POLITY

ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S SECULARISM

A rthur C. Clarke – one of Sri Lanka's most famous and distinguished residents - died aged 90, on March 19 2008. While Clarke's contributions on space explorations, communications technology and writings on these themes have been publicized and lauded in the local press, less is mentioned about his warnings of the dangers of fundamentalism in religion and his strong secularism. Throughout his life, Clarke often took issue with religious bigots and with those who denied Darwin's theories.

Although Voltaire, a philosopher of the Enlightenment, proclaimed that "God is Dead" over 200 years ago, and Charles Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species* over 150 years ago, debate still continues on issues of both atheism and evolution. Christianity, however, has ceased to dominate the lives of people in Western Europe (where churches are almost empty and clergy hard to recruit), and in Britain, more Muslims worship at mosques than Christians attend church on Sundays. But fundamentalism flourishes, promoting violent conflict and war in many parts of the world.

There are many modern-day Voltaires who have created an interest in challenging beliefs in God(s) and religion. Most sensationally in recent years have been Francis Wheen's *How Mumbo Jumbo Conquered the World*, scientist Richard Dawkin's *The God Delusion*, and the philosopher Slavoj Ziszek's article "Atheism is a Legacy Worth Fighting For" (*Polity* Vol 3, No3). Unfortunately when 'Third World' scholars write critically of religion - as did Taslima Nasreen, Salman Rushdie or S.J. Tambiah - they are villified by extremists.

Arthur Clarke was certainly in the secular tradition, as seen in his insistence that "absolutely no religious rites of any kind, relating to any religious faith should be associated with my funeral." His many pronouncements on religion, and his belief that religious fanaticism leads to violence and war, are revealing. Clarke said he suspected that "religion is a necessary evil in the childhood of our particular species" and added that "there is possibility that humankind can outgrow its infantile tendencies." In an interview to the *Free Inquiry* magazine on the topic of "God, Science and Delusion" he said:

> But it is amazing how childishly gullible humans are. There are, for example, so many different religions – each of them claiming to have the truth, each saying that their truths are clearly superior to the truths of others – how can someone possibly take any of them seriously? I mean, that's insane. And such insanity concerns me, especially now that waves of lunacy are washing over the United States and the world in the form of millennial cults.

To Arthur Clarke one of the "great tragedies of mankind" was that morality had been "hijacked by religion":

> So now people assume that religion and morality have a necessary connection. But the basis of morality is really very simple and doesn't require religion at all. It's this. "Don't do unto anybody else what you wouldn't like to be done to you." It seems to me that that's all there is to it.

Sri Lanka mercifully has not become a theocracy, and if we are to honour the memory of Arthur C. Clarke, we should continue to stress the importance of secularism which is a necessity for maintaining unity in diversity. Clarke towards the end of his life said that if he was granted three wishes, they would be - proof of extra terrestrial life, freedom from dependence on oil, and an end to the civil war in Sri Lanka. We hope that all these wishes will be realized soon.

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POLITICS OF SRI LANKA IN 2007 – TRAJECTORIES OF CONFLICT ESCALATION

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Introduction

Sri Lanka's political developments in the year 2007 have primarily been centered on the escalation of the 'undeclared' war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The resumption of war has made the negotiation option largely irrelevant to the immediate agenda of both the government and the LTTE, although both sides had used the rhetoric of a political solution amidst a commitment to a military solution. In 2007 it is language of war and hostility, rather than the language of peace and reconciliation, that dominated news headlines and public debates in Sri Lanka.

During the past few years, a particular puzzle has characterized the developments in relation to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict process: relapsing to civil war has been much easier for both the government and the LTTE than sustaining political engagement. It almost appeared that the parties were utterly exhausted by the kind of peace that the UNF-LTTE political engagement had produced in 2002-2003 through a ceasefire agreement, negotiations and international facilitation. Against this backdrop, events in the year 2007 have highlighted the relative ease with which Sri Lanka further entangled itself in what one may call the 'war trap' while drawing attention to the difficulties in exploring a political settlement in a new context of re-militarization. In exploring this twin process, this paper will discuss the following themes: (i) resumption of war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, (ii) human rights and humanitarian issues linked to war escalation, (iii) the international dimension in both peace and conflict processes, (iv) the question of a 'political solution,' (v) issues of governance, (vi) intra-party and interparty conflicts, and (vi) the pace and war traps that define the new dynamics of the conflict.

Resumption of War

The resumption of war actually occurred in 2006 in the aftermath of the breakdown of talks between the new Mahinda Rajapaksa administration and the LTTE. President Rajapaksa, who was elected to office in November 2005 with the backing of Sinhalese nationalist parties, attempted to revive talks with the LTTE in his first few months in office.[i] Two rounds of talks held in Geneva in early 2006 did not produce any major outcome in breaking the peace deadlock, because by this time the peace process initiated in 2002 with international backing and Norwegian facilitation had exhausted all its energy. Moreover, there was no political commitment on the part of either the government or the LTTE to give the negotiation process another chance to succeed, because each side had come to the conclusion that war was the best option to further its own interests.

One peculiar feature of the war resumption was that both the government and the LTTE had formally remained signatories to the Cease-Fire Agreement (CFA) of 2002. This CFA was signed by the LTTE and the then Sri Lankan government of the United National Front (UNF) in February 2002 as a prelude to peace negotiations. Brokered by the Norwegian peace facilitators, the functioning of the CFA was monitored by a Scandinavian monitoring team, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). One key clause in the CFA made it necessary for either party to formally withdraw from the CFA only after giving two-weeks notice of such withdrawal. [ii] For reasons of avoiding international blame, neither the new Sri Lankan government nor the LTTE formally abrogated the CFA despite the resumption of hostilities in mid-2006 in a fairly large scale. This explains the 'undeclared' nature of Sri Lanka's ethnic war in 2006 and 2007.

The developments in Sri Lanka's war since the middle part of 2006 offer rich material for analysis of intra-state civil war. The challenge in Sri Lanka from 2002 to mid 2004 was the transition from civil war to stable peace, making the best of an existing framework of limited peace. In 2006-2007, the task changed dramatically to a transition to the resumption and escalation of war. The 'peace' established through the ceasefire as well as subsequent negotiations had not produced a settlement agreement as such. It was a peace of a limited kind, the transition of which into sustainable and

comprehensive peace required a credible peace agreement acceptable not only to the government and the LTTE, but also to a host of other actors in the conflict, both direct and indirect. The six rounds of negotiations between the UNF government and the LTTE in 2002 had produced a vague commitment for them to explore a federal solution, but when the idea of a solution had to be worked out in concrete detail, the entire exercise of political engagement ran into a crisis in 2003.[iii]

In public debates as well as intense controversies and political disputes on the peace process as it unfolded in 2002 and after, negotiated peace became a less and less attractive option. Among key reasons were the failure of negotiations to produce a comprehensive peace agreement, lack of consensus among major political parties about the path to and content of a peace agreement, the absence of a clear economic dividend of peace as promised by the UNF government, the assertion of Sinhalese nationalist opposition to the peace process, and the gradual erosion of the public confidence in the particular peace process initiated by the UNF government and the LTTE. The dismissal of the UNF government in December 2003 by President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the electoral defeat of the UNF in April 2004 further contributed to the political context that was not conducive to carry the 2002 peace initiative forward. In fact, when President Rajapaksa assumed office in November 2005, the peace process had reached a point of extreme crisis. Even the complex humanitarian disaster of December 2004 had failed to provide any new incentive for re-working the process of political engagement for negotiated peace. The two rounds of talks held in Geneva in February and March 2006 between the Rajapaksa government and the LTTE did not produce any significant outcome to rescue the peace process that was in deep trouble due to continuing violations of the CFA. The acrimonious ending of the second round of Geneva talks in March 2006 demonstrated that retrieving the 2002 peace initiative was not on the immediate agenda of either party. Thus, the developments in 2004 to 2006 had merely marked Sri Lanka's inevitable relapse to full-scale civil war.

The Rajapaksa administration seems to have accepted the challenge of being locked into another protracted and intense phase of war with two outcomes in mind. Either the LTTE would be military defeated and totally destroyed as a fighting force, or decisively weakened so that it would no longer be a threat to the Sri Lankan state in any significant way. In the thinking of the government, either of these two outcomes would create conditions for a 'political solution' without the LTTE. The thinking of the Rajapaksa government seems to

be that the LTTE is the primary obstacle to peace and the removal of that obstacle by military means, despite the heavy cost such a course of action would entail, is of paramount importance. Thus, the present government has chosen the option of a full-scale military offensive. As long as the CFA was in force, the government's public posture was that its military campaign was a mere defensive response to LTTE aggression. Once the government withdrew from the CFA, such a defensive posture would no longer be necessary. Meanwhile, the military establishment of the government has begun to express confidence that by the end of 2008 the war will end with the 'extinction of Tigers,' meaning that the LTTE would be defeated on the battle front.

The sections of the government that have conceptualized and begun to execute the present phase of war appear to believe that in the past the Sri Lankan armed forces could have won the war against the LTTE, but were prevented from doing so not by military factors, but by extra-military, or political, factors. Among them are (i) interference in the strategy and execution of war by politicians, (ii) the pressure from the internationals to move away from a military solution, and (iii) the concerns for human rights and humanitarian consequences. Meanwhile, the Rajapaksa regime, quite in contrast with the previous Sri Lankan regimes, seems to have given a great deal of autonomy to the Ministry of Defence and the military establishment in the planning, strategizing and the execution of the war against the LTTE. The fact that the president's own younger brother, an ex-colonel in the military, has been appointed as the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, while the president himself is the Minister of Defence, has also contributed to this 'relative autonomy' gained by the military establishment in the conduct of the present war. This new development stands in contrast to the experience of previous governments which maintained the traditional practice of strict political control of the military. In fact, the Rajapaksa administration seems to be responding to a critique that emerged within the military as well as the Sinhalese nationalist and journalistic circles about the undesirability of political control of the military. A pervasive belief among the Sinhalese nationalist forces has been the view that politicians should not interfere with the war against the LTTE and that the military establishment, in effect, should be given a free hand in all aspects of the war. In this argument, politicians have allowed themselves to be subjected to pressures from domestic and international lobbies and interfered with the military's war efforts. The nationalist media has often made the point that in the past the war had been conducted to suit political agendas and political timetables of government leaders and not in accordance with

professional military advise. The present Rajapaksa regime seems to be the first government in Sri Lanka to insulate the military from political pressure in the conduct of the war. The broader political consequences of this policy shift are yet to be seen.

The LTTE on the other hand appears to be ready for a protracted war too. The LTTE's war commitment seems to emanate from a different framework of strategic calculus. This thinking may be summarized as follows: A long drawn out war would create grave humanitarian and human rights problems for the government, isolating the regime from the international community. An intense war that escalates the cost of war and spreads violence would seriously damage the economy, eroding the support base of the regime and weakening the capacity of the economy to fund the war. A war that damages the economy while producing serious human rights issues, weakening the rule of law and the democratic process, would also sharpen the contradictions in the Southern polity.

Eventually, such a scenario will make the war unsustainable for the government and that will open strategic opportunities for the LTTE to secure battleground victories leading to a new equilibrium. This thinking is also governed by a particular strategic calculation that the LTTE appears to have made. Unlike the government, the LTTE does not seem to aim at a military victory. The LTTE perhaps knows that a military victory over the Sri Lankan state is not possible, in view of both the superior military strength of the state and the configuration of regional and international forces in favour of the state. Therefore, the LTTE's military-strategic aim seems to focus on preventing the Sri Lankan state from obtaining a military victory, eventually leading to a military and political stalemate. In the LTTE's thinking, the new strategic stalemate would also create new conditions for the international community to intervene in Sri Lanka's conflict. The LTTE seems to envisage that the international intervention in such a scenario would be a prelude to acknowledging a new political reality as well.[iv]

The war in the Eastern Province during late 2006 to a great extent demonstrated the working of these competing strategic calculations of both sides. The government, using the forces of the LTTE's breakaway Karuna faction, sought to dislodge the LTTE from the province through a series of conventional battles. The LTTE, facing superior firepower of the state decided to withdraw. This was similar to what the LTTE did in the Jaffna peninsula in December 1995. Faced with a massive conventional offensive by the state, the LTTE withdrew all its fighters, cadres and military assets to the Vanni jungles without resisting the advancing army. In 1995 the LTTE also evacuated several hundred thousand civilians to the Vanni, south of the Jaffna peninsula. In 2007 the LTTE resisted the military onslaught for a while and then retreated to the North, without sacrificing much of the men and war material which were of course scarce resources. The government, claiming to have 'liberated' the Eastern Province from the LTTE, has launched massive development programmes in the Province with international assistance. The government seems to be quite keen to project the Eastern Province as a model in which 'terrorism' has been militarily defeated and that getting rid of LTTE by military means is the most essential pre-requisite for democracy and development in the region. But skeptics contest the government's triumphalist claims in the Eastern Province. As media reports indicate, the LTTE activities continue in the province and the eventual re-entry of the LTTE can no way be ruled out. A more serious issue is the continuing presence in the province of the armed wing of the Karuna faction, known as the Thamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP), with its practices of abductions, killings, extortion, child recruitment and terror. In the year 2007, the Karuna faction also split, leading to violent clashes between the two groups. The breakaway group is led by Pillayan, Karuna's former deputy in Batticaloa district. While Karuna, whose real name is Vinayagamoorthi Muralitharan, has fled to England, Pillayan is consolidating his power as the new regional war lord in the province. The government policy seems to be one of indifference to the reported atrocities against Tamil civilians by the cadres of the Karuna and Pillayan factions. There are now reports to suggest that the recently initiated development activities in the province have been severely affected by the new conditions of insecurity and political uncertainty in the East. When the government armed forces launch their much-awaited offensive into the LTTE-held areas in the Northern Province in mid-2008, the Eastern Province is likely to run the risk of being turned into another battle front.

War, Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues

A major consequence of the war resumption has been its exceedingly negative impact on Sri Lanka's human rights and humanitarian conditions. In the previous phases of the war too, military actions by both the government armed forces and the LTTE had led to grave violations of human rights and serious humanitarian issues. This had generated much international concern as well. The main aspects of the recurring and cyclical humanitarian crisis were the large-

scale displacement of civilians, and the destruction of communities and their livelihoods in the areas where the war is concentrated. In response to international concerns and the pressure from local and international human rights groups, governments in the past had taken steps to minimize both human rights and humanitarian consequences of the war. After the mid-1980s, improvement of human rights conditions had also been linked to aid conditionality, along with democratization and good governance. The strategy of the present government on these issues seems to be at variance with the policies of previous ones. The Rajapaksa administration seems to be willing to disregard both international and local concerns on human rights and humanitarian issues on the argument that paying heed to such external concerns would 'weaken the morale of the troops' and be in the service of the LTTE. The government has also justified this position on the argument that winning the 'war against terrorism' should take priority and precedence over human rights and political concerns for which there is interest only in the UN and the Western countries.

As highlighted in the reports by the International Crisis Group (ICG) as well as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Asian Human Rights Commission, the human rights and humanitarian issues were highlighted in the government's offensive against the LTTE in the Eastern Province in late 2006 and early 2007. In this offensive, large numbers of Tamil and Muslim civilians, who were living in the areas controlled by the LTTE in the Batticaloa and Trincomallee districts, were displaced. There were also reports of many atrocities against civilians that included abductions and extra-judicial killings. The ICG, in its report on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka in the context of the escalating war since 2006, noted that "more than 1,500 have been killed and more than 250,000 displaced since early 2006." Similarly, there have been "hundreds of extrajudicial killings" while "more than 1,000 people are still unaccounted for, presumed to be the victims of enforced disappearances." (ICG: 2007)

One shocking incident was the execution in August 2007 of 17 local aid workers belonging to Action Against Hunger, a French NGO, in Muttur in the Trincomallee district, a former stronghold of the LTTE. This massacre occurred when Sri Lankan army troops entered Muttur town which was being abandoned by the LTTE. This incident created a great deal of controversy bringing to sharp focus the question of responsibility as well as impunity in times of war intensification. While the government initially denied the culpability of the armed forces in this murder, the government spokesperson suggested that the LTTE may have been involved in these killings. But the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, human rights groups and independent media pointed to the possible culpability of government soldiers. The gravity of this incident and the international attention it received eventually compelled the government to initiate a judicial inquiry by a Presidential Commission of inquiry under the supervision of an international monitoring team called the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP).[v] The mandate of the Commission of Inquiry was to investigate 15 alleged incidents of violations including the Muttur killings of 4, August 2006 and the killing of 6 Tamil youth in Trincomallee on 2, January 2006. The inquiry process has been quite slow. This has led to a bitter debate between the agencies of the Sri Lankan government and the IIGEP. In an interim report issued on 18, December 2007, the IIGEP questioned the independence of the Commission of Inquiry as well as the usefulness of the role of IIGEP. The report alleged that the Commission of Inquiry process "fell short of international norms and standards" and that it "lacked transparency and independence, was ineffective with its witness protection measures" with "shortcomings in the investigations." (*Daily Mirror*, 19, December 2007).

One crucial component of the government's strategy for the success of its war against the LTTE–the 'war against terrorism' as the government prefers to call it–is to block the presence of resident UN human rights monitoring missions in Sri Lanka. The present Sri Lankan government, unlike previous ones, has been openly hostile to international scrutiny and criticism of the country's human rights situation. Visits by senior UN officials on human rights missions made in 2007 received both hostility and attacks by the government as well its Sinhalese nationalist allies, the JVP and JHU. In these attacks, the government and its allies have put forward three arguments. In the first argument, international human rights monitoring is a part of a strategy to interfere with the national sovereignty of Sri Lanka by Western and colonial powers. In the second, blaming the government for human rights violations only helps the LTTE in its terrorist war against the Sri Lankan state. Third, the Western concern for alleged human rights violations by the armed forces is based on wrong reporting by partial and incompetent local human rights monitoring groups whose political sympathies are with the Tamil minority and the LTTE terrorists. Despite the obvious weakness of these arguments, the Sri Lankan government has succeeded in preventing any major UN initiative to open an office in Sri Lanka to monitor the human rights situation.

International Dimension

The way in which the international actors responded to Sri Lanka's relapse to civil war is a theme the examination of which helps us to understand the changing contexts and dynamics of the international dimension in Sri Lanka's conflict process. One defining aspect of the 2002-2003 peace process was that it had been built around "heavy international involvement," which was expected to "create the pre-conditions for peace negotiations" (Goodhand and Klem, 2005:88). The international involvement was in two specific areas, peace facilitation through political and diplomatic means and 'postconflict' economic development through economic assistance. The activities in the first area included facilitation of the CFA as well as direct negotiations through Norway, ceasefire monitoring through the SLMM and mobilizing international support for negotiations as well as for a possible settlement agreement. In the second area, the USA, Japan and the EU played a leading role in mobilizing bilateral and multilateral economic assistance for post-conflict development and rebuilding.

However, when the negotiation process reached a deadlock and the possibility of war resumption loomed large in 2004, the role of the international actors largely centred on the task of persuading the LTTE to return to negotiations. The Tsunami of December 2004 opened up another opportunity for the international community to advance the agenda of negotiations in Sri Lanka. International economic assistance for post-Tsunami rebuilding was the incentive offered to both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to return to talks so that a joint effort between the two parties for post-Tsunami recovery could provide a new framework for peace building. However, failure of the government to effectively move forward in institutionalizing the MoU signed with the LTTE for a joint post-Tsunami administrative mechanism brought these efforts to an end.

