more overt and forceful Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, rather than an all-Ceylon nationalism, which becomes inextricably tied to the notion of liberal democratic majoritarianism from the 1950s. The latter in turn served to disqualify minority rights and grievances articulated about those rights.

---

1 For example, the way in which attempts to orchestrate some form of federal or other ethnically weighted solution to the problem of state power from the Donoughmore period up to Independence were consistently disqualified as "communal" within the rubric of liberal democratic majoritarianism. See J. Russell (1982) Communal politics under the Donoughmore Constitution, 1931-1947 (Tissara Prakasyayo, Colombo); M. Roberts (1994) Exploring Confrontation: Sri Lanka - Politics, Culture and History (Harwood, Switzerland), pp.249-268; and D. Scott (1994) "Community, Number, Ethos of Democracy" in Refashioning Futures: Criticism After Postcoloniality (Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.) pp.158-189.

2 This is nowhere more apparent than in D.C. Vijayavardhana’s Revolt in the Temple, where the grievances of the Federal Party become expressions of "communalism," whereas Sinhala majoritarianism is the natural outcome of "democratic" politics. See D.C. Vijayavardhana (1953) Revolt in the Temple (Sinha Publications).
leading to a Tamil nationalist reaction to the dominance of its Sinhala counterpart. Additionally, it should be noted that these Sinhala nationalist tropes did not remain the exclusive prerogative of Bandaranaike’s SLFP but also began to permeate the policies and political culture of the established Left in Sri Lanka. This happened to the extent that both the Communist Party (CP) and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) became more entrenched in the coalitional politics of the center, dropping their struggles for linguistic parity of status and the re-enfranchisement of the Upcountry Tamils after the 1956 period. As a result of these processes the SLFP-left coalition of the UF government came to power in the 1970 election, and produced a 1972 constitution which clearly discriminated in favor of the Sinhala Buddhist majority. This was evidenced through clauses asserting the need for the state to give Buddhism the "foremost place" and to "protect and foster" Buddhism at the same time as it removed the minority safeguards that had been articulated in Article 29 of the Soulbury Constitution. This set in motion a series of public policy changes through the 1970s pursued by the UF government of Sirimao Bandaranaike and additional constitutional changes under JR Jayewardene’s UNP government in 1978, which exacerbated the centralizing and authoritarian nature of unchecked elite rule. It also resulted in the increasing politicization of all branches of the state and the continuing rise of Sinhala nationalism.

While Sinhala nationalism became hegemonic from this period, one of the patterns in its shifting trajectory is that we increasingly see it not only articulated at the center by elites, but also becoming a central trope of marginalized and underprivileged groups who had been educated and socialized into this hegemonic ideology. As a result, it is elites who are increasingly viewed as “inauthentic” in terms of nationalism, allowing Sinhala nationalism once again to become the vehicle for counter-elite political movements and strategies. It is only in this sense that we can locate the shifting dynamic of nationalism vis-à-vis, for instance, a party like the JVP. In this respect, Sinhala nationalism becomes a political vehicle increasingly emerging from the “marchlands and countryside” rather than necessarily from the center, and thus frequently reactive to the forces of globalization that became ascendant after the economic liberalization initiated by JR Jayewardene’s 1977 UNP landslide government, and tied to uneven and unequal development and the politics of poverty. This process has if anything intensified rather than diminished over the years and it is now clear that the JVP has increasingly taken up the slack in nationalism left by the mainstream parties’ retreat in the 1990s from more overt articulations of Sinhala nationalism. Consequently, if we are to define and understand the JVP, an analytical perspective on nationalism remains more useful than attention to the party’s Marxism which has been lacking or superficial from its inception. This is not to say that recourse to Sinhala nationalist mobilization has disappeared in toto from the mainstream parties’ political arsenal or that this recession of the nationalist effect is as a result of a seismic hegemonic shift, but rather that this change has been necessitated by certain requirements of governance that will be discussed in greater detail below.

Despite these changes in the general trend of Sinhala nationalism, we should nonetheless recognize that elements of the mainstream and middle classes have not entirely exhausted or abandoned their recourse to Sinhala nationalist mobilization. This dynamic has, for example, underpinned the emergence and changing face of the Sihala Urumaya/Jathika Hela Urumaya (SU/JHU) combine. This movement has also contributed to a significant pendulum swing in nationalist resurgence as a response to prospective solutions to the ethnic conflict -

---


a process that gathered considerable momentum when Ranil Wickremasinghe’s UNF government implemented the CFA with the LTTE in February 2002. This was perceived by the SU/JHU as a narrowing of the ground for nationalist mobilization in the mainstream parties themselves as they began to grope toward corresponding positions on the need for implementing a peace package and constitutional reform. For these social forces, nationalism became a vehicle for re-territorializing socio-political and cultural control over dynamics that political elites were seen to have relinquished to globalizing forces such as powerful donor states, aid institutions, NGOs, and, to some extent, the forces of multinational capitalism. The southern polity has also seen comparatively recent shifts in Hill Country politics to the extent that the UPF has adopted a more militant attitude to the ethnic conflict and the plight of Upcountry Tamils and toward potential solutions to the conflict, including a rapprochement with the LTTE.
OVERVIEW OF THE UNP

The UNP was formed just prior to Independence, amalgamating a variety of loose organizations such as the Ceylon National Congress and the Sinhala Maha Sabha. As these constitutive organizations were largely vehicles for political personalities of the time rather than mass-based organizations in their own right, the embryonic UNP is perhaps better understood in terms of a coalition of leading political personalities representing the Ceylonese bourgeoisie, brought together by opposition to the radicalism of the Left.6

As there was an element of disdain for the burgeoning Buddhist revivalism represented by the Vidyalankara monks7 as well, a conscious effort was also made to include broad ethnic representation in the party’s composition. This was achieved either through direct co-option of ethno-political leaders or through electoral coalitions, although the advent of post-Independence ethno-nationalism was to divide the party’s political organization along ethnic lines (De Silva, 1986).

When the Soulbury Constitution was granted in 1947, it discontinued the particular form of democracy provided by the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931, which was predicated on the absence of a party political system. The Soulbury Constitution introduced conventional parliamentary government, necessitating the introduction of political party electoral democracy (Jennings, 1948). The primary impetus for the formation of the UNP, therefore, was for political parties to be created to compete in the first general election, as required under the new constitutional dispensation.

The UNP located itself to the right of center from its inception, and sought to fulfill the role of the Grand Old Party of moderate conservatism. The most appropriate analogy for the formative political stimuli behind the UNP is perhaps the British “One Nation Toryism.” Staunchly non-ideological, the UNP elevated pragmatism to a virtue. It sought to serve as an umbrella party around which Colombo and Western Province capitalists, as well as rural elites, could come together on the shared interests of stability, strong leadership, middle-class common sense, and an ostensibly cosmopolitan political outlook. The latter, however, was to prove superficial in the later dynamics of Sinhala nationalism because the UNP was Sinhala in the same way that “One Nation Toryism” tended to be predominantly English. Because the conservatism of the southern polity sustains, rather than checks Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and its supremacist ethno-religious worldview, electoral exigencies impelled the UNP to be led by those forces. The UNP’s association with majoritarian excesses through democratic institutions, therefore, have early antecedents.

Some of these characteristics were also the predominant personal traits of the UNP’s progenitor, D. S. Senanayake, who ultimately became the first prime

---


minister of independent Ceylon. A man relying on innate "native" shrewdness rather than intellectual achievement, Senanayake was a pragmatic and wily politician who was equally at home in constitutional negotiations in Whitehall as he was in his country estate ploughing paddies fields in the fashion of the lionized peasant of Sinhala Buddhist lore. Senanayake's personality is better characterized by an avuncular ease with people than by academic accomplishments in the liberal professions (at the time the natural resource pool from which politicians emerged) or oratorical gifts.

Senanayake's ascent to the undisputed leadership in Ceylonese politics during the empannage of British rule is due in equal measure to two factors. First, the shrewd capitalization of his role as minister of agriculture throughout the currency of the Donoughmore Constitution conveyed to the Sinhala polity the evocative persona of the agrarian monarch of Sinhala Buddhist historiography. Second, he won the respect of British administrators as a dependable pair of hands and trustworthy proxy in the context of the war effort during World War II, in stark contrast to the uncompromising attitude of the Indian independence leadership.9

However, the ethos of pragmatic ethnic accommodation that characterized the early UNP was forcefully displaced by the dynamics of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, which emerged as the key grounds for political mobilization after Independence. In the context of majoritarianism untrammeled by institutional restraints or constitutional culture, ethnicized electoral democracy drove political parties to focus on majority interests to the exclusion of minorities (Little, 1994). Hence, the UNP was responsible for the disenfranchisement of plantation Tamils and for opportunistic opposition to the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact—the earliest attempt at devolution and power-sharing that may have provided a more viable framework for conflict management through constitutional arrangements.10 While majoritarian populism, as exploited by the SLFP-led Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) in 1956, no doubt institutionalized Sinhala Buddhist nationalist claims to social dominance and state power, it must be borne in mind that the UNP's response to the program of the MEP was that of imitation rather than an attempt to give democratic leadership to any dormant forces of ethnic reconciliation and pluralism. It is difficult to imagine how a UNP government in 1956-1960 could have, given the nationalist hysteria sweeping the electoral landscape of the South during that period, differed from the MEP with regard to linguistic policy and attitudes to ethnic minorities and constitutional power-sharing.

Indeed, an intensification of the conflict resulting in the eruption of civil war during the 1980s occurred during a period in which the UNP had unparalleled control over the institutions of the state. The UNP bears a significant share of the responsibility for the ethnic conflict as the authoritarian centralization of political power accorded through the 1978 Constitution resulted in a brutal use of force to address Tamil insurrectionary activities, including the insidious encouragement of anti-Tamil mob violence during such incidents as the pogrom of 1983.11 Likewise, the second insurrection of the JVP was exterminated by the state apparatus controlled by the UNP, employing both legal and extra-legal methods of extreme violence.

The UNP, however, has been consistent with its founding vision to the extent that it retains the loyalty of approximately 30% of the Sri Lankan electorate at any given time and remains the largest single political party in the country. As the principal right-of-center player in Sri Lankan politics, the UNP is more pro-Western in its external policy than any other party and is generally associated with a market-friendly economic outlook. All of its heroes - the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed - are the Asian Brahmins of free market capitalism and spectacular economic successes. This serves as a testament to its ultimate goals.

However, the leader-centric nature of all political parties in Sri Lanka has meant that the party has changed its nature from time to time in reference to its leader’s personality, preferences and imperatives, rather than on realignments based on membership desires. Detractors would point to an undercurrent of dynastic politics in the UNP as the vehicle of the Wijewardene family, exemplified in the pejorative epithet that its acronym stands for “Uncle Nephew Party.” While it is perhaps more than a coincidence that all of its leaders bar two - Ranasinghe Premadasa and D. B. Wijetunga (the latter heading only a brief transitional interregnum) - have been related to the Wijewardene family, the intra-party culture of the UNP allows relative scope for democratic leadership independent of dynastic ties than its principal opponent, the SLFP.

The UNP is perhaps the most organized political party next to the JVP, although this claim must surely not be overstated. It certainly functions with intra-party institutions and processes to a far greater extent than the SLFP. But as with most Sri Lankan political parties, indicative standards of intra-party democracy are weak. Policy formulation and strategic and tactical decision-making remain the preserve of the leader (even though these are technically functions of the party’s working committee) and wider consultation depends on the leader’s attitude to collegiality. There is certainly little or no role played by the grass-roots membership in these areas, and party conferences and intra-party elections are largely ceremonial affairs. In particular, financial transparency and accountability are weak, and represent a regulatory lacuna in financial integrity, both of the party and its individual members. Another institutional handicap is organizational capacity in any number of respects, from administrative arrangements to research and development. The legislative performance of members in elected institutions such as Parliament and provincial councils, as well as the political literacy of its grassroots activists, suffer as a result. In fact, the UNP’s instinctive discomfort with overt ideological discourse manifests itself in the use of the mocking appellation "Theory-karaya" for anyone seen to be overly interested in political discussion and debate.

Interestingly, the UNP has been less diffident about borrowing political tools and characteristics from the Left, even where the Left’s culture of ideological and policy debate has been discarded. For example, in celebration of May Day, the UNP set up a communist-style youth corps, and has developed a presence in the trade union sector with the Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya (JSS-National Workers Union). In the 1970s, under the leadership of the purported patron saint of capitalist “robber barons” J. R. Jayawardene, such front-liners as Lalith Athulathmudali flirted with socialism. Despite the now unquestioned description of the Jayawardene administration as one of free-market capitalism, it only retracted the state from some of its more interventionist economic roles introduced by an LSSP finance minister in the previous regime. It did not question in any fundamental way the post-war Keynesian consensus of the mixed economy as Thatcherism or Reaganomics did.

Indeed, the Premadasa administration is characterized by resistance to categorization along the right-left axis. It was mercantilist in its promotion of industry and small-
and medium-scale businesses, and as an aspect of its populism, conceived a big role for the state in terms of grand poverty amelioration schemes and the provision of housing for the poor. Premadasa in fact attempted a "triangulation," binding together non-elite constituencies between rich and poor, left and right, and across the ethnic divide. The nature of the Premadasa state was in the classic paternalist mold of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist ideal: patron and protector. Moreover, Premadasa’s non-elite personal background, ecumenical religious interests, experience in the multicultural milieu of central Colombo, and sense of empathy with the poor and disadvantaged enabled him to conceive of a political worldview that, on one level, went beyond parochial nationalisms (Roberts, 1994).

However, such a state could, when confronted with challenges to its own security, very easily turn predator. This is precisely how the state responded to the challenges of the JVP and Tamil militancy, demonstrating the truism about the inherent menace of paternalism: there is a limit to its capacity for tolerance.

The retention of the pervasive state points to the reliance, indeed encouragement of clientelism, and the partisan advantages of perpetual rule to be gained thereby. In this way, the UNP’s position in the right of center does not necessarily denote an affinity with libertarian conceptions of limited government and individual autonomy per se. In a very Sri Lankan way, it can denote a much deeper empathy with Sinhala Buddhist nationalism’s ideal state than the UNP’s association with liberal capitalism would at times seem to suggest. This explains, for instance, Sir John Kotelawala’s totally unsuccessful attempt to make political capital out of the extravagant government-sponsored Buddha Jayanthi celebrations in 1956; and J. R. Jayewardene’s retention in the 1978 Constitution of the “foremost” status of Buddhism, and his pledge to create a "Dharmista Samajaya" (Virtuous Society) in the campaign that brought him to overwhelming power in 1977—actions that ultimately served to erode the separation between the state and religion. The latter example is symptomatic of an attempt to regain the nationalist moral high ground from a supposedly "dharma-less" (as in godless) and "immoral" left, which had attempted a doctrinaire reinvention of a society, to the exclusion of its own glorious history, culture, and language. Such an appeal to the Sinhala Buddhist volksgeist, while at the same time creating problems for the pursuit of pluralism and respect for minorities, cannot be explained away as Machiavellian electoral calculation, as it also demonstrates a potent identification with majoritarian nationalism (Little, 1994). This was nowhere more apparent than in the Sinhala nationalist battleground of the late 1980s over the threat to sovereignty represented by the Indo-Lanka Accord, when Premadasa competed with the JVP for the mantle of nationalist and patriotic "authenticity."

In this sense, the UNP has historically demonstrated a powerful nexus with Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and, under Premadasa at least, with a potent statist developmental role as well. However, these facets of the UNP were an ill fit with the Ranil Wickremasinghe UNP regime that came to power in 2001. It was a regime characterized by a seemingly doctrinaire position on economic liberalization (reflecting the Washington consensus and embracing globalization); by bold moves toward peace and constitutional reform (marked by the February 2002 signing of the CFA with the LTTE); and by an evident shift away from more overt or vocal Sinhala nationalist mobilization. Nonetheless, as far as the UNP refrain holds (that it was unfairly robbed of delivering on its long-term economic program and consequential political dividends after it was thrown out of office in April 2004), it is to be expected that a future UNP administration would continue in basically the


same policy directions in respect to peace, governance, and the economy. It seeks in this context, not only a parliamentary majority, but also the decisive instrument of state power in Sri Lanka—the executive presidency—to get on with an unfinished job. Yet, at the same time, it would be wide of the mark and far too hasty to conclude from this that the UNP had undergone some kind of radical transformation in which the heady air of Sinhala nationalist mobilization had suddenly vanished ideologically from the UNP in toto because of Wickremasinghe’s leadership skills. As we will see below, the relationship to nationalism is far more complex and ethereal than can be gauged by a linear or historically progressive analysis of this kind, whether in relation to the UNP or the SLFP.

OVERVIEW OF THE SLFP

The SLFP was founded by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in 1952, when he left the UNP and crossed over to the opposition, following a UNP succession crisis in the wake of D. S. Senanayake’s death. At the time Senanayake’s son Dudley, Sir John Kotelawala, and more peripherally—Bandaranaike himself competed for leadership of the party. At the core of the SLFP at its inception were the networks and organizational structure of Bandaranaike’s Sinhala Maha Sabha. As its name suggests it was an organization essentially espousing the interests of the Sinhala community. Although a federalist at the commencement of his career in the 1920s, Bandaranaike changed into a more parochial Sinhala Buddhist nationalist, at least in public self-definition for political advantage, during the 1930s and 1940s (Manor, 1989). Despite this some scholars have attempted to claim him as a historically misunderstood proto-consociational federalist for the duration of his political life.16

By 1956, the year of the Buddha Jayanthi (the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha’s birth), Sir John Kotelawala’s UNP had become widely discredited as inept, arrogant, and out of touch with the political aspirations of the people. This has to be understood in the context of the growing assertiveness of the vernacular village-level elites of the Sinhala polity and of the kind of rural upheaval that had brought the country to a standstill in the Left-led harta of 1953. While the LSSP and the CP had dominated anti-colonial pressures and subaltern class tensions until the 1950s, it was clear from Philip Gunawardena’s more nationalist-inspired split with the LSSP that such discontents were now being translated into the vehicle of Sinhala Buddhist revivalism. It was equally clear, however, that this vehicle required a champion with wider appeal than Gunawardena could provide. Although a scion of the Bandaranaike-Obeysekera clan, exemplifying the elite Anglicized ancien regime the new drivers of political change were seeking to displace, Bandaranaike adroitly exploited the Kotelawala UNP’s sense of alienation. He did this by building a broad coalition around the SLFP in the form of the MEP that cohered the forces of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, including Gunawardena’s VLSSP (Viplavakari (Revolutionary) Lanka Sama Samaja Party) splinter, into an election-winning force (Manor, 1989).

In capturing state power in 1956, majority nationalism democratized politics by giving a stakeholding to subordinate classes in the Sinhala polity who had hitherto been excluded, and who had previously lacked the confidence to challenge such elitist exclusion. The formation of the Sinhala aspirational "ape anduwa"—"our government"—reinforcing belonging, ownership, and affinity with the state gravely aggravated ethnic tensions by rejecting legitimate stakeholding by minorities in politics, nation-building, and political institutions. Although Bandaranaike attempted to

---


address Tamil demands for regional autonomy through dialogue with the Federal Party and to assuage the sense of injustice caused by the Sinhala-only language policy, the emotive potency of the political forces he himself had unleashed severely restricted his maneuvering space and ultimately led to his assassination (Little, 1994).

