

The Youth and the Challenge of Democratisation: A Comparative Study of Survey Data from India and Sri Lanka*

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Introduction

In traditional societies where age is seen as coterminous with experience and authority, the youth are conspicuous by their absence from the public sphere. In the upper echelons of ruling political parties, caste associations and *biradaris* (extended family and kin networks), or for that matter, *maths* and *ashrams* (Hindu holy places), gerontocracy is the rule rather than the exception. By the same token, when change comes, if change comes at all, its more enthusiastic supporters are the younger members of society, rebelling against what they consider to be outdated modes and outmoded leaders, coveting the power and social standing of their own senior but more particularly that of the superior social groups. Democratisation of traditional societies, unleashing the forces of political mobilisation, thus holds the potential for accelerated radicalisation of the youth. Rather than constituting an organic social group in their own right, the younger elements of particular social groups contest the authority of the traditional leaders and strive to become standard bearers for the group as a whole. This transformation in the attitudes of the youth is the result of an ensemble of forces, such as the forces of modernisation, the presence of trust, networks, shared beliefs and other attributes of social capital, and the pace of economic growth. The

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behaviour that these attitudes give rise to depends further on the local opportunity structure. The patterns of the political role of the youth therefore vary enormously from one context to another. Just as 'politics as usual' of the ideal type traditional society shuts the youth out, the unconventional politics of protest and new social movements draw them in. The paper builds on these premises and the burgeoning literature on democratisation (Potter Goldblatt, Kiloh and Lewis 1997, Mitra and Singh 1999, Haynes 2001) to investigate the complex relationship between youth and democratisation in India and Sri Lanka.

The comparability of India and Sri Lanka emerges from their common features such as the colonial heritage of limited political participation, the presence of a political elite with the knowledge and experience of political participation. A fortuitous commonality in the context of this study is a common questionnaire that has generated comparable survey data from both countries. These common features help us look for explanations for the variation in the salience that one notices in the prominence of the youth as a political issue in the two countries. Compared to India, the youth in Sri Lanka has received greater significant scholarly attention in connection with collective violence and the consequent disruption of social and political order. The issue here is: do the observed variation in the salience of youth politics in the two countries is indicative of their cultural idiosyncrasies, or, does it reflect the influence of factors that have more to do with the structure and process of politics? Recognising that 'Beyond and at the centre of 'youth unrest' is the question of state power', Uyangoda (1996) brings to our attention that:

"This is indeed not something peculiar to Sri Lanka. Even a brief look at Indian politics would convince us that in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam, for example violent separatist movements are being organised and led by youth groups" (p.48)

One-country analysis typically fails to control for cultural specificities whereas comparative analysis makes it possible to widen the scope of analysis and look for common parameters that play a significant role in attitude formation. With this main objective, this paper is divided into three parts. The first part is a systematic attempt to conceptualise the role that youth plays in the process of political participation. In the second part, an empirical exploration on the nature of political culture and the normative justification of political violence among youths in India and Sri Lanka is made. This comparative analysis is made on the basis of two surveys conducted in both countries, the National Election Survey 1996 in India, and the National Youth Survey 1998-2000 in Sri Lanka. The third part compares the intercorrelations of the ensemble of variables in India and Sri Lanka in an attempt to establish a common pattern of attitude formation.

Part I:

Youth and Collective Violence from a Political Science Perspective

Youth as an analytical category does not enjoy the same prominence in political science analysis as caste, class, ethnicity or gender. So we would first have to discuss in which way political science as a discipline can contribute to our understanding of youth unrest or revolt. Assuming that the state and its relation with society is one of the most fundamental concerns of political scientists - as against the sociologist who focuses on society and the role of the individual in it, as well as against the constitutional lawyer who is preoccupied with the state and its formal framework - youth becomes of interest to the political scientist the moment when this societal group is either affected by state action or when youth behaviour has an impact on the functioning of the state. For analytical purposes let us start by discussing the first relation: the state affecting youth. On the one hand, it is questions relating to a given *polity* that is of interest here. Do the institutions

of the state provide any recognition of youth as a social category in the form of either organisations, such as specialised ministries for youth affairs or state-sponsored youth associations, or in the form of institutions, for example statutory provisions specifically designed to protect, promote, or, in the negative form, discriminate against youth. In a democratic set-up it is also important to ask what participatory mechanisms exist for these young men and women. Apart from such questions concerning the polity, it is the presence or absence of *policies* that are directed - be it consciously or by default - at youth and that have an impact on this group. These policies can be positioned in a wide range of areas such as economic policies, welfare, law and order, or language, religion, or dealing with any other issue of identity. Closely related to questions about *polity* and *policies*, it is the political *process*, which affects the life situation of youth, in other words the allocation and distribution of material as well as immaterial goods. The *raison d'être* of political science as a discipline, the question of 'Who gets what and how?' would have to be reformulated for our purpose to 'What do youth get, which sections of it, and how?'.

So far we have highlighted the means by which state behaviour affects the youth population. When we turn to the other relational situation – youth behaviour affecting the state – we would first of all have to look at this social category in their role as ordinary citizens. They pay taxes; they might serve in the military, participate in elections, make demands for certain public goods in public speech, and so forth. In the course of this paper main emphasis is laid on the more political aspects of youth behaviour, namely the perception towards the institutions of the state as well as political participation. Political scientists distinguish between conventional and non-conventional forms of political participation. Voting, political demonstrations authorised or tolerated by the state, membership in political parties, contributing to public debates – all these are conventional forms of political participation. They are usually legally and socially accepted forms of

political behaviour. Non-conventional forms, on the other hand, can be sub-categorised into violent and non-violent kinds. Violent protest, destruction of public property or physical attacks against representatives of the state, such as politicians, the police or the military, are among the best known such acts. Non-violent forms of non-conventional political participation have a strong tradition particularly in South Asia. In the mainstream view, Mahatma Gandhi has become the symbol of this thought and action.