Meanwhile, the election of President Rajapaksa to office in November 2005 opened up another opportunity for the international actors to revive their engagement in Sri Lanka's stalled peace process. The two rounds of talks in Geneva held in the first quarter of 2006 also revived hopes of saving the fragile CFA from total breakdown. Although the two sides jointly agreed to honour the terms of the CFA in its full implementation, there was very little progress achieved. There was a major reason that constituted the backdrop for this failure of Geneva commitments. The LTTE by this time had suffered a major split, with its military commander in the Eastern Province, Karuna Amman, leaving the movement along with his fighters and then joining with the government against the mainstream LTTE leadership. The LTTE viewed the 'full implementation of the CFA' as a tactical move to disarm the Karuna faction and regain the control of its military machine in the Eastern Province. On the other hand, the government saw no reason to fully implement the CFA, because it saw in the LTTE split as a rare and unprecedented opportunity to weaken the LTTE militarily and then push out of the Eastern Province. The continuing clashes between the mainstream LTTE and the Karuna faction, the latter openly backed by the armed forces of the Sri Lankan government, eventually led to the intensification of the 'undeclared war.'

These developments that constituted the context in which the war between the government and the LTTE escalated in 2007 demonstrated the limits of international engagement in the process of civil war management in Sri Lanka. In 2002, when the UNF government and the LTTE actively solicited the assistance of international actors to begin the ceasefire and negotiation process, both sides, from their individual perspectives, had seen the strategic advantage of internationalization of the new peace process. For the UNF government, the internationalization meant achieving a political as well as an economic objective. The political objective was to establish what came to be known as an 'international safety net' for the government's risky policy of entering into a ceasefire agreement with the militarily strong and secessionist LTTE and eventually signing of a settlement agreement. Its economic objective was to obtain international economic assistance to ensure that the peace initiative would bring about a rich peace dividend in the form of increased foreign investment, development aid and post-conflict reconstruction.

From the LTTE's perspective, the internationalization in 2002 had two primary objectives. The first was to obtain international legitimacy for its project of national self-determination in the post-9/11 global context. The second was similar to the UNF government's notion of an international safety net. It envisaged a role for the international actors to provide guarantees that the Sri Lankan government would abide by the CFA and decisions made at the negotiation table. What was quite noteworthy in the developments that occurred in and after 2003, and became clearer in 2007, was that both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE sought to de-internationalize the peace process and then reduce the space for international actors on the new context of undeclared war.

It was the LTTE that took the first steps towards reducing the role of the international actors in the peace process in early 2003, alleging that the "excessive internationalization" of the peace process had led to a strategic imbalance in favour of the Sri Lankan government. (Balasingham: 2004) Once the LTTE suspended its participation in the negotiation process, it even resisted the massive economic incentives offered by international actors, notably Japan and the EU, to return to the negotiation table. The LTTE's strategic objective in 2003 was probably to resume political engagement with the government in a new context where the global state system had little or no role to influence the negotiation outcome.[vi] Although the UNF government, which was dissolved in January 2004, stood for greater internationalization of the peace process, the new alliance that came to power at the parliamentary election of April 2004 shared the LTTE's perspective of de-internationalization but from a completely different standpoint.

In the policy of the newly established United People's Freedom Alliance – a coalition of Sinhalese nationalist parties led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) internationalization of the peace process under the UNF government was seen as a wrong approach that jeopardized the national sovereignty of Sri Lanka, created space for undue external intervention in an essentially internal problem and allowed the LTTE to get unwarranted international legitimacy.

The steps towards de-internationalization of the conflict management process taken by the UPFA government as well as the LTTE in 2005 and 2006 eventually led to de-internationalization of the renewed conflict process as well. Sri Lanka saw the culmination as well as consequences of the de-internationalization of the renewed conflict in dramatic from in 2007. The de-internationalization of the conflict as occurred in 2005 and after indicated that both the government and the LTTE sought to redefine, and indeed minimize, the space and ability of international actors to influence their conflict behaviour. The government and the LTTE had their specific reasons to arrive at this perspective. In the thinking of the government, the new phase of war, the objective of which is to defeat the LTTE by means of an all out military campaign, would invariably result in human rights violations of Tamil civilians and even a serious humanitarian crisis. In the past and in such situations, the international community had come down hard on previous governments. The present Sri Lankan government's thinking is that when the past governments came under international pressure on human rights and humanitarian issues, the armed forces could not

continue to fight the war against the LTTE to its successful conclusion. Thus, as the government's thinking goes, insulating the government as well as the armed forces from international actors, notably the UN agencies, the Western governments and international NGOs. is a crucial prerequisite for the successful prosecution of what is viewed as the 'final' war against the LTTE. The LTTE's objective of relative isolation from the international community emanates from the assessment that the global state system was still backing the Sri Lankan nation-state at the expense of its own secessionist project. Thus, in the LTTE's present strategic thinking, the isolation of Sri Lanka's war from the international community is a strategic necessity until the military-ground situation favours direct intervention by the powerful global actors, possibly similar to the developments in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, there have been some subtle shifts in the UPFA government's foreign relations under President Rajapaksa since the war escalation began in 2006. These policy shifts became clearer in 2007. There were two major tendencies in this foreign policy shift. The first is the policy of looking beyond India as the government's major regional ally. The second is the shift away from the West and looking to the East–notably China and Japan–as the main sources of support, as a fall back strategy in case the relations with the West became severely strained. Reworking the relations with India began to take shape in mid-2006 when the Rajapakse administration failed to obtain direct military assistance from India in its envisaged war with the LTTE. In the aftermath of the breakdown of Geneva talks, President Rajapaksa visited New Delhi seeking closer military and defence cooperation. The Sri Lankan government expected India to sign a defence pact in order to formalize the military cooperation. But, the Indian government was reluctant to enter into a closer military alliance with Sri Lanka which would lead to a military solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. The Indian government insisted on a political solution. In the face of the Indian government's reluctance to be the key external partner in the envisaged war against the LTTE. the Sri Lankan government sought military assistance from Pakistan and China. In view of the traditional tension that had existed between India and its two major neighbours, this move by the Sri Lankan government had the element of a small state exploiting regional geopolitical realities. It appeared that while the India's enhanced military assistance to Sri Lanka was to be conditional on the Sri Lankan government's commitment to a political solution to the ethnic conflict that would address what the Indian leaders see as 'legitimate minority grievances,'

any military cooperation by China or Pakistan would be devoid of any such political conditionality.

The Colombo government's willingness even to take the risk of challenging the UN human rights and humanitarian agencies and resist the pressure from some key Western governments on human rights issues can only be understood in terms of the Rajapaksa regime's experiment in trying to reconfigure its global relations. When the Rajapaksa administration embarked on its undeclared war against the LTTE, the government leaders appeared to expect full backing of the Western governments to its own 'war against terrorism.' However, the Western backing to the war against LTTE came with human rights conditionality. This ran counter to the government's stand on the war against the LTTE, which assumed that concerns for human rights would blunt the effectiveness of the military campaign. Against this backdrop, the Sri Lankan government indicated closer economic cooperation with China and Japan and closer military cooperation with China, Pakistan and later Iran.

The Question of a 'Political Solution'

Amidst war escalation, the government continued its efforts towards searching for a political solution to the ethnic conflict, although with lukewarm enthusiasm and halfhearted commitment. The mechanism for the formulation of a political settlement was the All Party Representative Committee (APRC). This committee is composed of representatives from most of the political parties in parliament. Two notable absences in the Committee were the United National Party (UNP) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). The UNP, the main opposition party in parliament, decided to boycott the APRC proceedings in the context of political disagreements with the government, when President Rajapaksa engineered a split in the UNP despite a MoU signed by President Rajapaksa and the UNP leader in October 2006 to work together in finding solutions to urgent national issues, including the ethnic conflict. Meanwhile, the TNA was not present in the APRC process due to a government policy decision not to invite 'pro-LTTE' parties. The government considered the TNA as a front of the LTTE, although it was the biggest Tamil party in parliament.

The APRC process met many challenges and complexities throughout the years 2006 and 2007. The trouble for the APRC began when its Committee of Experts submitted an interim report in December 2006 proposing a political solution with enhanced province-based devolution. The essence of the interim proposals was to further strengthen the existing system of power-sharing in Sri Lanka in order to address Tamil aspirations for regional autonomy. The president and the ruling party immediately dissociated themselves from the report. Sinhalese nationalist partners of the ruling coalition, the JVP and JHU, were particularly harsh in denouncing the proposal by the experts committee. Although this was a political setback to the APRC process, its proceedings continued throughout 2007 with little progress in terms of any concrete proposals.

The international community, notably the EU, the US and India, watched the APRC process in 2007 with both enthusiasm and anxiety. Their enthusiasm was rooted in the belief that the Rajapaksa administration, despite the LTTE's rejection of the negotiation option, would be ready to offer a credible political framework that would satisfy moderate Tamils. The claims made by the government in 2006 suggesting that President Rajapaksa favoured a solution along the Indian model of power-sharing had further encouraged the international community to believe that there was actually a willingness on the part of the government to break the political deadlock. The global and regional powers were also anticipating a valid political excuse to support the Rajapaksa regime's war against the LTTE on the premise that the Sinhalese leadership would treat the Tamils fairly in a post-LTTE dispensation. However, when SLFP, led by President Rajapakse, presented its proposals to the APRC in May 2007, it appeared that the main party of the ruling coalition was not in favour of a settlement framework based on any power-sharing arrangement with the minorities. As it became clear in 2007, the ideology and policy of the coalition regime led by President Rajapaksa was not in favour of sharing state power with ethnic minorities.

The SLFP report to the APRC essentially gave expression to this position. There were two key features in the SLFP proposals– recognition of the district, as opposed to the province, as the unit of administrative decentralization, and greater emphasis on local government. Reforming the power structure of the central government was not in the agenda. In fact, the idea of district-based devolution, which the SLFP proposals emphasized in 2007, had earlier been associated with the Sinhalese nationalist parties that were opposed to devolution and ethnicity-based power sharing. Similarly, strengthening of local government as a solution to minority grievances had also been a Sinhalese nationalist idea, based on the assumption that Tamil and Muslim grievances could best be addressed by means of decentralization of administration. The fact that the main party of the ruling coalition had put forward a minimalist framework for a

political solution indeed led to much unease among the international actors who backed the war against the LTTE with the hope that a credible political solution was actually being worked out by the government.

In an overall assessment of the possibilities of an actual political settlement to Sri Lanka's conflict, an informed observer can only make comments that may appear both negative and pessimistic. It may be the case that Sri Lanka has lost the momentum for a negotiated political solution. It is not yet clear how a new momentum can be built. The APRC process is certainly not capable of generating any new political momentum towards a constitutional settlement of the ethnic conflict, primarily because of the minimalist framework of solution it is likely to propose. In fact, as the events in 2007 amply demonstrated, the trajectory of a political settlement to Sri Lanka's conflict has reached a blind alley, because the two dominant visions of a solution emanating from the Sinhalese and Tamil polities are so far apart that a common ground between them is even inconceivable. The vision of a solution that is dominant in the Sinhalese polity at present proposes a minimalist framework of powersharing within a unitary state. Even for that option, the military defeat of the LTTE is an essential pre-condition. In other words, the official approach to a solution suggests a minimalist political reform package to be offered by the government to a post-LTTE Tamil polity. Meanwhile, the dominant vision of the Tamil polity, as being articulated by the LTTE, suggests either secession facilitated by a prolonged war, or regional autonomy in a confederal framework. These are obviously mutually exclusivist political visions that offer no possibility of compromise.

Meanwhile, the intense political debates on the nature of a political solution to the ethnic conflict have highlighted the sharp differences that continue to resurface in the Sri Lankan society on such key issues as the nature of the conflict and the nature of the postconflict state. Concerning the nature of the Sri Lankan conflict, the discourse of terrorism seems to have triumphed over the discourse of ethnic conflict. The Rajapaksa regime, ideologically backed by the Sinhalese nationalist JVP and JHU, defines the island's conflict primarily as a terrorist problem. In the early years of the ethnic war, particularly in the early and mid-1980s, the dominant and official understanding of the conflict, as articulated by the Sinhalese political class at the time, was that the Tamil ethnic insurgency was primarily a terrorist challenge levelled against the legal and legitimate state of Sri Lanka. This view changed after the mid-1980s primarily as a result of the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka's political

debates on the ethnic conflict. The Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987, signed by the Indian prime minister and the Sri Lankan president, was the first official acknowledgement in Sri Lanka that the Tamil rebellion was a political problem that required a political solution through political reforms. All subsequent governments generally shared this perspective. During the People's Alliance regime (1994-2001) headed by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, and the UNF administration led by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe (2002-2003), the ethnic conflict discourse became the official discourse. The terrorism discourse still continued, but it was limited to small and extreme Sinhalese nationalist groups. This situation underwent a radical change in 2006-2007. Under the Rajapaksa administration, the terrorism discourse became official and dominant, and the ethnic conflict discourse lost political support.

Parallel to the re-emergence of the terrorism discourse has been the question of how to characterize the post-conflict state in Sri Lanka. Until about 2006, there was a consensus in Sri Lanka that the post-conflict state should be one in which state power is shared among majority and minority communities within a framework of devolution. In 2002-2003, the devolution discourse took a further step towards federalism. The Sinhalese nationalist forces in turn resisted the federalist discourse. In the context of the breakdown of negotiations between the UNF government and the LTTE in 2003 and then between the UPFA government and LTTE in 2006, the federalist vision of the post-conflict state took a severe beating. In his presidential election campaign in late 2005, President Rajapaksa, in alliance with the JVP and JHU, revived the unitary state vision through a new slogan, 'maximum devolution within a unitary framework.' Thus, since 2005, unitarism has been the official vision for Sri Lanka's post-conflict state. Quite interestingly, the UNP, which had been associated with the federal idea since 2002, decided to abandon its commitment to federalism on the argument that the party lost the electoral support in Sinhalese society in the 2004 and 2005 elections because of its association with federalism. Although this claim may be disputed, what remains significant is that no major political party at present seems to project a federalist vision for the post-conflict state in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, on the question of the impossibility of a compromise at present, one can say that Sri Lanka is in a 'scissors crisis.' (Uyangoda: 2007) The nature of this scissors crisis is that the two main protagonists to the conflict – the regime in Colombo and the LTTE – have crossed each other's

paths and are now travelling in two separate directions. It is hard to imagine how and when these two paths will intersect again.

Issues of Governance

The trends in governance, inter-party and inter-group relations, and institutional linkages of regular politics in Sri Lanka are also shaped by the turns and twists of the politics relating to the ethnic conflict. This constitutes what may be called the 'sub-plot' of the conflict process. In terms of governance and the phenomenology of state power, Sri Lanka continues to represent a unique co-existence of a duality. In the provinces and districts where the Sri Lankan state is present without facing the direct challenge of the Tamil secessionist insurgency, the state presence is accompanied by the presence of formal institutions and formal practices of democratic governance. In contrast, in areas where the civil war is concentrated, the Sri Lankan state is present primarily through its military and coercive apparatus.

A key factor that seems to have defined some of the major policy directions of the Rajapaksa regime in 2007 as well has been the crucial influence that the JVP and JHU continued to exercise. Both parties were constituents of the ruling UPFA alliance, but the JVP has been functioning independently without accepting any cabinet positions. The JHU in contrast is a member of the government. The continuing support of the JVP with 39 MPs is crucial for the survival of the Rajapaksa regime. The JVP's influence on the policy of the government is felt on two major areas, the ethnic conflict and economic policy. On the ethnic conflict, the JVP has been in the forefront of a campaign to abolish the ceasefire agreement, to sever links with the Norwegians and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, and to initiate an all-out war against the LTTE. The JVP has also been objecting to the government's initial willingness to design a power-sharing formula as the basis for a constitutional settlement to the ethnic conflict. In the area of economic policy, the JVP has been objecting to further privatization, and advocating a policy framework of economic nationalism. The JHU's influence is primarily on the government policy on the ethnic conflict with some commitment to redistributive justice and social welfare. With only nine members in parliament, the JHU has been quietly shaping the 'war for peace' strategy as well as the Sinhalese-Buddhist orientation of the Rajapaksa administration. While the government has been preparing for war, the question of economic management of war escalation has emerged as a significant governance issue. The government has so far been able to politically manage the economic and social consequences of rising war expenditure. Defence expenditure has been rising sharply in recent years, and the budgetary allocation for 2007 was 1.4 billion US dollars, which represented a 46% increase from the previous year. This was almost 24% of annual government income and 17% of annual government expenditure. This tendency of increasing defence expenditure has been a regular facet in Sri Lanka's economic life throughout the civil war. Some analysts even describe Sri Lanka as the "most militarised country in South Asia." (Balachandran: 2006)[vii] Amidst this spiraling economic cost of war, interest rates, inflation and the cost of living have also been rising.

The continuous rise in fuel and food prices has been key to the rising cost of living throughout 2007 as well. Labour unions linked to the JVP have been agitating for wage increases. In 2007 the plantation unions got a marginal wage increase though strike action. The fact that trade unions are largely controlled by political parties linked to the ruling UPFA alliance has enabled the government to keep the labour front relatively peaceful. One strategy the government has resorted to with some success to manage public discontent against increasing economic hardships is to portray its military campaign against the LTTE as a goal worth sacrifices by the people. Relentless media campaigns by the government have been projecting its war against the LTTE as requiring patience and support of the people until the final victory is achieved before the end of 2008. The government seems to have succeeded at least for the moment to convince the people that there will be an economic and security dividend of war before long.

Increasing remilitarization of politics is a tendency that has continued apace in 2007. The relatively stable functioning of the CFA during the period of 2002-2005 had set a tendency towards mild demilitarization of politics in Sri Lanka. However, the resumption of hostilities between the government and the LTTE in 2006 and its subsequent intensification has seen the emergence of the Ministry of Defence and the military establishment as the key institutions of state power. The continuation of Emergency Regulations and the introduction in early 2007 of the prevention of terrorism legislation have contributed to this tendency in considerable measure. There have been a few incidents that exposed the ethnic insensitivity of the defence establishment in exercising its newly gained powers to maintain security. On two occasions in 2007, the military and police authorities in Colombo arrested large numbers of Tamil civilians. On the first occasion, the Defence Ministry was planning to

deport en masse to Vavuniya in the Northern Province nearly 3,000 Tamil civilians arrested in Colombo in one security swoop. On the second occasion, in December 2007, about 2,000 Tamil civilians were arrested and detained in a major security operation in Colombo. Due to a major public outcry and judicial intervention, the Defence authorities released most of these Tamil civilians. Yet, what became quite clear is that for the defence establishment arbitrary arrest of Tamil civilians on suspicion as potential terrorists is a legitimate national security measure. In this approach, the civil rights of ethnic minorities are secondary or even subservient to national security needs.

The year 2007 also saw the continuation of the tendency towards increasing concentration of political power in the hands of the president. Under the Rajapaksa administration, this process has taken a peculiar form in which the president heads a government with over one hundred ministers, deputy ministers and non-Cabinet ministers. In order to ensure a parliamentary majority to the ruling coalition, President Rajapaksa has given ministerial appointments to this large number of MPs. All opposition MPs who have joined the government have also been given ministerial portfolios as an inducement to cross over as well as a reward for supporting regime stability. What is still peculiar about this arrangement is that all the key ministries and departments are controlled by the president and his brothers, who are also either ministers or key government officials. Many of the ministers of this large ensemble have only insignificant departmental responsibility.

This has implications for governance in a number of ways. Firstly, the institution of the Cabinet has lost its public esteem. People associate the ministerial office with corruption and political opportunism. Secondly, presidential control of the legislature is now maintained by means of an elaborate system of patronage, with both rewards and punishment. One punishment is the removal of the security detail provided by the Defence Ministry at a time when assassination of politicians has become an almost regular feature. Thirdly, although the Cabinet has been expanding in numbers, it is no longer the institution that makes major public policy decisions. Such decisions are made by a small group headed by the president, and consisting of the president's three brothers –two of whom are ministers and the other the Defence Secretary–and a few ministers, officials and advisors. This indeed is a consolidation of a process that continued under previous president's as well. Sri Lanka's executive presidential system of government, political expediencies of civil war and imperatives of economic liberalization have provided its broad context for policy–made by a very small caucus that hovers over the president.