The SLFP has a social democratic outlook relative to the UNP. Two factors explain this: first, nationalization of private enterprises in the 1950s was a reflection of the nationalism of the SLFP/MEP, in which the populist state is instrumental in the welfare of its owners—the Sinhala Buddhist nation—and their security has to be guarded against the perceived machinations of deracinated elites, conniving minorities, and perhaps even external foes. Second, the SLFP’s capacity to oust the UNP from power has always depended on support from the Left, most evidently in 1970-1977, when doctrinaire socialism dominated the economic thinking of the UF government. Even in its relatively market-friendly phase from 1994-1995, the SLFP posited caring welfarism as an equalizer to market forces: “the open economy with a human face.” The SLFP also associates itself with the non-aligned movement, and has taken international relations seriously, especially during the leadership of Sirimao Bandaranaike, when in the context of the Cold War some modest foreign affairs’ successes within the non-aligned movement and in the region were achieved.

The SLFP is the nonpareil of dynastic politics and leader-centrism among political parties in Sri Lanka. Its leadership is so closely identified with the Bandaranaike family that even the brief interlude led by outsider Maithripala Senanayake only came about because Sirimao Bandaranaike had been deprived of her civic rights and was therefore unable to stand for public office. Otherwise, the leadership has devolved from father to wife to daughter. It is perhaps unfair to speak of the Bandaranaike dynasty as if it were entirely their scheme to retain the leadership within the family. The Bandaranaike name exudes a tradition of public service and charismatic leadership that the electorate has come to expect. Indeed, all three Bandaranaike holders of the SLFP leadership have proven to be consummate campaigners and genuine electoral assets to their party.

At the same time, detractors would also make the point (as the UNP does so explicitly), that President Kumaratunga suffers from such a sense of entitlement to the leadership of the country that she would even contemplate a constitutional revolution in order to continue in office after her constitutionally limited two terms are over. However unkind the imputation of motive, it is incontrovertible that Sri Lankan governments and political leaders have employed the most ethically indefensible methods to prolong incumbency. Sirimao Bandaranaike gave herself two extra years (1975 - 1977), and J. R. Jayawardene extended the life of a parliament in which he enjoyed a five-sixth majority through a referendum. In Kumaratunga’s case, her government’s Constitution Bill of August 2000 collapsed in Parliament because of the president’s plans to use transitional provisions of the bill to give herself several extra years in office. In doing so, the UNP was given the opening to dissociate itself from the bill, which it had spent five years helping to draft in a parliamentary select committee. Such pernicious constitutional theories as the doctrine of necessity have been seriously entertained by her government as possible modes of circumventing Parliament in the process of constitutional amendment, most earnestly in the aftermath of the general elections of April 2004. There is a reasonable probability that a constitutional revolution may yet be attempted, with perilous consequences for the peace process, including the validation of secession in the North-East.17

---


The use of North-East throughout this report recognises the contested nature of the term. “Northeast” or “North and East” would denote different political approaches to the aspirations of Tamil nationalism.
However, the SLFP’s reliance on patronage, individual leadership, charisma, and star players has also suffused the second tier of the party, with such figures as Felix Dias Bandaranaike, C. P. de Silva, Maithripala Senanayake, T. B. Illangaratne, Mahinda Rajapakse, S. B. Dissanayake, and Mangala Samaraweera. Consequently, the SLFP’s organizational capacity is perhaps one of the weakest among Sri Lankan political parties. All indicators of intra-party institutions and democracy point to a disappointing score card, with a lack of clarity on such basic information as membership figures. Less surprisingly, financial information is even more obscure. The uneasy relationship between the SLFP and JVP within the current UPFA government is not only due to fundamental policy incongruities; there is also a dimension of SLFP insecurity in the face of the JVP’s much publicized organizational efficiency. In fact, even Lakshman Kadirgamar, foreign minister, presidential confidant, and key architect of the UPFA, has described his own party as “tired, flabby, and corrupt.” Such an indictment from within its own ranks is telling of the wider political crisis that currently afflicts the SLFP. Many of the party’s difficulties lie in balancing its role as a party of governance and constitutional change with a “traditional” image that has been associated with statism and Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. It is an impediment that has recently assumed heightened proportions due to the concomitant rise of the JVP as a party that fulfills all the SLFP’s past strengths with new vigor.

Although the legacy of its leadership of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism remained with the SLFP well into the early 1990s—during which time it opposed even a limited scheme of devolution offered by the Thirteenth Amendment and the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987—a far-reaching change in the SLFP’s stance on the ethnic conflict has occurred. Beginning in 1993, Chandrika Kumaratunga’s SLFP was able to persuade the southern constituency that Tamil grievances were legitimate and that a sustainable, durable peace could only come about through a process of negotiation and constitutional power-sharing. Associated with the SLFP-led People’s Alliance (PA) were the Sri Lankan peace constituency—journalists, academics, NGOs, and civil society activists—who were instrumental in sourcing the PA with conceptual arguments and rhetoric with which to pursue an aggressive policy on a negotiated peace. In its early stages, the PA government was characterized by successful initiatives designed to inform the southern polity about non-nationalist, rights-based explanations of conflict formation and the means of resolution. While this bid for peace and constitutional reform soon collapsed into the mire of a "dual track" "war for peace" strategy, the PA was and continues to be intellectually committed to a negotiated peace along federalist lines. Nevertheless, as with the UNP, the SLFP/PA have not entirely departed from moments of Sinhala nationalist strategy and mobilization. This has been most apparent in attempts to shore up a flagging parliamentary majority through agreements with the JVP while in office and in attempts to undermine the UNP-led peace bid of 2001 to 2004 in the run up to the UPFA electoral victory of 2004. Such machinations are evidenced through both its forging of the UPFA coalition and participation in Sinhala nationalist mobilization through movements such as the Patriotic National Movement (PNM).

THE SLFP, THE UNP, AND CONTEMPORARY PEACE PROCESSES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

What we have so far traced is a brief overview of the UNP and SLFP parties and their relationship to the state, society, nationalism, development, and the prospects for peace in Sri Lanka. However, more detailed analysis of contemporary attempts at peace negotiation and constitutional reform is also required in order to understand the current dynamics and contexts for peacebuilding, and what lessons might be learned from past attempts to institute radical change into the hitherto predominantly majoritarian machinations of the southern polity.
As we have stated above, the PA’s ascent to power initially spelled the demise of a period of UNP rule that had been characterized by authoritarianism, brutal counter-insurgency practices, and a lack of respect for human rights issues. Accordingly, Kumaratunga's ascent to power was a revitalization both for the SLFP and for the civil society groups in favor of a meaningful peace process. Nonetheless, despite the PA's commitment to peace, negotiations broke down due to the LTTE's intransigence as well as the government's incompetence in the "talks about talks" during early 1995. This spawned a policy realignment in the PA—the "war for peace" strategy—that called for a "dual" approach to solving the ethnic conflict: defeat or contain the LTTE militarily while offering the Tamil people constitutional options for meeting legitimate aspirations for regional autonomy. This "dual track" strategy resulted in the worst intensification of the military conflict, which occurred between 1995 and 2001. It ended with what has been described as a stalemate by PA apologists, but which—in view of the significant gains of the LTTE and the inability of the state to reassert itself in the North-East—in fact created a parity of military strength and a balance of political power that enabled the LTTE to conclude a ceasefire agreement in early 2002 with the new UNP government. The LTTE would not have entered into a ceasefire agreement from a position of military weakness. The pursuit of this "dual track" "war for peace" strategy also led to the departure of significant civil society figures that had helped to sweep Kumaratunga's PA coalition into power in 1994. At the same time the PA's draft constitutional bill of August 2000 was derailed by the UNP, Sangha, and JVP opposition (Ghosh, 2003, p.189). While the latter had justifiable reasons for opposing it, this was nonetheless yet another example of the mainstream parties' eternal tendency to try and undermine each other in the pursuit of power and at the expense of constitutional reform.

Following the intensification of the conflict in the 2000-2001 period, the southern electorate gave a clear mandate to Wickremasinghe's UNP led-coalition, the UNF. The coalition included the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), and UPF; as well as the support brought over by several prominent PA politicians, who in crossing over to the opposition in June 2001 had caused President Kumaratunga to lose her parliamentary majority. Consequently, a period in which the PA had been associated with constitutional overhaul had passed without any of the objectives of the dual track strategy having been achieved, leaving the SLFP in some disarray. It was in this context that the limited engagement for cooperation between the PA and JVP referred to above was first envisaged, whereby the JVP would vote with the government on critical issues, without joining the government or accepting executive office. This was the so-called "Parivasa Anduwa" (probationary government), which held on for a few months before the political fallout of the airport attacks precipitated a general election and the installation of the UNF government. Consequently, the SLFP began to rely on the JVP to shore up its flagging political condition, while the JVP simultaneously began to eat into the SLFP's constituency. The JVP has succeeded in this regard because it was not afraid to vocalize its allegiance to an undiluted Sinhala nationalism and a critique of devolution and constitutional change. In doing so it capitalized on the groundswells of Sinhala nationalism in a way in which the SLFP, as a party of governance, was increasingly constrained from doing.

Consequently, the UNP won the general elections in December 2001 on a platform of negotiating a peaceful settlement to the ethnic conflict. While this might be seen as a testament to the radically changed ideological nature of the UNF approach to the peace process, we should understand instead the series of interlocking dynamics, of governmental and economic necessity as well as historical

---

18 It should also be noted that the PA campaign encouraged the return of the JVP in the South (albeit under a different moniker) as part of its strategy to discredit 17 years of UNP rule.

contingency that faced the UNF regime at the time. First, the UNP under Ranil Wickremasinghe emerged as a party that had returned to the mold of business-oriented and anglicized elite leadership after the statist, populist, but ultimately authoritarian leadership of the Premadasa years. This process began in the early 1990s with Premadasa’s demise and the formation of the Democratic United National Front offshoot. It signaled a tension between, on the one hand, the more anglicized “traditional” UNP elites and the populist style and support-base of Premadasa; and, on the other, between the more functional business-oriented factions of the party and Premadasa’s statist and interventionist approach.\(^2\) The UNP under Ranil Wickremasinghe has come to embody a particularly open response to globalization, linking a section of the Sinhala elite to the forces of global capital in a way that is no longer as reliant on nation-state conceptions of development as it was under Premadasa, for instance (Uyangoda, 2005). As a result, the UNP, for pragmatic and functional reasons, saw “negotiated peace as the only way forward for Sri Lanka’s further integration with the global economy.”\(^3\) This facilitated an easy rejection of Kumaratunga’s “war for peace” strategy in the interest of long-term economic growth and development.

To the UNF coalition it was also painfully obvious that Chandrika Kumaratunga’s strategy, while no doubt creating a thriving militaristic war-economy,\(^2\) was also responsible for the huge loss of life among the poorest sections of society, and had stifled economic alternatives available to Sri Lanka’s economy. Moreover, it had not provided any way out of the country’s highly uneven development, poverty, and economic vulnerability. The military stalemate and “strategic symmetry of power between the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE” resulting from Kumaratunga’s strategy had only added to the recognition that a military solution was no longer a viable long-term solution to Sri Lanka’s political, economic, and social problems (Uyangoda, 2005). The war appeared basically unwinnable. It was also highly apparent among a wide range of commentators that some level of fragmentation of a unitary Sri Lanka was inevitable. If any unity was to be preserved, they argued, federalist and devolutionary solutions should be found in conjunction with peace talks with the LTTE.\(^2\)

Another factor at play was the system of Proportional Representation (PR) introduced by Jayawardene in 1978. As this system increasingly benefited the smaller and minority-based parties, the mainstream parties were no longer as able to depend upon Sinhala nationalist ethnic out-bidding to carry them through elections and periods of office. What has become increasingly clear is that with PR the mainstream parties have had to operate without significant parliamentary majorities and so, have relied on many of the smaller and minority parties to act as kingmakers for the establishment and maintenance of government (Goodhand et al., 2005, pp. 24-26). This has brought the UNP and the SLFP away from more vehement and overt Sinhala nationalist mobilization toward the center-ground in order to court the minority parties for coalition making. At the same time it has proved a Sisyphean task to introduce constitutional change due to the impossibility of attaining the requisite two-thirds majority in Parliament. It is in this static political context that the baton of overt nationalist mobilization has been passed to the smaller and more extreme nationalist actors like the SU/JHU and the JVP. The Urumaya combine can also be seen as emerging genealogically out of the UNP constituency and the

---


21 J. Uyangoda, “Three Years after the Ceasefire Agreement: Where have we gone?” Daily Mirror (Colombo) March 18, 2005.


23 See for instance the remit of the Mangala Moonesinghe Committee, which aimed to find a political solution to the ethnic question in order to “prevent the disintegration of the nation” in P. Ghosh (2003) Ethnicity versus Nationalism: The Devolution Discourse in Sri Lanka (Sage, New Delhi), p.142.
alienation caused by the UNP’s decisive shift toward the need for constitutional reform, as well as a peace process that, in turn, inflamed the "small islander" insecurities at the heart of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.24

Consequently, the UNP shift and passing of the Sinhala nationalist baton cannot be read as sprouting from a radical ideological transformation within the support base or even membership of the party. Rather it must be seen as a pragmatic response to changes in the political, social, economic, and military landscape at the time. It is therefore not possible to claim (as some have done within the party)25 that the UNP will not undergo another pendulum swing within its own ranks or policy perspectives when Sinhala Buddhist undercurrents again bubble to the surface. Indeed, as long as Sinhala nationalist undercurrents and anxieties exist within the southern polity, the UNP like every other actor will have to respond to them through appeasement, confrontation, or isolation.

The UNP-led UNF administration took substantial risks during the peace process between 2001-2004. The initial signing of a ceasefire agreement and the building of a consensus between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the LTTE regarding the form and implementation of CBM (including the basis for third party mediation and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission’s peace monitoring), resulted in the longest ceasefire in the history of the conflict. The initial fruit of this framework had "immediate, visible, and positive impacts on lives and livelihoods throughout the island" (Bush, 2003, pp.158-159). There was a gradual island-wide demilitarization and in conflict-affected areas there was less restricted movement of people and goods, as well as some limited aid and reconstruction. This has been characterized as a "development for peace" initiative in which the normalization, economic development, and de-escalation of conflict created a more stable context for developing long-term institutionalized frameworks for peace.

Nevertheless, the UNF initiative can also be criticized on a number of counts. It is clear that the government at that time deliberately set out on a peace process with a tabula rasa regarding what constitutional framework might form the basis for discussion. As one scholar has noted, "the implication was that constitutional changes should follow from rather than precede talks with the LTTE" (Ibid, p. 160). The UNP approached talks with only one precondition: to avoid the disintegration of the Sri Lankan state. While this might seem a pragmatic approach to peacebuilding, what actually transpired was that the GoSL hesitated in drawing up anything other than a very minimalist proposal that was "primarily administrative in nature" and written from within the existing constitutional structure (Ferdinands et al., 2004, p.18). This handed the initiative to the LTTE who responded by placing the Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) on the table - an undiluted maximalist, ethno-nationalist framework that began to unravel the basis for peace talks in the southern polity due to the hostile response it received in the media and among moderate and nationalist elements. While the earlier PA peace initiative floundered by failing to implement an environment for peace and CBM, the opposite was the case with the UNF initiative. This may well have undermined Wickremasinghe’s peace process, which ultimately strayed from the principles outlined in the Oslo communiqué.

Second, what the UNP did not do—particularly in the areas of building public support for federalism in the South and attention to human rights issues—is also the subject of debate.26 Noteworthy in this regard is the fact that there is no indication of an idealistic commitment to constitutional reform and multiculturalism or grandiose visions of ethnic reconciliation and justice within the UNP. Rather, what is evident is the primacy of a

24 Authors’ interview with Bradman Weerakoon, March 2004.
26 Authors’ interview with Prof. G. L. Peiris MP.
functional attitude to conflict resolution. The ceasefire and negotiations on a constitutional settlement then became merely necessary steps for the restoration of political stability and the absence of a costly war. As such they were subordinated to the primary project of economic reform and acceleration—aims that genuinely interested the UNP. What must also be understood is that the UNF-led peace bid can be seen to have been excessively economic in its thrust and lacking in consultation and transparency. In that sense it repeated the classic economistic misunderstanding that presumed that "rapid economic growth would be a more effective antidote to the 'ethnic conflict' than debating constitutional issues." It is an assumption that was itself based on "the idea that economics could be separated from politics—that developmentalism bore no relationship to governance" (Goodhand et al., 2005, p.19).

Third, one can also cite a flaw for which both of the mainstream parties must be held partially accountable—the failure to cooperate on the implementation of the peace process in the context of an unprecedented political landscape. While the hybrid Constitution of 1978 conceptually contemplated the possibility of oppositional parties controlling the executive and legislative branches, this was the first time that it had in fact occurred. It therefore occasioned a thorough re-evaluation of the political principles and the constitutional rules of engagement between the two branches, where a system of "cohabitation" perhaps not unlike the type the French had developed during the 1980s would be made possible.

What happened instead was an uneasy and at times confrontational relationship between the president and the cabinet enjoying a parliamentary majority. It is worthwhile revisiting some of the reasons for this inability to cooperate on governance on the basis of equally valid popular mandates enjoyed by both branches of the state. The PA and the UNF are, as can be gathered from the preceding discussion, conspicuous by their relative congruity at the policy level. In this sense, the Sri Lankan political party system, reinforced through the pressures of PR, has come to resemble the West, wherein political competition is most intense in the battle for the center. However in Sri Lanka, the "center" is an elusive territory that the two parties sometimes contemporaneously occupy, depending on who is more "radical" or "conservative" on a given issue. Thus the political center is elastic at the same time as it is nebulous, in that it may include nationalism as well as pragmatism, or deregulation (as a feature of the commitment to the free market) as well as protectionism (as an aspect of social democracy). Neither of these political or economic debates is understood in Sri Lankan democracy as even remotely dichotomous or even particularly contradictory, which is what makes centrist party political behavior so difficult to subject to Western-style understanding.

This is perhaps to be expected in an essentially conservative polity that has hitherto tended to choose governments on personalities and mundane issues of immediate concern, rather than on ideology, conviction, or rational persuasion. It is thus no surprise that while the conservative ontology can quite comfortably accommodate nationalism, which thrives on either side of the ethnic divide, political parties have learned that other types of doctrinal rigor (i.e., socialism, liberal democracy) must be sacrificed at the altar of electoral success. On the question of the ethnic conflict and means of its resolution, the positions of the PA and UNF have largely always been the same. Both agree that there is no military solution to the conflict and that a

| 25 | The Political Actors |

---


political settlement must be negotiated between principally the government and the LTTE. Both parties recognize that third party facilitation is necessary in the peace process, and have recognized Norway as best-placed to play that role. They also agree that a fundamental restructuring of the state with substantial devolution to the regions is central to a successful political settlement.