The subsequent section will discuss some basic forms of violent non-conventional forms of political participation from the youth constituency. Except for some anarchical or probably orthodox Marxist thinkers, a broad consensus exists among state theorists that one of the elementary objectives of any given state would have to be the maintenance of public and political order. By public order we simply refer to a situation in which life and property of a maximum number of citizens is safe and guaranteed, by political order one in which the mechanisms of collective decision-making are stable and resilient against fundamental challenges. One may argue that political order is a pre-condition for the maintenance of public order, for it prevents the Hobbesian state of anarchy, while a situation of political order without public order can be found in the case of a regime based on state-sponsored terrorism against some of its citizens.

1. When Youth Violence is Political

Gurr (1970: 157) defines political violence as "all collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors – including competing political groups as well as incumbents – or its policies". Historical experience provides many examples, however, of state promoted youth violence. Cases of state sponsored terrorism, ethnic cleansing or genocide are manifold and it is, again, usually young men - sometimes women - who form the machinery of such

activities against select minorities or other constituencies of a state. The issue becomes even more complex in an anarchical situation where the mere existence of a state is in doubt. In the South Asian neighbourhood, it is obviously the case of Afghanistan where the question of 'Does a state exist and who represents it?' would have to be the first one to raise. So let us limit the scope of this present undertaking to situations in which 'young men rebel against the state'.

2. Individual Violence and Crime

Individual youth criminality or violence, be it in the context of the family, among friends or directed against unknown individuals or property is a familiar social phenomenon in almost all societies around the world. These acts are of interest primarily to psychologists, sociologists, criminologists or lawyers since they hardly pose a systematic challenge to the state. Nor does it seem very promising to try to explain such deviant behaviour primarily by state action. However, in a situation where the accumulation of youth criminality is perceived as a serious social illness disrupting social order in a systematic way, it is common that society calls for state action in the form of specific policies targeting this problem. Drug policies, fighting petty crime committed by young people or the introduction of more severe punishments can be cited as examples of such demands for policy action. They can either take the form of repressive actions by the state (e. g. increasing punishment for drug abuse) or of welfare measures. However, we will ignore these problems of accumulated individual crime or violence and focus instead on politically motivated collective violence.

One common form of such collective youth violence is urban gang violence. Primarily a phenomenon in western industrialised cities, the megacities of the developing world increasingly face similar problems. Again, this realm is mainly the concern of sociologists and psychologists since the motivation for this form of

collective action is rarely directed against the state. However, as it is the case with individual forms of such deviant behaviour the state is often under pressure to react to this kind of disruption of social order by appropriate policies of welfare, education or - in a more innovative way - health policies or city planning. In some instances, nevertheless, collective urban violence might take on characteristics of political unrest. The riots in Los Angeles following the Rodney King case, or the violent street protest in various cities of Indonesia in the late 1990s provide examples of cases for which the dividing line between collective urban violence and mainstream political unrest are hard to draw.

3. Student Movements

In the South Asian context violent student movements have been the most thoroughly studied instances of youth driven social and political disorder. Shah's (1998: 148-159) review of literature on *Social Movements in India*, for example, offers in a special chapter a comprehensive overview of the vast body of literature on this phenomenon in South Asia's largest state. Like many other forms of collective political action, student movements historically emerged as part of the national freedom movement. Until today, student organisations such as the All-India Sikh Students' Federation in Punjab and the All Assam Students Union in Assam form the backbone of sub-national movements throughout India.

However, since only some student protest is motivated by political issues, while others are often related to educational questions or concerns of narrow self-interest of students, only „a few political scientists have also explored the area“. (Shah: 149). In the case of India, the centrality of student movements when it comes to questions of youth unrest can be illustrated by a statement taken from a study sponsored by the Department of Youth Affairs of the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development, in which Saraswathi (1988) states that „Youth unrest is

taken to be student unrest [...]“. Also for Rudolph and Rudolph (1987: 290-311) students represent one of the most important demand groups in their model of Indian ‘involved pluralism’. This seems to be in some contrast to the Sri Lankan perception of student unrest. Despite the centrality of youth as a social category, notwithstanding the importance of the educational issue in Sri Lankan politics and society, and regardless of the tragic violent experience of a generation of students in the country, the way in which these problems have been conceptualised in Sri Lanka differs substantially from the centrality that student politics receives in the Indian discourse.

From a comparative perspective an even more puzzling mosaic emerges when one brings Pakistan into the picture. Some of the defining moments of Pakistan’s history cannot be sufficiently understood without reference to the collective action of students. The idea of Pakistan received early support from large sections of Muslim students in colonial India (see Zaman 1978) and Jinnah is said to have called Aligarh University the ‘arsenal of Muslim India’ (Hasan: 108-110). Student agitation was also consequential in the events leading to the fall of Ayub Khan, and without the separatist sentiment under the rubric of the language movement (*bhasha andolan*) among students the creation of Bangladesh is hard to imagine. Since the years following partition, the mobilisation of students for various political purposes remains as effective political tool in Pakistan and a continuing challenge to the stability and integrity of the dominant political structure. In recent years it has been large numbers of lower middle class university students and graduates that have provided a recruitment pool for religious groups and parties such as the Jamaat-i-Islami with their youth and student organisations.

These few ‘highlights’ of collective youth activity in the context of institutions of higher education suggest that a systematic comparative analysis of this phenomenon might shed some light on the question of the relationship between

youth and the state in South Asia in general.¹ In this context some guiding question could lead our investigative undertaking.