Inter-Party and Intra-Party Politics

Although there were no dramatic changes in inter-party and intra-party politics in Sri Lanka in 2007, there were some developments worth noting. The split in the SLFP, the main party in the ruling UPF A coalition and headed by President Rajapaksa, added some excitement to an otherwise dull process of party politics. This split occurred in February 2007 when President Rajapaksa removed Mangala Samaraweera from the position of the Foreign Minister. Samaraweera has been a close associate of former President Chandrika Kumaratunga. He was one of the key campaigners for Rajapakse when he contested the presidential election in November 2005. Rajapaksa also sacked another minister, Sripathi Suriayarachchi, a close associate of Samaraweera. Two of them later formed a breakaway party called the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (Mahajana). The SLFP(M) has been closely aligned with the main opposition UNP in public campaigns against President Rajapaksa's regime. The UNP and SLFP(M) eventually formed a new political front called the National Congress.

The way in which serious differences between Rajapaksa and Samaraweera had developed leading to Samaraweera's sacking from the Cabinet is symptomatic of some of the dynamics of party politics in contemporary Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's political parties, particularly the SLFP and the UNP, which are the two main parties, are exceedingly family centric. For example, the SLFP from its inception in 1951 has been led by members of the Bandaranaike family–father, mother and then daughter. When Mahinda Rajapaksa became the SLFP's presidential candidate and then the party leader, it marked a radical shift in the party leadership away from the monopoly held by the Bandaranaike family. Rajapaksa received the SLFP's candidacy for presidency in 2005 after a bitter power struggle with the then President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who is a Bandaranaike. After becoming the president, Rajapaksa brought in his own family members to the party as well as the government in order to secure his own position against possible threats from Bandaranaike loyalists. In this process of consolidation of his own personal power, Rajapaksa seems to have antagonized Samaraweera, who was a Bandaranaike loyalist as well as a stalwart in the SLFP's old guard. Interestingly, Samaraweera's campaign against Rajapaksa after the split focussed primarily on the alleged monopolization of power within the party as well as the government by President Rajapaksa and his brothers.

The intra-party rivalry of the SLFP thus led to an inter-party rivalry in 2007. It reached a highpoint in November-December 2007 when the Rajapaksa regime presented its annual budget proposals to parliament. The opposition UNP in association with the SLFP(M) made an attempt to defeat the government at the voting of the budget. With increasing dissatisfaction among ethnic minority parties within the ruling coalition and the dissent building up within the SLFP, there was some possibility of the plan of the UNP-SLFP(M) to succeed. However, President Rajapaksa managed to convince the JVP, which had voted against the Budget at the first reading, to change their tactics at the second reading. The abstention by the JVP with 39 MPs ensured the survival of the Rajapaksa government for another year.

From 'Peace Trap' to 'War Trap'

One of the recurring dimensions of Sri Lanka's protracted ethnic conflict has been the periodic swing from war trap to peace trap and then to war trap. The 'war trap' and the 'peace trap' have also been the connecting thread of the cycle of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. Sahadevan's (2006: 239) observation that peace negotiations have constituted an "integral part of the long-drawn life cycle" of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict is quite apt. The 'peace trap' refers to brief periods of political engagement between the government and the LTTE that initially produces political space as well as huge expectations for ending civil war through a negotiated peace agreement, but soon leads to a deadlock and a crisis.

Parties then abandon political engagement in favour of the resumption of hostilities, violence and war. The metaphor of trap becomes vividly visible when the parties try to get out of the 'peace process' unilaterally and in great haste while other political forces too begin to behave in a manner which suggests that retuning to war is the most prudent and rational alternative despite the potentially high cost of that option. The 'war trap' refers to phases of intense war spread over relatively longer periods. Usually a war trap emerges following the failure of political engagement between the state and the rebels.

This phenomenon of war trap has had a few defining features built up over the years. First, after the failure of every peace process, both the government and the LTTE have returned to war with great enthusiasm and fervour as if the brief period of political engagement and relative peace had been an unmitigated disaster and the only path to recover the losses was all-out war. Second, the period of relative peace has been

seen by the government, the LTTE as well as other indirect parties to the conflict as a period of abnormality. Therefore, returning to war is a process of normalization. Third, parties see the war as the only path to ensure unilateral outcomes and benefits.

The parties to Sri Lanka's conflict have now moved out of the peace trap and are back in the war trap. It is difficult to assess the outcome of this phase of war, because the government as well as the LTTE appear to consider it as something akin to a 'final war.' Therefore, both sides will mobilize all their resources to impose a unilateral military outcome. What nevertheless has become clear is that in the year 2008, Sri Lanka's crisis is likely to deepen, with very serious political, economic and humanitarian consequences. The outcome of the present phase of war will thus be crucial in defining the future trajectories of Sri Lanka's conflict, including a limited space for reviving the track of political engagement.

Conclusion

As this study indicates, developments in Sri Lanka's politics in the year 2007 provide an immediate context for further escalation of the war between the government and the LTTE. To recapture the main trends, it has been a year during which the Rajapaksa administration consolidated its power. The year 2007 also saw further intensification of the undeclared war between the government and the LTTE, leading to battlefield defeats of the LTTE in the Eastern Province. The government eventually consolidated its military and administrative control of the entire province. The war in the Eastern Province led to serious human rights and humanitarian issues, but the government succeeded in politically managing the fallout of these developments by adopting a confrontationist approach to pressures from local and international human rights bodies.
The successes in the battlefield also enabled the government to manage public discontent arising out of rising inflation and spiralling cost of living.

Against such a backdrop the government of Sri Lanka formally withdrew from the CFA on 2, January 2008. Following a cabinet decision made on that day, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister informed the Norwegian government in writing that it would be withdrawing from the CFA with effect from 16, January 2008. Thus, the year 2008 began for Sri Lanka with a very clear message that the new year would bring the war to a decisive phase. The government and the military establishment are confident that before the end of

the year the war will reach a successful conclusion. The signs are that the LTTE has also been making preparations for a decisive showdown. While its is extremely difficult for independent observers to speculate with any degree of accuracy about the outcome of this decisive phase of the war, what one can say with some degree of confidence is that any opening for reviving the political engagement will depend on the outcome of the impending finale of the war.

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Endnotes

i. The main coalition allies of President Rajapaksa's UPFA alliance were the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU). Both the JVP and JHU are Sinhalese nationalist parties. They were opposed to the CFA, negotiations with the LTTE and any political settlement including ethnicity-based powersharing. They were also the most vocal advocates of a military approach to the ethnic conflict, suggesting that the Sri Lankan state should defeat the LTTE in the battlefield before working out a political solution.

At the parliamentary elections held in April 2004, the JVP won 39 parliamentary seats and the JHU 9. All JHU members initially were Buddhist monks. While the JVP refused to accept any cabinet positions, the JHU accepted political office in the Rajapaksa-led UPF administration.

ii. Section 4.4 of the CFA reads as follows: "This agreement shall remain in force until notice of termination is given by either party to the Royal Norwegian Government. Such notice shall be given fourteen days in advance of the effective date of termination."

iii. The understanding to 'explore' a federal solution was reached in December 2002 when the government and LTTE delegations met in Oslo. The official statement issued by the Norwegian government on 5 December 2002 stated as follows: "Responding to a proposal by the leadership of the LTTE, the parties agreed to explore a solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka."

iv. Reliable indications about the LTTE's new strategic thinking are quite rare. A somewhat clear articulation is available in the statement attributed to E. Balakumar, which appeared in the pro-LTTE website, Tamilnet, in early January 2008. Balakumar's thesis may be summarized as follows: 'When the LTTE presented its proposals for a political solution, the government in Colombo and the international community did not respond to them adequately. Only the balance of power established by the developments in the battlefield have enabled the LTTE to be taken seriously. In that backdrop, the outcome of the present war will demonstrate once again that a military solution as envisaged by the Sri Lankan government would not be possible and that a new framework of political engagement would be needed.' In his annual hero's day speech made on 27, November 2007, the LTTE leader also hinted at a possible new role for the international actors in Sri Lanka after the outcome of the present phase of war. The LTTE probably thinks that under conditions of a new military stalemate on the ground, its proposal for an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA), made in October 2003, would provide the basis for new phase of negotiations. The LTTE might also peruse international support for its secessionist goal if the outcome of the war favours that option.

v. The IIOEP consists of the following 11 Eminent Persons: Justice P.N. Bhagwati (India, Chairman), Judge Jean-Pierre Cot (France), Mr. Marzuki Darusman (Indonesia), Mr. Arthur E. Dewey (USA), Prof. Cees Fasseur (Netherlands), Dr. Kamal Hossain (Bangladesh), Prof. Bruce Matthews (Canada), Mr. Andreas Mavrommatis (Cyprus), Prof. Sir Nigel Radley (UK), Prof. Ivan Shearer (Australia) and Prof. Yozo Yokota (Japan).

POLITY

vi. An examination of the LTTE's approach to a possible solution suggests two options: a separate state or a regional sub-state within Sri Lanka with extensive regional autonomy in a confederal framework. The LTTE seems to have been extremely cautious about the role of international actors in terms of their potential role in defining what the solution should be. On all occasions when the external actors even . appeared to suggest the framework of a solution, notably in 1987-88 and 2002-2003, the LTTE has resisted the international engagement and adopted a policy of isolationism.

vii. Balachandran cites a study conducted by the Mumbai-based Strategic Foresight Group (SFG) in 2006. The SFG report says that Sri Lanka has 8,000 military personnel per one million population which is the highest among the South Asian countries. In terms of military expenditure as percentage of GDP, Sri Lanka records the highest figure in South Asia at 4.1%, whereas for Pakistan it is 3.5% and for India 2.5%. ■

THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2008: PRIMARY SEASON

Judy Waters Pasqualge

At the end of 2007, with the US primary season set to begin in January, a familiar feeling of 'here we go again' kept tugging at my brain. Coming soon would be a deluge of campaign pr, special interest (including media) spin, the political game soap opera beating out issues, the money hunt, lies and smears ... and maybe worse. It would be one thing if the whole process led to some real change, but I felt a certain lack of interest in most of the dozen or so main candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties. Generally, these people could only be described as representing the status quo, in the sense of US foreign and domestic economic policy. A few pushed the right-wing Christian fundamentalist extreme, and a few were noteworthy for consistent anti-war positions – for immediate withdrawal, with several weaker candidates even supporting war reparations to Iraq and an end to the 'permanent war' economy.

At least, however, there has been a contest within the two parties for choice of presidential candidate, and no contestant is a sitting president or vice-president – the last time this happened was in 1928. As such, the fractures within the parties and within the US citizenry can be more easily seen. In addition, the concurrent races for US Senate and House, state governorships and legislatures, and other local officials may quite possibly continue the trend from 2004 and 2006, in which not only did Democrats gain hugely, but the issues underlying these gains reflected positions tending toward the Left (or centre, depending on your definition). On top of all this, as the end of the Bush term grows nearer, and his polls remain strongly negative on the two key issues of the war and economy, there is a chance of some administration step regarding Iraq or Iran, and/or of a major debacle; this in the context of a quickly deepening recession. So far, voter turnout has by far surpassed that in 2004, and sometimes set records. The issues are clear, and the leadership of the two main parties will have a harder time managing the desired results.[1]

This article is intended as the first of several on the November 2008 presidential and general elections. The focus of this one is the events leading up to the situation in early March.
    majority of state primaries or caucuses (public meetings) have already been held – to determine, generally, the affiliation of many state delegates to each party's candidate nominating convention in late summer. Many candidates have already dropped out, and John McCain has emerged as the Republican candidate. Later articles will provide an update of the primary season, which ends in June: the August and September party conventions; the presidential candidates and their advisors; the televised debates in September and October; state and local races; and the November poll. First, however, a note on the system of selecting the party presidential candidates is necessary.

Primaries and Caucuses – 50 Different Procedures

Each state determines how delegates to the nominating conventions are selected. In some states a person must be a registered party member to vote in that party's primary: in a few states anyone can participate. Many states hold direct elections, others hold caucuses. Some states allocate most of the delegates to candidates based on winner-take-all; others divide delegates proportionally based on the percentage of vote obtained; others might give weight to special groups, for example rural voters. The Democratic Party (DP) divides elected delegates proportionally. Both the DP and Republican Party (RP) select additional delegates: the RP includes the three members from each state who are elected to the Republican National Committee (RNC), ten at-large delegates, and bonus delegates if the party holds the state governorship, or US Senate seat, or controls a state House or Senate. The DP assigns 796 additional delegates, who include party officials, and state and national office holders; they are not bound to a particular candidate. Each state also defines the exact 'commitment' of elected delegates to candidates – what happens when candidates drop out, or if multiple votes are needed at the nominating convention.

Each state determines its primary or caucus date(s), with many choosing to schedule Democratic and Republican contests on the same day for cost and logistics reasons. However, these dates are determined in conjunction with rules established by the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and RNC. This year the two parties agreed to hold almost half of primaries on 5 February, and restricted which states

could hold earlier ones. Michigan and Florida broke the rules by scheduling earlier votes; DP rules deny their delegates any role in the nominating convention, and the RP denies one-half from any role. (These are key states, however, and the two parties will likely find a way to seat delegates).[2]

Candidates and Issues

Heading into the first contest, the Iowa caucus on 3 January, the relative positions of the DP and RP showed the Democrats controlling the House of Representatives (232-202) and Senate (51-49), and more governorships and state legislatures. Polls seemed to show: an increase in the number of voters identifying themselves as Democrats, and in independents favouring Democrats; the Democrats raising more money, and their constituency showing more enthusiasm; and an increase in people who think the country is 'on the wrong track.'[3]

War and Economy – Republicans

Almost all eight Republican candidates supported the decisions to go to war and increase troops levels (the 'surge' of 2007). The one exception is libertarian Ron Paul, a Texas Congressman, who opposed the war from the start, was against the surge, and calls for immediate troop withdrawal. Three candidates favour maintaining troop levels: John McCain (former navy pilot and POW, Arizona senator); Mitt Romney (businessman, former Massachusetts governor); and Rudy Giuliani (former US attorney, former mayor of New York). Several candidates have called for a phased withdrawal of troops: Fred Thompson (former lobbyist and Tennessee rep and senator, actor); and Tom Tancredo (Colorado rep). Two favour gradually handing over responsibility to Iraqis: Mike Huckabee (Southern Baptist minister, former Arkansas governor); and Duncan Hunter (California rep).

Similarly, most of the eight support Bush on the economy: for lowering taxes on the wealthy, free trade agreements, privatization and a roll-back of social services. Romney also calls for an industrial policy to keep such jobs in the US; Huckabee calls for a national (regressive) flat tax; and Paul would cut both war costs and social programmes. With the swift downturn of the economy from late 2007, however, and even the president supporting government payments to individuals and small businesses, Republicans have had to change gear (see below).

War and Economy – Democrats

With the war highly unpopular among US voters, dealing with the issue presents a problem for many DP candidates. The war was an issue in 2006, but many Congressional Democrats took no real action to end it. An anti-war resolution was passed, and a weak attempt made to set a troop withdrawal timetable, but these were not linked to denying funds. Rather, the war was often used as a bargaining chip for administration concessions on domestic programmes.[4] A key factor to keep in mind is exactly what is meant by 'withdrawing troops.' Combat troops comprise only 20-25% of total forces in Iraq. If trainers and advisors are retained, about three times the number of support forces are necessary. And these figures say nothing about the almost 50,000 private security personnel. Finally, there is the question of the very large, and seemingly permanent, US bases now being constructed.[5]

Dennis Kucinich (Ohio rep, former mayor of Cleveland) was the only candidate to vote against the war in 2002; he also voted against the surge and favours immediate troop withdrawal. Mike Gravel (Alaska senator 1969-81) also opposed the war, the surge and is for immediate withdrawal. Bill Richardson (former rep, New Mexico governor) opposed the surge and is for immediate withdrawal. Two senior DP senators, Joseph Biden (Delaware) and Christopher Dodd (Connecticut), voted for the war but are now against; they also favour troop 'redeployment' while Iraqis are trained. That leaves the three main DP candidates.

Hillary Clinton (New York senator since 2000) voted for the war in 2002, opposed the surge and voted for funding; she will not commit to a withdrawal timetable. She would leave some 60,000 trainers and special forces in Iraq and require the country to pass legislation requiring a foreign role in the oil industry. Barack Obama (Illinois senator since 2004) opposed the war from the start, and the surge, and voted for funding. He is for a phased withdrawal (16 months) to leave trainers and special forces, and the oil law. John Edwards (North Carolina senator, 2004 vice-presidential candidate) also voted for the war (now against it), for the surge, and is for a phased withdrawal leaving trainers and special forces, and the oil law.[6]

Unlike in 2004, when John Kerry could get away with ignoring the war issue, pressure from below is forcing DP candidates to explain positions. They will have to distinguish themselves from the Republicans, and from each other. The Republicans' problem is that even in many Republican

Congressional districts, a majority of voters at least want the withdrawal of combat troops to start.[7]

On the economy, it is again Rep. Kucinich who sets the left agenda, being against the permanent war economy, and for the repeal of NAFTA and US withdrawal from the WTO. Mike Gravel would cut the defense budget in half. The three main Democrats again show little difference. They generally favour a balanced budget and would repeal the Bush tax cuts to the wealthy (and use the money for education, job, energy and healthcare measures). Both Clinton and Obama are against a decrease in the defense budget, and Clinton is a long-time supporter of NAFTA (passed under Bill Clinton). Edwards, while not noted for initiating 'change' legislation, speaks of a campaign against poverty and is for some government provision of jobs.[8] The question remains: how can the budget be balanced while maintaining defence expenditures, and, thus, where will the funds come from for promised domestic programmes?

Other Issues – Democrats and Republicans

Healthcare: With 50 million people without health insurance, steep inflation in the price of insurance, and an electorate favouring a comprehensive programme, most candidates fall short. Most Republicans are for allowing the free market, not government, to determine coverage. Clinton and Edwards would require all people to get insurance, supported by tax credits to small business and individuals, and by money from reversing the Bush tax cuts; Obama would require employers to contribute to plans for workers, and parents to cover children. It is unclear how the very poor/jobless – those who earn too little to pay taxes – would afford mandatory insurance. Kucinich and Gravel support a single-payer programme covering everyone, with the former favouring a not-for-profit system.

Abortion: The Republican candidates are against a woman's right to choose (for overturning *Roe v. Wade*) and for a ban on late-term abortion, even when the life of a mother is in danger. The Democrats support choice, and most are against the late-term ban.

Immigration: With 12 million illegals in the US, and most states passing legislation to deal with this, the issue has gained new importance. Most Republicans favour building a fence on the border with Mexico. McCain and Romney support a temporary work programme. Tancredo would use troops to deport illegals. Clinton, Obama, Biden and Dodd favour the fence, with Gravel, Kucinich and Richardson opposed. Clinton, Obama and Edwards are for some process to legalize some illegals.

Iran: Among Republicans only Ron Paul is against possible military action against Iran, and he voted against naming the Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization (Kyl-Lieberman, September 2007). Clinton and Dodd voted for Kyl-Lieberman; Obama did not vote on it; Richardson, Kucinich and Gravel were against.