It would thus appear that there were wide areas of congruence on which the PA and the UNF could have come to an interest-based accommodation for the purposes of the peace process, if not a comprehensive agenda for cohabitation government. That this did not happen, despite previous attempts at agreements, points to the zero-sum nature of Sri Lankan democracy in which political parties cannot conceive of sharing credit for popular achievements. This culture is so pervasive that it has been part of the improperly rationalized democratic value system upon which the institutional structure of the Sri Lankan state, in its several incarnations, has been grounded since independence. It continues to ensure that succeeding generations are continuously robbed of opportunities to remedy that anomalous value system, to make the state work for citizens as a whole, rather than just for the political class that controls public institutions.

Finally--while we have touched on the primacy of the economic sphere vis-à-vis the UNF-led peace process--what is also clear is that economic performance in combination with the aforementioned factors also played a part in undermining the UNF regime, and with it Wickremasinghe’s peace bid. Although there are no longer great differences between the SLFP/PA and the UNP/UNF in respect to the economy (other than the PA being more social democrat in outlook and the UNF more free-market oriented), this did not prevent the economy from becoming a major source of political tension in the general elections of 2004. The UPFA attacked the UNF’s doctrinaire program of economic liberalization embodied in the "Regaining Sri Lanka" document, and claimed that capitalism of the kind promoted by the UNF benefited only the affluent. This struck a resonant chord among a wide constituency of Sri Lankans belonging to the lower middle class, working class, and the peasantry for whom welfare and government spending cutbacks had impacted on the cost of living. They were also dismayed that the greatly expected dividends related to the cessation in hostilities and economic growth had not borne fruit. The fact that the UPFA pursued an argument on economic issues is noteworthy for several reasons. First, the UNP has been traditionally perceived as the party of economic competence. Second, the UNF government, in undertaking tough structural reform and tight fiscal discipline, made the fatal mistake of not explaining to the public why the measures were necessary or how the measures were meant to deliver tangible results to the people. This allowed the UPFA’s opponents to exploit the people’s sense of alienation and disgruntlement to maximum benefit.

Most significantly, the UNF’s failure to convince the public of their economic program points not only to that party’s unsuccessful public relations, but also to the nature of the polity’s expectations of the state in the economic life of the community. As discussed before, in the political imagination of the people, the state is seen as both protector and patron; such attitudes toward the state are relatively munificent. This is in contrast to most modern constitutional states in which dominant constitutive assumptions with regard to state formation are by nature suspicious of political power and its wielders, particularly in relation to the economic freedom of individuals. In Sri Lanka, however, any administration that is inclined toward deregulation, competition, global capital; and wants to cut back welfare, subsidies, and government spending, runs a risky political gauntlet.

Previous UNP administrations that boasted of economic accomplishment have achieved that success through a mixture of authoritarianism and steamrolling reforms.

29 Liam Fox attempted to mediate such an agreement between Kumaratunga and Wickremasinghe in 1997.
past the opposition. The last UNF administration lacked control of the decisive institution of executive political power: the presidency. This disallowed it from seeing unpopular reforms to fruition. On the other hand, the growth and development strategies of the last UNF administration did not seem to focus on the poor in the way its predecessors had done, with the result that its economic policy lost wider popular support among fixed income groups like wage-earners and public-sector employees as well as the rural population dependent on the agricultural economy. By contrast, the UPFA came up with a wildly populist set of promises on welfare measures that an electorate less naïve about macroeconomics would have scoffed at.

Notwithstanding the implausible nature of those promises, that the people endorsed the program points not merely to ignorance. It is a telling example of the common person’s perception of the ideal role of the state in his or her life and economic wellbeing.

This conception of the state was also partly a result of the fact that politicization of Sri Lankan society occurred largely at the hands of the Left, due to its anti-colonial political mobilization agenda in the pre-independence period. Even thereafter, when it was clear that Sri Lankan independence merely meant the transfer of power from one elite to another, the Left’s influence on popular mobilization has been clearly evident. The nature of the communist state is very similar to the paradigm of statehood in the collective social memory of pre-colonial politics in Sinhala society. As mentioned before, the state is big and generous—a protector and a patron; and political relations are essentially clientelist. In post-colonial Sri Lanka, the “bourgeois” parties (the SLFP and UNP) merely exploited the clientelist political notions of the people to their advantage by indulging in generous welfare programs. Here we mean not justified investment in health, education, and infrastructure that a post-colonial nation-building project must necessarily undertake; but imprudent spending on direct hand-outs unlinked to productivity or efficiency. In their most extreme form this included government subsidies for consumer goods and services.

The opportunity afforded by the 2001 dual mandate for forging a national consensus regarding peace and prosperity dissipated with the UNF’s peace strategy, as it was perceived by a significant section of Sri Lankan society to have fallen at the feet of an LTTE-scripted ISGA agenda. The party was also seen as having failed to engage in social consultation or political cooperation over peace or development. Nor were they seen as having pursued an economic policy that benefited people beyond a narrow Colombo-centric elite. All of these perceptions fuelled the defeat of the UNP and a narrow UPFA victory in the 2004 election.

As a result, the peace process—under the guidance of a UPFA coalition split between the broadly pro-federalist PA and the thoroughly unitarist and integrationist JVP—had to be recommenced from new political coordinates. Many observers were skeptical about the coalition’s ability to overcome internal divisions considering the JVP’s hostility to both constitutional change and the LTTE as a negotiating partner. Until the tsunami struck, the peace process remained fairly static and rumors of a return to war by the LTTE circulated. In this context it has been widely recognized that the tsunami’s destructive impact also occasioned a potential revival of the peace process through the Joint Mechanism for Aid distribution—what is now known as the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure or P-TOMS)—which the president pledged to sign despite JVP threats to leave the UPFA coalition.

During the writing of this report, the JVP walked out of the government over the Joint Mechanism issue, but the president went on to sign the P-TOMS agreement. Despite the government’s power base being reduced to a mere 79 seats with the threat of further defections, the P-TOMS forms a much-needed operational basis for kick-starting the peace process. Without it a return to conflict would be increasingly likely. Due to the UPFA’s current disintegration, the passage of the P-TOMS framework and the sustainability of the government, both require the tacit support of the UNP-led opposition. Although this has been forthcoming, it has also been accompanied
by criticisms from G.L. Pieris and the UNP over the content of the P-TOMS document, specifically the lack of Sinhala representation proposed in the main aid body. Moreover, reports of overtures from the president for the formation of a joint UNP-SLFP-led national government have also received a lukewarm reception from the UNP, who are keen to hold a presidential election before making another bid for parliamentary power. They are also threatening another round of "Jana Bala Meheyuma" (People’s Power protests) to this effect. In this context, while the P-TOMS provides an aid distribution framework that might conceivably operate outside the usual cycles of ethnic outbidding, it remains to be seen whether a more congenial spirit of cooperation between these two parties has been effected in the short to medium term. It is against this background that the role of nationalist actors and their impact on prospects for peace should be contextualized.

OVERVIEW OF THE JVP

The JVP or People’s Liberation Front originated in the 1966-1967 period as a splinter group from the Communist Party (Peking). It engaged in a rapid and widespread political mobilization in the Sinhala-dominated rural areas of the South during the late 1960s, with a leadership base among educated rural youth who had benefited from the advantages of expanding state-sponsored university education. The movement soon undertook an insurrectionary strategy in April 1971, attempting to take state power through a "one-day revolution" tactic centered on the capture of rural police stations throughout the country. It was an attempt that ended in failure and a brutal counter-insurgency. In 1977 what remained of the JVP leadership was released, and between then and 1983 the party underwent a phase of democratic politics with modest but not insignificant success. In the aftermath of the anti-Tamil pogroms of "Black July" 1983, the JVP was used as a scapegoat for this event and proscribed, forcing the leadership underground. Between 1986 and 1989 the JVP once again engaged in a more protracted and sustained insurrection, which almost succeeded in capturing state power but eventually, through tactical and strategic miscalculation, spawned a counter-insurgency that matched if not outdid the insurgency in its brutality.

However, after the landslide electoral victory of the PA government in 1994, the JVP once again resurfaced as an officially recognized political party engaged in electoral politics. In the October 2000 general elections it won 10 seats, establishing it as the “third force” in Sri Lankan parliamentary politics at the expense of the “Old Left” and the Tamil parties (CP, LSSP, Tamil United Liberation Front [TULF], and Eelam People’s Democratic Party [EPDP]). In the 2001 election, the JVP expanded its electoral base further, returning 16 MPs to Parliament and building its electoral mandate still further in the April 2004 election on a coalition ticket with the PA as the UPFA, when the JVP captured 39 seats. The JVP has also demonstrated significant successes in local government elections, capturing Tissamaharama Pradeshiya Sabha in 2002, along with 219 other seats and 80 provincial council seats in 2004.

---

30 The CP (Peking) was itself a breakaway faction from the CP Moscow that had occurred due to the coalitional political strategies of the "Old Left."

31 Between 3,000 and 8,000 people are estimated to have been killed in the counter-insurgency, which included extra-judicial killings and, on more than one occasion, large-scale massacres of low caste groups.

32 In addition to the JVP, the CP and the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) were also proscribed.

33 The insurgency and counter-insurgency are believed to have resulted in over 60,000 deaths. Many of the deaths were largely attributable to the increasingly indiscriminate ferocity of the military and paramilitary forces of the counter-insurgency. By the end of November 1989, almost the entire upper leadership of the JVP had been executed or had gone into hiding and exile.

34 The JVP captured a Hambantota seat for Nihal Galapatti, contesting under the banner of the National Salvation Front/Progressive Front at this time.
POLITICAL CONSTITUENCY AND SOURCES OF MARGINALITY

Interpretations of the JVP’s support base, ideology, tactics and strategy tend for the most part toward several distinct sets of explanation. First, many commentators emphasize the structural facets in the origin, ascendancy and endurance of the JVP which gave rise to and continue to sustain the economic, socio-cultural and political alienation of Sinhala youth in the South. These structural dynamics have been variously interpreted as deriving from a number of overlapping sources of marginality. This is evidenced by sources of “structural unemployment” among predominantly rural, Sinhala university-educated youth, arising from the exhaustion of the post-colonial state in Sri Lanka and its inability to make room for the distribution of employment and goods to this social stratum. The exhaustion of the state in this regard cannot be understood without also comprehending the context of a vulnerable agro-export and garment-export oriented economy susceptible to world price fluctuations that have forced finance ministers to go to the Bretton Woods institutions for loans since at least the 1960s. Some of these perspectives also stress the JVP’s origins and endurance as the outcome of processes of rural class formation and competition, in which the JVP has become the engine for the discontent of both the subaltern and poorer rural classes, especially small-holder and landless rural farmers and their offspring, the nirdhana pantiya (dispossessed classes) of the southern polity.

Second, there are serious developmental and infrastructural disparities between the more developed south-western areas of the island in the immediate environs of Colombo and more peripheral rural and dry zone districts like Anuradhapura, Hambantota, Pollanaruwa, and Matara. The latter have consistently formed the geographical core of JVP strength whether in periods of electoral or insurrectionary activity. These disparities have sustained a view in the rural South that development in the southern polity is Colombo-centric while the peripheral areas of the country suffer from unequal access to a range of resources. It is a disparity perfectly captured in the rural slogan, colombata kiri, apata kekiri. However, semi-urbanized constituencies in and around Colombo have now also increasingly become areas of JVP electoral strength. Part of the thrust away from a concentrated rural base is reflected in the JVP’s fairly recent rise in union politics. The party’s Inter-Company Employees Union, for example, has extended into almost every sector of the economy with over 150 branches and is beginning to emerge as a dominant force in industrial relations in some sectors of the economy. Additionally, the shift to urbanized and semi-urbanized constituencies within and around Colombo can also be explained as a result of newly urbanized and educated groups with greater literacy and wider access to the media who are willing to challenge the dominance of the mainstream political parties’ clientelist ties.

Third, the JVP also arises from cultural marginality in as far as the “Sinhala-only” language changes instituted after Bandaranaike’s pancha maha balavegraya electoral victory of 1956 served to ghettoize many of the Sinhala rural youth strata within frames of vernacular education. Meanwhile English continued to operate as a dominant


37 A phrase that can be liberally rendered: “As Colombo gets milk, the rest must make do with water.” Cf. Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth (Government of Sri Lanka, 1990).

38 For example, the JVP have control of those unions in the energy and petroleum sectors, which are currently threatening strike action (March 2005).
and necessary resource for access to employment and social mobility. At the same time, education and socialization into the vernacular-speaking Sinhala Buddhist strata of the South has also drawn Sinhala youth into politico-cultural preconceptions of a Sri Lankan state framework, which is frequently perceived as necessarily unitary and redistributive. It is also seen as a protective framework for the Sinhala nation and the Buddhist religion. Consequently, a deep nexus has always existed between the spheres of educational inculturation into Sinhala Buddhist culture and the origins, growth, and nurture of the JVP. The vernacular schools and universities of the country serve to operate as sites of party recruitment through the twin arms of the Inter-University Students Federation, or Anthare as it is popularly known, and the Socialist Students' Union. This has also contributed to fiercely hostile attitudes to the privatization of services and to social policy liberalization, especially in regard to the provision of university education. Despite the admiration for JVP cadres' organizational capacities and their struggle for social justice, it is widely recognized, despite the university connection, that the JVP's intellectual and cultural horizons have remained consistently restricted throughout their history. It is a factor that bodes ill for their capacity to think imaginatively and innovatively with regard to a range of policies—from the economy to constitutional reforms and the peace process. From this, one can clearly explain how wider intellectual and cultural self-development frequently brings about large-scale defections and departures from the party rather than the possibility of notable internal shifts in party policy. It is for this reason that the point of entry into and exit from the party has been described as a "revolving door" or "a nest in which the educated rural youth are ideologically incubated" resulting in massive turnover of personnel whether in the aftermath of insurgency or during periods of engagement with electoral politics (Chandraprema, 1991, p. 74).

Fourth, the nature of dominant political culture in Sri Lanka, the failures of democracy, the historical hardening of clientelistic politics, corruption, and politically motivated thuggery have also served to disqualify mainstream politics among politically active youth from rural areas. That the JVP offers alternative channels of mobilization that do not operate through rent-a-crowd or "strong-arm" politics has thus become attractive to rural youth in the South and in the universities. Additionally, while the JVP historically has been no stranger to political violence of an often-extreme form, the party has attempted to portray itself in its current electoral phase as disciplined, non-violent, and with a reputation for self-renunciation and integrity. For instance, JVP MPs and local government officials claim to sacrifice their salaries to the party coffers, drawing instead a stipend from collective funds. JVP MPs' capacity to use Parliament for the representation and relaying of constituents' interests in a way that is absent from the parliamentary debates undertaken by other political party candidates should also not be overlooked. Additionally, JVP claims of a sizeable and highly organized cadre base have been substantiated by the mobilization of some 10,000 Sahana Seva Balakaya (Social Relief Force) cadres for post-tsunami social relief. The JVP's organizational structure is also of a classic Bolshevik cellular structure built around

---

39 The persevering significance of English in this way has been characterized as the neo-colonial dominance of the "kaduwa" or sword of English. See S. Perera (1995) Living with Torturers and Other Essays of Intervention (ICES, Colombo), pp.37-45.

40 The universities have been beset by violence in the weeks in which the fieldwork for this report was conducted over these issues and related violence between SLFP and JVP factions within the universities. Cf. Interview with PDP, Colombo University Student March 11, 2005.

41 While the issue of privilege and perks for MPs and ministers has come under recent scrutiny with the use of luxury vehicles, the charge of non-violent politics is generally confirmed by election complaint statistics from non-partisan election monitoring bodies. For example before the UPGA was formed, in the 2002 local elections, the UNP and the PA registered 405 and 143 alleged incidents of violence while the JVP registered just 14 incidents. In the General Elections of 2001 the figures for alleged incidents were 1,284 for the PA, 751 for the UNP and 9 for the JVP. See Final Report of Election-Related Violence by the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) - Local Government Elections 2002 (CMEV, 2002) and Final Report of Election-Related Violence by the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) - General Election 2001 (CMEV, 2002). It should be noted however that university politics in which the JVP also play a powerful role through the Inter-University Students' Union is characterized by frequent eruptions of violence.
the principle of "democratic centralism" among the 1,000 to 2,000 full-timers and 20,000 members.\textsuperscript{42} However, while this might afford some substance to the JVP’s adherence to democratic principles, it is also widely recognized that the party offers almost no space for public political dissonance or dissent from the party line, even between local and leadership levels.\textsuperscript{43} Nevertheless, what is clear is that the JVP’s organizational structure and political culture remain radically at odds with the shape and style of the mainstream parties. These organizational dynamics are also clearly an attempt to take the moral high ground in a situation of widespread disillusionment with the state of political culture in Sri Lanka. However, only time will tell whether the JVP can maintain this trend or whether it will be sucked into the shape and form of the predominant, pre-existing political culture through their engagement with electoral politics and the fruits and privileges of office. After all, one of the central reasons behind the JVP’s ability to mobilize and organize in this way has been its past marginalization from political power that affords it little other recourse than to such "weapons of the weak."

Fifth, it is clear that the JVP’s support base among the Sangha has also expanded considerably. The JVP has always had a significant influence among the younger generation of bhikkus and this pattern was present even in the early insurgency years of the 1971 generation when pansalas became hiding places for both JVP cadres and weaponry, despite there being considerable ambivalence toward the Sangha among the JVP leadership at this time. The attraction of the JVP for these younger, junior monks has always been based on the common social origins in the rural and vernacular-educated spheres of Sinhala society shared by both such sections of the Sangha and lay JVP cadres. It also has its roots in the widening of access to university education (including increased contact with lay students and secular disciplines) among bhikkus implemented in the post-independence years. It is in this context that the former monastic Buddhist colleges like Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara, which were awarded university status after 1956, became centers of JVP activity for the "1971" generation. The nexus between the JVP and younger generations of monks has also been a consequence of socio-economic, cultural, and caste tensions and resentment borne of the hierarchical nature of the Sangha—which junior and novice monks feel toward their elders in the pirivenas, pansalas, monastic chapters, and other walks of Buddhist clerical life in Sri Lanka. Consequently, the JVP has always maintained a separate organizational section for monks within its party structure.

At one time, there had been considerable disapprobation for the JVP among the older and senior theras, particularly of the Agiriya and Malwatte Chapters—especially over accusations of a JVP attack on the Dalada Maligawa in the late 1980s. Despite this, since the 1980s there has been a considerable rapprochement between the JVP and the elder Sangha with a noticeable shift on both sides in which the JVP leadership seeks the blessings of the Sangha and engages in bodhi puja rituals to the same extent as is common among other party leaders. This reconciliation is a testament to the deeper nexus forged between the JVP and Sinhala Buddhist nationalist sentiment.

There is some speculation that the JVP have also extended their support base among the military and that this has been a growing tendency within the party since the 1980s period when significant ambivalence toward the JVP among different strata of the military hierarchy brought about a considerable reluctance to engage in violent counter-insurgency tactics against the movement.\textsuperscript{44} Accordingly, it is quite clear that, aside from the JVP’s vocal brand of “patriotism,” its anti-

\textsuperscript{42} Cf. author’s interview with Somawansa Amarasinghe, March 19, 2005.