Are universities mainly a ground for recruitment of other social and political leaders, and easy-to-access source of bodies waiting to be mobilised for various ideological and political purposes? Or do students form the intellectual and ideological vanguard of value change and the resulting societal pressures on the state and, thus, generate the ideas as well as physical masses to bring about change in stagnant and status quo oriented societies and polities? The latter question raises another more fundamental puzzle about protest and violent struggle in general. Should we regard such forms of collective action as a social illness or rather as a catalyst - from a normative point of view – of necessary social change.

A potential research endeavour aiming at a systematic and comparative understanding of the relationship between the state and student protest could fall back upon – in particular in the Indian context –the vast amount of secondary material in the form of case studies of individual incidences that would also provide a rich treasure of conceptual variables such as issues, participants, leadership and ways of mobilisation. We should not expect uniform and homogenous patterns of causes and forms of student protest in the South Asian context. According to Shah (1998: 153), even within Indian various studies have generated contradictory findings about the social and academic background of student protesters. Shah argues that Shils' thirty-year old statement is still valid, namely that 'we know very little about which students participate in [students' movements] in different capacities – as instigators, as coadjutors, as swellers of the chorus. We don't know which students take the lead in acts of violence and in

¹ Also in Nepal students are among the most articulate segments of society, In 1980, Student protest forced King Birendra to call for a referendum about the future of Nepals political system, and ten years later, contributed to the pressure to implement a parliamentary system allowing political parties.

other acts of aggression or defiance against authorities. We do not know the scope of the process and particularly how actions begin and expand. We do not know [...]’ (Shils 1968: 7-8; cited from Shah 1998: 153-54).

4. **Salience of the Youth in Sub-national Movements²**

As it has already been mentioned above, as part of the anti-colonial struggle by the people of South Asia youth has played a decisive role. But once the imperialistic ideology of racial superiority had ceased to give any legitimacy to the power that ruling elite possessed over their 'subjects', the new political structure was supposed to be based on the democratic principle that the likes would govern over the likes through elected representation. Even before the transfer of power could occur, the experience of partition cast a long shadow of the difficulties to come for the multi-ethnic states of South Asia. The question about 'who owns the state'³ and the legitimacy of dominance of one group over the other(s) by various political, economic, administrative or other means has been the most important challenge to the nation-building process of all South Asian states. One predominant form in which the structure of power and dominance has been challenged again and again in the modern nation states of South Asia is sub-nationalism. The list of cases in the region is a long one: Assam, Balochistan, Chittagong, East Pakistan, Gorkhaland, Jharkand, Kashmir, Mizoram, Nagaland, Pakhtunistan, Punjab, Sindh, as well as the Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka. As it is the case in the above-mentioned forms of collective action, we are well aware that youth has always played a significant role in sub-national movements of South Asia.

² See Mitra, Subrata K. and Alison Lewis (eds.). 1996. *Subnational Movements in South Asia*. Boulder: Westview Press for the concept of sub-nationalism.

³ This question has recently been developed by Wimmer (1997).

³ The model is adapted from Mitra/Singh (1999)

With Sri Lanka being the only exception, very little attention has so far been devoted to the important role that specifically young men and women play in collective violence in the region. Most studies of protest movements have been mainly concerned with the issues on which groups have been mobilised, such as nationalism, student politics, class politics, ethnicity, or sub-nationalism, while the systematic and consequential role that younger generations play as mobilisers and mobilised has been largely ignored. The fact that such movements and the participation of youth in it repeatedly pose a challenge to all societies and polities of South Asia, the need for a comparative research agenda, a cross-border discourse and dialogue, and a "regional discourse" on this theme seems necessary. The following section develops a model, which might provide some theoretical guidance to such an empirical and intellectual endeavour.

Part II:

Comparing Youth Attitudes to Authority, Efficacy, and Rebellion

In this section a general model of youth participation and social change that seeks to explain the occurrence of youth protest in the above mentioned forms is elaborated on the basis of four explanatory variables: First, 'institutionalisation' as variable of measuring the process of achieving and sustaining statehood; second, 'participation' as variable of measuring the performance of youth within the formal democratic process; third, 'welfare' as important prerequisite for the functioning of state institutions and people's participation therein, and; fourth the 'normative justification of political violence' as variable which determines whether violent struggle is considered a legitimate means of non-conventional political participation⁴.

“Many post-colonial states start their independent existences with a brave programme of social change. But some regimes eventually collapse because of lack of support from entrenched social groups. Yet another feature of a robust political system is one which produces a consensus that not only captures the imagination of the people at a given point of time, but one that anticipates future demands and straddles the gap between the generation in power and generations to come.” (Mitra and Singh 1999: 56).

In the course of further elaborating the model it is argued that the explanatory variables are context specific and, therefore, a number of relevant secondary context variables for the South Asian environment are to be introduced. It is the political socialisation of youth, which determines whether violent struggle is considered a legitimate means of either simply expressing frustrations, or, more systematically of putting forward demands and pressure for change on the system.

Before we are going to address each of our above categories it is important to remember that youth is not a coherent social category, but is divided along numerous other social cleavages such as class, caste, ethnicity, religion, and so forth. So we have to remember that the state does not have to deal with a one-dimensional perception among the youth population of how it should function, but, moreover, with the issue of a distribution among these various sub-categories within the broad youth category which is considered just and legitimate by all the actors involved. Sri Lanka seems to be a graphical example of what can happen if some sections of the youth population perceive the handouts from the state as discriminative.

In the following section some results from two surveys conducted in India and in Sri Lanka are presented. The Indian survey was conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi. A cross-section of the Indian

electorate was interviewed after the polling for the 1996 national elections to the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Indian parliament. Therefore, this study neglects those below the age of eighteen and is, for this reason, not the perfect empirical source for information about the youth population. In order to extract the findings for the youth population, only the respondents aged between 18 and 25 were looked at.