Patriot Act: Clinton and Edwards voted for the act in 2001; Clinton and Obama voted for reauthorization of it in 2006.[9]

Thus, among the main contenders, there are few differences within the two parties. However, with regard to the DP, there are many issues now on the agenda that Kerry avoided in 2004. In addition to the war and healthcare, these include: global warming, reform of free trade agreements, tax policy, education, infrastructure, the criminal justice system and 'war on drugs,' and media consolidation.[10]

Candidates – Other Information

McCain: a US Naval Academy graduate and pilot for 22 years; POW in Vietnam for five years; naval liaison to Senate; Arizona rep from 1982; senator from 1986.
Romney: a Mormon critical of secularists; CEO of a venture capital fund; son of former Michigan governor George Romney; supporter of 'rough' interrogation; RP establishment favourite; known for easy switch on issues and hazy ideas.
Huckabee: anti-evolutionist who thinks homosexuality is a sin; against divorce; apocalyptic world view; against Muslims and Mormons; supporter of Israel and expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza; as governor, supported state minimum wage and health care legislation.
Giuliani: pro-Israel; law and order hardliner; social liberal on abortion, gun control and immigration.
Paul: for abolishing the Internal Revenue Service, all federal taxation and safety regulations, the Education Department; criticized for racist/anti-Semitic/homophobic statements.
Thompson: lobbyist for 20 years, including for savings and loan sector; Senate Watergate Committee counsel; key proponent of 'weapons of mass destruction' argument; key player in Scooter Libby defence fund (convicted former chief-of-staff to Cheney).
Hunter: Vietnam vet and lawyer, elected to Congress in 1980.
Tancredo: Reagan regional rep of Department of Education; noted for xenophobic anti-illegal immigrant views; thinks Bush too soft in 'war on terror.'[11]

18

Clinton: corporate lawyer and former Wal-Mart board member; credibility problems regarding 1978 cattle futures insider trading, role in firing White House travel office employees (under Bill Clinton), role in Arkansas real estate/ savings and loan scandals (Whitewater).
Obama: civil rights lawyer, first black president of *Harvard Law Review*, gave noteworthy speech at 2004 Democratic National Convention.
Edwards: personal injury lawyer; self-made millionaire.
Richardson: Energy secretary and ambassador to UN under Bill Clinton; part Hispanic; has most international experience.
Kucinich: as Cleveland mayor refused to privatize electricity, leading to banks refusing to lend and city default (bank criminal involvement with private utilities later proved); lost next mayoral race but elected to city council, then as Ohio state senator, and to US House in 1997; leader of campaign to impeach VP Cheney; first to take stand against Bush on Iran.
Gravel: anti-Vietnam War and draft; read Daniel Ellsberg's *Pentagon Papers* into Congressional Record to side step its censor; openly states that troops in Vietnam and Iraq died in vain, and that it is a delusion for the US or its citizens to claim superiority.
Dodd: chair of Senate Banking Committee.
Biden: supporter of 'soft' partition of Iraq.[12]

March 2008

L ooking back to early January, and besides the swing to Obama and McCain (see below), the noteworthy trend is the challenge to established powers in both the DP and RP. The RP is having a hard time keeping its grand coalition together, because there is no one candidate who appeals to all. The RP establishment and big business clearly favoured Romney. Party conservatives and their supporters in the media and think tanks detest McCain for his stands against the Bush tax cuts, torture and extraordinary rendition, and in favour of campaign finance reform, global warming measures, allowing cheap drug imports, and a citizenship route for some illegals. These stands have made McCain attractive to moderates and independents; if he now changes position, he will look like Bush. Much of the Christian right supported Huckabee, who also has some populist appeal. Giuliani, while a foreign policy hawk, leans to being a social liberal.[13] The split in the party – over issues – has resulted in a decrease in campaign contributions, lower voter turnout, and many local Republicans deciding not to run for office this year.

The conservative DP leadership, supportive of Hillary Clinton, is facing a strong internal challenge over choice of candidate and campaign strategy (led by white and black men). After the defeat of John Kerry in 2004, many state DP officials assured that former Vermont governor Howard Dean became head of the DNC, against the wishes of the Clinton clique. Dean instituted a 50-state strategy – to contest all races, and assist states in hiring local organizers to work year round – countering the party norm of targeting big donors, with big media, and key targets (Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004), while ignoring huge areas such as the South. The success of Dean's strategy was seen in the 2006 mid-term elections. With Democrats contesting even sure Republican seats, the RP was unable to shift resources to Democratic areas. In addition, the strategy increased grassroots involvement, including by the Left, the amount of small campaign contributions, and this year voter turnout. Still, DP conservatives tried to unseat Dean after the 2006 elections, and will continue in this attempt. Their dilemma is – with Clinton, Obama and Edwards holding similar views; Clinton carrying strong negatives; and Obama seen as more electable in states that vote DP in local races but Republican in the presidential – that   a window opened for another candidate. Going into the primary season. Clinton stressed experience, Obama the need for change, and Edwards the need to fight poverty.[14]

The Primaries

The state primaries conducted from early January to early March made for interesting viewing. It seemed possible that the Republican contest would only be resolved at the September convention, but McCain has gained a strong win. On the Democratic side, many saw Hillary Clinton as an easy winner (indeed, her campaign was modeled on a win by the end of Super Tuesday on 5 February), never imagining Obama as presenting such a challenge. Here's a rundown:

Iowa (3 January): a largely white state that went Democratic in 2006, with 4% of people polling for military action against Iran, and with December polls close and varying widely. McCain and Giuliani largely skipped the state to concentrate elsewhere; Romney, using his own money, spent big: Huckabee (34%), Romney (26%), Thompson and McCain (13%), Paul (10%), Giuliani (4%). Huckabee won the evangelical/born-again vote, and younger, lower-income and less-educated voters. Thompson's strong showing kept him in the race. Democrats: Obama (38%), Edwards (30%), Clinton (29%). Obama gained over half the youth (under

age 24) vote, 35% of women and the higher educated; Clinton won 30% of women and people over age 65.[15] (Group voting percentages are determined by polls taken after people vote, and are very inexact.)

After Iowa, Biden and Dodd withdrew from the race. For Clinton and Romney, New Hampshire became more important. Strategy differences emerged in the Clinton campaign, partly over how to deal with Obama; in December a campaign official had speculated on whether he had ever dealt drugs, and Bill Clinton said Obama as president would be like "rolling the dice"; the campaign used Bill for delivering the 'low blows,' especially on the day before a primary.[16]

Wyoming (5 January): only Republican; McCain, Huckabee, Giuliani campaigned elsewhere: Romney (57%), Thompson (21%).

New Hampshire (8 January): record turnout for Democrats, down for Republicans. Republicans: McCain (37%), Romney (32%), Huckabee (11%), Giuliani (9%), Paul (8%). McCain won moderates and liberals, all age and income categories; Romney won conservatives; half of party voters said they'd had enough of Bush. Democrats: Clinton (39%), Obama (36%), Edwards (17%), Richardson (5%). More than half of Democrats said they wanted a candidate for change, 20% with experience. Clinton won with women, middle aged and over 65, lower income, and those wanting experience. Obama won with men, independents, youth, middle class and wealthy, those wanting change, and those stating the main issue as the war or healthcare.[17]

After New Hampshire, races in both parties were wide open. Richardson withdrew. Obama gained key endorsements: the Culinary Workers' Union (largest in Nevada, in Las Vegas hotel, restaurant, laundry sectors); the Nevada chapter of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Senator John Kerry; a key California rep close to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi; senators from Missouri, Nebraska and South Dakota (the latter close to former Majority Leader Tom Daschle); the governor of Arizona (the latter two categories in either Republican or swing states). By the end of 2007, ten senators had endorsed Clinton, none doing so thus far in 2008. In preparation for the next week's contest in Michigan, both Clinton and Obama announced economic stimulus plans of over $100 billion, offering tax rebates to individuals and tax breaks to small business, and mortgage assistance. Clinton acknowledged the role of former President Johnson in promoting civil rights, a statement construed as belittling Martin Luther King, setting off an uproar.[18]

Michigan (15 January): both parties penalized for breaking rules. Republicans: Romney (39%), McCain (30%), Huckabee (16%), Paul (6%). Romney won conservatives, Bush supporters, those valuing experience and worried about the economy; McCain won moderates and independents. Romney's win kept him in the race. Democrats: Clinton (55%), uncommitted (40% – Obama and Edwards pulled out after DP stripped delegates). Clinton lost the black vote to Obama, 70-30%. After Michigan, Senator Leahy (Vermont, chair of Judiciary Committee) endorsed Obama.[19]

Nevada (19 January): state with highest home foreclosure rate; 25% of Republican voters are Mormons; 66% of Democrats are unionized. Republicans: Romney (51%), Paul (14%), McCain (13%), Thompson (7%), Huckabee (8%). Romney only active campaigner. Democrats: Clinton (51%), Obama (45%), Edwards (4%) (but Obama won more delegates). Clinton pulled lower income, Las Vegas County, Hispanic and women. Obama won across the state, including (largely white) rural, Reno and Carson City; blacks, youth.

Nevada had set up caucus sites in Las Vegas hotels to enable worker participation. This was challenged in court by the state Education Association, a backer of Clinton, after Obama won the union endorsements; a judge ruled against the challenge. After the poll, Bill Clinton accused the unions of suppressing votes, and then the Clinton campaign misleadingly construed Obama's statement that the RP was the "party of ideas" during the Reagan years as being one of praise.[20]

South Carolina (19 January): Republican only; McCain (33%), Huckabee (30%), Thompson (16%), Romney (15%), Paul (4%). McCain again gained moderates, independents and those opposed to Bush. After the 19 January polls, Hunter withdrew from the race and endorsed Huckabee. Thompson then withdrew, and retired General Norman Schwarzkopf endorsed McCain. Kucinich withdrew.

South Carolina (26 January): Democrats only; with blacks making up more than 50% of voters, October 2007 polls showed the state going to Clinton; Edwards won there in 2004; voter turnout 80% more than in 2004; Obama (55%), Clinton (27%), Edwards (18%). Clinton gained the white women and elderly vote; Edwards white men; and Obama most of the rest – 80% of blacks, men, women, every income

and educational level, youth, independents, moderates, key concern Iraq, economy or health care.[21]

The big news after South Carolina was the endorsements for Obama from the Kennedy family. On 27 January in *The New York Times*, Caroline Kennedy (daughter of JFK) called for a change in leadership, noting Obama's character and judgment, his appeal to youth, the dignity and honour of his campaign, and early opposition to the war. The next day, and in spite of an appeal from Bill Clinton, Senator Ted Kennedy followed. The most powerful senator on domestic issues, he had been expected to remain neutral; his stand would help Obama among Hispanics, union members and low income groups, and regarding the experience issue. Three other Kennedys then endorsed Clinton: Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (former lieutenant governor of Maryland), Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (environmental advocate), and Kerry Kennedy (human rights activist). In early February Ethel Kennedy (widow of Robert) and Maria Shriver endorsed Obama. Clinton also picked up endorsements from *The New York Times* and *LA Times*.[22]

Florida (29 January): penalized by both parties for early date; the first very demographically mixed state, of the old and new South, many New Yorkers, retired and active military, and Hispanics in both parties. Republicans: a must win for Giuliani; the governor endorsed McCain; McCain (36%), Romney (31%), Giuliani (15%), Huckabee (14%). McCain won with the same coalition; won Dade County (Miami), the Gulf Coast and Tampa; Romney won very conservatives, the northeast, and those approving of Bush. The Democrats did not campaign in the state; Clinton (50%), Obama (33%), Edwards (14%).[23] After Florida, Giuliani withdrew and endorsed McCain; California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger also endorsed him. Edwards withdrew.

Maine (5 February): Republican only; Romney (52%), McCain (21%), Paul (18%), Huckabee (6%). This period saw conservative attacks on McCain by Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter and Pat Buchanan.[24]

Super Tuesday (5 February): Democratic contests in 22 states, Republican in 21; including large-delegate states of California, Illinois, New York, New Jersey; swing states of Alaska, Colorado, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Tennessee, New Mexico; states with large black populations – Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama; and large Hispanic – New Mexico, Arizona; many states showed record turnouts. Republicans: McCain won 9 states, Romney 7, Huckabee 5. McCain: California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey,

Missouri, Arizona, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Delaware; Romney: Massachusetts, Minnesota, Colorado, Vermont, North Dakota, Montana, Alaska; Huckabee: Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, West Virginia. Of all Republican voters that day, 33% were evangelical/born-again, 40% said the main issue was the economy, and 25% illegal immigration.

Democrats: Obama won 13 states and Clinton 9. Obama: Illinois, Georgia, Missouri, Minnesota, Colorado, Alabama, Connecticut, Utah, Delaware, North Dakota, Alaska, Kansas, Idaho; Clinton: California, New York, New Jersey, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Arizona, Oklahoma, Arkansas, New Mexico. In general, Clinton won with white women, Hispanics, elderly, lower income, issue of health care, and experience. Obama won among blacks, higher income, most liberal, issue of the war; he also gained 40% of women and whites. With regard to delegates won, Clinton and Obama were about even; the popular vote was tied – results that showed Obama gaining in popularity over the past weeks. His campaign pulled in $32 million in January, as compared to Clinton's $13 million.[25]

McCain's showing on Super Tuesday convinced Romney to drop out of the race. Obama picked up several endorsements: the Transportation Workers Union; and Rep. David Obey (D-Wisconsin), chair of the House Appropriations Committee; Obey had supported Edwards, and is an economic populist against the Bush tax cuts and free trade agreements.[26]

Washington, Louisiana, Nebraska, Virgin Islands (9 February): Republicans: McCain won Washington (26%, Huckabee 24%, Paul 22%, Romney (17%). Huckabee won Louisiana (43%, McCain 43%, Romney 6%, Paul 5%); and Nebraska (60%, McCain 24%, Paul 11%, Romney 3%). Obama beat Clinton in all four: Washington, one of the most liberal states (68-31%); Louisiana (57-36%), Nebraska (68-32%), and Virgin Islands (90-8%).

Maine (10 February): Democrats only; Obama beat Clinton, 59-40%. With Obama on a roll, Clinton's campaign manager resigned, to be replaced by her former chief-of-staff. In question was the strategy to focus on delegate-rich states, to front end spending with the assumption of winning the nomination by early February, and whether to now stick to issues or to confront Clinton's shortcomings.[27]

Virginia, Maryland, Washington, DC (12 February): With all three having large black populations, and relatively

educated and affluent areas (including the DC suburbs). Republicans: McCain easily won all three: Virginia (50%, Huckabee 41%, Paul 5%, Romney 4%); Maryland (55%, Huckabee 30%, Paul and Romney 6%); DC (68%, Huckabee 17%, Paul 8%, Romney 6%). Obama beat Clinton: Virginia (64-35%); Maryland (61-37%), DC (75-24%). In Virginia Obama cut into Clinton's constituencies, winning with women, whites, Hispanics, rural, suburban, high school educated, lower income, main issue war or economy or health care. Clinton won with white women.[28] At the end of the day the Democrats' approximate delegate count showed Obama with 1,275 and Clinton with 1,220 (2,025 needed for nomination).

In preparation for the next week's Wisconsin primary, Obama revised his economic programme. He criticized NAFTA and China's most-favoured-nation trade status, corporate tax loopholes, the Bush tax cuts, high credit card charges, and tax breaks to companies that shift jobs overseas; he came out for investment and jobs in infrastructure and green energy. He picked up two more important endorsements: Rep. John Lewis (D-Georgia), the elder statesman of the civil rights movement, who had endorsed Clinton in 2007; the national SEIU, with 1.9 million members; and the United Food and Commercial Workers, with 1.3 million. Both unions are not members of the AFL-CIO; Clinton has the endorsement of its head John Sweeney (though not the union); and AFL-CIO affiliates the American Federation of Teachers and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. McCain received the endorsement of Romney and George Bush senior.[29]

Wisconsin, Hawaii (19 February): in Wisconsin, a state with few minorities and many liberals and independents, McCain won (55%, Huckabee 37%, Paul 5%); the Republicans did not contest in Hawaii. Obama won both: Wisconsin (58-40%), Hawaii (76-25%), making eleven victories in a row. Clinton's slide among white women, union and lower income voters continued.[30]

In the run-up to the 4 March primaries, Obama obtained the following endorsements: Feminists for Peace (1,000, including Barbara Ehrenreich, Katha Pollitt and Susan Sarandon, who criticized Clinton's position on Iraq; they join former NARAL president Kate Michelman, and the director of the National Association of Working Women); Russ Feingold (Wisconsin anti-war and anti-Patriot Act senator); the Teamsters (1.4 million); Paul Volker (former chair of the Federal Reserve); Jim Hightower (long-time Texas populist

state official); and Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-West Virginia), chair of the Intelligence Committee. Ralph Nader announced that he would run under the Green Party, and New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg that he would not run as an independent.[31]

The Clinton campaign came out fighting. It complained that the media was reveling in her downfall. Obama was attacked for plagiarizing a statement said by the Massachusetts governor; his picture in Somali dress was leaked to the press; a statement by his economic advisor to a Canadian official that campaign talk on NAFTA was "posturing" was broadcast; his readiness regarding national security was questioned; and the media was urged to question Obama about his ties to Tony Rezko, a Chicago developer whose corruption trial was to begin on 3 March. By end of the week, there was a Clinton 'comeback' tone in parts of the media, aided by her campaign raising $35 million in February (Obama more than $50 million).[32]

Ohio, Texas, Vermont, Rhode Island (4 March): Republican: McCain beat Huckabee in all four, and enough delegates to assure the nomination: Ohio (54-33%); Texas (52-38%); Vermont (72-14%); Rhode Island (65-22%). Huckabee withdrew and endorsed McCain; President Bush also endorsed him. Clinton won all but Vermont, to keep her in the race. The outcomes in Vermont and Rhode Island were expected: Vermont, very white and anti-war, went to Obama (60-38%); Rhode Island to Clinton (58-40%). Clinton won Ohio (56-42%), supported by her usual constituencies. She also won the primary in Texas (51-47%), but the state's subsequent caucus results are not yet in. At the end of the day, approximate delegate counts showed Obama with 1,573 and Clinton with 1,464. Some good news coming out of the Ohio polls was that Dennis Kucinich won his primary, to run for and retain his House seat, against a well-funded opponent (52-33%).[33]

After 4 March the Obama campaign raised the issue of Clinton's refusal thus far to release her tax returns, unlike other candidates; there was some speculation that this might be due to Bill Clinton's receipt of income from foreign sources. The Clinton campaign responded by saying Obama's campaign mimicked Ken Starr (the independent counsel who investigated the Clinton's Arkansas Whitewater involvement and Monicagate). Clinton claimed that she and McCain were ready to be commander-in-chief, but not Obama. Obama's foreign policy advisor lost her cool, called Clinton a monster, and resigned.[34]

POLITY

Wyoming (8 March): Obama won, 61-39%.

Reports as of 9 March say that the Democrats will redo the primary in Michigan, though no date has been set; the state of Florida is willing to redo its vote, if the DNC pays for it ($10 million). The schedule here on in shows: Mississippi (11 March); Pennsylvania, the largest state left (22 April); Indiana and North Carolina (6 May); West Virginia (13 May); Kentucky and Oregon (20 May); Montana and South Dakota (3 June); and Puerto Rico (7 June).

The high-stakes game will be interesting to watch over the next three months, especially the six weeks with no primary before Pennsylvania. How successful will McCain be in unifying his party, and how will he deal with Clinton and Obama? For Clinton, this will be a chance to show what she criticizes Obama for lacking — integrity, credibility, experience and leadership; will the low attacks, which belie this, continue? It has been reported that the Republican neo-cons, like Rush Limbaugh, were hoping for a Clinton win on 4 March, that she will damage Obama in case McCain faces him — they already know Clinton's negatives. John Nichols of *The Nation* has described this as a dangerous time for the Democrats: if the Clinton campaign sees itself as winning only if Obama loses, and continues to try to destroy him, then Clinton may lose the nomination, and the Democrats lose in November; if Clinton runs on the issues, with dignity, a November loss could be avoided.[35]

Another thing to watch is how the media portrays the Democratic race: first, Clinton was the favorite, then Obama had the momentum, then Clinton had it after the wins in Ohio and Texas — all while the delegate count has remained very close. Individual events are given more or less coverage and importance, depending on the propaganda spin intended. This propaganda is aimed at overseas viewers as well as at US voters. Part of this coverage involves opinion polling, the results of which so far have often been way off as predictors of primary wins – beware! The treatment of Obama, by both DP and RP machines, also merits watching. Obama is a serious contender, with serious backers, and Bill Clinton's moves against Obama clearly backfired.