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. interviews with SD March 16, 2005, March 23, 2005, and SF March 10, 2005.

\textsuperscript{44} It has been claimed that the turning point only came when anti-JVP forces issued Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya (DJV) threats and “chits” against military personnel and their families that spawned the ferocity of the counter-insurgency on a wider scale. Cf. fieldwork in Anuradhapura District, 2002. See also A.C. Alles (1990) The JVP, 1969-1989 (Lakehouse, Colombo), pp. 310-312.
LTTE stance, and its enduring and often-invoked praise for the security forces, there is also a social nexus between the JVP and the social strata within Sri Lanka who constitute the core recruitment material of the military services. Indeed, it has been asserted by some commentators (including in discussion with the authors) that the JVP has infiltrated the Sri Lankan Army to the captain-level—a tendency for infiltration of military services by “fundamentalist” forces that is by no means a novel phenomenon in South Asia. The potential evolution of a JVP-military nexus in this way could itself prove problematic for the peace process in a crisis situation and is more likely to add to the pressure of a return to a “war for peace” strategy should the nexus be reinforced. Although it may currently be an extreme interpretation and somewhat premature, in a worst-case scenario one could not entirely rule out the future development of military coup dynamics in a context of heightened political instability.

Finally, a number of commentators (for example, Ivan, Kapferer, Jiggins) have asserted that the JVP cannot be understood unless one also understands the historical potency of caste politics in Sri Lanka. Such politics operate through KSD (Karava, Salagama, Durava) and lower caste (for example, Baram, Wahumpara) blocks against forms of caste political domination from the upper strata (Goyigama) within Sri Lanka’s inverted pyramidal or hourglass-shaped caste structure. While the JVP themselves reject a caste-based analysis of their mobilizations (a tendency reinforced by the combined influence of Marxism and Buddhism), the possibility that caste networks have been (and may still be) operative at a background level in a way that also interlocks with class, mass-elite, and center-periphery conflictual dynamics cannot be rejected outright. Indeed, occasionally informants sympathetic to the JVP have expressed resentment against a perceived caste nexus of what are called the three “Cs”—Colombo, Catholic or Christian, and (the “C” that is a “K”) Karava. The importance of this is that it underlines how the view that the JVP are now expressive of caste dynamics below the classic KSD triangle, that had previously underpinned elements of the Old Left, cannot be simply dismissed. Caste perspectives on the JVP stress the difficulties facing overt lower-caste electoral mobilization in a context where the Goyigama constitute roughly half the Sinhala electorate. This can be used to explain the consistent recourse to nationalist tropes and symbols in JVP mobilizations in which deeper problems of social injustice and inequality remain obscured. In this sense caste remains the “inner courtyard” in Sri Lankan politics, a taboo area that nonetheless underpins the struggles of subaltern movements like the JVP while also explaining their consistent recourse to Sinhala nationalism rather than to mobilizations based on the social fissures that underpin their constituency.

A number of scholars have emphasized that the JVP is radically agency-driven, voluntaristic, and a party of action and not ideology with an immense capacity for political entrepreneurship. Despite this, it is clear that the party has nonetheless sustained itself (even after the...
death of Wijeweera) through many of the aforementioned structural dynamics. Moreover, the ideology that underpins and sustains the JVP’s political cohesion lies not so much in the doctrines and theories of Marxism as in the more affective and emotive appeal of Sinhala nationalism. Additionally, it should be recognized that the JVP has taken on the mantle of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist mobilization proportionately, to the extent to which both the UNP and the SLFP have begun to distance themselves from an overtly Sinhala nationalist position.51 In a sense, this can be interpreted as arising from the JVP’s capacity--because of its vernacular, lower-class, and rural roots--to articulate a more potent discourse of nationalist authenticity in opposition to what it has consistently described as the inauthentic, decadent, deracinated, and corrupt politics of Sri Lanka’s elites. So, while a gradual internal transformation is no doubt accompanying increasing exposure to the spheres of political office, unless these underlying dynamics of inequality are addressed, it is unlikely (in the foreseeable future at least) that this will also result in a shift away from the JVP’s recourse to forms of Sinhala nationalist mobilization. The fact that the JVP walked away from the UPFA coalition in June 2005 over the Joint Mechanism issue, when there was much debate about the possibility that they would remain in office, is a testament to this fact.

THE JVP’S NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY AND ATTITUDES TO THE PEACE PROCESS AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

It is through the political vehicle of Sinhala nationalism that the JVP have increasingly sought legitimacy as guardians of the territorial integrity and unity of the Sri Lankan state. While we can say that this JVP ideological framework has hardened in recent years, it builds upon previous moments of Sinhala nationalist mobilization that date back to the 1960s when anti-Indian chauvinism found expression in the fourth class of the panti paha, the series of lectures that formed the recruitment vehicle of the party. This lecture, “Indian Expansionism,” built upon a Chinese Communist Party perspective of India’s long-term strategy, which discerned political and economic designs of regionalist expansionism emanating from the subcontinent. In the context of the JVP, the lecture also labeled the Upcountry Tamil estate workers as a “fifth column” in Sri Lanka, whose political interests were inimical to the revolutionary strategy of the JVP and whose sufferings were supposedly not as great as those of Sinhala chena and smallholder farmers in the South.

Notwithstanding this, the JVP entered a more accommodative phase toward Tamil minority interests during the 1977 to 1983 period, when both Rohana Wijeweera and Lionel Bopage articulated the need to recognize the potential legitimacy of the Tamils’ right for self-determination.52 However, this momentary shift was undone after Bopage’s 1984 resignation from the party over this and issues of party mobilization and organization. As a result the JVP once again returned to a position that rejected the right to self-determination for Tamil minorities (Wijeweera, 1986). During the period of the Indo-Lanka Accord in 1987 and the 13th Amendment proposals for measures of provincial autonomy, the JVP mobilized vociferously against any such devolutionary consideration to the Tamil communities. This was done both as a single political force and through other nationalist organs or front organizations such as the *Maubima Surakima Vyaparaya* (MSV - Force for the Protection of the Motherland), the *Maubima Surakina Sanvidhanaya* (MSS - Movement for the Protection of the Motherland) and the *Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya* (DJV - Patriotic People’s Movement).

---

51 Cf. Authors’ interview with Gunadasa Amarasekera March 17-18, 2005.
The analytical thrust of Wijeweera’s move once again to a more Sinhala nationalist position was that calls for autonomy for the North and East of the country were merely an imperialist conspiracy to split the Sri Lankan proletariat through spurious racial categories that ultimately served the ambitions of the Western states and India’s “Cholan” ambitions. Wijeweera attempted to legitimize this position through recourse to an analysis of Lenin’s discussion of the national question. As he himself put it, “we know very well that the division of the country and decentralization are completely opposed to the class aims and necessities of the proletariat” (Ibid).

When the JVP resurfaced after the bishana-samaya period, it held an internal debate on the national question. Debate revolved around whether the party should adopt a Marxist or nationalist stand on the question of minorities, or a Rosa Luxemburg or Leninist-oriented stand on the question of self-determination. Additionally, Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne and other Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) delegates were invited to attend the JVP national congress in Tangalle in May 1995, where all of the speakers were heavily critical of a military solution to the conflict. However, once the PA government announced its devolution proposals, the JVP began to criticize a federal or devolutionary solution to the ethnic conflict. Aside from a brief sojourn on a common Left platform in the presidential election of 1999, this has remained their position ever since—whether articulated against PA or UNP-led governments. Although the JVP were rivals to the SLFP in opposition to the UNF in the 2002 period; they signed an MOU with the SLFP in January 2004 to form the UPFA, in the context of a stalled peace process, rising prices and union unrest. The text of the MOU asserts that “as a result of the wrong policies followed by the ruling United National Front, the country faces the prospect of losing its territorial integrity...” As critics from within the PA at the time stated, a coalition formed with the JVP—a party unreceptive to the LTTE, to ISGA, and to federal devolution—could present a potential obstacle to constitutional reforms and to attempts to take the peace negotiations forward. While this presented a new obstacle to the possibility of the PA being able to deliver a peace package, some critics point to President Kumaratunga’s vacillating commitment to the peace process as an equally enduring problem impacting on the likelihood of meaningful negotiations.

Although the UPFA coalition won the April 2004 election on a slender majority—with the JVP holding 39 seats and 4 ministerial portfolios—it is clear that the JVP had the potential to act as a veto block from within the walls of the government. As international and national pressure on the government to move peace negotiations forward increases, including $4.5 billion in Tokyo Conference aid, the cracks and fissures in the UPFA coalition have begun to appear. In February 2005, the JVP parliamentary group leader and publicity secretary, Wimal Weerawansa, called on the government to withdraw from the ISGA framework, which it considered contrary to the letter of the MOU. This prompted the president to call their bluff and demand their departure from the coalition.

What is clear from the UPFA’s predicament at the time is that the JVP remained unmoved by the urgent need to bring the peace process forward. They continued to reassert their opposition to negotiations on the basis of ISGA and reiterated that both the LTTE and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) were undemocratic and not a legitimate entity for the GoSL to conduct negotiations with. Additionally, the JVP rejected a federal
framework for Sri Lanka and argued that the only acceptable devolution as far as it was concerned was to the local administrative district levels and below—not unlike the panchyat system. This is once again reflective of the JVP’s obsession with unitary state power rather than with any devolutionary framework that could meaningfully deliver a response to the current ethnic conflict. It is a perspective on the state that has clearly fuelled the perpetuation of Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism. In the same vein, while the JVP claims to be "the only party to have publicly stated that the State should not have a language or a religion," the fact that this claim to secular status was immediately qualified by Somawansa Amarasinghe's assertion that "the majority in this country are Sinhala Buddhists" and that "one should not forget the fact that this country has a culture built on Buddhist values and this was a tolerant society," speaks volumes about the nature of the JVP’s secularism. For secularism without a viable constitutional framework for political autonomy and the protection of human rights through a combination of a federal framework and a series of checks and balances to the executive and legislative branches of governance, is little more than a guise for persisting ethnic majoritarianism.

ATTITUDE TO INTERNATIONAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

The JVP have long maintained a reputation for hostility to International Financial Institutions (IFIs), Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), NGOs, and civil society actors. Such institutions and actors are frequently characterized as a threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. In the past, the JVP have been critical of IFIs such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund because these institutions are perceived to encourage liberalization and privatization as well as attempt to dismantle areas of small-holder agriculture that remain contentious in terms of the JVP’s traditional rural power base. This is especially true for the paddy and chena farming that remain symbolic Sinhala nationalist tropes (wewa, chaitya, andiya), which the state encouraged historically through numerous colonization and large-scale irrigation projects. Indeed, it should be noted that the JVP launched its dahasak wew or "one thousand tanks" rehabilitation project in August 2004 in Kurunegala. By doing so the JVP indicated its continued outward commitment to this form of state-sponsored agricultural development and this particular support base. However, despite the JVP’s support for a more commanding economy and the strengthening of small-holder agriculture, leader Somawansa Amarasinghe indicated that the party recognizes the necessity of international institutions and the need for access to international finance. So the party is not against these institutions per se.

In this context, the recent attack on the World Bank Country Director should not be read in the context of a gratuitous attack on the institution of the World Bank itself. Rather, it was an attack on the Country Director’s perceived treatment of the LTTE as a state-like or quasi-state institution, through which aid can legitimately be channeled to the North-East. In other words, as with

57 Ibid.
59 Cf. author’s interview with Somawansa Amarasinghe and Tilvin Silva, March 10, 2005.
60 Ibid.
62 Cf. author’s interview with Somawansa Amarasinghe and Tilvin Silva, March 10, 2005.
Wimal Weerawansa’s recent criticisms of Kofi Annan, the attack on the Country Director remains an attack on perceived threats to Sri Lanka’s political and territorial integrity rather than necessarily on the economic and developmental vision of the World Bank as a whole. While we are not suggesting that a fundamental overhaul of the JVP’s statist macro-economic policies are on the cards in the immediate future or that the JVP have engaged in a miraculous *volte face* on Bretton Woods policies, it is clear that the experience of political office has softened their once uncompromising hostility to such institutions. The experience has opened them up to the potential of dialogue and the possibility of a long-term transition on economic policy even if the centrality of unitary nation-state power will be difficult to dispel from such a vision.

In the same way, the JVP’s attitude to INGOs, NGOs, civil society actors, academics, and think-tanks is driven by the same ideological commitment toward the re-territorialization of power within the unitary framework of the Sri Lankan nation-state. In discussions with the authors, the JVP leadership again stated that they are not against NGOs *per se* but that they differentiate between NGOs such as Care International, who adhere to a non-political mandate (and with whom the JVP have worked in the post-tsunami context), and NGOs such as World Vision (which it should be noted is also a Christian organization). The JVP perceive the latter as having a political agenda in Sri Lanka that transgresses Sri Lankan governmental sovereignty and being therefore politically unaccountable and illegitimate.63

Additionally, during the period in which this report was written there were numerous attacks on civil society figures (including spokespeople for think-tanks, academics, and NGO officials) by the JVP press. They were variously described as being in league with the LTTE, being bearers of foreign and corruptive values and lifestyles, or being traitors to the Sri Lankan nation (*drohi*). These attacks culminated in a rabid and fanatical assault by Weerawansa during the course of a PNM meeting at Maharagama in April 2005. In his address, Weerawansa encouraged his audience to “spit on NGOs and stop them from walking on our streets. Donor countries and their NGO agents are holding this country to ransom, telling the government to set up a joint tsunami relief mechanism with the LTTE. It is something that can be done through the Sri Lankan state machinery. There is no need for a joint mechanism.”64 Weerawansa then went on to attack Professor Jayadeva Uyangoda; Kumar Rupasinghe of International Alert; Dr. Pakkiyasothy Saravanamuttu of the Centre for Policy Alternatives; the late journalist Taraki; Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council; and the politicians of the Left, Vasudeva Nanayakkara and Wickramabahu Karunaratna; whom he accused of being covert NGO puppets.

When one analyses the JVP stance on international NGO and civil societal actors, it appears that their outlook is structured from a background dichotomy of political and non-political opposites. The political sphere should remain the exclusive domain of “democratic” and “accountable” political actors and figures; while NGOs and civil societal actors—who have received no such mandate from the “people”—should stick to clearly demarcated non-political, humanitarian, relief and developmental mandates.66

While the JVP’s perspective on this issue raises serious concerns about their narrow conception of the “political” and their commitment to freedom of speech among civil society actors as a whole, it should

---

63 Ibid.
64 Cf. “JVP slams NGOs, western countries for meddling,” Tamilnet April 7, 2005 (www.tamilnet.com).
65 Cf. “Weerawansa lashes out at INGOs, NGOs, RINGOs, GRINGOs and BINGOs,” Lanka Academic, April 7, 2005.
66 Cf. author’s interview with Somawansa Amarasinghe and Tilvin Silva, March 10, 2005; and with Somawansa Amarasinghe, March 19, 2005.
nonetheless not be dismissed out of hand. It is relevant to the broader debate about the extent to which donor states, international actors and NGOs should continue to contravene traditional notions of sovereignty and the extent to which aid should remain harnessed to conditionalities like "good governance"—or, in the Sri Lankan context, to "progress in the peace process." This is especially relevant in the fragile post-tsunami context of widely acknowledged state incapacity.67 While the maintenance of such conditionalities may be intended to contribute to the strengthening of human rights within developing world contexts, they may nonetheless be counterproductive in as far as they lead to the reinforcement of nationalist agendas against a perceived "imperialist" cosmopolitan agenda imposed by dominant states and NGOs—a situation which will have been exacerbated and not improved by the tsunami. The recent plan to create a parliamentary select committee to police aid and NGOs, spearheaded by JVP heavyweight Nandana Gunatillake, is a testament to the political polarization over aid that has taken place in Sri Lanka.68

The JVP also remains highly critical of Norway’s role as mediator in the peace process. It constantly questions Norwegian agenda and propagates the notion that Norwegian mediation is partial to the LTTE’s interests and their ultimate objectives of creating a separate state—a perspective that is not confined to the JVP. Considering the JVP’s history of anti-Indian mobilization—dating back to the "Indian Expansionism" class, and continuing with the agitation against the Indo-Lanka Accord and the presence of the Indian Peace Keeping Force—the JVP has ironically but very firmly shifted toward a pro-Indian position in terms of both a preferable potential mediator to the peace process and in terms of foreign policy alignments as a whole. This reflects a mutuality of interests—with India wanting to ensure that a potentially destabilizing separate state of Tamil Eelam does not appear at the foot of India, while the JVP are keen (for obvious reasons) to enlist the external support of a powerful regional state actor that is opposed to Eelamist aspirations. Consequently, the JVP have been keen to develop good relations with the Indian High Commission and to lobby for an Indian role in the peace process.69

THE POST-TSUNAMI CONTEXT AND THE JVP’S LONG-TERM POLITICAL PROSPECTS

The recent political juncture is one in which the JVP has sought to secure political capital and legitimacy through its swift reaction in the wake of the Asian tsunami. It mobilized 10,000 cadres of the Sahana Seva Balakaya (Social Relief Force),70 a relief force that provided medical aid, well purification, relief camps, the distribution of food, and other emergency supplies. It also engaged in reconstruction work including the rebuilding of the Galle Bus Stand, repairs to the Sri Lankan railway network, and provision of temporary housing to the displaced.71 Somawansa Amarasinghe states that while the Sahana Seva Balakaya is not a governmental organization, it is nonetheless the JVP’s organizational strength that has made up for other parties’ lack of organizational capacity and helped to thus far avoid serious food riots in the South.72 Based on

---

67 For a broader discussion of these issues in the Sri Lankan context, see N. Wickramasinghe (2001) Civil Society in Sri Lanka: New Circles Of Power (Sage, 2001); for the recent post-Tsunami context, see G. Freks and B. Klem (2005) "Muddling the Peace Process: Post-Tsunami Rehabilitation in War-torn Sri Lanka" (Clingendael Conflict Research Unit, Netherlands).

68 The appointment of the Parliamentary Select Committee is scheduled for early May 2005.

69 Cf. author’s interview with Somawansa Amarasinghe and Tilvin Silva, March 10, 2005.

70 The Sahana Seva Balakaya was not created in response to the 2004 tsunami but in relation to droughts and floods in different areas of the South in 2003.

71 Cf author’s interview with PB, Mataara District Organiser of the Sahana Seva Balakaya, Weligama, March 2005.

72 Ibid.
our brief fieldwork in the South and also from reports of post-tsunami protests emanating from Galle and Matara among other places, dissatisfaction and frustration with the level of governmental intervention in the South has been high and the atmosphere in social relief camps is highly charged. Comparing testimony from displaced people in both a JVP relief camp and from an NGO tented camp, all the interviewees charged the government with negligence and failure in solving their long- and short-term problems while praising the JVP for their relief and reconstruction efforts. Additionally, those displaced in the tented camp also aggressively indicated their intention to vote for the JVP in any subsequent election without being directly asked about such intentions. The post-tsunami context may well have provided an occasion for the JVP to prove its organizational capacities and commitment to social relief at a moment of sharp crisis, and may serve to expand its popularity and political constituency in any future election.