For methodological reasons, the analysis of the National Youth Survey, which was conducted in Sri Lanka between in 1999, was equally limited to the age group 18-25. Thus the empirical analysis is based on 2366 respondents in the case of India, and 1836 respondents in the case of Sri Lanka⁵.

1. Level of Education and Interest in Politics

Prior to an analysis of the political culture among the youth a closer look at the level of education as well as the interest in politics among youths as important prerequisites for political participation and the proper functioning of institutions is made. The comparison of the level of education among Indian and Sri Lankan youth reveals a disturbingly high number of illiterates in India, being almost one third of all respondents, whereas the problem of illiteracy among Sri Lankan youth appears almost solved.

⁵ The potential pitfall of this kind of specific youth study lies in the absence of an older-aged reference group. One might find certain characteristics without being sure to which extent they are specific to the youth group as opposed to the older generations.

Table 1: Level of education (%)

	India (n=2366)	Sri Lanka (n=1836)
Illiterate, No School	30,9	0,7
Literate, Primary, Grade 1-5	16,6	4,6
Middle School, Grade 6-11	15,8	41,8
High School, A level	29,5	50,6
Degree or Higher	7,2	2,3
Total	100,0	100,0

When it comes to the interest of youths in politics and public affairs, the figures for India are equally disturbing! 62 % of all respondents up to 25 years claim not to be interested at all. Figures for Sri Lanka are slightly better, where nevertheless still more than half of the youths respond negatively to this question.

Table 2: How much interest would you say you have in politics and public affairs? (%)

	India (n=2366)	Sri Lanka (n=1836)
Great Deal	7,6	7,5
Somewhat / Some Interest	30,4	36,5
No Interest at All	62,0	56,0
Total	100,0	100,0

2. Institutionalisation

The degree of political institutionalisation is the first criteria to measure how successful any society - in this context particularly the post-colonial societies of India and Sri Lanka - is in achieving and sustaining statehood. The first step to measure the degree of institutionalisation would be to explore the perception of (young) people on the efficacy of key institutions of the state, such as the different levels of government and political parties as mediators between government and society.

Next to the perception on key democratic institutions, security as a value seems just as significant. Not only needs an individual legal protection from unwanted and illegitimate interference from institutions of the state, but he also expects the state to offer protection from interference and abuse from other sections of society. He or she expects a social environment in which his or her personal and physical integrity is protected by law and by the law enforcing institutions. This, again, is of particular importance in a multi-ethnic environment, where minority protection is an issue of uttermost importance. Positive policy intervention in this area is possible, for example, in the field of police training.

The higher level of education as well as interest in politics among the youth in Sri Lanka would suggest an equally higher trust in the institutions of the state and participation in them. To measure the perception of the efficacy of their participation within democratic institutions, the respondents were asked the following question: *Do you think your vote has any effect on how things are run in this country or do you think that your vote makes no difference?* More Sri Lankan youths (30,5%) answer this question in the negative, compared to their Indian counterparts (20,4%). However, this outcome is qualified by the high number of respondents in India who were either not able or willing to answer the question.

Table 3: Do you think your vote has any effect on how things are run in this country or do you think that your vote makes no difference? (%)

	Indian (n=2366)	Sri Lanka n=1836)
Has Effect	60,8	65,4
No Difference	20,4	30,5
Other / Don't Know	18,8	4,1
Total	100,0	100,0

The opinion on the usefulness of political parties is in some contradiction with the opinion on the efficacy of votes. Here, a vast majority of Sri Lankans consider political parties as important intermediary institutions between the government and

society. In India, on the other hand, less than half of the respondents are of the opinion that parties do help to make the government pay attention to the people.

Table 4: How much in your opinion do political parties help to make government pay attention to the people? (%)

	India (n=2366)	Sri Lanka n=1836)
Good Deal	9,5	18,2
Somewhat	35,3	53,8
Not at All	27,4	27,4
Other / Don't Know	27,8	0,6
Total	100,0	100,0

As the analysis has shown so far, the comparison of the sense of efficacy of votes in both countries remains ambivalent, whereas the sense of efficacy of parties is substantially higher in Sri Lanka.

In the following step, an exploration is made on the trust in key institutions within the state, such as the central and local government, government officials and elected representatives. The perception on the central and local governments, as well as government officials is significantly more polarised in India between a great deal of trust and no trust at all, while a majority of Sri Lankan youths perceive these institutions as somewhat trustworthy. The degree of trust in parties and elected representatives is lower in Sri Lanka as compared to India. This outcome is particularly puzzling as it contradicts the overall positive perception of the Sri Lankan respondents on the efficacy of parties, as shown in Table 4.

Table 5: How much trust do you have in the following institutions?

	Great Deal	Somewhat	Not at All	Other/ Don't Know	Total
Central government					
India	34,7	43,2	22,0	0,1	100,0
Sri Lanka	10,7	64,7	24,5	0,1	100,0
Local government					
India	37,7	38,7	23,6	-	100,0
Sri Lanka	8,2	68,0	23,2	0,6	100,0
Government officials					
India	15,8	40,7	43,5	-	100,0
Sri Lanka	7,4	60,2	32,2	0,2	100,0
Political Parties					
India	16,6	43,3	40,1	-	100,0
Sri Lanka	4,0	46,7	49,0	0,3	100,0
Elected representatives					
India	19,7	40,1	40,2	-	100,0
Sri Lanka	4,3	46,8	48,8	0,1	100,0

(n=2366 (India); n=1836 (Sri Lanka))

When it comes to those institutions responsible for the enforcement of the law, namely the judiciary and the police, the degree of trust is substantially higher in Sri Lanka, as compared to the Indian figures. Noteworthy is the low level of trust in the Indian police. Three fifth of the young respondents in India have no trust at all in the police.