All this is happening while the main issues – the economy and Iraq – are serious and in flux. The impact of the falling economy will likely have an increased impact on voters. The collapse of the sub-prime mortgage sector is now spreading to near-prime and prime sectors, to credit card and small business debt, and to bond insurers. The situation is clearly worsening and people are afraid. This is reflected in the

candidates having to address the issue in the last two months – and even Republicans and the president calling for government intervention. But the measures taken so far have been inadequate.

In an opinion poll taken after Super Tuesday, people were asked what would help 'a great deal' to fix the economy. The highest number of people said getting out of Iraq (48%); compared to: increasing funds for health care, education and housing (43%); cutting taxes (36%); and channeling money to the poor (29%). Among Democrats, 65% stated the response regarding the war.[36] In this regard, at the end of February anti-war activists commenced an Iraq Campaign, supported by MoveOn.org and SEIU, and recently Clinton and Obama were forced to take a position on the use of private security contractors.[37] With Clinton and McCain holding very similar positions on Iraq, and with the French and Israeli governments (along with Iranian exiles) urging US action against Iran, the next eight months could witness the playing of a few wild cards.[38]

The good news is that the race is still on, and the issues won't disappear. Also, the Democratic campaign has moved beyond simple identification by race or gender, and people are voting. While McCain is not a neo-con, and Clinton is often as conservative as he is, a progressive agenda is still in play nationally – and is especially so at the state and local level.

End Notes

[1] At the end of January six polls on Bush's job performance showed a range of 60% to 63% disapproval; in early March seven polls showed a range of 59 to 66%. realclearpolitics.com, 29.1.and 7.3.08.
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POLITY

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[11] For candidate info, see bbc.co.com; Hunter and Tancredo campaign websites; and Marc Cooper, "GOP Clutches at Iowa Straws," *The Nation*, 10/17.9.07; John Nichols, "Playing the God Card," *The Nation*, 31.12.07; David Corn, "Fred Thompson, Neocon," *The Nation*, 13/20.8.07; politics1.com, 11.1.08; Max Blumenthal, "The Real Mike Huckabee," thenation.com, 11.1.08.

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SHIFTING THEORIES: PARTIAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE HOUSEHOLD

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1. Introduction

One concern of feminist economists is with the appropriateness of mainstream methodology for understanding social reality (England, 1993; Folbre, 1993; Humphries, 1995; Lawsen, 1997). This concern arises because of the limitations of a categorical structure of analysis put in place by mainstream economists, and the partial orientation of this analytical structure. The dominant paradigm is absolutist in nature, mostly involving isolated individuals operating in conditions where an equilibrium outcome is the result, which is often fictitious and is a way of providing universalizing accounts.[1] Feminist economists point out that this feature is motivated by the reduction of human relationships to one dominant Western white male ideal as a stereotype (England, 1993; Folbre, 1993; Humphries, 1995). Others argue that this outcome is brought about by a desire to facilitate the universal application of analytic or formalistic methods within economics (Lawson, 1997, 1999). Certainly, to understand the complexities of the world, and household structures in particular, feminist economists need to move beyond the mainstream paradigm. There are however, projects already concerned with the broader features of the real world, which range from Marxism and (old) institutionalism to critical realism. Feminist economists already engage with the draw on these frameworks in important ways (Hartmann, 1981; Ferber and Nelson, 1993; Folbre, 1993; Mohan, 2003).

The realist social theory project, conceptualized as critical realism within economics, has self-consciously set out to derive, via ontological analysis, a categorical structure appropriate to the world in which we live, including in particular the social realm (Lawson, 1997; Bourdieu, 1998, 1999). The social ontology outlined by advocates of critical realism provides a conception of the social world as, at once, structured differentiated, emergent, process driven, polyvalent, value-laden, holistic and human-agency dependent. It is a framework that captures and systematizes the highly differentiated, evolving and interconnected world that feminists have uncovered in their empirically oriented research. Because critical realism concerns itself mostly with ontological analysis, it provides a categorical framework merely of possibilities, where it cannot be determined in advance which of the developed categories provides greatest insight or how all the various aspects are able to interconnect (Lawson, 1997, 1999). Work by feminist economists, then, especially through case studies, can fill in the details and thus reciprocally enrich the critical realist framework, just as they draw on it. My aim here is to uncover the ways in which social ontology offers an effective way of recognizing diverse household structures that exist in our social world. In this paper I want to illustrate these claims by drawing on my own research on female-headship[2] in eastern Sri Lanka.

Orthodox economic readings of the household in some measure fail because the links between structure and agency are not included,[3] and the household is treated as an undifferentiated unit akin to methodical individualism that underpins the dominant economic perspective (Becker, 1965). Methodological individualism cannot accommodate the combination of human agency and social structures in dynamic interaction (Lawson, 1997, p.16; Humphries, 1998, p.224)

Others have provided (e.g., Sen, 1990; Agarwal, 1997) more progressive analyses of households and household relations. But I argue that, for all Sen's and Agarwal's strong points, households in their framework remain bounded, unitary and homogenous.[4] They assume a standard patriarchal household and work within a framework of methodological individualism. Consequently, their analysis either neglects or is unable to explain diverse forms of household relations, including female-headship, which are networked, contested and diverse. My evidence, along with that of numerous others, suggests that the transformation of households is best understood by paying attention to the differentiated patriarchal structures (Chant, 1997; Chen, 1998; Ruwanpura, 2001). In this respect, the ontological analysis advocated by critical realism is particularly useful to my research. At the same time, research such as my own serves to illustrate how the critical realist conception works out in particular contexts, highlighting some of its more salient features for feminist economists - especially from a development perspective.

2. Revising the household through feminist narrations

Intra-household analyses have traditionally sought to focus on gender relationships by looking at the bargaining power of men and women. Exit options available to men and women are held to determine negotiations over resources within the household. Since men have an advantage over women in gaining access to employment and income-generating activities, the bargaining position of men within the household, is strengthened by their economic position, while that of women is weakened. The economic basis of unequal power relations between men and women is depicted in these ways (Becker, 1965; Engels, 1978; Folbre, 1986A, 1986B.

Recent contributions provide the framework for a more complex analysis, by emphasizing the qualitative dimensions of bargaining relations (Sen, 1990; Agarwal, 1997). This literature has shown that economic relations not only have economic features, but are also tied up with cultural, religious, ideological and material factors. Although the conceptualization of the household provided by Sen (1990) and Agarwal (1997) does not stand for all feminist theory, they are powerful thinkers who have greatly influenced feminist economics - including my own thinking on the critical issue of the household. Thus it was these influential accounts of the household that formed the basis for my fieldwork research.[5]

Sen's (1990) writings on cooperative conflicts and Agarwal's (1990) contributions to bargaining and household relations are treated together in this paper. Agarwal (1997) is concerned with incorporating the qualitative dimensions of bargaining over social norms and perceptions into household relations. Her assessment is similar to Sen's: endowments, entitlements and entitlement relations are related to cultural factors, which have an impact on cooperative conflicts in intra-household dynamics. Likewise, Agarwal is concerned with two qualitative dimensions of bargaining relations. First, she investigates how social perceptions influence intra-household dynamics (echoing Sen in his cooperative conflict model). And second, she asks how these social factors are themselves bargained over, which can be considered an extension of earlier work on bargaining relations as well as gender cooperative conflict literature.[6]

The key point in analyzing cooperative conflicts is to extend entitlements in order to incorporate notions of perceived legitimacy in intra-household divisions (Sen, 1990, pp. 125, 145). It is these that enable an individual's capabilities to be fully realized. Sen recognizes that, in the case of women,

entitlements *per se* do not necessarily translate into minimum standards of welfare, because qualitative relations, namely the cultural and social dimensions, constitute the informational base of women's 'legitimate' status *vis-à-vis* men. These are factors that define views on propriety and norms, which in turn characterize acceptable gender roles in communities (Sen, 1990, p. 125). Therefore, it is not merely entitlements that matter in determining the welfare of women, but also the informational base, which is at best conceived as a lens through which entitlements are perceived (Sen, 1990, p.126).

Agarwal's concerns are twofold. Her first concern is similar to Sen's, and is about the role of social norms and perceptions in the bargaining process. Her view is that social norms affect the strength of a person's fall back position in bargaining relations. Second, she examines how social norms and expectations are themselves bargained over. This is an extension of Sen's analysis of cooperative conflict. Sen's concern with the informational base is similar to Agarwal's premise that social norms and perceptions determine the fallback position of individuals. However, Agarwal (1997, pp. 1-11) goes further by conjecturing that social norms, expectations and perceptions can themselves be bargained over. In Agarwal's analysis, Sen's informational base becomes endogenous. The implication is that factors such as state intervention, feminist political activity and awareness building, institutional reform and the like can lead to positive shifts in the informational base.

Agarwal is no doubt correct in arguing that there are possibilities for progressive transformation in social norms that can affect the welfare of women. However, the process of bargaining for social legitimacy need not be unidimensional. The complex twist to the analysis lies here. Social legitimacy has a variety of facets. While certain factors influence gender issues positively, others may be detrimental to progressive gender relations. Disentangling particular effects can be difficult. I draw attention to this not to make a case for a simpler framework, but rather to acknowledge the complexity of household relations. The important point of Agarwal's theme is that there is an explicit role for the state in influencing bargaining relations within the context of social norms and legitimacy.[7]

3. Other household structures: the evidence

Feminists are increasingly paying attention to alternative household structures that deviate from the patriarchal norm, with the rise in female-headship being a particularly good

27

example of an emergent form of household structure (Chant, 1997; Chen, 1998). Like all household structures, however, female-headed households take many forms. Chant (1997) provides a selective typology, which includes lone-mother households, female-headed extended households, lone female households, single-sex/female-only households, and so on (Chant, 1997, pp. 10-26). The reasons for the emergence and increase in female-headship vary from economic and social transformation to conflict and displacement (Buvinic *et al.*, 1978; Youssef and Hetler, 1983; Buvinic and Gupta, 1997; Chant, 1997). This diversity in the types of female-headed households suggests that there is a case for the development of a framework that can be adapted to these different forms.

With this in mind, the following analysis draws on my previous study of female-headship in eastern Sri Lanka with the aim of moving beyond existing theoretical contributions (Ruwanpura, 2001). There are many creative ways in which the cooperative and bargaining relations' model can be extended when speaking about female-headship. But I conclude that, because it is embedded in individualist methodology, the limits of the model become apparent when applied to female-headship. Because of this, an open-ended theorizing of household structures is called for; that is, a form of theorizing that is not closed, isolated and atomistic is promoted. This supports feminist advocacy for methodologically shifting away from mainstream economics. The next section offers some possible ways in which cooperative conflict models can provide a backdrop for female-headship.

4. Nearing the limits or pushing boundaries?

The cooperative conflict literature makes links between extended entitlements, the perceived legitimacy of women and their households' levels of welfare. In the case of female-headed households, how does this group transform these links into claims on the community and state resources in order to expand their entitlement base? In eastern Sri Lanka, the Muslim and Tamil communities are governed by matrilineal laws, customs and practices (Agarwal, 1996)[8] so have these practices legitimated the status of female-heads and widows so as to establish entitlement relations and sharpen extended entitlements? The evidence is ambiguous, since matrilineal practices do not mean the absence of patriarchal values and/or structures Ruwanpura, 2001). Do matrilineal practices override other cultural constraints? There are ethnic and class-based variations (Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004), but the response here is straightforward. In eastern Sri Lanka, generally repressive cultural practices are not a pervasive

feature. But this does not negate the existence of patriarchal structures and patriarchal institutional laws and run counter to matrilineal inheritance, and which mostly work against the interests of women, and of female-heads in particular (Ruwanpura, 2001; de Alwis, 2002; Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004). Such divergences will not inform the informational base of female-heads positively, since they only serve to perpetuate patriarchal interests against which female-heads have no legal recourse.

The basic thrust of cooperative conflict theories is that women subsume their perceived self-interest in order to work together with their men in negotiation over resources, and that this helps maintain the welfare of families. So even where women's own interest is in conflict with the larger familial interest, women are more likely to cooperate with men to avoid a breakdown in marital relations. In my own case study, I found similarly that female-heads subordinated their own social, economic and emotional interests so as to obtain the support of their kin and/or community in maintaining the welfare of their households (Ruwanpura, 2001, 2003). Female-heads end up making difficult choices and forgo their own individual interest to ensure the welfare of their families (Ruwanpura, 2003, Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004).

Where the economic support available to women is crucially dependent upon the community's benevolence and the support systems for female-heads, women are likely to repress their own self-interest. In the absence of targeted welfare policies and institutional structures supporting female-heads, there is likely to be a multiplication of such incidents. But does this mean, in turn, that the community will provide resources indefinitely to 'honourable' female heads? This does not appear to happen, since community and kin support for most female-heads is intermittent and/or temporary. The lack of a patriarchal figure in their household may mean that female-heads do not participate in the bargaining over resources characteristic of two-person households. But nonetheless they often remain trapped in community and kin structures that perpetuate patriarchal values, and where women's individual self-interest continues to be pushed aside.

Two issues are pertinent here. First, where benevolent community or kin support is available, female-heads may be able to extend their entitlement base, thus sustain in the welfare of their households. But, second, such extensions of entitlement relations may do nothing to expand their capabilities because they place family welfare over their own personal welfare. Without this expansion female-heads'

28

economic vulnerability and susceptibility to poverty remains very real.

But even the conditional support of kin and community is not offered to all. Most female-heads do not get continuous economic support from their kin and neighbours. For most female-heads, the support received is largely non-monetary in nature, which brings to the debate the gender dimensions of network structures, and the theoretical implications for feminist methodology.

5. The need for undifferentiated households

It is possible to extend Sen and Agarwal's analysis of cooperative conflicts in household to the community. However, this makes the limitations of their discourse more apparent.[9] It is useful to consider two problems in detail here. First, the focus is on women suppressing their own interests. My previous study (Ruwanpura, 2001) has shown that female-heads do not simply deal with gender relations within the household, but have to negotiate with patriarchal structures in the shape of networks, labour markets and other institutions. These structures, whether represented by men or women, are imbued with patriarchal values.[10] Female-heads may have to repress their own interest to ensure community or kin support. Second, these structures in turn depend upon women (and men) to sustain, maintain and reciprocate them. Since most women take it for granted that it is their 'duty' to help each other, they rarely step back to analyse their role in perpetuating particular gender relationships. Even where female heads are strongly aware of the material and social changes that make them adopt a critical standpoint towards their new circumstances, they still constantly have to bargain with other women in the community to ensure that they do not face their wrath.

The very absence of any consideration of community structures in modern economics is revealing of the discipline's limitations. But does an incorporation of the relationship between the market, state and household suffice to comprehend social realities? The answer is in the negative, as social reality is more complex still. The basic cooperative conflict model assumes a patriarchal household, leaving little room for those alternative household structures within which women devise survival strategies. The female-headed household is an example of an alternative household structure that shapes the social and reproductive roles of children. Such alternative household structures, of course, point to the need for feminist economists to move beyond frameworks that

simply focus on patriarchal households. Hence, despite the several strengths of these feminist narrations of the household, because as a paradigm they are implicitly based on a methodologically individualist framework, their limitations become apparent when they are applied to household formations that are socially networked, contested and diverse.[11]

Perception, welfare and agency of women in cooperative conflict situations bring into the household debate social and personal parameters that lead to particular outcomes for household relationships. My assessment departs from Sen's and is closer to Agarwal's view that 'what is needed is less making women realize they deserve better, than having them believe they can do better' (1997,p.25). This is because through socially aware action (i.e., they can do better'), the possibility for transformation of social structures through intended and unintended consequences takes place, with the space for agency getting recognized. A few illustrations from my research serve to exemplify the numerous ways in which this can happen. At one level, the ethnic conflict in eastern Sri Lanka is opening up spaces for female-heads to question accepted patriarchal values and norms. However the extent of their willingness to challenge the status quo has links to ethnicity. Tamil female-heads are, in most instances, openly critical of the legitimacy and authority of social norms and values in their community that devalue their interests. Most Muslim female-heads limited their criticism of social and patriarchal norms to those that restrict their social mobility, public movements and welfare interests. Although Sinhala female-heads are aware of patriarchal values pervading their lives and options, they see no real reason to challenge such structures overtly. The rationale is that, as long as there was ease of movement and access to economic resources, there was little reason to confront the status quo.

Female-heads facing poverty or belonging to low-income classes across ethnic communities, however, are vociferous critics of those structures that make their economic survival difficult. But female-heads in all ethnic groups face barriers that prevent them from realizing their capabilities. Impediments are translated through community or kin networks which espouse the values of each ethnic community, and perpetuate patriarchal interests. The diverse groups of female-headed households in eastern Sri Lanka, therefore, are placed in particularly contradictory positions. Matrilineal inheritance patterns and community structures place female-heads in a favourable position, but this positioning was only relative.

I have previously shown that female-heads within this particular context in eastern Sri Lanka nevertheless have lives that remain shaped by ethnic dimensions and influenced by patriarchal relations (Ruwanpura, 2001, 2003; Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004). Patriarchal restraints sit together with structures that have traditionally favoured women, and manage to survive and mutate according to historically specific circumstances. For example, at the current juncture in Sri Lanka, ethno-nationalist discourse has become an effective medium through which patriarchal interests are promoted (Jayawardena and de Alwis, 1996; de Alwis, 2002). My research has revealed how these patriarchal interests also find their way into network structures in numerous ways. Since these structures are the very basis through which female-heads realize their economic interests, such women are particularly affected.

While most feminists working in development economics discuss the gradual erosion of traditional kin support to female-heads, I have shown that kin and networks continue to support them, although increasingly in non-monetary forms (Ruwanpura 2001). Rather than disappearing, kin and community support has shifted from monetary support to non-monetary activities, with obvious gender implications. Women mainly carry out care-giving tasks, which are both unpaid and unaccounted for in descriptions of development activities. This dimension of network support, a support that is important to female-heads for economic and social reasons, also illustrates women's roles in maintaining, reciprocating and sustaining these network structures. Women (and men) rarely reflect on the way they perpetuate gender roles and relationships: their day-to-day practical activities simply mean that, because they have little choice but to engage with these roles and relationships, the latter become the unintended consequence of these necessary day-to-day activities. In this way, actions reproduce structures as an unintended consequence. Since their very economic survival depends on these networks, the common sense in upholding them is apparent. More importantly; from a feminist methodological standpoint, a pushing aside of community structures in economic analysis serves to underscore the gender biases in the discipline. Both Sen and Agarwal, while cognizant of the social forces shaping the particular outcomes for women's entitlements and their capabilities base, limit their analysis to individual behaviour within the patriarchal households.[12] Yet the way households are networked with other institutions and the gender composition of social relations of the latter are not given enough consideration.

Gender outcomes are linked not simply to bargaining relations within patriarchal households, but also to a gender-biased community that generally espouses patriarchal values. Analysing communities, therefore, is necessary not simply to show the methodological limitations of the mainstream framework, but also because a critical feminist reading may make for better policy prescriptions.

The neglect of network and community structures within cooperative conflict models arises because of the assumption of a household structure that is headed by a patriarch, where women actively negotiate their interests and agency. While there is great validity in this particular reading, since, after all, a fair proportion of household are headed by men, it also implicitly assumes a particular type of household. Sen's (1990) elucidation of the cooperative conflict model never radically departs from the bargaining problem theorized by Nash (Ibid, p, 131-4). By resting cooperative conflict situations on the tenets of individual welfare and outcomes, the gender division problem is formulated in terms of the need to incorporate 'perceptions of interest' of individuals so as to consider their impact on welfare outcomes (Sen, 1990, p. 133). The call for recognizing the central import of a wider informational base for the bargaining problem as applied to gender divisions within the household is the basis of Agarwal's (1997) work. Her analysis of household models brings in social norms, community-based coalitions and identities, and the state so as to recognize the diversity of factors that affect perceptions of individual interests and challenges the methodological individualism upon which Nash builds his bargaining problem. Rather, they extend the basics of the model to household relations y including other variables, such as conceptions of legitimacy, desertion, social norms, perceived interests and so forth.