While the JVP may have expanded its political legitimacy in the face of government failures in the post-tsunami situation; it is also possible that while the JVP aid effort has been welcomed in areas where it has been operative, due to the crisis context it may not necessarily have extended the party’s political constituency in any significant long-term way. A more extreme interpretation is that the JVP may have discredited itself through a perceived naked attempt to exploit the post-tsunami crisis for political aims and through its partnership in a government that is widely perceived to have dragged its feet and provided little other than food stamps to those most seriously affected by the tsunami. However, fieldwork indicated a high level of differentiation among informants between the JVP on the one hand and the UPFA government on the other, indicating that the JVP managed to accrue most of the political capital from independent social relief work while still a member of the UPFA coalition. This suggests that the former scenario of expanded JVP legitimacy is far more likely.

From both the post-tsunami situation and the JVP’s departure from the UPFA coalition in June 2005 over the Joint Mechanism issue, it is clear that some observers have underestimated the party’s long-term strategy and impact upon political culture in Sri Lanka. One of the arguments constantly made is that the JVP are being drawn into mainstream political culture through their exposure to the fruits and spoils of coalitional office. From this it has been varyingy interpreted that the JVP will either fall into a decline in the same way that the Old Left parties did from the 1970s onward; or that these processes may lead to an internal transformation and moderation of the party away from more radical and nationalist politics. However, what has perhaps been overlooked is the impact that the JVP will continue to have on political culture and political processes in Sri Lanka. It is quite clear, as the JVP’s Joint Mechanism departure demonstrated, that the party’s short-term interest in portfolio and office is not as extensive as some have suggested—a point Somawansa Amarasinghe was keen to emphasize in an interview with the authors. Bearing this in mind, it is clear that the JVP’s long-term goals are to maintain its staunch resistance to both the Joint Mechanism and ISGA and to achieve its stated political objectives at the helm of a future government.

However, there was a broad consensus among academic and media commentators during the fieldwork period that, in the event of another general election, the JVP would not retain its current 39-seat position. There was agreement that its seat count would fall to perhaps the region of 20 to 25 seats. The authors’ own prediction is that the JVP’s future electoral gains will be considerably greater than this. In the context of another Sinhala
nationalist upsurge in response to P-TOMS and the continuing failure of the mainstream parties to cooperate in government, it is highly likely that the JVP will continue to disembowel the SLFP's political constituency. Moreover, the prospect of a realigned JVP-SLFP coalition at the next election, with the JVP in a much stronger position, is no longer unlikely. Disillusionment with the clientelism of the mainstream parties, the SLFP's own political crisis, the structural inequalities outlined above, along with the JVP's capacity to assume the moral high-ground of nationalist authenticity and ascetic discipline, all remain key ingredients in the almost inevitable political ascendancy of the party.

INCENTIVES FOR THE JVP AS A PEACE STAKEHOLDER

While it is quite clear from the preceding pages that the JVP remain critical of the peace process in its currently envisaged frameworks, there are a number of possible areas that offer potential space for maneuver. The prospects for such openings include:

1) The JVP as a democratic and/or nationalist entity?
First, it is clear that a more open, electorally-oriented JVP has been a step forward in the relative stability of the southern polity. This is especially true in comparison to the violent dynamics at work in the bishane period (1987), when Sri Lanka last had the opportunity to implement a solution to the ethnic conflict. The JVP have also shown some willingness to engage in dialogue with international actors and diplomatic representatives from differing ideological hues so they may present their own perspective on the Sri Lankan situation. This is motivated in response to their perception that the Sri Lankan media distorts their standpoint, thus posing a major obstacle to both their political growth and the development of their international reputation.⁷⁷ In this sense, it is clear that their time in office has been significant.

At the same time, however, since the JVP have taken up the slack left by the UNP and SLFP parties' relative move away from a Sinhala nationalist position, they still act as the most significant political movement fomenting active opposition to current frameworks for the peace process. They also serve to mobilize more passive opposition to the peace process as well—a block within the southern polity that is considerable and should not be underestimated.⁷⁸ During the period of fieldwork for this report the JVP held their own series of polls in regional meetings in March 2005 that asked for a democratic consensus on whether the JVP should leave the government at that juncture ("no"), whether they should oppose ISGA ("yes"), and whether they should oppose the joint mechanism for relief and reconstruction ("yes"). While this revealed the JVP's willingness to criticize the government from within (where it could act as a more effective veto block without having to bring about another potential election and the possibility of another UNP-led administration), it is clear that the Joint Mechanism issue provided an unmissable opportunity for the JVP to maximize political mileage out of vocal Sinhala nationalist mobilizations against the Joint Mechanism. It was to this extent that they were willing to follow through their threat to walk out of government.

2) The Referendum: In interviews with the authors, the JVP indicated that should a referendum be held on the issue of federalism and the abolition of the executive presidency, the JVP would fiercely contest it on the basis of a challenge to a federal constitution, but they would nonetheless support a referendum result whatever the outcome would be.⁷⁹ It should also be noted that in the past the JVP

⁷⁷ Cf. author’s interview with Somawansa Amarasinghe and Tilvin Silva, March 10, 2005; and with Somawansa Amarasinghe, March 19, 2005.
⁷⁹ Cf. author’s interview with Somawansa Amarasinghe, March 19, 2005.
have stated that this referendum is unnecessary as the framework for peace lies outside the coalitional MOU, and that the president already chose to disregard the abolition of the presidency in the post-1994 period.

3) **Federal Devolution:** The JVP have some clearly circumscribed power bases in areas that suffer from highly uneven development, and the centralized polity continues to exacerbate this unevenness. In this sense the LTTE and the JVP can be seen as mirror images of each other, and it would seem a logical corollary that the JVP would be willing to indulge some form of symmetrical political devolution or regional autonomy from which it would benefit in terms of a political power base. This should be considered in the same way that the Communist Party of India (CPI) have profited if not thrived historically through power bases in Kerala and West Bengal. However, what is clear from the JVP’s consistently negative response is that their attachment to the centralized polity clearly outweighs any imaginative response to a federal solution at the present juncture. Although it remains clear, to the authors at least, that the JVP’s tactic is not necessarily one of instrumental manipulation of nationalist issues, but of a more hegemonic depth of nationalist affect, this does not, however, exclude the possibility of a future shift as it is clear that the JVP have shifted on a number of policies in the past (for example, the 1977-1983 policy on the national question).

4) **Dialogue with Marxist movements:** As a party with claims to a Marxist heritage, the JVP still maintains a dialogue with both the CPI and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM); and both parties recently invited the JVP to their party conventions for the first time. Additionally, Sitaram Yechury from CPIM recently gave a Kandiah memorial lecture on federalism in Colombo and it is understood that the CPI have attempted to engage the JVP in some kind of dialogue on the potentialities of a federal solution to Sri Lanka’s current crisis, reportedly without success. 80 While the Communist Party in Sri Lanka also maintains a dialogue with the JVP, a familiar story has emerged from an interview with a Communist Party representative in Sri Lanka. 81 Although the JVP have built bridges with the NSSP over the issue of conflict and the national question in the past, for instance, this momentary shift came at a time of JVP convalescence after the 1980s insurrection. It is now quite clear that the JVP currently remains unmoved on this issue and no amount of intellectual badgering seems to produce any shift or signs of a willingness to change. While this failure of dialogue with other Marxist movements is perhaps a sign of the intractable nature of the JVP’s position on the national question in Sri Lanka, it is not completely surprising as the emergence of the JVP power base has frequently been at odds (and rarely in cooperation) with rival Left movements. However, as long as the JVP maintains good relations with these movements there is still the potential for dialogue on the question of federalism.

5) **The JVP and the “national question”:** It should be noted that the authors have attempted to emphasize the varied historical attitude of the JVP on the national question to the JVP leadership themselves. Indeed, in the 1975 to 1983 period the JVP attempted to articulate the genuine grievances of the Sri Lankan Tamil population in Lionel Bopage’s *A Marxist Analysis of the National Question* and Wijeweera’s *Policy Declaration.* 82 However, upon

---


81 Cf. authors’ interview with DG, March 2005.

being presented with the idea that this was a varied historical perspective on the national question that could potentially be revived, Somawansa Amarasinghe immediately countered that there was no shift in position. Rather, different ideological currents had always been at work and Bopage’s ideological influence was ultimately defeated (having only three votes at the central committee level) once it was put to the democratic test. Such a perspective reinforces the idea that the JVP’s Sinhala nationalism is deeply embedded, although the fact that Somawansa Amarasinghe is also viewed as one of the chief proponents of the Sinhala nationalist position should not be overlooked.83 So, once again, internal changes in the party leading to policy shifts cannot be entirely ruled out.

The JVP and the LTTE--unexplored empathy:

One other perspective is that the JVP and the LTTE share much in common and are in fact mirror images in relation to the Sri Lankan state. According to this argument, if a space for understanding could be carved out between these two actors, the potential for peace could be augmented. Although there is little doubt that members of the LTTE and elements sympathetic to the LTTE hold the JVP in a sympathetic light, we have found little evidence of the reverse at present. While there is an obvious recognition that the LTTE are an efficient organization,84 there is little other evidence of admiration on the part of the JVP. This is mainly because the JVP now point to the LTTE’s lack of democratic accountability and military structure as the main reason for censure on their part. These factors also account for the JVP’s rabid opposition to the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS) for aid distribution signed by the LTTE and the GoSL in June 2005--an issue that prompted their departure from the UPFA government. However, the JVP have consistently maintained that if the LTTE were to enter the democratic fold its position would radically change. For the same reasons the JVP (like the JHU) have also been keen to develop relations with alternative Tamil political parties such as the EPDP. Progress was made in this area in May 2004 when the JVP and EPDP agreed to embark on a joint program articulating the need for a solution to the ethnic conflict, setting out their opposition to the ISGA proposals and the LTTE’s claim to be the “sole representatives” of the Tamil people.85 While this might suggest that there is room for maneuver among the JVP on the issue of northern and eastern autonomy, the bond between the JVP and the EPDP is probably more reflective of a mutuality of interests in opposing the LTTE and of the JVP’s respect for a party that had until very recently acted as a surrogate armed wing of the Sri Lankan government in the North-East. Additionally, the JVP have also been keen to establish relations with Anandasangari since his split with the LTTE, again because they see him as a potential political alternative. At the same time, it does demonstrate that changes within the LTTE, could herald a shift in the JVP’s attitude towards actors who they might perceive as having a legitimate role to play in the peace process.

International Relations and the JVP:

As previously stated, the JVP remain hostile to Norwegian involvement as mediators in the peace process. This is based largely on the feeling that the Norwegian government is partial to the LTTE and toward the ISGA framework. The JVP have alternatively suggested India as mediators, as Delhi remains hostile to the creation of a separatist Eelam power base that might destabilize the Indian polity. However, given the obvious lessons of South Asian
history, it remains highly unlikely that India would wish to be too closely involved unless the political situation in Sri Lanka were to seriously deteriorate further. Other alternative external actors that might present opportunities for a potential dialogue with the JVP are China (as the party tends to maintain close links with Chinese Communist Party and upholds China as a paradigm for Sri Lanka’s developmental future) and Japan, to which the JVP sent a diplomatic mission in June 2005.

THE PATRIOTIC NATIONAL MOVEMENT: AIMS AND CONSTITUENTS

As the PNM (Deshbithaishi Jathika Vyaparaya) is for all intents and purposes a limb of the JVP, a fuller treatment of this movement will not be required other than to outline the participants involved and the movement’s aims and strategies. The PNM is the latest in a series of political sidecars that the JVP has mobilized as a vehicle for articulating its nationalist project and it is clear that the movement’s aims remain firmly embedded within this nationalist agenda:

1. “To resist any attempt at the division of the country in the name of devolution of power. To preserve sovereignty of the Nation and the territorial integrity of the country.

2. To resist the neo-colonial economic exploitation that is being carried out by Western powers. To save our economic resources, our land, rivers and forests from being usurped by foreign powers.

3. To resist the cultural invasion aimed at destroying our National identity and our cultural heritage. To preserve our civilization and culture.”

The JVP has a long history of using alternative platforms to reach out to a wider socio-political set of forces such as the MSS, MSV, and DJV organs of the Indo-Lanka Accord period. Many commentators feel that the formation and use of these organizations is a means for separating the use of an ultra-nationalist vehicle from the JVP per se (in order to present a secular non-nationalist face to the world beyond Sri Lanka). As the PNM is a diasporic organization with branches in France and the U.K., our perspective is that only an incredibly naïve observer would not see this connection, especially considering the pivotal and vocal role played by Wimal Weerawansa, the JVP Communication Secretary. As such the PNM serves two primary functions for the JVP. First, it enables the JVP to widen its reach to figures and groups who might otherwise be reluctant to associate with the JVP because of its violent past and a lack of connection on their part with its social constituency. It also serves to forge political bridges with other political actors and nationalist figures. Second, the PNM acts as a vehicle for mobilizing and reinforcing the emotive and affective appeal of Sinhala nationalism at a wider level than simply through the JVP. In this way it works to try and set a Sinhala nationalist context, platform and agenda for electoral and political struggles, within which the JVP can thrive and indeed outdo their Sinhala nationalist rivals such as the SU/JHU. It is not surprising, therefore, that Wimal Weerawansa put down the UPFA’s 2004 electoral victory and political revitalization of the executive to the success of the PNM.

The PNM initially coalesced in 2002 as a loose, JVP-led organ opposing Ranil Wickremasinghe’s peace process and did not officially establish itself until 2003. The movement drew on a wide circle of participants from the JVP, the MEP, and the SLFP; the clergy; and Sinhala academics, artists, and intellectuals such as Wimal Weerawansa, Arjuna Ranatunga, Wijedasa Rajapakse, Elle Gunawansa, Gunadasa Amarasekara and Buddhadasa Vithanarachchi. While the aforementioned

87 The PNM opened these branches in November 2004, an event that the author observed.
88 “Weerawansa whacks left and right” Daily Mirror (Colombo), October 26, 2004.
are members of the PNM Executive Council, marches organized by the movement against the UNF-led peace process also attracted the support and participation of political figures like Dinesh Gunawardana of the MEP and Mangala Samaraweera, Anura Bandaranaike and Dilan Perera of the SLFP. In this respect, the movement served to bring figures from the JVP and the SLFP closer and therefore may have been of great significance in bringing about the UPFA coalition between the SLFP and JVP. While it is perhaps correct to say that the UNP and SLFP elites have broadly moved away from a Sinhala nationalist position, one should also recognize that movements like the PNM remain attractive vehicles for members of the SLFP who remain sympathetic to nationalist aspirations. It should be understood as well that the PNM has also been deployed by the PA/SLFP— for the normal political practice of undermining the UNP’s own attempts to resolve Sri Lanka’s conflict and as an electoral strategy for the resumption of power. This is clearly evident from the notable drift away from the PNM by PA members in the aftermath of the 2004 electoral victory. The PNM has also been part of a closer rapprochement between the JVP and one of the leading and most influential Sinhala nationalist schools of thought, Jathika Chintanaya, with Gunadasa Amarasekara forming a close ideological bond with the movement for the first time. As the PNM is radically opposed to the devolution of power, it is clear that few if any incentives toward the peace process can be foreseen. Despite this, the movement gives us a powerful sense of the extent to which Sinhala nationalist mobilization has become key to the JVP.

**OVERVIEW OF THE SIHALA URUMAYA/JATHIKA HELA URUMAYA COMBINE**

Although there is a clear overlap between the JHU’s and the JVP’s current ideological platform—the former espouses a radical Sinhala nationalist program—it is clear that there are significant differences between these two movements. They remain archrivals, and have clear differences in their social constituency base and political genealogies. It is worth tracing some of the historical background to the emergence of the current Urumaya avatar. In doing so, one must examine not only the emergence of the Sihala Urumaya itself, but also the political milieu out of which some of its leaders emerged—a context in which the JVP once again plays a central role.

Some of the central figures in the current JHU (namely the Venerable Athuraliye Rathana Thera, Champika Ranawaka, and Udaya Gammanpila) were once JVP organizers, and were active during the 1980s agitations against the Indo-Lanka Accord. At that time, Ranawaka and Rathana were ideologically aligned to both Jathika Chintanaya and (as Inter-University Students Federation leaders) to the JVP. They were also active in the Deshapremi Sishya Vyaparaya, the student arm of the JVP-led nationalist front, the DJV. However, Champika Ranawaka was to play an integral part in a split with the JVP over two issues. First, Ranawaka had a dispute with Wijeweera over the JVP’s ideological path, declaring Marxism dead and urging the JVP to wholeheartedly embrace nationalism as its central ideological engine—a line Wijeweera refused to countenance. Second, the JVP’s decision not to

---

89 Cf authors’ interviews with Gunadasa Amarasekara March 17-18, 2005.
90 Ibid.
91 It should be noted that prior to the SU’s first participation in an election, the JSS attempted to form a broader SU alliance with the Sinhalaya Mahasammatha Bhumiputra Party or Sinhala Sons of the Soil Party and the JVP without success.
92 Udaya Gammanpila and Champika Ranawaka were JVP members while at school.
93 Cf. authors’ interview with UG, Colombo March 21, 2005.
94 Ibid.
support Mrs. Bandaranaike’s candidacy for the 1988 presidential election triggered a final split between the JVP and Jathika Chintanaya and SLFP-aligned unions (Chandraprema, 1991, p. 117). After the split, Ranawaka and Rathana established the Janatha Mithuro (“Friends of the People”) organization, which represented an admixture of environmental lobbying with socialist and nationalist politics. However, the deeper plunge into Sinhala nationalist politics only came after the dissolution of the Janatha Mithuro and a drawing together of a number of Sinhala organizations into the National Movement Against Terrorism (NMAT) in 1998, led by Champika Ranawaka. Among the organizations were the Jathika Sangha Sabha or Buddhist Monks Council, which is a cross-nikaya association, and the Jathika Daham Guru Sabha or National Association of Dhamma School Teachers. The NMAT received considerable support from the Sinhala small-trader business community under the umbrella of the Sinhala Veera Vidhana (Sinhala Heroes Forum - SVV). The SVV promoted a military solution to the ethnic conflict, and mobilized vigorously against the LTTE, the peace process, and minorities.95 On the latter score it was particularly opposed to political parties such as the CWC and policies that were perceived as beneficial to minorities, such as the Equal Opportunities Bill of 1999.