Table 6: How much trust do you have in the following institutions? (%)

	great deal	somewhat	not at all	other/ Don't Know	Total
Judiciary					
India	41,9	33,0	25,1	-	100,0
Sri Lanka	36,9	48,8	13,7	0,6	100,0
Police					
India	12,3	28,4	59,3	-	100,0
Sri Lanka	14,0	57,1	28,8	0,1	100,0

(n=2366 (India); n=1836 (Sri Lanka))

The belief in the necessity of political parties and elections as essential precondition for the existing political system is high among youths in both countries. When asked whether an authoritarian government could run things better, a vast majority of the respondents disagree. Still, the percentage of those who would prefer an authoritarian rule is twice as high in Sri Lanka as compared to India.

Table 7: Suppose there were no parties and elections were not held – do you think that the government in this country can be run better? (%)

	India (n=2366)	Sri Lanka (n=1836)
Yes	10,4	21,6
No	71,4	65,4
Other / Don't Know	18,2	13,0
Total	100,0	100,0

3. Participation

The question of how political participation of a certain social group could be enhanced is a challenging playing field within the arena of political science. While the progressive argument of democratic theory would be that any form of empowerment is desirable, conservative voices would point to the tricky

relationship between power value capabilities and power value expectations (Gurr 1970). Studies of protest movements, revolts and revolutions have indicated that an increase in participation may result in increasing power value expectations which, then, offset the earlier advances in participation. Nevertheless, a cautious and systematic enhancement of participatory opportunities to the youth population of South Asia would build positive attitudes among future generations towards the process of democratic and representative governance and conflict resolution. Very little is known about the present contribution of young men and women to the political processes of South Asian states. While the unconventional forms of political participation like student protests have, as it has been argued earlier, received some interest, little work has been done to evaluate the performance of youth in the formal democratic process. Apart from taking part in elections as the most basic form of democratic participation, we do not have, for example, systematic figures about the representation of younger generations in parliaments, assemblies or local representative bodies in South Asia. Nor do we know enough about the involvement of young men and women in the working of political parties as the main interface between state and society.

It is important to remember that participation in collective decision-making may be practised much earlier than just at the age that qualifies for suffrage. Other public institutions and organisations such as schools, sport clubs and other associations provide the training ground for young people to practice democracy, to listen to and tolerate opposing views, to associate with others in order to win an argument, and basically to experience that one's own interests can find powerful expression through democratic means.

The turnout among voters up to 25 years is considerably higher in India than in Sri Lanka. Since the survey in India was conducted in the context of the national elections to the Lok Sabha, only eligible respondents have been asked whether

they have cast their vote in these elections or not. In the case of the Sri Lankan youth survey, this was not the case, and thus more than a third of the respondents were not yet eligible for participation in the last elections.

Table 8: Did you vote in the last elections? (%)

	India (n=2366)	Sri Lanka (n=1836)
Yes	85,5	48,2
No	14,2	17,3
Not Eligible (not asked in India)	-	34,5
Other / Not Sure	0,3	-
Total	100,0	100,0

The lower turnout among youths in Sri Lanka, however, is not a general tendency, but rather due to the voting behaviour of the Tamil minority. While the participation of more than 80% of the Sinhalese and Moor youths in the elections is considerably higher than the nation-wide turnout, the turnout among Tamil youths is less than half. In India, on the other side, the turnout among young voters does not vary among different minorities, and is, same as in Sri Lanka, considerably above the national average.

Table 9: Did you vote in the last elections? (eligible only) (%)

	Yes	No	Total
Hindu	85,5	14,5	100,0
Muslim	86,9	13,1	100,0
Other	86,7	13,3	100,0
India (n=2366):			
	Yes	No	TOTAL
Sinhalese	80,2	19,8	100,0
Tamil	43,0	57,0	100,0
Other	84,0	16,0	100,0
Sri Lanka (n=1836):			

4. Welfare

The task for state action seems to be most obvious in the field of welfare. The provision of education, jobs, basic amenities, infrastructure, and so forth, seems essential in order to enhance economic and self-actualisation capabilities (Gurr 1970). The argument as of today is not so much about whether a state has a job to do in this field, but rather how it should go about it. We shall abstain here from a discussion about how the ideal division of labour between the state and the market should look like. However, especially in the context of third world economies the state always plays some role in addressing the issue of welfare and economic policy in the promotion of youth. Even in the industrialised economies of Western Europe, more and more governments feel that direct intervention by the state is required in order to address the problem of youth unemployment. Again a reminder here that the design of such policies has to be non-discriminatory within the youth category.

In the following three tables the level of satisfaction with the respective financial situation in the past, present and future is measured. In both countries, little more than 70% of the youths are either satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their present financial situation. In Sri Lanka, however, more young people regard their situation either as stagnating or worsening. In terms of their expectations for the future, Sri Lankan youths appear more optimistic, while the high figures of expected stagnation as well as non-responses show a certain degree of disillusion among the youth in India.