However, households are not the same everywhere: their structure is dependent upon social context, and they are a sub-system of wider social relations and realities. Understanding household requires us to study the varied contexts in which household are situated as well as the social relations of individuals within these institutions. In studying female-leadership, for example, there is a need to locate these household structures in their ethnic and class backgrounds, and it is this specific reading that is provided in the study. This analysis calls for consideration of the wider social structures in economic readings of female-headed households, since the welfare of these households is over-determined by an interplay of factors that are ignored when a uniform patriarchal household is assumed. Furthermore, the implied economically deterministic readings of household

are another limitation, since female heads' participation in economic activity has not necessarily increased the perception of the 'naturalness' of these women's households or their roles as primary income earners. Shaping values that are beneficial for women will require more than their having access to income, economic activity and land. While these may be crucial for female-heads; survival and the welfare of their households, their autonomy and emancipation are not guaranteed through improvements in economically determined fallback positions. To ensure the autonomy of female-heads requires considering the wider social structures which shape the parameters of their agency. The argument for incorporating social structures into the conceptualization of households, therefore, is also about broadening the methodological boundaries of household analysis. Put simply, accommodating the differentiated nature of households requires moving out o the *doxa[13]*of development economics, since it is within tis doxa that the cooperative conflicts framework is located. To move out of requires borrowing from feminist and social theoretical contributions on economic methodology, and this will be done in the next section.

6. Realist social theory and re-conceptualising the household

Realist social theory contributes in important ways to understanding the social structures within which humans operate. The specific project of critical realism[14] on which I draw here shows in particular that event regularities-the backbone of mainstream economic theory-are a special case that occurs when stable structures are isolated under experimental conditions (Lawson, 1997).[15] Narratives of female-headed households accentuate again and again the inter-connections of social structures, which reveal that they cannot be isolated in the real world (Ruwanpura, 2001, 2003; Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004). Moreover, the case studies of female-heads' interactions with these social structures show that the latter are constantly being shaped and reshaped.

The difficult decisions made by female-heads to involve children in labouring activities to maintain the welfare of the household illustrates this point. Women, we witness, do not necessarily make black-and-white choices. Instead, they navigate a grey nebulous terrain when deciding between pulling their sons or daughters out of school to uplift or maintain family welfare (Ruwanpura, 2001, pp.88-104). Social theorists argue that this happens because of the social realm's 'dependency upon human agency' (Lawson, 1997,

p.157; Bourdieu, 1998, p.25). Here, social structures depend on human agency, and are intrinsically dynamic and internally related to each other. Two aspects are internally related when they are what they are and can do what they do in virtue of the relation in which they stand to one another. A focus on female-headship provides many instances of internally related social positions and interactions, including those of mothers and daughters,- sisters and sisters-in-law, mothers and children, women and maternal uncles, women and their in-laws, and so on. The emphasis on social position rather than on people is an essential feature of this particular perspective. Focusing on social position also opens up the possibility of each individual occupying a multitude of positions simultaneously. According to the conception, then, social reality is a network of positioned practices, where social structures are not reducible to people but consists of relations, rules and positions which are dynamically linked and facilitate the possibility of complexly structured human practices (Lawson, 1997, p.159).

The position of female-heads in eastern Sri Lanka is indeed linked to rules and relations emerging from ethnic, religious, class and gender structures that interact with each other dynamically multifaceted ways. Such a conception of social reality helps highlight the fact that neither these structures nor the positions of female-heads are static or unchanging, but are constantly being reconstituted in the very interactions they facilitate. However, routine and regular behaviour patterns do follow from the generalized procedures of actions, which are an outcome of the relational practices and positions of people (Lawson, 1997, pp. 160-3). But disparities across individuals regarding these practices are obvious and likely, since social positions themselves usually imply hierarchy and segmentation. It is also the case that such a differentiated ascription of rule-governed practices [1] is connected to class, gender, ethnic and other such relations: social positions exist only in relation to these institutional modes.[16] Female-heads, therefore, occupy a particular position, one which, though in most instances they are thrust into it, is shaped and constituted by their relations with other social positions as well as by other relations and structures. The analysis of these facets of considering households as open, dynamic and heterogeneous entities that are related to other social institutions and, at the same time, may be constituted by each other too.

The ability of people to exercise their agency is connected with social position, relations and structures. Like social positions and relations, social structures too are constituted and connected to each other. The experiences of female-heads in eastern Sri Lanka show the interconnections between

POLITY

ethnicity, the economy, religion, culture and gender identities and how these connect with each other in a myriad of alternative ways. And this, of course, includes the household and network structures too. The household always exists as a sub-system, a structured process of interaction, which is internally related to other sub-systems: the local and wider culture, religion, education system, the economic system, the market, the state, etc. Consequently, variations in household structures are inevitable, and certainly systematic differences between social groups, i.e., Muslims, Sinhalese and Tamils, reveal patterns and tendencies towards one particular formation of the household rather than another. This reading of structures allows leeway for identifying the particularities of the ways in which structures operate in different contexts. Put differently, from this perspective it would indeed be surprising if culture, education, the market and other structures were the same everywhere. Similarly, households, female-headed households, nuclear households, extended households, and so on, are all likely to exist and coexist, with some others. In this perspective, female-headship need not be perceived as an aberration, but rather one way of forming kin relationships among many possibilities, one that needless to say is context-dependent.

7. Shifting theories: partial perspectives on the household

To consider female-headed households as an alternative form of kin relationship, of course, implies that economic theory needs to shift its focus from bounded readings of the household. And development policies, in particular, should recognize that even the more progressive readings of household structures and relations (e.g., Sen and Agarwal) provide only partial perspectives on the social reality of these structures. Similarly, community and kin structures are shaped by individual interactions with other institutions: Muslim female-heads note more support from older children and kin, which is an expression of their links to ethnic, religious and kin formations (Ruwanpura and Humphries, 2004). Sinhala female-heads, in contrast, note their dependence upon neighbors and friends, as less emphasis is placed on kin structures to support vulnerable households (Ruwanpura, 2003). Likewise, most households in all ethnic groups experienced a shifting from monetary to non-monetary support from community and kin as a consequence of altering material realities and the ethnic conflict in these communities. Such cases illustrate the inter-connections between different structures, and how both household and network structures exist as sub-systems related to other structures. In addition, variations in community and/or kin support in each ethnic group also typify the specificity of structures in different situations. For instance, even within a similar economic environment, community and kin agents organise and reorganize themselves very differently because of their relationships with other structures, such as ethnic, class and/or gender identities.

Additionally, there are two related points relevant to households and-networks that warrant deliberation in this study of structures. First, human intentional agency presupposes the existence of social structures, so that the latter cannot simply be viewed as a creation of individuals. Second, since social structures depend upon humans, and there is willful intention on the part of all individuals to exercise their agency, these structures cannot be regarded as static (Lawson, 1997, p. 167). So the emphasis is on reproduction and transformation rather than on creation or determination: by drawing upon social structure as a condition of acting and, through the sum total of their actions, social structures are either reproduced or transformed (ibid, pp. 168-9). Household structures and networks here maintain the social order as well as reproduce and transform the structure of social space and social relations (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 69). Household structures, then, whether patriarchal, female-headed, or of any other formation, essentially serve very similar functions in the social system.

But the ability of agents within these household structures to realize their social and economic capabilities will depend very much upon interconnections with other social structures. The analysis of structure and agency, then, allows us to note their distinct and yet interdependent nature so that space for conflict of interests between agents - whether based on class, age, gender or ethnicity - as well as for collective action, is made possible. Thus, individual female-heads may have conflicting interests in relation to their mothers, older female kin and/or sisters that will bear upon the ways in which their households are created and re-created. Yet, at the same time female-headed households as a group may have similar interests that need championing so that they are able to realize their capabilities through cooperative efforts, which in turn of course may lead to changing perceptions and formations of households. Equally, individuals, mostly women, by exercising their agency configure networks; and yet the ability of women (agents) to transform network structures is shaped by the prevalent social order. This dual feature of social structure, where it is both a condition and a consequence of action, is termed the *duality of structure*, while the dual feature of action, where motivated and unmotivated reproduction take place, is called the *duality of praxis*.

Interpreting action and structure as a duality allows structure and its action to be viewed from two distinct perspectives. First, it ensures that neither is reduced to the other. Second, it makes certain that as social scientists we do not ignore the fact that structure and human action presuppose each other (Lawson, 1997, pp. 169-70). Certainly, much of this study has accentuated the multitude of ways in which such a perspective is relevant for understanding the economic welfare of female-headed households. Female-heads, in most cases, try to achieve economic self-reliance, but this is critically contingent upon their interaction, as agents, with other social structures and relations. Obviously, this standpoint also sees the social sciences, and specifically economics, as intrinsically dynamic areas of study, with human action leading to social reproduction and transformation (p. 170). While some structures may be more enduring than others, there is nothing normal or natural about either endurance or change. Equally, this continued existence of structures does not imply stagnation, since the existence of matrilineal kinship and inheritance systems for Muslims and Tamils is known to take very new shapes and forms at this particular political-historical juncture (McGilvray, 2001; Ruwanpura, 2001). Social structures are therefore, fluid and dynamic entities, and household and network structures are no exception. This contributes to an understanding of the household and networks in a particular and changing context, and thus to the recognition of the opportunities its participants have in transforming relations.

8. Closing comments

The central thrust of this discussion has been to show that cooperative conflict models do not pay adequate attention to ontological structures, and they implicitly assume a homogeneous, unitary and static household unit. Consequently, these models have much ambiguity in explaining social reality, and the inadequacy of their explanatory power is revealed when theorizing female-headship. Hence, by engaging in substantive research and analysis, this paper argues that paying attention to ontology allows us to trace out social structures, social positions and agency of female-headship, which better encapsulates their realities than do cooperative conflict models. This particular account has more explanatory power, which is not the same thing as saying that cooperative conflict models are inaccurate, but rather to contend that they provide a partial perspective. Conceptualising households in a manner that is consistent with the broader social ontology framework associated with critical realism permits the recognition that there could be other accounts of households that are equally

consistent with social ontological structures. Thus extending the analysis in different directions as well as focusing on diverse aspects can only help explain the diversity of social reality in household formation and relations.

From a feminist realist perspective, then, it is essential to recognize that a diversity of outcomes remains consistent with a degree of uniformity at the level of underlying structures. This is the importance of ontology for a feminist economic methodology. Thus, while social structures depend upon the intentions and agency of humans, they are also rooted in distinctive historical, political and cultural conditions. Household formations and relations are simply not the same everywhere, and contending claims on the theorizing of household bargaining relations provide a partial perspective on these manifest differences. Consequently, cooperative conflict models reflect particular dimensions of social reality. But by not giving explicit consideration to ontological issues, their applications are limited in explaining alternative household formations.

Feminist economics should pay attention to ontology. This paper, with its focus on the social realities of female-headship, has shown that ontology helps us recognize that the diversity within these household structures is very real. Paying particular attention to distinct ethnic groups of female-heads in Sri Lanka is an attempt to illustrate differences that get played out according to differing social, cultural, political and economic spaces. Yet regardless of this diversity, there is a sameness of structured ontology, where social structures, positions and spaces are structured similarly. Such a methodological perspective allows feminist economists the possibility of recognizing diversity and yet, at the same time, of advocating gender-sensitive development policies.

End Notes

1 In the neoclassical paradigm, the use of fictitious units implies that other kinds of units, which are likely to be more reflective of the real world, are neglected. (My thanks to the second referee of this paper for making me aware of the need to emphasise this point.)
2 The phrases 'female-headship' and female-headed household' are used in keeping with the convention in the development and

economics literature. I do so with the full awareness of the debates surrounding biological and social categorization of the constructs 'female' and 'woman'. Therefore, the importance of recognizing the social construction of gender identities, roles and relationships is fully noted. My point, however, is not to be biological deterministic about gender identities, but to simply keep with the terms used in the development literature.

3 There are other failings of orthodox economic readings of the household too, and these are pointed to in the discussion that follows.

4 Using contributions from critical realist thinking, by 'bounded, unitary and homogenous' I refer to that economic theory that emerges from within the corpus of methodological individualism, where the units are treated in atomistic and isolated ways, which therefore leads to closure in the systems analysed (Lawson, 1997, 1999).

5 I owe my appreciation here to a couple of people. First, to the anonymous first referee for ensuring that this issue is highlighted. And second, equally to the late Dr Sue Benson (Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge) for pointing to the particular caveats of the cooperative conflicts models in the first place, and suggesting that I develop this particular argument further.

6 In the following paragraphs, the essential elements of Sen (1990) and Agarwal's (1997) frameworks are summarized, which for my purposes provides an entry-point to develop my arguments on the networked, contested and diverse nature of households.

7 Agarwal does not expand on her notion of the state, but there is little doubt that her reading of this institution is not simplistic either. It has been a site through which oppressive gender, class and ethnic relations have been perpetuated in the past (Chatterjee, 1993, pp.116-34; Jayawardena and de Alwis, 1996, pp. ix-xxiv).

8 Muslims, Sinhalese and Tamils are the three primary ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Ethnic identities in the country, however, are linked neither to religion nor to language – and historically there has been much overlap and fluidity between these groups. However, the post-colonial Sri Lanka has been marked by ethno-nationalist positions and identity politics that have attempted clear demarcations between various social groups.

9 In order to develop the methodological critique of the work of Sen (1990) and Agarawal (1997), this section begins with the empirical limitations of their conceptualization o the household before the ensuing paragraphs develop the theoretical and methodological criticisms.

10 While Agarwal (1997) does incorporate the process through which social norms and perceptions are bargained over, her analysis still implicitly focuses on patriarchal households.

11 Below, I have elaborate in detail the ways in which the cooperative conflicts approach is individualist, and from this critique build up the usefulness of an open-ended ontology.

12 Analysing this bias is important not merely from a feminist perspective. From a policy position, also, its central import should not be missed: if women are at the core of network structures, shaping and influencing gender aware policies has to be directed at many levels and at many groups. 'Social capital' of networks, therefore, should not be ignored either in formulating or in promoting gender-sensitive policies. (The concept of social capital is put within quotes to denote the awareness of the problematic aspects to the usual uncritical application of the same within development circles (see Fine, 1999, for more).

13 Doxa is a particular perspective that is generally accepted as a self-evident consensus. This consensus is in many ways arguably a mere principle of construction that we socialize into our habitus, which has often been struggled over in the past (Bourdieu, 1999, pp. 56-7, 67).

14 Realist social theory is acknowledged for its relevance in the social sciences (Bourdieu, 1998, 1999, 2000), but is rarely used in economics (Lawson, 1997, 1999). Though the use of theoretical contributions I have illustrated the interdependence of social structures and social relations in my work on female-headship. Unfortunately, most economic methodology ignores social relations and structures in its analysis of the social world. Lawson's use of realism, particularly critical realism, serves as an example of the relevance of this methodology to economics (Lawson, 1997). His use of realism finds inspiration specifically from critical realism (à la Bhaskar), I find areas of overlap between Bourdieu and Lawson useful to feminist economic methodology, and my feminist economic project uses theoretical contributions from those scholars I find useful for this study.

15 While I am in sympathy with Lawson (1997, 1999) in this particular reading of economics, I am not in total agreement with his rationale for economics' proclivity to formalistic modeling. Yes, mainstream economic theory does rely upon formalistic models, but why it does is left out of his discussion on the relationship between feminism and realism (Lawson, 1999). Here I m more in agreement with feminists who perceive that this practice is linked to gender values embedded in scientific thought that economists constantly attempt to emulate (Ferber and Nelson, 1993, p.10; Harding, 1995). However, there are many insights that Lawson offers feminists, which I employ, but when in disagreement with him I point this out accordingly.

16 Lawson's reading of social positions asserts that agents are slotted into these numerous positions (1997, p. 165). I complicate this particular reading by claiming that agents do not simply slot themselves into positions but actively exercise their agency in choosing particular social positions, although shaped by social structures and relations, over others. Since their individual agency may be limited by social conditions, the need for social action is thus incorporated into this perspective.

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Kanchana Ruwanpura is the author of *Matrilineal Communities, Patriarchal Realities: A Feminist Nirvana Uncovered.*

International McCarthyism: The Case of Rhoda Miller de Silva

by Judy Waters Pasqualge
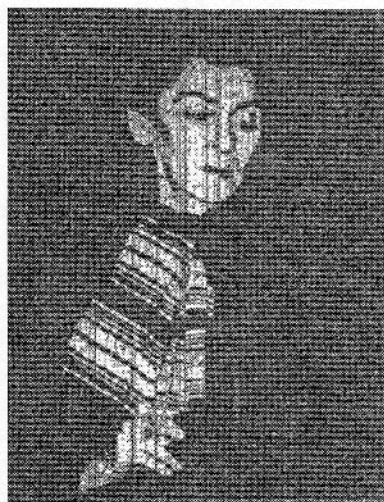
In 1954 Rhoda Miller (married to Sri Lankan Joe de Silva) was labelled as a subversive and deported from Sri Lanka (Ceylon). A journalist born in New York state who had already published books on post-war Poland and the Rosenberg case, Rhoda, with the assistance of friends in New York, would successfully challenge the United States-inspired deportation and return to Sri Lanka. There she became noted for her hard-hitting weekly column in the *Ceylon Daily News* on current affairs. This book contains forty of these articles, as well as excerpts from several of her books. It also contains an examination of her 'life and times,' a story that weaves in and out of the US during the New Deal and Cold War, the Russia of her Jewish immigrant parents (and those of her first cousin, writer and activist Howard Fast), and Sri Lanka in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

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POLITY

TEMPORARY COLUMNS: OBAMA, UNGER AND I

Ram Manikkalingam

I sat in on a class that Obama also attended at Harvard Law School. I believe it was the Spring or Fall of 1991. The class was called, "Re-inventing Democracy,". It was taught by Roberto Unger, who dresses like an undertaker, lectures like a prophet, and thinks like a philosopher in a hurry. At the time, I was doing my doctorate in political science at MIT. Students at MIT and Harvard were permitted to take classes at each other,' institution.

Unger is now the ,"minister of strategic affairs," in Lula's government in Brazil. His colleagues call him ,"the minister of ideas,". Unger belonged to what is known as the critical legal studies movement in law. They are leftish, foucauldian, postmodernish, multiculturalist critics of how law has traditionally been approached in the academic (primarily), professional and political worlds. Critical legal scholars have had more success with changing academia than the "real world". Still, their views are important to understand the role of power (racial, class, gender, heterosexual, among others) in law. In fact Unger's first (and I believe his best) book is called Politics and Knowledge.

Roberto Unger's own work goes beyond critical legal studies. He has been describing a new world full of political possibilities and economic opportunities for quite some time. He described this world then as an alternative to liberalism and Marxism. While the world he describes remains the same, the alternatives he critiques have changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union and communist Eastern Europe. He goes after neo-liberalism on the right, and on the left he attacks what he calls - ,"the populist authoritative nationalist version of Latin America," associated with Chavez, and the "well behaved version of Western Europe," associated with social democratic parties of the north Atlantic. He criticises both lefts for stifling individual and institutional creativity. He argues instead for a world of economic and political experimentation, where the state, function is to first provide the social and political tools (including insurance for individual and collective failures) to encourage innovation, and then to get out of the way. Innovate and experiment, till things get stuck, either because the strategy has failed, or you have come to a fork in the political road. Then let the people decide how to get unstuck through a plebiscite. The heroic class of his theory are the petty bourgeoisie, dismissed by marxists, and disregarded by liberals. He believes they are the wellspring of innovation as the classic boundary crossing group, finding new ways of surviving in an institutional and ideological environment that is inhospitable to them. But their innovations are disregarded, dismissed or suppressed by a combination of ignorance (among those who seek emancipation through Marxism) and enmity (among those who seek wealth through capitalism). The result is a failure to harness and increase innovations that can help society progress. Instead, Unger argues those dissatisfied with the world moving towards a divide between rich, fat and comfortable white people, and poor, hungry and uncomfortable black ones, are left with authoritarian Third Worldism and phlegmatic North Atlantic social democracy as the only available alternatives.