As a consensus among the mainstream parties grew for the need to formulate a constitutional response to the ethnic conflict, the NMAT and SVV coalition began to sense a political space for a more directly political Sinhala nationalist organ—beyond the use of civil society and lobby groups such as NMAT and the SVV. On April 26, 2000 the SU was established. SL Gunasekera, Tilak Karunaratna and Champika Ranawaka assumed the key positions of the party at the outset, serving as chairman, secretary and national organizer respectively.96 The SU also relied on the political experience and fundraising capacities of SL Gunasekera, and Karunaratne, both seasoned politicians. The former was a long-time member of the SLFP, while the latter had been leader of the nationalist Hela Urumaya faction within the SLFP until his 1993 switch to the UNP. Almost immediately the party gained one seat from the national list in the 2000 election after polling 127,863 votes (1.47% of the vote). Although the party suffered an initial setback in the 2001 election when it lost all its seats, it recovered in the April 2004 election after a fusion of the SU and the Jathika Sangha Sammelanaya (National Sangha Congress - JSS) led to the adoption of the JHU label. It also benefited by fielding bhikku candidates in almost every electorate in the country in the aftermath of the Venerable Soma’s death. The JHU subsequently won 9 seats—three from Colombo District; two from Gampaha; one from Kalutara and the Kandy District respectively; and two from the national list.97 In doing so, it seemingly secured its place at the heart of Sri Lanka’s political existence.

THE JHU’S SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSTITUENCY

Although many of the JHU parliamentarian monks themselves have rural origins, the JHU/SU combine must be seen as a primarily urban and suburban phenomenon. This is clear from its past and present electoral constituencies (primarily located in and around Colombo), and with symbolic support bases such as the Sri Vajiraghana temple in Maharagama. The latter remains closely tied to the non-Siyam Amarapura nikaya with which (alongside the Rammana nikaya) almost all the JHU monks are affiliated. While the JHU may appear on the surface to represent the interests of the

95 For instance, SVV organized a campaign directed against Tamil expansionism in Colombo in 1999 and a march organized by the SV in June 1999 on this platform ended up in an attack on the CWC office in Colombo.


97 Ibid.
Sangha in politics, the Sangha itself is obviously driven by pre-existing political differences and affiliations. As such the decision to exclusively field monk candidates can be seen as not necessarily an expression of “bhikkhu politics” as a whole but rather as the exploitation of the Sinhala Buddhist swing caused by the Venerable Soma’s death in 2003. This nationalist upsurge inspired the lay leadership of the SU to stand aside for an exclusive candidacy of monks in the April 2004 election.

Additionally, "the JHU monks by and large came into prominence outside the hierarchical structures of the Sangha" as many of them were involved in high profile, public and media-driven preaching and rituals and were accustomed to life in comfortable urban contexts, despite their rural origins (Frydenlund, 2005, p. 15). In that sense they were expressive of the dynamics of "protestant Buddhism"—of the monk who is active in the world to the extent that politics is no longer a proscribed area of activity, and in which a far more aggressive but less dependent relationship is forged between the laity and the Sangha.98

In this sense the JHU is representative of a modern Sinhala Buddhist nationalism tied to the spread of print and televisual media. It is also a more aggressive “evangelical” religious dynamic that has been especially prolific among the urban and suburban middle classes rather than being expressive of "traditional" Buddhist values or of the interest of the Sangha as a whole. It is also clear that the party’s membership and support base is comprised of Sinhala professionals, intellectuals,99 business community leaders, and members of the armed services.100 This is apparent from the connection between the JHU and organizations like NMAT and the SVV, as well as from the lay figures in the Urumaya combine.

The Urumaya combine is built upon very middle-class foundations, with considerable financial and media resources mobilized both in Sri Lanka and among the diaspora.101 Moreover, its pre-existing political affiliations are closer to the UNP, as is illustrated by Tilak Karunaratne’s previous role in the party. In this sense, while the JHU/SU movement stressed the need for the revitalization of a “national economy” built on the glorious Sinhala past of hydraulic civilization and agriculture with a focus on self-sufficiency in food, this quest for economic autarky is not all encompassing and has been qualified in the SU manifesto by a relative openness to foreign investment:

“We do not see multi-national companies and foreign investors as devils," party secretary Karunaratne told Aratuwa, a Sinhala business newspaper. “Within this globalization, [we] are working confidently with the private sector, and accept the necessity of foreign investment. Although we have accepted that the public sector and private sector should function at the same level in the economy, we are not of the opinion that the public sector must control industry and business...” (Senaratne and Jayasekera, 2000).

While the JHU/SU evidently have a potent tendency toward the re-territorialization of political power as a reaction to the forces of globalization, their perspective on the revitalization of state power (unlike that of the JVP) is mainly concentrated on the politico-cultural rather than economic sphere. It is a stance that reflects their solid constituency in the business and professional classes and which, despite the elements of small business mentality that persevere in the combine, places them close to the UNP’s brand of globally connected business.

---


99 For example, Professor Piyasena Dissanayaka, Professor C. M. Madduma Bandara, Professor A. D. V. de S. Indraratne, and Dr. Ranjini Ratnapala.

100 For instance at its inception Major General Thilak Paranagama and Lieutenant Colonel Anil Amarasekera were appointed as deputy presidents.

101 This accounts for the SU and the JHU’s capacity to mobilize widely and speedily in elections since 2000 and to have fielded 252 monk-candidates in 21 of the country’s 22 electoral districts. There have also been allegations that Thilanga Sumathipala, whose family owns a chain of betting shops in Sri Lanka, funded the JHU in the 2004 election and that the party received prominent exposure through the TNL, Maharaja, and Swarnavahini networks.
interests. It also serves as yet another facet of the enduring relationship between the JHU/SU and the UNP. Indeed, one extreme interpretation that was reinforced by the "speaker election" incident of 2000 is that the SU and the JHU are no more than a UNP decoy created to draw voters away from other Sinhala nationalist rivals such as the MEP or the JVP. While this interpretation is extreme, it does articulate the truism that the JHU is ultimately a UNP constellation. Bearing this in mind, were the JHU to collapse, depending on the political context, membership and support would probably be reabsorbed back into the UNP. However, considering the JVP’s rapid expansion and the current attempts at constitutional reform and peace processes pursued by mainstream parties, the possibility that these nationalist elements may find an ideological hearth in the JVP cannot be entirely ruled out.

THE JHU, SINHALA NATIONALISM AND ATTITUDES TO THE ‘ETHNIC CONFLICT’ AND THE PEACE PROCESS

The SU and the JHU mobilize primarily on a Sinhala nationalist platform based on the perceived premise that the southern polity is excessively dominated by minority interests. This assertion is based on the belief that minority-based parties such as the TNA and the Hill Country Tamil parties are alleged to have a disproportionate influence on the proportional electoral system and coalition politics. According to this view, the minority and mainstream parties (the SLFP and the UNP) have succumbed to the agenda of the LTTE, Western governments, NGOs, and INGOs. Meanwhile, the interests of the majority Sinhala community are sidelined. The party was established to fill a void in the polity and "to represent the silent majority who do not really have a voice," as one member of the JHU put it, and to lobby (like the JVP) for the protection of the unitary state and Sri Lankan national sovereignty.

Unlike the JVP, the SU and the JHU have an apparently clear and transparent 12-point program articulating their main demands around the central theocratic pillar of the dharmarajaya (righteous state or rule) concept, aimed at restoring the Buddhasasana (mission of the Buddha) at the apex of the Sri Lankan state. We have briefly condensed the program below:

1) That Sri Lanka should be a Buddhist state and should be ruled according to Buddhist principles while simultaneously safeguarding the rights of other religions and combating "unethical conversions"
2) Sri Lanka is and should remain a unitary state
3) That the national civilizational heritage of the country is that of the Sinhala majority
4) That rulers should adopt the universal dharmaraja concept of Asokan rule, which should apply to all ethnic groups equally
5) That the government should have supervisory and monitoring control over all activities and monetary transactions of NGOs and INGOs in Sri Lanka, especially in the context of these institutions’ use of educational programs for proselytization
6) That a decentralized administration (grama rajya sankalpaya) should be adopted according to the principle of grama rajya (village rule) and that a devolution of power in the currently proposed forms are imported concepts
7) That development should be based on the natural habitat, animals, and humanity of Sri Lanka and on a Buddhist-oriented national economy that empowers local farmers and entrepreneurs
8) That an educational system suited to Sri Lanka should be developed based on the traditional

---

102 For instance, MEP leader Dinesh Gunawardana, after having his invitation for the SU to contest under the MEP banner refused, asserted that the SU was only mobilizing on behalf of the UNP. Nalin de Silva has also made similar allegations. See Walter Jayawardhana (2004) "Monks voting with TNA is unacceptable" Asian Tribune, April 24, 2004.

103 Cf. author’s interview with UG, Colombo March 21, 2005.
hierarchies of duty and obligation between parent and child, teacher and pupil etc.

9) That Sri Lanka as the land of dhamma should build ties with other Buddhist countries as well as with non-Buddhist neighbors and seek to spread Buddhism globally

10) That a Buddhist council should be established and maintained for the supervision of the Sangha, and the 1957 and 2002 Buddhist Commissions should be adopted

11) That the moral rights of women and the status of motherhood should be protected

12) That the media should be governed by "independent, free, and ethical principles."104

Consequently, the JHU presently remains embedded in a characteristically Sinhala nationalist conception of the Sri Lankan state—one that is Asokan, unitary, munificent and protective of the language, religious rights, and agricultural and entrepreneurial foundations of the Sinhala people. Such a conception inevitably precludes the possibility of entertaining (at least in their current stance) the viability of meaningful constitutional reform or of a federal solution to the current ethnic conflict. In fact the JHU does not even recognize an "ethnic conflict" as such. Instead they assert that the current crisis is the result of an upper-middle class failure among Tamil political leaders in Sri Lanka (and among the diaspora) to retreat from a colonially privileged position. They also argue that the LTTE, with the aid of "peace-lobbying NGOs," maintain their dominance over the Tamil populace through coercion and the suppression of democratic alternatives such as the EPDP and Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF).105 Additionally, the party rejects any proposal for self-determination on the part of Tamils or other minority groups. The reasoning behind this is that the JHU do not recognize Tamils as a "national minority" in the Sri Lankan as opposed to Indian context but as an "ethnic minority," which automatically disqualifies the Tamil struggle for autonomy. Moreover, the JHU has been pressing for a de-merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces (which were merged subject to a referendum in 1987) in order to undermine the claim that these are "Tamil Homelands."106

Consequently, the JHU, like their Sinhala nationalist nemesis, the JVP, remain incontrovertibly hostile to the LTTE, which they perceive as an undemocratic, unrepresentative, illegitimate and unaccountable terrorist organization that violates human rights. They also believe that Prabhakaran and the Vanni LTTE remain opposed to a peaceful solution to the current conflict. Alleged evidence to that effect lies in Prabhakaran’s assertion to Anita Pratap107 (and to the world media at the ground-breaking press conference of 2002) that a military struggle for the defeat of the Sri Lankan Army will secure a more legitimate Tamil state and that Eelam still remains the ultimate goal of the LTTE.108

Furthermore, the JHU (like the JVP) remains hostile to the ISGA framework for peace talks, stating that it is merely an attempt to turn a de facto LTTE-led Tamil nation-state into a de jure state.109 The JHU also feel that the GoSL has not exploited to the fullest the opportunity presented by the LTTE split, arguing it served as an occasion to destroy the Vanni LTTE in the East.


105 Cf. authors’ interview with UG, Colombo March 21, 2005.

106 This became one of the conditionalities along with the abandonment of the principle of autonomy for an unfulfilled JHU’s participation in the UPFA.


108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.
The JHU also appear to remain as hostile to NGOs and international actors as the JVP. As demonstrated by their "Twelve Point Programme," the transgression of sovereignty by such actors remains as high on the JHU agenda as on that of the JVP—despite a history of hostility and mutual infiltration between these two Sinhala nationalist actors. In this regard, it should be noted that the JHU feel that they have successfully used the promotion of a radical Sinhala nationalist agenda to push the JVP to articulate an even more hostile line to ISGA and a federal solution than would otherwise have been the case. While there is a profound academic debate beyond the scope of this report as to the extent of Sinhala nationalist hegemony in the South as a whole, it is nonetheless clear that a number of political, economic and socio-cultural factors can coalesce to produce significant pendulum swings toward a Sinhala Buddhist upsurge. It must be recognized that these features of the Sri Lankan polity are not static but part of a highly dynamic and variable phenomenon.

Although the JHU have contributed to a rightward shift within the JVP and the southern polity as a whole, our opinion is that the JHU as it currently stands is no longer as significant a long-term potential spoiler of the peace process as it may have seemed in April 2004 when it won nine seats in the election. Our reasons for this assessment will be expanded upon below.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE JHU AS A SINHALA NATIONALIST ORGAN

The JHU fielded bhikku candidates in the 2004 election in the context of a sudden upsurge of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist passions. This nationalism had emerged in late 2003 in the aftermath of the death of the Venerable Gangodavila Soma, a popular Buddhist preacher and bhikku who was able to reach a wide audience through the electronic media and his uncompromising castigation of the generally corrupt state of politics in the South. Soma also preached vociferously against Christian churches and NGOs, seeing them as "the instruments of a diabolical conspiracy by Christian powers to convert and corrupt the Sinhalese Buddhist public." This upsurge also emerged at a time of financial hardship and rising prices in the country alongside the destabilizing dynamics and uncertainty of a stalled peace process in which the UNF government was unable to capitalize on the vision of the 2002 CFA. All these factors may well have combined to produce the potency of the sudden nationalist turn and expressions of dissatisfaction with the UNF government. Much of this lay in their perceived failure to engage in consultation with the people or the president over the nature of the proposals for interim administration in the North-East. Indeed, it became not uncommon for Ranil Wickremasinghe to be depicted in the media as more sympathetic to the cause of Tamil Eelam than to the concerns of the southern electorate. He was portrayed as a leader who had handed the interests and control of the country’s future to INGOs and powerful donor states pressuring for a solution to the ethnic conflict, and as the helmsman of a government that had done little for development and growth in the South outside of a narrow elite section of the Colombo-centric business community.

In this more turbulent situation, a series of attacks on Christian churches immediately followed Soma’s death in December 2003. They continued well into the 2004 period resulting in at least 170 recorded acts of violence.

110 Again the CPA Social Indicators survey remains of use in this respect as it clearly demonstrates the existence of significant opposition to the peace process in the South. See Centre for Policy Alternatives (2004) Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices Survey on the Sri Lankan Peace Process (KAPS) (CPA, Colombo). What such empirical studies cannot gauge is the extent to which political leadership can swiftly produce a counter-hegemonic position to the claim that the South is Sinhala nationalist in orientation.


against Christian churches. NGOs (such as World Vision) were also targeted with anti-Christian posters, slogans, and acts of violence. The JHU/SU combine obviously attempted to make the most of its links with Venerable Soma, which were formally established through the Maharagama Temple connection, and the affiliation of his Jana Vijaya Foundation with the SU in 2002. To this extent they have even claimed his support from beyond the grave. Indeed, it is the SU who contributed massively to the continued fanning of anti-Christian flames, passions, and violence and who were instrumental in the campaign for the tabling of an "anti-conversion bill" in 2004 that was in the end ruled unconstitutional.

However, the JHU influence on the political process has been such that the minister for Buddha Sasana, Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, also tabled a government anti-conversion bill, the "Act of Safeguarding Religious Freedom." Ironically, this bill is viewed as even more stringent than its predecessor, with potential penalties of up to five years imprisonment or a Rs. 100,000 fine for "unethical" conversion offences. Penalties increase to seven years imprisonment and a Rs. 500,000 fine in the case of minors. Evidently, both bills were targeting the perceived inducement to conversion of poorer Buddhist communities by Christian evangelical organizations and NGOs. A law that potentially contravenes human rights articles on freedom of religion may consequently seriously affect relief and reconstruction efforts on the part of Christian aid groups and charities in Sri Lanka, and could also augment rather than diminish religious strife in the country.

Despite the continuing impact of the JHU on the Sri Lankan political landscape, the Urumaya combine has suffered a series of setbacks and scandals since its inception. This has rendered the JHU’s current political influence and future electoral prospects considerably more tenuous than a year ago. Among the setbacks was the split suffered by the SU in October 2000 on the question of who should take up their single parliamentary seat won in that year’s election. A faction led by Ranawaka and the NMAT sought to remove the party chairman, SL Gunasekera, from his unanimous nomination to the seat by the SU’s central committee. Ranawaka blamed Gunasekera for the poor showing in the elections and accused him of lacking nationalist authenticity; casting aspersions on his religious views (or lack of them), his consumption of alcohol, and his alleged use of English over Sinhala. This led to the departure of a more restrained variety of Sinhala nationalism championed by the SL Gunasekera faction. In its place, the right wing of an already ultra-nationalist organ began to assert control over the Urumaya movement.

The JHU were also beset by scandal when two dissident JHU monks, Aparekke Pannanada Thera and Kathaluwe Rathanaseeha Thera, resigned from the party in close succession. They accused the party of corruption and bribery and continue to criticize the party for falling into the trap of SU manipulation. The monks then mysteriously disappeared immediately prior to the election of the parliamentary speaker and then emerged to vote with the government for DEW Gunasekara (CP and UPFA) as speaker. This prompted the JHU to cast the two decisive votes, alongside the UNF and the TNA, for a UNP-affiliated candidate, WJM Lokubandara. It was a move that was perceived, particularly among fellow nationalists, as contrary to the electoral will of the country and to the supposed principles of the JHU. In doing so it rekindled suspicions that elements within the party still seemed to uphold UNP interests. These events led to a series of attacks on JHU-affiliated temples in the South and are perceived to have widely

113 Source: National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka.
114 The JHU’s "Prohibition of Forcible Conversions of Religions Bill" was tabled in July 2004, but was judged unconstitutional as it breached articles protecting freedom of religious expression.
discredited JHU claims that it was acting above the political fray and in the general national interest. Furthermore, defections from the JHU/SU combine have continued with both Thilak Karunaratne returning to the UNP fold and Gampaha District MP, Kolonnawe Sumanagala Thera, announcing his resignation from party politics in October 2004. One interpretation of these continuing splits in the party is that they represent a political divide between the lay leadership of Champika Ranawaka and the bhikku legislators in the party.

Consequently, the JHU is deemed to have been widely discredited in both political circles and among the wider public. They are also seen to have brought the controversial image of bhikkus in politics into sharp disrepute. This may suggest several things—including that the JHU’s long-term prospects have been seriously undermined, that the Urumaya organ therefore no longer poses as serious a threat as spoiler to the peace process, or that support for the movement may swing back to the UNP or even to the JVP. Nonetheless, it is possible that the Urumaya elements may regroup and reassert their influence on the political landscape in a revitalized and novel shape. The possibility of an Urumaya revival received a considerable boost in the recent negotiation and signing of the P-TOMS agreement between the GoSL and the president. The JHU along with the JVP were at the forefront of protests and mobilizations against the aid mechanism, including high-profile fasts-unto-death by Athuraliye Rathana Thera and Omalpe Sobhita Thera of the JHU and four other monks. There have also been rumors circulating in the press that the JHU has been engaging in negotiations with the JVP regarding the formation of a coalition and the fielding of a common presidential candidate. Such a possibility, however, has been swiftly dismissed by the JVP who are more likely to seek political partnerships with the Muslim parties and the MEP.116 However, the current Sinhala nationalist upswing once again poses at least the possibility that the JHU could have a political resurrection. As such, it is worth considering the potential incentives there may be for the JHU in regards to the peace process.