Table 10: During the last five years, has your financial (economic) situation improved, worsened, or has it stayed the same? (%)

	India (n=2366)	Sri Lanka (n=1836)
Improved	33,0	27,8
Stayed the Same	51,1	44,1
Worsened	15,8	28,1
Other/Don't Know	0,1	-
Total	100,0	100,0

Table 11: In whatever financial (economic) situation you are placed today, on the whole, are you satisfied with your present financial situation? (%)

	India (n=23669)	Sri Lanka (n=1836)
Satisfied	29,9	25,5
Somewhat Satisfied	41,5	45,6
Not Satisfied	28,6	28,8
Other/Don't Know	-	0,1
Total	100,0	100,0

Table 12: Future economic expectation (financial situation)

	India (n=2366)	Sri Lanka (n=1836)
Better	52,5	67,9
Stay the Same	23,9	19,1
Worse	8,4	9,7
Other / Don't Know	15,2	3,3
Total	100,0	100,0

5. Normative justification of political violence

The imperfect nature of any given society suggests that some gap between value expectations and value capabilities is always around and will always remain. It even seems that this gap is the dominant force of social change. So we would have to ask why it does not always and everywhere lead to violent protest. At this stage, the fourth explanatory variable is introduced to our model of youth protest, namely the prevalence of norms about "the extent to which and the conditions under which

violence, and political violence, is proper". The utilitarian justification, on the other hand, reflects the "expectations about the relative utility of violence as a means of value attainment" among members of a collectivity. To put it simple, "Men who believe that [political violence] is both proper and useful are more likely to resort to it than men who think it is neither." (Gurr 1970: 156)

We know very little about such normative and utilitarian attitudes of the youth population in South Asia, and about the process by which such attitudes are shaped. Most systematic studies that we have about political socialisation in general are based on empirical findings from western countries, while some of the most prominent investigations into collective violence in South Asia are of psychoanalytical nature as, for example, in the writings of Kakar (1996). What seems to be needed is a truly comparative, empirical investigation into the normative and utilitarian justifications for political violence among youth in South Asia.

Political socialisation of the individual mind forms the basis of a political culture, and, at the same time, the political culture of the collectivity has a decisive impact on the political socialisation of the individual. Central to this dialectic relationship between political socialisation and political culture are variables such as value orientations, opinions, attitudes, and political behaviour. Political socialisation, in this sense, describes the way by which — within a given society — the political culture of one generation is passed on to the next. (Langton 1969). Numerous models of political socialisation have been suggested and they vary on aspects such as the main agents of socialisation (e.g. family, school, neighbourhood, voluntary associations, work place), period of socialisation (e. g. early childhood, adolescence, early adulthood), or the emphasis that it put on certain consequences of political socialisation (e.g. legitimacy, participation, civic attitudes).

All these aspects of political socialisation are context sensitive and the development of a research agenda specifically designed for the South Asian context would have to take into account some of the shared socio-political and economic characteristics that are common for the region. Some of those are as follows:

- Post-colonial societies with variant colonial legacies (e. g. political systems, bureaucracy, educational system);
- Low levels of economic development and the process of modernisation; persistence of wide-spread poverty;
- Process of rapid democratisation;
- Demographic imbalance;
- Disputed role of religion in state and society;
- Multi-ethnicity;
- Minority politics;
- Cultural aspects (caste; family).

In the context of the present paper, we specifically would have to ask how attitudes towards the political system are shaped, how certain patterns of political participation are passed on to the younger generation, and how perceptions about the legitimacy of the use of violence for political ends emerge. Unless a substantive amount of empirical research is done in this field, the temptation to fall back upon primordial and essentialist cultural explanations for violent behaviour (e. g. the *Sikhs* as fighters) will always remain. Moreover, the dangers that lie in the often very effective politicisation of such cultural explanations pose a threat to the peaceful coexistence within multi-ethnic societies. Empirical social science research and an open public debate of the issue would substantively contribute to such a demystification of violent youth protest.

The key question, which can be seen as one way to operationalise the above concept of the normative justification of political violence, was posed to the respondents in the following way:

Table 13: People hold different opinion about struggle. Some people say that struggle, even if it leads to violence, is a proper method for the people to fulfil their demands, while others say that struggle is not a proper method if it leads to violence. How do you feel-is struggle leading to violence proper or not a proper method for fulfilling people's demands? (%)

	India (n=2366)	Sri Lanka (n=1836)
Proper	14,2	32,3
Not Proper	64,1	61,9
Other	1,3	2,6
Don't Know	20,4	3,2
Total	100,0	100,0

In Sri Lanka, the normative justification of political violence among youths is significantly higher than in India, with one third of the Sri Lankan youth accepting violent struggle as legitimate method. Another basic finding is that younger people in Sri Lanka are more likely to have an opinion on this issue than their Indian counterparts.

A split-up into gender reveals no significant variation between both countries' figures, confirming the popular understanding that men are more ready to resort to violence than women. Cross-tabulating the perception on violence with the class variable, it is the middle class in both countries in which violence is accepted slightly more than in other classes.

Neither in India nor in Sri Lanka a significant variation can be observed between economic satisfaction and justification of violence, with an increase in non-responses proportionally to the economic dissatisfaction of the respondents. Thus,

violent struggle among youth appears not to generate from economic deprivation in either country.

Table 14: Is Struggle Leading to Violence Proper or Not a Proper Method for Fulfilling People's Demands? (Satisfaction with present financial situation) (%)

	Struggle Leading to Violence			Total
	Proper	Not Proper	Other / Don't Know	
India:				
Satisfied	15,0	68,2	16,8	100,0
Somewhat Satisfied	14,9	66,1	19,0	100,0
Not Satisfied	12,4	57,1	30,5	100,0
Sri Lanka:				
Satisfied	33,0	63,2	3,8	100,0
Somewhat Satisfied	30,9	63,5	5,6	100,0
Not Satisfied	34,2	58,1	7,7	100,0

(n=2366 (India); n=1836 (Sri Lanka))

In India, figures on the perception of the legitimacy of violent struggle do not vary among different religious or ethnic groups. In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, one can observe a significant variation between the high level of acceptance of violence among Sinhalese and Tamil youths, and the comparably low level among Moor youths.