While it is easy to be sceptical about Unger's capacity to translate his ideas into practical policies, there is no doubt that his work captures the disaffection many of us feel with the failures of the dominant neo-liberal model, and the uninspiring alternatives that have been presented to us. It says something appealing about Obama, that he attended this class, instead of one on say corporate tax law that many other Harvard law students planning to pursue another career route probably did. Dissatisfied with the world we inhabited, he too was struggling with ideas for a better future one.

One day in the midst of all this high minded theorising, students in this class staged a (mini) "revolt" against Unger. I do not recall exactly what sparked it off, but a student (planned or unplanned) took on Unger's own commitment to democracy. Since this was a class about re-inventing democracy in radically new ways, Unger did not discourage challenges to his ideas and queries about his approach. This attack, however, went beyond the realm of Unger‚Äôs ideas, but to his personal commitment to implementing them in the very sphere he had control over, the class room. The attack was that while Unger talked about re-inventing democracy in the world, the class was taught in a hierarchical manner, like any other. In short, his class was run like a Latin American fiefdom, while he posed as a radical democrat.

He behaved like he knew more than we did, so the critique went. He taught by lecturing, and we ,"the students , learned by trying to digest what he said. The point, at least to the extent I can recall one - was that Unger was not engaging the class in a manner that enabled them to participate more fully. He set the agenda, the content and the tenor of the discussion. And the students had to fall in line. More over, those revolting charged that some students seemed to speak more than others, implying that Unger was permitting a select few to domineer class discussion. And so one student after another piled on repeating variations of the same critical theme and accusing Unger of hypocrisy. The class ended in the middle of the uproar.

I was bemused by the whole incident walking back. And by the time I got to my flat the supercilious attitude I had assumed towards my fellow students , rich and privileged members of the corporate elite-in-waiting who were posing at radicalism ,had turned into disdain. What do they expect they teach and the professor listens? How could these students be so naïve about what a classroom is? Or who a professor is? How else is he to teach other than lecture in a class with seventy odd students? And they are the ultimate hypocrites taking a class on re-inventing democracy, while interviewing for jobs with corporate law firms.

I had never felt that Unger or for that matter any other professor , however authoritarian and hierarchical in the class room , was necessarily smarter than me , just by being my professor. Certainly, I acknowledged that some were. But the reason they were the professor and I the student, was more pragmatic. They had already struggled with questions I was struggling with. And they (probably) had read far more books than I had, in doing so. So their experience and possibly wisdom might help me navigate a little quicker my own struggle with ideas. Did this mean that they were smarter? I was loathe to admit it of those who were, and happy to deny it of those who weren,'t.

The following week, I returned to class expectantly for the second act in the drama. I was not the only one. There were many new faces in class, along side the regulars. Word had spread there was going to be a showdown in Unger, classroom. So the cheap stalls were full. And Unger began as he always uncannily did , from the very word where he left off the previous week. He acknowledged the mini revolt and then proceeded to express his disagreement with its rationale.

He said that for him the , form, of the class was dictated by practical aspects. He disagreed that just because a professor lectured and students listened, they ought to feel less smart or agree with his views. In fact, he claimed that he always did think he was smarter than his lecturers even though he had to listen to them. And as a student who never spoke in class, he certainly felt that those who did usually made fools of themselves, rather than actually dominate discussion. He also argued there was nothing about the nature of the classroom that precluded students from disagreeing with his ideas, forming their own, or simply dismissing his altogether. And finally he came up with the most brilliant summary of teaching approaches (in a large lecture classroom) I had heard. Here is what he said:

> There are three forms of pedagogical discourse. The first is the no-holds-barred philosophical discourse. The chief requirements of which are infinite amounts of time and a willingness to waste it. The second is the pseudo socratic method, with the illusion of freedom and the reality of structure. Here the professor asks a question. Joe responds ,Äi wrongly in the view of the professor. The professor says that was a very interesting answer Joe , now can we please get on with the discussion. The third is what I do. I present my own ideas. You then develop and sharpen your own, by arguing against and critiquing mine. I do not expect that the outcome of this process will be that you come over to mine.,

Unger then opened up the class for more comments and suggestions about what to do. He had a little trick up his sleeve, but he wanted to first give everyone hankering for a showdown an opportunity to have a say. One supporter piped in from the gallery saying that Unger should not be discouraged (as if he were when he was quite enjoying himself), but that , he should know, in the words of Nixon, that a silent majority was with him. After the tumult had settled down a bit, Obama took the stage. He captured the mood of the outspoken minority in the class , idealistic (even if naïve) outrage about hierarchy in the university. Without losing the realistic view of why we go there in the first place there are people who know more than we do about books at a University and spend more time thinking abut them than most others. He was good, really good. Though not succinct, he was eloquent. Students quietened down and listened. So did I. For a moment I even suspended my cynicism about Harvard law students in the class, as corporate elite-in-waiting posing as radical democrats. He finally ended his speech.

There were few other comments afterwards. But they seemed superfluous after Obama's.

Finally Unger came in with his denouement. He invited the students to take over the class. He asked any interested group of students to develop a syllabus, an agenda and a reading list, and visit his office and discuss it with him. He assured them that he would not just consider this input but actually work with it. It may have been this that put students off. But in any case, anyone who has had to teach knows that developing an agenda and content for a class in a coherent, interesting and pedagogically useful way takes time and/or experience. The students had neither. None showed up in his office and we returned the next week to business as usual, much to my relief.

This minor episode (or at least my reaction to it) prefigures my response to Obama as a Presidential candidate sixteen years later. I recall verbatim Unger's brilliantly succinct summary of pedagogical approaches. While I remember the tenor of, I struggle to recall a single word in Obama's eloquent intervention. He is inspiring as a speaker on change. But, however much I would like to, I cannot quite shake off my doubts about him as a maker of it.

Ravi Mariki(illegible) teaches Political Science at the University of Amsterdam.

A SCHOLARSHIP IN MEMORY OF BERNADEEN SILVA

As you know we are making every effort to inaugurate a scholarship Fund in memory of Bernadeen Silva who played a pivotal role in the women's movement in Sri Lanka.

In the light of this background Women's Education and Research Centre WERC wants to initiate a scholarship fund and make an award in her memory. As Ms Bernadeen was a personality who worked to empower people and to create an environment where everyone has equal opportunity, we thought it would be ideal to inaugurate a scholarship fund. and make an award in her name as means of continuing her dream.

Writings, plays and performances that seek to give a feminist message to the society need support. These artistic expressions designed by enthusiastic individuals in our society, often go unnoticed due to the lack of recognition. The scholarship fund we propose to inaugurate will encourage young people to come out and prove their skills. It will also motivate them to create a violence free society with equal opportunity for all. There has been no award of this nature specifically meant for feminists and women in Sri Lanka. As personal friends and colleagues of Bernadeen with whom she has worked in various organizations, we wish to approach you for help, either you as individuals or your organizations. We hope to receive contributions in the range of Rs.10,000 from about nine organizations, which we have identified, as having been closely associated with her.

We propose to inaugurate this fund before her first death anniversary, which falls in February 2008. We shall be grateful if you could please forward your cheques in favour of Women's Education and Research Centre. We shall be thankful if you could please let us have your response to this request as soon as possible.

Selvy Thiruchandran
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Colombo 06.

A LABOUR OF RECOVERY

Radhika Desai

R avi Vaitheespara, *Theorizing the National Crisis: Shanmugathasan, the Left and the Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka,* Studies on the Sri Lankan Left –1, Colombo: Social Scientists Association, 2007, 78 + xvii.

One of the first headlines of 2008 announced that the six-year-old ceasefire between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil insurgents (in fact long de-ceased in the continuing fire of Tamil militancy and government repression) brokered by the Norwegians had ended. Even before that Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict had been one of the most intractable of our times, defying many attempts at resolution –by neighbours, international actors and donor powers; through negotiations and the use of peacekeeping forces. More than half a century after the problems first emerged, and a quarter century after the civil war began, the conflict seemed endless and, ironically, normalized. The neo-liberal economic model dating back to the 1970s had kept the economy humming along at decent pace even as its rewards accrued disproportionately to those privileged by class, ethnicity and geography. It had also, by many accounts, catalysed the civil war and kept it simmering. As the violence resumed in early 2008, many feared that economic growth might finally be one of its casualties, though whether that opened up possibilities for an early end to the conflict was still anybody's guess.

The very intractability of the conflict may, perhaps, have exhausted analysis. One of the principal aims of this slim volume–two articles and a substantial introduction by Professor Shanmugaratnam of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences–is to try to revive it in an intriguing fashion. Though the mainstream of the Sri Lankan left infamously capitulated to parliamentarism, and to the Sinhala majoritarianism which necessarily went with it, reneging on, and failing, the national question, Vaitheespara focuses on the far more interesting, and analytically powerful, positions taken on it by prominent left intellectuals–principally Shanmugathasan, but also Kandiah, Karalasingham and Ponnambalam–who dissented from that capitulation. The complex intertwining of the social and national questions in Sri Lanka, and especially the intractability of the conflict which this intertwining produced, gives this volume, which

might otherwise seem merely to explore some particularly esoteric aspects an arcane world–that of the Sri Lankan left - the potential to play a key role in discussions about Sri Lankan politics and about nations and nationalisms more generally. For, contrary to myths about the congenital inability of an all-too-cosmopolitan left to understand the national question, myths rather irresponsibly perpetrated by those who should have known better,[1] the left has produced some of the most penetrating analyses of nationalism, even if these may have fallen short of its own theoretical ambitions and foul of its own politicallimitations.[2] V aitheespara' s sensitive explorations of dissident left positions in this volume confirm this in the Sri Lankan case. They also highlight the importance of the Sri Lankan case–in which class and nation, and the revolutionary and national struggles, proved to hard to separate–to the understanding of nationalism at a time when the operation of neoliberalism has exacerbated inequalities along class, but also along every other social faultline–national, ethnic, gender–making the understanding of their complex intertwining that much more urgent.

Vaitheespara's volume fills another gap. The literature on the Sri Lankan left, including major works such as Kumari Jayawardena's, aimed at explaining and criticizing the capitulation of the mainstream left on the national question. However, its focus on broader national developments meant that it neglected discussion of the relatively marginal figures which Vaitheespara focuses on. Marginal though they may have been, Vaitheespara's labour of recovery clearly demonstrates that their understanding of the national question in Sri Lanka was some of the most insightful that could be found. Its insights emerged from at least attempting to navigate the uncharted waters where nation and class flowed into one another making perilous whirls and eddies whose vortices of violence continue to spiral more than five decades on.

Finally, this book will strike a refreshingly different note against the background of contemporary scholarship. Though early accounts of the conflict in Sri Lanka attempted to identify its historical roots in the nature of the Sri Lankan state and specifically its Sinhala content and dynamics, as time went on the focus shifted to Tamil violence and

'terrorism'. The new scholarship suggested that it was this 'Tamil' violence and not discrimination and repression by the Sri Lankan state that bred Tamil identity (40-41). It also seemed to 'focus on the local and the "fragment" and [was] more ethnographic in orientation.' It expended its theoretical sophistication on no longer attributing 'the causes of the conflict to basic material and ideological struggles over access to jobs, resources and land, but toward a more rarefied ... failure of the imagination–albeit of Sri Lanka's ruling classes and policy makers' (1-2). Shying away from any semblance of argument or accusation (a necessary political act), preferring description and exoneration, it nevertheless attributed legitimate agency, the capacity to change things for the better, exclusively to the ruling classes, if only they would muster the imagination to do so. Needless to say, the agency of the Tamils themselves was delegitimized by equation with terrorism and violence alone, shorn of any justice or legitimacy. In these discourses, 'communalist and populist forces, masquerade[d] as leftist and socialist' (iii) to obscure the real legacy of the left in Sri Lanka, as Professor Shanmugaratnam notes in his introduction.

In these circumstances, Ravi Vaitheespara has begun an important work of recovery. In this short book of two articles he painstakingly steers us thorough the attempts by important figures of the Sri Lankan left, in particular N. Shanmugathasan, to theorize and take meaningful positions on the Tamil problem. These perspectives, though each had its limitations, both intellectual and political, can at least re-ignite a debate about the historical and materialist understandings which have been lost sight of and recreate overall political perspectives on the situation. In these perspectives, Shanmugathasan's analysis of 'the distinctly pro-imperialist and comprarador character of Sri Lanka's ruling elite and political culture' (3) will clearly be central as will be his critique of the left movement. Both occupy Vaitheespara's account centrally. In the circumstances of Sri Lanka, the two could not be separated. The main left parties erred precisely in trying to do so when they capitulated to parliamentarism in a system which systematically marginalized Tamils. Though the left parties might have claimed to still be pursuing the politics of class, in Sri Lankan conditions abandoning the Tamil question was tantamount to compromising the politics of class. The list of blunders which Shanmugathasan pinned on the left included 'the failure to organize and the abandonment of the most exploited plantation Tamil workers for fear of reprisal from the majority community; breaking strikes in alliance with the United Front governments; the deafening silence over the mass butchery of the JVP youth; open communalism against the Tamils under the UF government; the narrowly communal and discriminatory 1973 republican constitution; and the so-called standardization of university entrance' (14).

Vaitheespara's discussion of the complex and perplexing relationship between Shanmugathasan and the militant JVP, which later evolved into a sinister and virulently anti- Tamil and Sinhala chauvinistic organization, uncovers another layer in the complex relationship between left and nationalist politics in Sri Lanka. Shanmugathasan's closeness to the early JVP enabled him to see clearly the similarity of its evolution from the left to the fascist right, to that of Mussolini in Italy long before these tendencies became manifest. He was able to detect this early on because he had already observed the prominence of 'racialism' in the JVP in its earliest days. As he put it, after it was banned,

> ... the JVP provided the ideological leadership to the anti-Tamil chauvinist movement which was at the same time anti-UNP. This enabled it to draw near the SLFP and even attract to itself the support and sympathy of the rank and file of the SLFP as well as sections of the more chauvinist Buddhist clergy. It was a combination of these forces that joined together to form the Defence of the Motherland Organization ... (18)

In Shanmugathasan's case these insights did not translate into any easy endorsement of the Tamil cause. In sharp contrast to the easy 'nativism' of so many contemporary avowedly postmodern and postcolonial–intellectuals, he took his time in declaring his political support for the Tamil cause. Shanmugathasan emerges from Vaitheespara's account as almost touchingly paradigmatic of the cosmopolitanism of the left culture of his time, though perhaps he was also moved by the need 'to present himself first and foremost as a national leader able to transcend narrow ethnic affiliations' and 'project himself as someone without any sense of Tamil ethnic particularism or loyalty' (21).

Tragically, he failed to take any action with regard to the brutal repression which began in the late 1970s, causing much bewilderment in his own party's leadership. It was not until 1983 that he finally endorsed the Tamil struggle, and once he did so he supported its more militant wing, the LTTE. What comes through clearly in Vaitheespara's discussion, which will be read amid the ruins of the latest attempt to resolve the conflict, is how clearly and presciently Shanmugathasan saw that no solution to the national question was possible within the neo-colonial conditions of Sri Lanka.

Though short, this work often manages to re-create vividly the difficulties of taking a position on an emerging phenomenon, one which these leaders were still struggling to understand. Particularly moving are his accounts of leaders, anxious not to give up on principle, initially distancing themselves from the conflict because they happened to be Tamil only to return to a mature sympathy for the struggle which they defended unreservedly, putting their own attachments and sentiments in the reckoning.

However, this is only a beginning. One hopes that now that it has been made (and one can think of no more fitting inaugural volume in the series on the Sri Lankan Left), there will be further work which moves on from the work of reconstruction and sympathetic exposition to critique in the context of an overall theoretical framework which is capable of both comprehending the flaws of the array of left positions and laying the foundation of new historical understandings. For the Sri Lankan national question, given its complexity and intractability, has the potential for shedding more serious light on theories of nationalism than practically any other. Perhaps this slim book will spark a new conversation of the relationship between the left and nationalism, between class and nation and the tensions latent in these relationships as well as the potential for creative interaction.

End notes

1 I discuss this issue in relation to the most prominent writer on nationalism in our time in 'The Inadvertence of Benedict Anderson: A Review Essay on *Imagined Communities* on the Occasion of a New Edition', *Global Media and Communications*, Vol. 4, no. 1, Spring 2008.
2 I trace the intellectual lineage of understandings of nationalisms in which the left figures prominently in my 'Introduction: The Political Economy and Cultural Politics of Nationalisms in Historical Perspective', *Developmental and Cultural Nationalisms* Special Issue of *Third World Quarterly* guest editor, Radhika Desai, Vol. 29, No. 3,2008.

K. APPANRAJ (1923-2007)

Charles Wesley Ervin

K. Appanraj, a veteran of the Trotskyist movement in India, died at his home in Chennai (Madras) on November 5, 2007 at the age of 84. Appanraj had been a founding member of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (BLPI), the Indo-Ceylonese section of the Fourth International from 1942 to 1948. He played a key role in building the BLPI into a mass-based party in South India in the tumultuous and pivotal years leading up to the forced British withdrawal in 1947. I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to get to know Appanraj through the many letters that we exchanged over the last few years, while I was writing my book on the BLPI. More than anyone else, it was he who brought that history alive for me. Though he had drifted from the Trotskyist movement in his later years, he recounted his revolutionary past with pride and no regret. I offer this tribute as a salute to a man who devoted his life, from his teenage years to the very end, to the long and hard struggle for the freedom of his country and the uplift of all the oppressed.

Karuppiah Appanraj was born in 1923 at Madurai in the British Madras Province (now Tamil Nadu), the son of M. Karuppia Servai. He grew up in exciting times. The Indian National Congress had already become a powerful mass movement capable of rousing millions from every walk of life to the bruising and bloody fight for freedom. In 1941 he enrolled at the American College in Madurai and became active in the Student Federation, in which the Communist Party was very influential. At that point the Communists were very anti-British. However, after the German invasion of the USSR, Stalin proclaimed that the "imperialist war" had been transformed overnight into a "peoples' war" against fascism. Appanraj opposed the new pro-British line of the Communists, and that brought him to the attention of some radical Congressmen who were sympathetic to the Fourth International. They took this promising contact to meet the Ceylonese Trotskyist organizers from the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) who had been dispatched to Madurai to help form a Trotskyist party on the mainland. Appanraj found his calling. At the age of 19 he joined the BLPI. Given the government repression, the BLPI had to be clandestine from the start. Appanraj used the cover name, "Giri."

In August 1942 Gandhi made his famous "do or die" speech in Bombay, calling upon his countrymen to paralyze the government and thereby force the British to "quit India." Faced with an imminent Japanese onslaught on India, the British were in no mood for conciliation. The government whisked Gandhi and the Congress high command off to jail. Riots erupted in Bombay and the revolt rolled across India. The panicked British government responded with mass repression. Like his comrades elsewhere, Appanraj went underground and attempted to give leadership to the anarchic upsurge. Though the BLPI program characterized Congress as "the party of the bourgeoisie," Appanraj had the good sense to collaborate closely with the radical Congressmen who were in the vanguard of the movement. Using a cyclostyle machine hidden in a nearby village, Appanraj produced revolutionary propaganda in the name of the BLPI.