INCENTIVES FOR THE JHU/SIHALA URUMAYA AS A PEACE STAKEHOLDER

1) It is clear that the JHU/SU and their satellite organizations have taken on a consistently negative role vis-à-vis the issues of minorities, the peace process, prospect of a federal solution, and ISGA. They have also proved hostile to recognizing the LTTE as a legitimate actor and repeatedly attack and marginalize ethnic and religious minorities and their political representatives, including Sri Lankan and Hill Country Tamils, Muslims, and Christians. As the JHU clearly seeks to control and challenge the activities of INGOs, NGOs, international and inter-governmental actors, and foreign mediators (such as Norway), it is clear that they remain a highly antagonistic force and a potentially serious obstacle as far as the aid community is concerned. This movement has consistently vied for a military solution, making it (alongside the JVP) opposed to the peace process in its current form. While it must be stated that the JVP are a more significant political actor and thus potential opponent to the peace process, the JHU/SU’s capacity to wield a disproportionate influence on the political landscape should not be underestimated. It can be reasonably argued that the JHU have also pushed the JVP itself in a more Sinhala nationalist direction with the latter party seeking to mobilize the Sinhala nationalist block in competition with the former.

2) Having said that, the JHU/SU have differences with the JVP. Considering the refractory nature of JHU/SU’s stance, they are ironically endowed with a greater transparency of aims and potential for dialogue than the JVP. The JHU/SU have always promoted their ideas in a clear and accessible way.

and (unlike the JVP) do not deny, disguise, or attempt to dilute their Sinhala nationalist discourse through recourse to the homogenizing rhetoric of pseudo-Marxist platitudes about universal man. In this respect, when donors confront the spectra of the JHU/SU combine, there can be a clear perspective of where the movement lies in relation to a viable peace process. Some of this may have to do with the broader cultural horizons of a movement that is to a great extent related to the Sinhala diaspora and has greater access to the English media—in spite of its small world nationalist pretensions. While we are not for a minute suggesting that these cultural horizons moderate the exclusionary potency of “long-distance” nationalism, the ability to enjoin and mount a dialogue is clearly there. This is not a far-fetched view. A study on the role of the Sangha in the peace process indicated that even nationalist monks have, at times, been susceptible to ideological movement on the peace process (Frydenlund, 2005, p. 30). This is also echoed by the words of a senior JHU representative:

"We, the JHU, are willing to change our stand if somebody proves us wrong. The day that we are convinced or proved that we are wrong, we are willing to change our stand... We are not supporting the Sinhala cause just because we are Sinhalese in a very tribal way. We are supporting it because we think it is the correct perspective and if somebody convinces us that it is wrong, we will accept that. We strongly believe that we must crush the LTTE. That is the true liberation for Tamils, true independence for the entire country."  

Nevertheless, it is clear from the same quote that the JHU/SU see the LTTE as one among a contending range of arch adversaries and this has serious implications for a peace process in which the LTTE play a leading role.

3) What is also clear from discussions with the JHU is that there is some history and continuing dialogue between the JHU/SU combine and political alternatives to the LTTE. While groups like the EPDP and the EPRLF may be regarded as paramilitary arms of the Sri Lankan state (including by many donors and NGOs), since the CFA it is claimed that these groups have been disarmed and represent an alternative to the LTTE. They have claimed a willingness to engage in the electoral process and in a dialogue with JHU members. As a leadership-level representative of the JHU put it:

"I have a very close rapport with the alternative Tamil groups. Recently at an EPDP workshop I said, 'Convince me your struggle for federalism is correct.' I have been supporting EPRLF since my school days. I was a strong Leftist in my school days. I was supporting Eelam and EPRLF."  

Though such a stance does not preclude the possibility of a dialogue about autonomy for the North-East with non-LTTE groups, at the same time it makes the possibility of the JHU/SU engaging in a dialogue with the LTTE highly improbable.

4) As mentioned above, it should be clearly recognized that the JHU/SU dynamic has been ebbing over the last year, as has the context for its initial potency. It is clear that over the past year, influential figures associated with the JHU/SU movement have left in considerable numbers. Due to its increased lack of political influence it may, therefore, be more apt to describe the JHU as an organization that will be more effectively isolated than accommodated in any meaningful peace process. Nevertheless, it is perfectly possible that, as the implementation of a joint aid mechanism and the peace process is rolled

---

117 Cf. interview with UG, Colombo March 21, 2005.
119 Cf. interview with UG, Colombo March 21, 2005.
forward, the *Urumaya* combine may attempt to forge closer links with the elements that oppose these aims—including ironically those minority parties that the *Urumaya* have frequently attacked.\(^{120}\) As stated above, the vicissitudes of Sinhala nationalism show that the pendulum can swing swiftly; and that the potential for a grass-roots mobilization of Sinhala nationalist opinion has not completely dissipated among the JHU/SU’s social constituency; and, therefore, the social context for donors must be seriously considered before completely writing off such dynamics and their potential for regeneration.

**JATHIKA CHINTANAYA: AIMS AND STRATEGIES FOR SINHALA NATIONALISM**

As *Jathika Chintanaya* is not precisely a political association but more a school of thought led by two intellectuals—author Gunadasa Amarasekara and Nalin de Silva, who heads the think-tank *Jathika Chintana Parshadaya*—this section will remain very brief. Nonetheless, we will outline the central alignments between the ideological program and political actors we have discussed because the movement has a profound influence on both cultural and political facets of Sinhala nationalism. The term Jathika Chinatanaya was first coined in Gunadasa Amarasekara’s Sinhala journalistic articles in the 1980s and is best translated as "civilizational" or "national consciousness." It refers to a program of regeneration of traditional Buddhist social and political values as a bulwark against the perceived socio-culturally deleterious impact of capitalist and Western influences.\(^{121}\) Such conceptions once again serve to reproduce Sinhala Buddhist nationalist associations between kingship and righteous rule; and engender an attachment to the unitary state and, of course, a rabid hostility to any project of devolutionary constitutional reform. It might be assumed from this that the JHU/SU and *Jathika Chintanaya* have a natural ideological proximity and it is indeed clear that after Champika Ranawaka and Athuraliye Rathana Thera left the JVP, they aligned themselves for a time with the *Jathika Chintana Parshadaya*.\(^{122}\) However, the relationship soured over disagreements on long-term Sinhala nationalist strategy and Nalin de Silva has since remained hostile to the JHU/SU. This recently led to accusations of UNP subterfuge in the strategies of the party.

It is interesting to note for the purposes of this report that for most of the 1980s both Nalin de Silva and Gunadasa Amarasekara remained critical of the JVP—despite the party’s frequent appeal to Sinhala nationalist discontent and interpretations of support (Chandraprema, 1991, pp.110-117). For the proponents of *Jathika Chintanaya*, the JVP’s revolutionary Marxism was also a Western dilution of the true potential for Sinhala civilizational consciousness. However, while Nalin de Silva still refuses to shift completely on the question of the third generation of the JVP (again censuring the party for their continued adherence to Marxism), over the last three years Gunadasa Amarasekara has been eager to hitch the *Jathika Chintanaya* bandwagon to the JVP.\(^{123}\) For Amarasekara, the mainstream parties no longer have any nationalist dynamics and the JVP, with Weerawansa at the ideological helm, has taken up the Sinhala nationalist cause to potent effect. Such a turnaround is notable, as it has formed a vital political bridge between an older and more established generation of Sinhala nationalism and the JVP’s youthful “patriotic” cohorts. It also

---

120 In April 2005, the JHU invited the JVP and all political parties who were against the Joint Mechanism to join forces. See “JHU to join JVP against the joint mechanism” Daily Mirror (Colombo), April 26, 2005. UPFA Cabinet Minister, Ferial Ashraff’s National Unity Alliance also voiced objection to the “joint mechanism.”

121 Cf authors’ interviews with Gunadasa Amarasekara March 17-18, 2005.

122 Cf. authors’ interview with UG, March 21, 2005.

confirms the authors’ interpretation that the JVP remains the most significant contemporary Sinhala nationalist actor and that its nationalism is deeply ideologically embedded. It is also clearly taking up the baton of Sinhala nationalism increasingly discarded by the mainstream parties due to their general consensus on the need for a devolutionary solution. For these reasons also, the JVP remains the most significant opponent to the current frameworks for the peace process.

OVERVIEW OF THE UPCOUNTRY PEOPLE’S FRONT

The UPF is a small but not insignificant Hill Country Tamil political party that emerged as a splinter group from the CWC, the leading political organization representing the interests of the "Upcountry" Tamils. The UPF emerged in 1989 when Periyasamy Chandrasekaran, a CWC organizer, Urban Council representative and energetic social activist became disillusioned with the CWC’s failure to nominate him for the provincial council elections of 1988 and the general elections of 1989. In founding the party, Chandrasekaran joined forces with Kader (an Upcountry Marxist intellectual and former activist in the Ceylon Teacher’s Union), Tharmalingham (a school principal), and a group of activists who had previously been connected to the Gamini Yapa group and the Upcountry Mass Organization. The party was initially unable to register independently and therefore ran in the 1989 elections under the anchor symbol of the People’s Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) with Umamaheswaran’s blessing. While they failed to capture a seat, the UPF nonetheless managed to amass 10,000 votes in their debut general election. They also succeeded in splitting the Upcountry vote in the district so the CWC also failed to obtain a seat. After capturing three seats in the local government elections in 1991, the party fell into a momentary decline after Kader, Tharmaligham, and Chandrasekaran were detained for allegedly harboring Varathan who was accused of bombing the Joint Operational Command in Colombo.

Nonetheless, in 1993 Chandrasekaran became the first provincial councilor to win a seat while still in detention. In the 1994 general election, he worked alongside the PA, won a seat, and became minister for estate housing until his resignation in the course of the term. The UPF then became active members of the UNF alliance in 2001 and though Chandrasekaran became minister of social development he earned disapprobation in some circles by being the first minister to publicly engage in a Pongu Thamil address in 2003. Since the UPFA came to power, the UPF have maintained their political alignment with the UNF, lobbied vocally for a resumption of peace negotiations, and continue to maintain close relations with the LTTE.

ORGANIZATION AND CONSTITUENCY BASE

The CWC and the UPF have broadly similar roots in that they operate out of similar Upcountry Tamil constituencies and remain heavily dependent on union activities for funding, training, organizational dynamics, and international linkages. Indeed, despite the massive decline in union membership in recent years it is widely recognized that any political force seeking to mobilize the Upcountry vote will not succeed without also laying down what is termed as the twin “tracks” of Hill Country “railway politics.” Although the UPF first began as a political party rather than a union, it soon recognized the essential necessity of forming the Upcountry Workers’ Front— the second-largest estate union with an estimated 45,000 members and 100 full-
time union workers, many of whom received their training within the CWC. In terms of social constituency, the Upcountry people must be socio-economically differentiated. There is a significant, socially mobile, and growing urban and trading class of the Upcountry populace in both Colombo and in the towns of the Central Province. However, the majority of Upcountry Tamils are still employed on the estates despite the fact that there is an increasing trend for younger generations to shun estate work and the social stigma that accompanies it. Where possible, people prefer to move out of the estate sector. In this sense, despite their slowly increasing mobility and social differentiation, both the CWC and the UPF still have their organizational roots in the estates where the depressed state of Upcountry Tamils is most concentrated and evident. This is so despite their recognition that the socio-economic conditions and political rights of all Upcountry Tamils need improving—whether they are living in the Hill Country areas, Colombo, or the North-East.

THE UPF, CWC, UPCOUNTRY TAMIL NATIONALISM AND THE PEACE PROCESS

Some informed critics view the UPF and the CWC in the same light, as parties whose central concerns remained tied to "immediate political objectives." Their actions are also considered a form of political "bargaining" that "fits in very well with the current state of politics in Sri Lanka." The present leadership, however, is criticized for "not having a long-term vision and is not capable of developing a long-term vision" beyond the desire for holding ministerial portfolios and bargaining for access to equal citizenship entitlement, employment, and development projects from the electorally dominant parties or coalitions. Nonetheless, since the CWC entered electoral politics in 1977 it has become renowned for its political opportunism and capacity to work with either of the two mainstream parties. As a result it plays a significant role in coalition-making and breaking, and can effect clear differences of emphasis and nuances in the approach of these two parties—especially with regards to Tamil identity and the peace process. Indeed, what is clear is that the UPF’s stance on the national question has, to some degree, departed from that found in the genealogy of both their left-wing and CWC roots. This is evident in the fact that they have, at least rhetorically, discarded the reductionist Marxist economic platitudes that assert that economic change with other proletarian forces should be the primary objective of Upcountry Tamil people. They have also modified their approach to the national question in the aftermath of the successive targeting of Upcountry Tamils by Sinhala chauvinist violence in 1977, 1981, and 1983. More recent examples of ethnic violence, including attacks orchestrated by the NMAT/SVV combine in 1998 and the aftermath of the Bindunuwewa massacre in 2000, have also influenced their change in position. For the UPF then, the problems of the Upcountry Tamil constituency are no longer to be contained within a "citizenship" paradigm. As a result, the leadership base of the party took up a more militantly Upcountry Tamil nationalist platform after having forged links with the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students, EPRLF, and PLOTE in the late 1980s.

126 Cf. authors’ interview with Lawrence, March 20, 2005.
127 Cf. authors’ interview with P.P. Devaraj, March 15, 2005.
128 Ibid.
129 Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman had been a government-nominated representative for the CWC since the 1960s but it was only in 1977 that he won on an election ticket.
130 It should be noted that the CWC briefly walked out of the present UPFA coalition in late February 2005, over reported disagreements over the Upper Kotmale Dam project and a series of other conditions that had sealed their participation in the coalition.
The essential difference between the UPF and the CWC is that they no longer claim to see the citizenship issue and the gradual equalizing of status to be the main aim of an Upcountry Tamil political party. They have instead opted to emphasize that their suffering at the hands of Sinhala chauvinism—as well as their long-term educational, employment, infrastructural, cultural, political, and developmental deprivations—can only be answered through recourse to a federal or devolutionary restructuring of power. In this, the UPF operate a dual strategy of clearly demarcating and differentiating the needs, identity, and rights of the Upcountry Tamils from those of the Northern and Eastern Tamils. At the same time they actively forge links with and support the struggle for autonomy articulated by the Vanni LTTE. In the eyes of the UPF, the essential demand and solution for the Upcountry Tamils (as well as the LTTE) is for territorial devolution and the carving out of a "devolutionary unit." The UPF has published this proposal in its manifesto commitments, presented the idea to the Parliamentary Select Committees on Devolution and responded to the gathering of suggestions for constitutional reform in 1994. On all occasions, according to the UPF, it failed to produce any notable response other than a deep reluctance on the part of the GoSL to introduce yet another dimension that might be perceived as a potential source of ethnic fragmentation/balkanization within the Sri Lankan polity. It was also touted that should the territorial devolution unit prove impractical, the UPF would explore the possibility of Pondicherry-style enclaves. The party also indicated that their commitment to forging a bond with the LTTE is based on the latter’s pledge to lobby on behalf of the UPF proposal for Upcountry devolution when constitutional reform is seriously discussed.

The emergence of a deeper LTTE/Upcountry nexus has not surprisingly triggered criticism from Sinhala nationalist quarters that are eager to read into it an LTTE infiltration of the Hill Country districts. It has also brought about condemnation from Arumugam Thondaman who accuses the UPF of over-extending its connections and support to the LTTE. He asserts that the UPF are losing sight of the separate issues at stake and of potentially subjugating Upcountry Tamil interests to the will of Prabhakaran. In response, the UPF have stated that the relationship is not so much a case of instrumental design but a result of a gradual evolution due to the rising numbers of Upcountry Tamils in areas of the North-East such as the Vanni. This happened subsequent to the forced migrations and colonizations that took place after the land reforms and food crisis of 1973-1974; and then the series of anti-Tamil pogroms of 1977, 1981, and 1983, which seriously affected the Hill Country districts. It is also evident that Northeastern Tamils are also present in the Hill Country in sizeable numbers, with 41,445 "Sri Lankan Tamils" residing in Nuwara Eliya alone. According to the UPF, although the Upcountry Tamils are a separate national community, a bond has been developing between the communities because of this increasing interpenetration of the communities, their shared Tamil speaking background and experience of oppression. The UPF-LTTE nexus is expressive of these dynamics.

Yet while Thondaman has condemned the UPF’s proximity to the LTTE, the CWC has also long forged connections with Tamil militant groups, attempted to
appease Prabhakaran, and supported the LTTE’s ISGA framework for the peace process. Indeed the pursuit of ISGA became one of the publicly pronounced conditions for the CWC’s entry into the UPFA coalition in September 2004. Indeed, since the 1980s the CWC have regularly made loud noises in support of an autonomous region in the North-East without allowing this stance to affect its immediate political interests and decisions. Although the CWC was one of the principal actors involved in the Vaddukodai Declaration of 1976, it is quite clear that the CWC went its own way in the aftermath of the declaration, partly due to its newfound place in electoral politics. Bearing in mind the influence that the LTTE has come to wield over the TNA, the CWC is thus concerned with protecting the autonomy of its power base from the potential encroachment and suzerainty of Prabhakaran. The CWC also feels ambivalence about the prospect of constitutional and electoral reforms. Minority parties currently benefit under the proportional and presidential system and may, therefore, lose out under currently proposed changes. India’s interest in keeping the LTTE, ISGA, and the UNF at bay may also have influenced the CWC’s current political tactics.

It is also clear that the influence of the Tamil media, the history of conjoined suffering, the interaction between the different Tamil communities, and the restlessness of a younger generation of Upcountry Tamils have all played their part in producing an empathy with the LTTE among the constituency base of the Upcountry Tamils. This has played a major part in both the rhetorical strategies of the CWC and the more deep-seated alliance of the UPF. The latter appear to be asserting a more potent support for a devolutionary solution and leaning toward a stronger relationship with the LTTE and the UNP coalition. Yet support for autonomy in the North-East by both the UPF and the CWC can also be interpreted as an attempt to steal the thunder of Tamil nationalism and prevent the LTTE from making in-roads into the Hill Country. It therefore remains to be seen if the UPF will contribute to a more potent politics of nationalist affect in the Upcountry Tamil constituencies or whether, as with the CWC, the party is based on the patronage networks and political bargaining that has hitherto characterized the CWC. On the latter score some commentators have interpreted the historical trajectory of Estate Tamil politics as a simple substitution of the union for the kangani system. Nonetheless, having finally overcome the first legacy of the historical hurdles left by the disenfranchisement of the citizenship acts of 1948 and 1949, Upcountry Tamils now form a significant voting block within a number of electoral districts. As a result they have even greater political prominence than simply Thondaman’s capacity to act as political kingmaker, and therefore their role in relation to the peace process will become increasingly significant.