Table 15: How do you feel-is struggle leading to violence proper or not a proper method for fulfilling people's demands? (Sri Lanka, ethnic split-up, n=1836) (%)

	Proper	Not Proper	Other /D.K.	TOTAL
Sinhalese	33,4	61,2	5,4	100,0
Tamil	34,2	58,2	7,6	100,0
Moor	20,1	73,8	6,1	100,0

For participatory political research it is important to understand whether violent protest is regarded by the citizen as an alternative or a complement to conventional forms of political participation. The hypothesis here would be that the stability of a political system increases when protest is not regarded as the only means of expressing one's own will, but is only strategically used to put some select pressure on the system, while the conventional forms of participation are predominant. To test this hypothesis empirically, the perception of violent struggle is cross-tabulated with the respondents' perception on the efficacy of their vote.

Table 16: Is Struggle Leading to Violence Proper or Not a Proper Method for Fulfilling People's Demands? (Efficacy of Vote) (%)

	Proper	Not Proper	Other/ Don't Know	Total
India (n=2366):				
Vote has effect	16,1	71,3	12,6	100,0
Vote makes no difference	13,0	65,4	21,6	100,0
Sri Lanka (n=1836):				
Vote has effect	34,2	61,5	4,3	100,0
Vote makes no difference	30,5	60,6	8,9	100,0

The outcome of this cross-tabulation is somewhat ambivalent. In both cases those respondents who consider their democratic participation as having an effect are more likely to have an opinion on this issue than those who neglect the effect of their vote. A negative correlation between the perception on democratic forms of participation and the perception of the legitimacy of violence, as the hypothesis suggests, cannot be observed.

One striking outcome of the above empirical analysis is the disturbingly high level of illiterate youths in India. This figure strongly correlates with the high figures of non-responses throughout the survey. In the case of Sri Lanka, the fact that almost all youth enjoyed at least a basic literacy is reflected in the general tendency that

Sri Lankan respondents are much more likely to have an opinion on questions concerning politics than their Indian counterparts.

In terms of trust in various institutions, Sri Lankan youths tend to have a more cautious opinion compared to Indians, which again might be related to the higher level of education and their experience of violence and institutional decay. Quite puzzling and hard to interpret is the perception of democratic participation within the context of Sri Lanka. While a considerably high number of youths believe in the efficacy of political parties, the trust in parties and elected representatives are significantly lower than in India. This gap is further aggravated by the high number of respondents who generally reject the democratic system within the context of Sri Lanka. As the ethnic split-up shows, these low figures are explained by the diverging perception of the Tamil minority.

Insights into the general level of youth participation are limited due to the missing older-aged reference group. However, a comparison of the figures on participation in elections among the young respondents and the nation-wide voter's turnout indicates a significantly higher level of participation among youths in both, India and Sri Lanka.

As compared to India, the normative justification of political violence among youths is higher in Sri Lanka, with almost one third of the Sri Lankan youth accepting violent struggle as legitimate political instruments. A cross-tabulation with variables on economic satisfaction reveals a break with the popular hypothesis that political violence strongly correlates with economic deprivation. This correlation cannot be observed, neither in the case of India nor in the case of Sri Lanka.

Next, the similarly popular hypothesis on the negative correlation between the believe in the democratic process, i.e. the perception that one's vote has an effect, and the justification of violence as non-conventional form of political protest, is also challenged by the data.

In the case of India those who regard political violence as justified are equally distributed among all ethnic and religious groups. In Sri Lanka, the level of acceptance of violence among Tamil and Sinhalese youth is significantly higher as compared to the acceptance among Moor youths.

Part III:

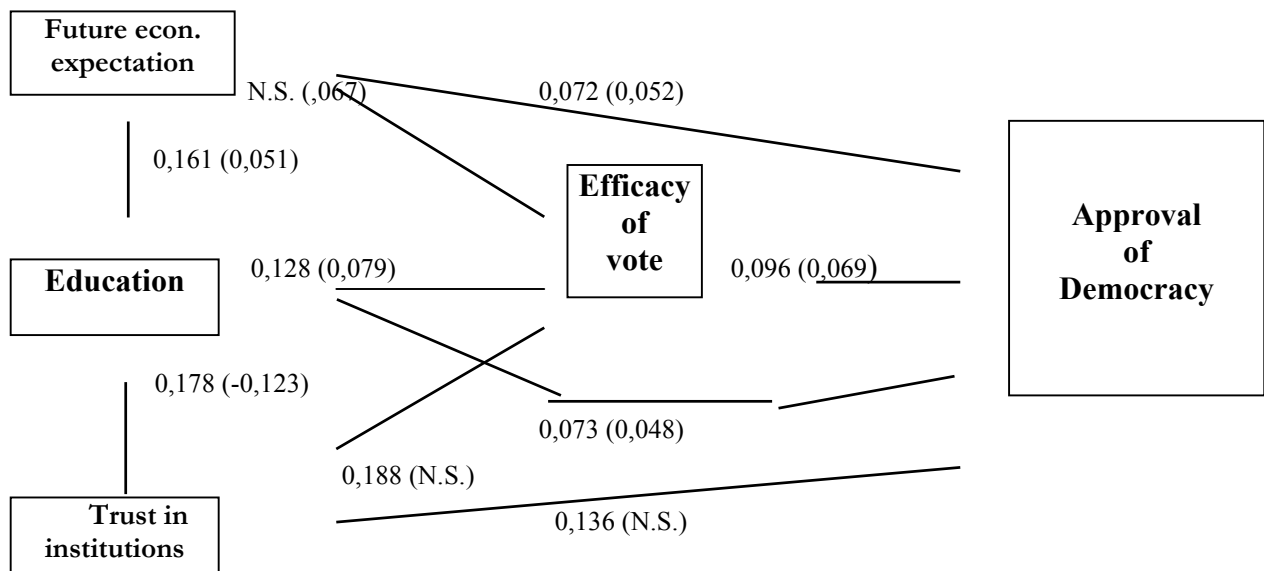
Cross-cultural patters of attitudes of the youth towards democratisation