Even though the BLPI was a tiny party, the government was determined to nip it in the bud. In 1943 the police, acting on information provided by the Stalinists and other spies, swooped down on the Trotskyists in Madurai, Madras, and Bombay. The BLPI was nearly crushed. But Appanraj escaped the roundup and, without telling even his parents, fled to Madras. He had no money. He roomed with a former classmate at the Tambaram Christian College Hostel. The BLPI group in Madras became his new "family." The Madras branch was ably led by the LSSP transplant, S.C.C. Anthony Pillai (1914–2000). Pillai became his political guru and a father figure to young Appanraj. He would remain devoted to Anthony Pillai for the rest of his life.

Appanra got a job as a record clerk in the Madras & Southern Mahratta Railways (MSM), a hotbed of militant nationalism. However, within a few months the police tracked him down, and after another close call he again had to pack his bag quickly and slip away, this time to Coimbatore, an industrial city in western Tamil Nadu. At the age of 21, he was leading the nerve-wracking life of a revolutionary fugitive.

When the war ended, the BLPI surfaced to legality for the first time. That began a period of frenetic activity for young Appanraj. The BLPI sent him to Tuticorin in south Madras Province where the party had a group working in an important textile union. "I organized a strong party group in Tuticorin and started some trade unions," he wrote in one of his letters

to me, "and I was the president for them." He led a textile strike. In 1946 he returned to Madurai and led another strike at the Mahalakshmi Textile Mills. This was rough and risky work. The working-class slums were rife with crime and every other social pathology that fester in such fetid pools of poverty.

Appanraj was a gifted orator. When the BLPI called public meetings, thousands attended. He recounted what happened when the Communist Party sent thugs to disrupt one of his meetings: "The cadres of the BLPI, though small in number, retaliated and started a hand-to-hand fight with the Communists. The sympathizers of the party also directly intervened. From the dais, I threw a challenge to the Stalinists that the BLPI would hold another meeting in a week and if they have guts let them come and break up the meeting." He made good on that promise. That was the end of the Stalinist attacks.

Appanraj was also an effective recruiter. "I was a full-time party worker. I used to travel all over the District. At that time the BLPI was strong in the area around Bodi [Bodinayakanur]. Almost all the villages had BLPI units. In Thevaram we had such a strong unit that comrade Erulandi Thevar contested the election for president of the Panchayat Board and won." During this period Appanraj also took leadership of a peasant union in Sholavandan, a town about 15 miles northwest of Madurai. "The landlords and police tried their best to break the strike but could not. We organized rallies and public meetings regularly. Finally, the government backed down." Appanraj drew these peasant militants into the work of the party in Madurai. "I used to bring Peasant Union activists from Sholavandan to act as guards for our union meetings. In the dark night when I addressed the meetings, the swords that were brought by peasants would glitter under the lamps of the mill gate."

The BLPI had its biggest success in Madras, where party cadres had made inroads into the labor movement during the war years, when the Stalinists opposed anything that would disrupt production for the war effort. In 1946 the Madras Labour Union, which represented the workers in the huge Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, elected BLPI leader Anthony Pillai president. In 1947 the union called a strike. The BLPI threw every available comrade into the struggle. Anticipating the inevitable repression, the Trotskyists formed a network of strike committees and a workers' defense corps with 1,000 union men. For the next hundred days Appanraj and his comrades led militant marches through the streets of Madras, staged massive open-air support rallies, skirmished with the police, and kept the ranks firm in the face of repression and severe financial hardship. The red flag of the union fluttered defiantly everywhere in the city.

The BLPI emerged from that landmark labor battle with tremendous prestige. In 1948 Anthony Pillai and seven of his comrades contested the elections for the Madras Municipal Corporation (city council). All were elected. The Trotskyist bloc began to implement measures that benefited the working class, such as setting up the Municipal Maternity Hospital, establishing dispensaries, and building flats for slum dwellers. In 1948 Pillai was also elected president of the Madras Port Trust Employees' Union and became a member of the general council of the All-India Trade Union Congress. The BLPI was on the road to becoming a mass-based revolutionary party in South India.

Meanwhile, the BLPI was embroiled in an internal debate that was to have far-reaching consequence. Some party members in Bombay proposed that the BLPI enter the Congress Socialist Party with the objective of building up a left wing and then exiting stronger than before. Appanraj was opposed to this "entry tactic." He did not think that the Congress Socialist Party offered a fertile enough ground for recruitment to warrant the dissolution of the BLPI at a time when the party was poised to make progress. However, as the Congress Socialist Party grew rapidly during 1947-48, the entry faction gained ground. "To their favor," Appanraj wrote, "the Congress Socialists exited the Congress and formed a separate party. They held their first conference at Madurai for three days, and on the final day their leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, addressed a mammoth public meeting which drew hundreds of thousands of people. No political leader except Mahatma Gandhi had pulled such a huge crowd. This indirectly convinced our cadres, who started to side with the pro-entry leaders in the BLPI. So my voice had gone with the wind."

In late 1948 the BLPI formally folded into the Socialist Party. Appanraj, then only 25 years old, accepted the majority decision, though with apprehension. In one his last letters to me, he described the dissolution of the BLPI as "a great tragedy." Though he had opposed the entry, Appanraj tried his best to make it work. "Since I happened to be a good orator," he wrote in his usual modest way, "I gained influence not only with the leadership but also with the rank and file." Whenever one of the national party leaders toured Tamil Nadu, Appanraj went along to translate. "In all the towns thousands of people gathered in spite of the hot sun." In 1951 he was appointed editor of the party weekly, *Samadharma Vathi* (Socialist Appeal).

In 1951 the Nehru government called the first general election since Independence. The Socialist leaders had high hopes that they could become the dominant opposition party. But Congress campaigned with its own socialist-sounding program, backed up by a vast grass-roots machine. The Congress won in a landslide. Even the Communist Party won more seats in

parliament than the Socialists. Traumatized and demoralized, the Socialist leaders negotiated a hasty marriage of convenience with a group of dissident Congressmen to produce the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). Appanraj and his comrades appealed to the ranks to reject the merger and revitalize the Socialist Party on a more militant program. The ignominious collapse of the Socialist Party showed that Appanraj had been right in his opposition to the entry tactic in 1948.

The Trotskyists were the brains and the backbone of the rump Socialist Party. The Madras group produced the party newspaper, *Socialist Appeal*, on the printing press at the Madras Labour Union. When they held their first conference at Madurai on November 2, 1952, their erstwhile comrades in the PSP attacked the meeting hall. Appanraj recalled the melee. "We had long sticks which could be used for two purposes – one was to fly the flags, the other was for our safety. We thrashed the attackers and many were wounded."

As the Trotskyists predicted, the PSP was doomed to unravel. In July 1955 Ram Manohar Lohia, an old Socialist warhorse, left the PSP and launched his own rival Socialist Party. He appealed for Socialist unity. Anthony Pillai and his group, including Appanraj, joined forces with Lohia. Appanraj became president of the Tamil Nadu organization. In 1956 he became editor of the Tamil edition of its journal, *Manoitha Kulam* (Mankind). His mentor, Anthony Pillai, became the leader of the Socialist Party in Parliament.

In the late 'fifties Ram Manohar Lohia went on a crusade to "abolish English" (the Angrezi Hatao movement). Whatever the merits, that demand didn't play well in Tamil Nadu and other states in South India where Hindi was every bit as "foreign" as English. "As Tamil Nadu Socialist Party President," Appanraj recounted to me, "I directly condemned Dr. Lohia's behavior. We held a party conference at Madurai. The party was split in two. We decided to continue our party as the 'Socialist Workers Party'."

In 1962 the Socialist Workers fielded seven candidates for the Madras Assembly. Every single one lost. The ruling Congress Party claimed to be carrying out a "revolution" in the social and economic relationships of India. Kamaraj, the Congress boss, invited all those who believed in socialism to return to the Congress fold. Some of the Socialists heeded his call. Appanraj wrote tersely: "Likewise, we the Socialists in Tamil

Nadu also joined Congress." He became general secretary of the South Madras District Congress Committee (1968-74), president of the Tamil Nadu National Trade Union Congress (1974-76), and general secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress (1979-80).

Having devoted his entire adult life to politics, Appanraj was not financially secure. He had a wife and three children to support. In 1972 the government established the "Freedom Fighters' Pension" for Indians who had gone to jail or were fugitives in the long fight to oust the British. Appanraj applied, but the government rejected his application on the grounds that he could not prove that he had been an underground fighter. He appealed, and finally in 2003 the High Court in Madras ruled in his favor. He lived in retirement on that modest pension.

In the nineties some old BLPI veterans in Tamil Nadu got together and formed the Samadharma Pakkiya Pannai (Socialist Publishing Society). Their goal was to publish Trotskyist literature in Tamil and in so doing muster the forces to "re-launch" the BLPI. Appanraj gladly volunteered to help his old comrades. He produced *Puratchi Pathai* (Way to Revolution), a translation of the book, *Rise and Fall of the Comintern*, by K. Tilak (Leslie Goonewardene), which the BLPI had published in 1947. He also wrote *Anja neenjan Thoyizhisangha medai S.C.C. Anthoni Pillai, vazhkai varalaru* (The Fearless One: Biography of the Labour Leader, S.C.C. Anthony Pillai).

Reflecting on his life, I recall the oft-quoted lines from Wordsworth's poem about the French Revolution: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive / But to be young was very heaven!" Appanraj had the opportunity to participate in one of the most dramatic, momentous mass movements of the twentieth century. He felt the tremors of revolution during the convulsive Quit India revolt of 1942-43 and witnessed the power of the working class in the great Madras general strike of 1947. Thanks in no small part to his efforts, the BLPI in South India became a "proletarian party" in actual composition, not just in theory, and that is something that few Trotskyist parties have ever achieved.

Karuppiah Appanraj deserves to be honored and remembered for what he was in his prime: a "soldier of the revolution" who bravely fought for socialism under the banner of the Fourth International. ▧

MERYL FERNANDO 1923-2007

Meryl Fernando, the veteran Trotskyist died on 27 May 2007 at his home at Koralawella, Moratuwa. He was in frail health for several months. He was 84.

He was born at Koralawella, in the house built by his maternal uncle in 1908. Meryl recalled a story recounted by people in his neighbourhood that their house was surrounded by Punjabi (Indian) soldiers during the 1915 riots. His uncle who edited a Sinhala nationalist paper was taken to prison as were prominent nationalist leaders.

The son of Cornelius Fernando, a small shopowner- trader, and Mary Fernando, Meryl received his education at Prince of Wales College, Moratuwa. He entered the Colombo university in 1941; World War II was raging. Illness prevented him from sitting for the London intermediate examination. However, he prepared privately for this examination in economics and passed it in 1944. He later entered the Teachers' Training College, Maharagama, where he qualified as a trained teacher.

His interest in politics began about 1942. He attended study classes conducted by Regi Siriwardena, at that time an LSSP activist. He also contacted Henry Peiris, a popular party educator who was doing underground political work. Meryl recalled that he attended a full-day study class by Henry for the Ratmalana railway workers. He joined the LSSP during the Second World War whilst still a university student. In the immediate postwar period he was active organizing match-factory workers in his hometown Moratuwa.

His elder brother Aloysius who had been associated with the LSSP since the late 1930s was a formative political influence. Henry Peiris (later LSSP MP for Panadura 1947-52) was another influence. In 1944 Meryl attended a secret conference of the party organized by the pro-BLP wing.

He was a member of the Moratuwa Urban Council for a period of fifteen years and was for a term its chairman. This was the first local council in which the LSSP was able to wrest power from the ruling UNP in 1951. Moratuwa, 12 miles south of Colombo, was a rising seaside township dotted with carpentry workshops. Monsoonal conditions affected fisherfolk who lived in cadjan-thatched mud and wattle huts. Rainstorms blew away their habitations. Deep-sea fishermen were unable to venture out even to eke out a precarious living. Likewise in-shore fishermen who were engaged in the casting and hauling of nets were also adversely affected. The Left-dominated urban council administration introduced relief measures.

In 1948 Meryl was successful in getting carpentry workers at Willorawatte, Moratuwa, to join the Industrial and General Workers' Union affiliated to the LSSP and submit demands. He and Doric de Souza made representations on behalf of the union. The management agreed to grant an eight-hour working day, wages-board holidays with pay, overtime payments etc. This was the first time that carpentry workers employed in a workshop had won such demands.

In November 1945 the workers at the Elephant Match Factory at Kelaniya, came out on strike. Their demands were higher wages and and an eight-hour working day. They sought the assistance of the BLP. Port workers in Colombo rallied to offer support and a demonstration of strikers marched from Peliyagoda to Pettah. Meryl tried to secure the support of the workers of the Lanka Light Match Factory, Moratuwa, but he and V. Karalasingham (Carlo) were not successful. The strike at the match factory at Kelaniya ended in a victory for the workers.

Later their efforts at the Moratuwa match factory bore fruit. In June 1946 the workers there joined the Kelaniya Match Workers' Union. On May 1 the Moratuwa match workers
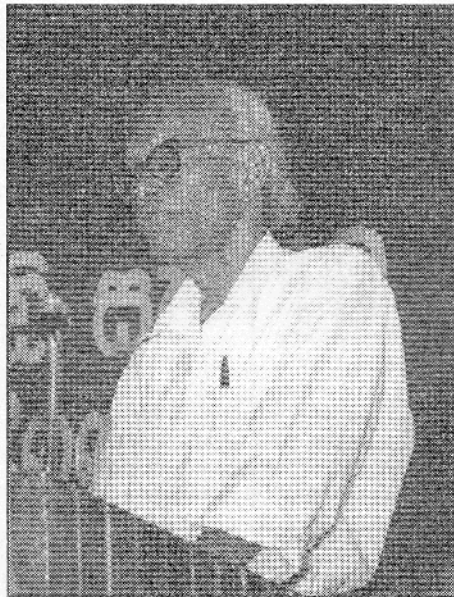
struck work. The management refused to grant their demands and two workers were also dismissed. The strike lasted nine days and was called off when the management agreed to reinstate the two workers and refer the union's demands for arbitration.

Meryl was associated with the work of the Moratuwa branch of the Kelaniya Match Workers' Union for nearly two decades and served as secretary of the Moratuwa branch for several years. Meryl and Doric de Souza participated in committee meetings – the union committee used to meet almost once a week. Meryl and Doric also attended to representation work and Meryl to the day-to-day work.
A carpentry worker, Allanson Fernando was one of the mourners who filed past Meryl's coffin at the Town Hall. He recalled that as a boy he had sought the latter's assistance when his father a fisherman died at sea. Meryl had expedited the post-mortem procedures and Allanson's family received compensation from the council. He was later associated with the youth league.

Meryl was arrested and jailed during the August 1953 hartal or protest campaign against drastic cutbacks on food and welfare spending by the ruling rightwing UNP Meryl was detained for three weeks. Colvin R. de Silva appeared for him at the trial, as he did in over 50 such cases in various courts in the island. The charges were blatantly false and after two policemen gave evidence and were cross-examined by Colvin, Meryl was acquitted without the defence being called.

The hartal reached almost insurrectionary high points where the LSSP was strong, in Moratuwa in the hamlets of Egoda Uyana, Katukurunda and Koralawella. Over 40 years later, Meryl published a reprint of Colvin's original pamphlet *Hartal*, with a new introduction by him.outlining the lessons of the tumultous events. Meryl also addressed a public meeting at Moratuwa held to mark the hartal anniversary. He vividly recounted the turbulent events that shook the town.

In May 1960 when N.M. Perera proposed that the LSSP should form a coalition government with the SLFP, Meryl along with the left tendency in the party opposed the proposal at a special conference. On developments that followed Meryl wrote, "recognising that 'in the context of Sri Lankan politics, the attainment of power through a parliamentary election is a possibility ', the leadership proceeded to form a United Left Front (ULF) in 1963 with the Communist Party and Philip Gunawardena's MEP."

"But when the government was seriously weakend in 1964 and its very existence became doubtful, and Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike prorogued parliament for four months and sought leftwing leaders in her government ..." the LSSP entered the government and the ULF broke up.

Meryl rejected the coalition perspective the LSSP followed in 1964, in 1970 and thereafter. In 1964 Meryl broke with the LSSP along with Edmund Samarakkody, Bala Tampoe, Prins Rajasooriya and others when the party joined the capitalist coalition government of Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, and he helped found the LSSP-R, and later the Revolutionary Workers Party (RWP). He represented the LSSP and later the LSSP-R as MP for Moratuwa from 1956 to 1964.

In the 1956 general election he made a stormy entry into parliament by beating into third place the sitting member, ex-LSSP and a leader of the Sinhala Bhasha Perumuna. The LSSP then adhered intransigently to its language policy of parity of status for Sinhala and Tamil as state languages. Its prestige was never higher.

He made rousing speeches in Sinhala; a parliamentary colleague used to tease him, about his 'takarang' voice, soaring in flights of oratory, he recalled in a self-deprecatory reminiscence. He spoke eloquently on the aspirations of workers and the oppressed and on the imperatives to radically transform society.

There is an anecdote about the riches he made on the stock exchange. One morning a group of pressmen called at his house. They broke the news about a large portfolio of shares he had acquired. It turned out that it was his namesake – a successful entrepreuner-who had made an attractive investment on the stock exchange the previous day. A bemused Meryl told the journalists that let alone purchasing shares he could barely make ends meet.

There is another tale of mistaken identity. In 1960 Robert Gunawardena defected from the LSSP to join his brother Philip, leader of the MEP. He received a congratulatory telegram and he rushed to Moratuwa to thank Meryl. He was disappointed to learn that the sender was the latter's namesake (who spelt his first name with a slight difference).

With his defeat at the hustings in 1965 Meryl braced himself for the long haul – the uphill task of pursuing principled politics. Meryl continued to intervene in class and social struggles. He stoutly adhered to the defence of working-class independence against all varieties of political

opportunism. Meryl also contributed articles on political topics to the *Revolutionary History* and *What Next?* published in London, and the local press. On his last visit to London in 1999 he met for the first time the late Al Richardson and several comrades of his *Revolutionary History* team.

He undertook stints as a part-time university English teacher, and after passing three parts of a management accountancy examination worked for a period as a bookkeeper at the Moratuwa University.

We recall his final intervention in parliament in December 1964. It was a courageous reaffirmation of socialist and secular principles in the teeth of retrogressive attempts by the ruling United Front government to undermine them. He had moved an amendment to the Throne Speech (programme presented at the beginning of a parliamentary term) of the short-lived United Front government. His amendment drew attention to the coalition government's basically anti-working- class and chauvinist policies. He added that the government had abandoned the fundamental democratic principle of a secular state. Before his own amendment came up for a vote the government was defeated.

Some two decades after he had commenced his pioneering work in his hometown organizing workers in unions, workers in a leading garment factory began a gruelling battle to gain recognition for their union as well as increased wages. In the aftermath of the LSSP's entry into the coalition government in 1964 the factory workers had high expectations. It turned out that their illusions about the new government quickly evaporated. The workers then turned to Meryl for assistance to build an effective union.

The strike received publicity and sympathizers rallied a round to help. Several public meetings were organized. Finally the management agreed to reinstate the dismissed union activists. When they arrived at the gates they were shut out. The management reneged on its undertaking.

Meryl was a modest and unassuming man. A lanky figure, he would travel to Colombo by bus or train for party meetings. He did not own a motor car.

His remains were taken to the Town Hall, Moratuwa, on 29 may to enable the public to pay their respects. Meryl's close comrade Tulsiri Andradi delivered the funeral oration. The Mayor of Moratuwa, Sunimal Fernando, in a tribute to Meryl referred to his services to the people of the town. The burial took place at the General Cemetery, Rawatawatte, Moratuwa.

Farewell Comrade Meryl!