INCENTIVES FOR THE PEACE PROCESS

While the CWC is locked into the status quo as far as the peace process goes, the UPF is willing to entertain the ISGA framework for negotiations, with the understanding that the LTTE will bring its request for a devolutionary unit for the Upcountry Tamils onto the agenda for constitutional reform. In this respect the UPF offer little in terms of potential obstacles to the recommencement of peace talks on the basis of continuity with the UNF regime. In fact Chandrasekaran himself attempted, unsuccessfully, to bring Weerawansa and the JVP to the table with the LTTE in 2004 on the basis of ISGA. Consequently, the UPF had been willing to take initiatives with the UPFA in order to revive the peace process, despite remaining aligned with the UNF. The UPF’s peace strategy presently remains unproblematic, a factor that may swiftly change if Upcountry Tamil issues are not mooted when frameworks for constitutional change are seriously discussed.


3. Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear the mainstream parties (the SLFP/PA and UNP/UNF) have shifted on the whole toward a common platform that recognizes the need for consociational constitutional reform and the negotiation of a peace process on the basis of autonomy for the North-East. This consensus has come about despite the fact that attempts to implement such a solution by each party have been frequently derailed by the opposition benches. Although this shift has occurred at the level of political leadership and among wide sections of Sri Lanka's elite, it does not in any way signify that Sinhala nationalist majoritarianism is in the process of finally being effaced from its long hegemonic sojourn in the southern polity. The dynamics behind this perseverance are complex but for the sake of understanding we can break them down into a four-fold, overlapping schema.

First, decades of potent socialization through familial, religious, educational, and media practices have resulted in a Sinhala Buddhist nationalist hegemony that spans the political, socio-economic and cultural landscape of Sri Lanka. It has resulted in these practices and apparatuses being reproduced and deeply permeating wide levels of society, especially the vernacular strata. The Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices Survey on the Sri Lankan Peace Process attests to this, and while we are not suggesting that this vision of the world goes uncontested or that it is structurally rigid or static, our view is that it ebbs and flows in reaction to events, as one would expect. In that sense Sinhala nationalism is still in the room of Sri Lanka's political house and like an unwanted guest is also keeping long and unsocial hours.

Second, it is clear that the increasingly globalized world operates to break up nationalist space very suddenly and unevenly due to the rapid circulation of modern communication, capital, and socio-cultural flows. This can often lead to potent nationalist reactions seeking to re-territorialize these flows politically, socially, culturally, and sometimes economically in order to reassert control over what is essentially a very disorganized phase of late capitalism. Accordingly, globalization may "produce strong political reactions asserting the normative authority of the local and the national over the global and the international" (Ong, 1999), which a more statist approach was once more able to, if not resolve, then at least contain.

Additionally, because disparities are exacerbated within "given" national spaces, cosmopolitanism may swiftly become a cultural marker for the elite, just as nationalist cultural authenticity often plays a similar role for subaltern groups. This is especially true if they are ghettoized within the socio-cultural vernacular or economically operative frameworks that the elites are keen to reinforce upon everyone but themselves. It is for this reason that we argue, with Tom Nairn, that much of the thrust of nationalism comes increasingly (but not exclusively) from the "marchlands and the countryside."¹³⁹ As nationalism frequently emerges with overt force from the margins and peripheries in a global, national, and local sense, explanations of this phenomenon cannot simply be reduced to economic factors. While the differing constituencies of the JHU/SU and the JVP attest to this, it is unmistakable that the JVP's more potent political presence and reproduction of this Sinhala nationalist seam has emanated from a profound socio-economic and politico-cultural disarticulation within Sri Lanka. This disarticulation is operative through class, caste, cultural, linguistic, center/periphery, and mass/elite differences.

and disparities in which the JVP has positioned itself as a more "authentic" nationalist voice because of its traditionally marginalized power base. In a situation in which elites have shifted their general position on the peace process, the JVP have served to crowd the nationalist stage—their "moral" and "sovereign high ground." This has been done in a context in which donor states, lending institutions, NGOs, and the flows of global capital and cultural currents have all increased their influence within Sri Lanka, thereby deepening the perceived transgression of the country's sovereignty.

In this landscape a division has opened up between the political project of the "cosmopolitan" elites who are attempting to move the political scene toward a federal or devolved solution and social forces within the South, socialized into the ideological hearth of Sinhala nationalism, who see this as a step toward the disintegration of Sri Lanka. As a result of the disarticulation and failure to overcome the aforementioned disparities, a potent bridge has been created between uneven development, poverty, and socio-political and cultural marginalization in the South and nationalist dynamics. In the case of the JVP at least, it continues to sustain the party's grassroots support and expanding power base. This is not to say that the JVP are absolutely inimical to peace in Sri Lanka but that their vision, along with that of the JHU, is presently trapped within the "integrative, evolutionary" scheme that denies "difference" and attempts to challenge the problems of Sinhala majoritarianism from within that power structure (Ghosh, 2003, pp. 23-34). It is a stance that has proved consistently fruitless and ultimately reinforces majoritarian dominance.

Third, while we have argued that the baton of nationalism has been passed from the mainstream parties such as the UNP and the SLFP to the once more marginalized parties such as the JHU and the JVP; it must also be appreciated that there is a return journey here in as far as the combination of existing and widening inequalities that exist in the southern polity have come to be expressed through the vocal nationalist dynamics of the JHU and, more significantly, through the JVP. There is, as it stands, no current scheme for alleviating the kinds of inequality and poverty (infrastructural, socio-economic, political, and cultural) that feed into the JVP. As such, mainstream parties (especially the SLFP) face a future of diminishing electoral returns as long as they maintain their poor record of democratic standards, accountability, and respect for moving developmental priorities beyond the Colombo-centric and elitist patron-heavy networks that exist at present. In the current context the JVP will expand and, if past experience is anything to go by, prove a worthier representative of most of its constituents than has been the case with mainstream parties. At the same time, as traditional holders of government, the mainstream parties will fight tooth and nail to keep their constituencies; and, unless there is a radical change, may continue to rely on the corruption and violent intimidation typical of patronage-based politics in the past. Similarly, there are concerns that mainstream parties may resort once again to more extreme nationalist mobilizations to compete with their more overtly nationalist counterparts. This can lead to cycles in which, for instance, bold attempts to rush through peace and constitutional reform packages without sufficient social inclusivity, participation, and consultation may continue to be undone by opposition from an admixture of the opposing mainstream party and/or the nationalist parties. In this context, mainstream political actors often become willing parties to further rounds of ethnic-outbidding and zero-sum politics. We have already seen this in the graveyard of the Constitutional Bill of 2000, the post-CFA negotiations of the UNF in the 2002-2004 period, and the UNP's refusal to entertain the idea of a national UNP/PA government after the departure of the JVP in June 2005. Once again, Sri Lanka falls victim to the zero-sum game and "ethnic outbidding" of Sri Lankan politics.

While the peace process is a necessary first step toward solving many of the aforementioned political and social problems affecting the current crisis, the shift away from
Sinhala majoritarian mobilizations has not been sufficiently accompanied in any sustained way by a counter-hegemonic, participatory project, relaying this ideological shift to wider levels of society.\textsuperscript{140} Much of this failure in political leadership has been due to the perseverance of patron-clientage as the predominant political thread that runs vertically from the state through the social body. It is a mode of politics that provides little scope for ideological or social transformation.

All too often initiatives for peace and constitutional change have been developed on an excessively narrow functional basis, most noticeably of late, by the UNP/UNF under Ranil Wickremasinghe. The latter's peace initiative fell prey to the overriding interests of a party that is representative of a "stratum of the Sinhalese ruling elite" that "is linked to global capital and no longer views the state from the outdated paradigm of national sovereignty" (Uyangoda, 2005). In this regard the UNP/UNF strives to create a stable landscape for the long-term interests of global and local business within Sri Lanka. Similar concerns have not been entirely absent from the agenda of the SLFP/PA, where far greater attention is paid to meeting both ends of the political spectrum, including the nationalist and global currents. Such pressures evidently produced greater tensions on the forging of the UPFA coalition with the JVP and did not greatly improve the consultative mechanisms for the peace process. The result is that the agenda of constitutional reforms and peace favored by political elites has not been effectively translated to wider sections of the South where Sinhala nationalist mobilization and affect is still a potent dynamic, albeit one that is subject to shifting pendulum swings.

In this, both the JVP and the JHU have played a role in fomenting opposition to consociational and devolutionary frameworks for political reform. In doing so they reproduce the dynamics of Sinhala nationalism and the concomitant desires for the preservation of the Sinhala majoritarian and unitary state. Consequently, while the JVP and the JHU can be viewed as the most significant potential opponents of the peace process and political reform, we must be wary of treating Sinhala nationalism as the sole domain of any political party. Nationalism in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere, is a far too diffuse and volatile phenomenon for such an analysis. The JVP (and to a lesser extent the JHU/SU) will continue to mobilize on Sinhala nationalist demands, but they will also seek to move the political spectrum in their favor by recruiting mainstream political actors onto their nationalist platforms or through nationalist bandwagons such as the PNM. The drafting of the Anti-Conversion Bill is a perfect illustration of nationalist movements' enduring influence on mainstream political actors. For such reasons, Sinhala nationalist politics is still a vibrant phenomenon, impacting on mainstream actors as well as producing currents of enduring marginalization and counter-nationalist reaction by minorities. This is evidenced, for instance, by Upcountry Tamil political parties such as the UPF, who have demanded devolutionary autonomy and forged stronger political bridges with the LTTE. Unless some form of devolution can break the deadlock of this ethnic outbidding, the growth of nationalism will continue unabated—a tendency that may tear at the diverse socio-political fabric, not just of Sri Lanka but of the southern polity itself.

\textsuperscript{140} The early period of the PA coalition’s rise to power and initial time in government in the mid-1990s can be seen as a more thoroughgoing attempt at a consultative, educational project but it was not sustained.
4. Implications for International Donors

These findings have the following implications for international donors aiming to support peacebuilding processes:

**POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE**

The donor community must develop mechanisms to ensure a more extensive and up-to-date knowledge of the political processes at work in the southern polity and among the diaspora. A sensitivity to the nuances and complexities of political processes will lead to a heightened understanding of the deep nexus between poverty, uneven development, social exclusion and conflict dynamics—not just in relation to the North-East but in the South as well. Doing so will significantly open the potential space for developments among the depressed communities of the Upcountry Tamils. This approach can also contribute to a deeper understanding of the conflicts within a global framework and prevent donors from falling into the trap of seeing such dynamics through an excessively “internalist” lens. Similarly, it might avert interventions that fail to look below the edifice of nationalism at the socio-cultural, economic, and political cracks and fissures that nationalism seeks to paper over but which frequently feed into its dynamics. In this sense, it can lead to a more sophisticated analysis of conflict that looks at intra-group dynamics rather than accepting the veneer of “ethnic conflict” at face value.

An ongoing, politically informed approach could also enhance conceptions of the vicissitudes and micro-political shifts that may be hostile to frameworks for peace; for instance, the upswings and downswings of nationalist agitation and upheaval and the movements that feed into and away from nationalist positions.

Rather than taking nationalist actors simply at face value, efforts should be made to create an awareness that improves judgments about the appropriateness and timing of donor interventions in situations of tension and potential conflict. Moreover, there should be a clearer perception of the capacities for peace among the spectrum of political actors.

**AID FRAMEWORKS**

The donor community needs to take account of the effects aid and attached conditionalities have in the debilitation of the state and in the fostering of nationalist and anti-globalization reactions that ultimately combine in their effects to undermine the prospects for peace. One of the central tensions that emerge from an analysis of nationalist actors such as the JVP, the SU and the JHU is the evident hostility of these political actors to IFIs, IGOs, NGOs, and INGOs. Indeed, their hostility extends to any national or international actor who is perceived to transgress the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. Such attacks have been taken to the level of an art form by the JVP’s propaganda secretary and parliamentarian, Wimal Weerawansa, and are emblematic of a nationalist reaction to the way in which humanitarian aid and development assistance have increasingly become focused on non-governmental bodies. In this respect, while Weerawansa’s attacks can be read on one level as examples of indiscriminate, fanatical and insular nationalism, they nonetheless reflect some of the debates that have ranged about the way in which aid organizations have contributed to a transnational reconfiguration of the world order and subsequent concerns over the loss of state sovereignty. While few would argue that a return to an outmoded concept of

---

sovereignty is possible, there are nonetheless deep concerns about the way in which this process has also played its part in reducing the state’s developmental role, capacity, and responsiveness. It is an issue that has certainly taken center-stage in the post-tsunami context. The increasing introduction of “governance” principles and conditionalities to aid frameworks has also obviously contributed to such concerns.

Consequently, as part of the project of strengthening conflict resolution and the peace process within the SCA project as a whole, the authors stress the need for the donor community to take account of the effects aid and attached conditionalities have on the Sri Lankan state. In this context, aid has been accused of reproducing cycles in which the government is debilitated and caught between the need to succumb to transnational and international pressures while juggling the rise of nationalist and anti-globalization reactions and agitations such pressures provoke. This has been evidenced by tensions between the state and NGOs in which the former attempts to place controls and regulation on the latter. The NGOs respond by taking on a hostile and antagonistic stance, including refusing dialogue with the state. The authors, therefore, suggest greater dialogue between these sectors that act to delimit the "circles of power" in a more responsible, transparent, and mutually acceptable fashion. We also stress the need for implementing “initiatives that help to build a strong, legitimate and responsive state” (Goodhand, 2001, p. 112).

ENGAGEMENT WITH POLITICAL ACTORS AND CAPACITIES FOR PEACE

Donors need to be aware that nationalism is not the monopoly of any one party but a tactic often deployed to undermine peace processes and the political legitimacy of opponents. Rather than privileging certain political actors, the donor community should concentrate efforts on encouraging inter-party dialogue that prevents the use of "ethnic outbidding" and encourages mechanisms for power-sharing and greater openness. The authors feel that a deeper knowledge of the political actors (including those nationalist parties that are gaining political ground) will engender a more in-depth appreciation of the capacities of the diverse actors involved in the spectrum of Sri Lankan politics. In the course of this study we have attempted to delimit the varying incentives toward engagement with the peace process that exist among these forces. The overriding conclusion is that almost all of the significant political parties discussed (with the exception of the JVP and the JHU) are potentially open to direct engagement with the process and to a dialogue about the possibility of federal frameworks.

However, one of the central findings in this report is that the process of "ethnic outbidding" continues to undermine peace bids and constitutional reform by mainstream political parties. While there has been some positive movement here (for example, on the P-TOMS agreement), donors need to be aware that nationalism is not the province of any one of the mainstream parties. Rather it has been deployed by both the UNP and SLFP-led coalitions as a tactic for undermining peace processes and political legitimacy, thereby contributing to the sustenance and reproduction of destabilizing Sinhala nationalist dynamics. In this context, the donor community should not privilege any one of the political actors. Instead it should encourage inter-party communication and dialogue, including attempts by government and opposition coalitions to enter into and honor agreements designed to prevent the use of such tactics (for example, the 1997 U.K.-mediated bipartisan agreement). In the interests of long-term political cooperation, donors should also continue to encourage mechanisms for power-sharing and greater openness.

Political actors engaged in finding long-term solutions to the conflict should craft interventions that address confidence-building measures and transparent constitutional proposals simultaneously. One of the problems with past peace processes discussed in this report is that they have leaned too heavily in the direction of either CBM (for example, the UNF 2001-2004) or on the preparation of clear and
transparent constitutional proposals (for example, the PA 1994-2000), at the expense of the other. Political actors engaged in finding long-term solutions to the ethnic conflict need to recognize the importance of addressing both areas simultaneously, as it is crucial to the creation of an environment conducive to dialogue, negotiation, and development.

*Helping traditional parties overcome institutional limitations would enhance the quality of democracy in terms of participation, deliberation, and informed choice.* In respect to the traditional parties—the UNP and SLFP—it should be noted that institutional capacities and intra-party governance frameworks are weak. Mobilizations in support of peace suffer as a result. We note that there are several handicaps common to both parties that impair their ability to function as effective actors in Sri Lanka’s multi-party democracy.

These include an absence of transparency and accountability; over-centralization of decision-making power in hierarchical leaderships preventing participation and diversity; the lack of structures, initiatives, and incentives for building policy development capacities; and a lack of even marginally satisfactory frameworks for financial transparency and accountability. There is an alarming lack of capacity and incentive on the part of elected members of these parties to employ democratic institutions in the conduct of politics and the advancement of party interests. Consequently, legislative institutions such as Parliament and provincial councils become regressively irrelevant, an executive-centric political culture develops, and political competition is increasingly conducted outside institutions. Helping the traditional parties overcome these disabilities would enhance the quality of democracy in terms of participation, deliberation, and informed choice. It is also worthwhile to bear in mind that these two parties command between them the confidence of approximately 60% of the electorate. By any standard, this is a formidable constituency for peace, if only the party leaderships’ stated commitment for a negotiated settlement along federalist lines can be percolated down to the grassroots. This may explain how the UNP’s remarkable track-one achievements in 2002-2004 could not be transformed into broad public support for peace.

*Wider participation by and consultation with external and internal actors might influence parties that remain hostile to peace. This could confer greater transparency, consensus, and legitimacy on a viable and enduring framework for peace.* While we have concluded that the JVP, and to a lesser extent the JHU, remains opposed to the predominant paradigms for a peaceful solution, there are a range of actors that have the potential to play a role in opening up the space for dialogue and engaging with the peace process. External actors who maintain contact with and/or influence over the JVP include China, India, and the CPIM; while internal players include the Left parties in Sri Lanka (the CP, LSSP, NSSP) and personalities such as TULF’s V. Anandasangari. Bearing in mind some of the criticisms we have raised about past failures in encouraging wider participation in and consultation about the peace process, an expanded role for building peace capacities among a wider range of actors could confer a greater transparency, consensus, and legitimacy on a viable and enduring framework for peace.

**CIVIL SOCIETY, EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION, AND CONFIDENCE-BUILDING**

*Programmatic support for civil society actors is essential to ensure that they continue to generate policy options and act as rights watchdogs.* Bearing in mind the concerns set out above, it must be reiterated that expansion of democratic politics to include civil society actors as legitimate stakeholders in public policy debates must be encouraged. During the last two decades Sri Lanka has seen the establishment of several public policy research and advocacy organizations that are key actors in the peace constituency. Programmatic support for these organizations is essential to ensure that they continue to generate policy options and act as rights watchdogs. The
media, too, has played a similar role and requires continued support.

However, civil society must not be defined to include only certain types of organizations to the exclusion of others. Local-level and community-based organizations are pivotal allies in peacebuilding efforts but are currently suffering from many of the same capacity problems as traditional political parties. Therefore, engagement with them is imperative.

**TRANSPARENCY, CONSULTATION, AND INCLUSIVITY**

A lack of transparency and consultation in the peace process must be addressed as it feeds suspicion and destroys trust and confidence among opposition groups and civil society. One of the problems that has incited and legitimized cycles of nationalist discontent with past and present peace efforts is a lack of transparency, consultation, and inclusivity. This is true in respect to opposition groups as well as civil society as a whole. It is important that these areas be addressed, as a lack of transparency feeds suspicion and destroys trust and confidence among political opposition groups and civil society actors as a whole. This in turn can serve to legitimize antagonism toward peace and reform proposals. The recent context for P-TOMS provided another example of failure in this area and ultimately fanned the flames of Sinhala nationalist protest.
Bibliography