Democratisation, the main dependent variable of this paper, indicates a complex process of attitudinal change. Measured by the extent to which people 'approve of democracy' the causal process is mediated by the efficacy that actors attribute to the vote. At the deepest level of causation one finds three sets of variables, namely the extent to which one can expect one's welfare to improve; the level of education one has achieved, which under *normal circumstances* improves one's chances in the economic and social sphere; and, finally, the level of trust one has in the main political institutions that frame the political process. The causal model that one can formulate on the basis of these conjectures would anticipate positive correlations between future economic expectations, education and institutional trust, efficacy of vote and approval of democracy. The main objective behind a comparative analysis of the attitudes of Indian and Sri Lankan youth on the basis of comparable questions is to understand the extent to which the process of democratisation in both countries follows a parallel course at the attitudinal level. To the extent the anticipated positive correlations are supported by evidence from survey data, one can assert the parallel course of basic attitudes in both countries.

However, to the extent that the survey results fail to support the conjectures of the model, or produce correlations that are not significant, one will need to draw on the contextual information to explain these departures from the hypothetical expectations.

The comparison of Indian and Sri Lankan youth on single variables has in many cases given rise to similarity of trends. Do these trends constitute the basis of a structure of correlates of attitudes that is cross-culturally valid in the context of India and Sri Lanka? In order to test the existence of such a pattern, a preliminary analysis has been done on the basis of a multiple correlation of the crucial variables. Figure 1 presents the findings.

Figure 1: Correlation between Key Variables



Key:
 Figures for Indian youth (age 18-25); Figures Sri Lankan youth in brackets. All correlations are significant at least at 0.05 level. N.S. refers to the absence of a correlation, which is significant at least at 5%.

The most significant and general observation one can come up with from figure 1 is the comparability of the correlation's between the two countries. Thus, on the whole, variables connected with modernisation (education), economic growth (financial expectations) and social capital (institutional trust) give rise to higher sense of efficacy which, in turn, leads towards attitudes supportive of democracy. But, there are interesting variations as well. Thus, in the case of Sri Lanka, trust in institutions is not related to efficacy; in other words, one might feel personally efficacious, but not have trust in institutions. One notices the same phenomenon in Sri Lanka with regard to trust in institutions and attitudes towards democracy; the latter remains positive while the former tends to be low, or not significantly related to the normative approval of democracy. In the Indian case, a similar observation can be made with regard to future economic expectations, which do not have a significant correlation with a sense of efficacy.

Two caveats must be added here. In the first place, one must emphasise here that figure one provides data on the similarity of deep, attitudinal correlation. These are not necessarily reflected in behaviour, which is the outcome of responses to the structure of opportunities and central policy. Attitudes provide a psychological point of departure for policy makers who wish to affect behaviour. Increasing trust in Sri Lanka and perception of economic opportunities in India are thus two findings that may be relevant to policy makers.

The second observation is related to intra-system variations. It would be interesting to compare the pattern of variations, using the model presented in figure 1, across the social cleavage between former untouchables and others, or, across Hindus and minority religions. Similarly, in the case of Sri Lanka, the cleavage between Tamil and Sinhalese youth could be probed further using the same model.

Conclusion

While the Shell study had already indicated the role of the youth in the European context, it is Sri Lankan scholarly research which made us aware of the fact that youth does play a significant role in the process of political participation in general, and in various forms of collective violent behaviour in particular, within the context of South Asian societies. Any comparative research agenda, however, has to take into account the context sensitivity of youth unrest. Within India, sub-nationalism and separatism is only one of many forms of youth aggression, along with a diverse range of other factors such as the colonial legacy, demographic imbalances, caste politics, as well as student- and peasant movements.

The concept of youth as a category is based on the premise that it is this particular cleavage, which makes individuals, refers to various forms of collective political behaviour. However, youth is not a coherent social group, but is rather divided along numerous other social cleavages such as class, caste, ethnicity, religion, and so forth. The concept of youth as such does not serve for generating collective identity. Young people might resort to political violence on the basis of their identity as member of a particular caste or class, as Muslim, as Sikh, or as Tamil, but hardly just because they are young. In this respect, youth can be conceptualised and operationalised as a sub-category. Thus, as it is argued, while young men and women do play an important if not decisive role in collective violence, the cause of the violence is hardly youth specific, but rather rooted in one of the above societal group identities. Due to this conceptual difficulty, studies of political violence have so far usually been concerned with the issue on which groups have been mobilised, while the salience of an in-depth analysis of the systematic and consequential role that younger generations play within the various movements has been largely ignored.

As starting point of such an analysis is an exploration of the peculiarities of political socialisation as well as political culture among the young generation and the way in which the political culture and the normative values of one generation is passed on to the next. More particularly, the present study has tried to explore how perceptions of the youth on the political system, as well as the patterns of political participation therein are shaped. The focus was thereby led on the exploration of the normative justification of violence within the process of political participation among the youth.

The empirical comparison of perceptions between India and Sri Lanka shed some light on the issue of political socialisation and culture among the younger generation, but at the end of the day, it raised more questions than it was able to answer. How can the gap between the low interest in politics and the strong participation at the polls be explained? Why do Sri Lankan youths strongly believe in the efficacy of parties, but, at the same time, show a deep mistrust in them? Why is the perception on the efficacy of vote quite positive, while, at the same time, a significant number of Sri Lankan youths are in favour of an authoritarian, rather than a democratic regime. Further, some popular hypotheses about the link between economic deprivation and the perception on political violence cannot be ascertained, neither in the case of Sri Lanka nor in the case of India. Most of the emerging puzzles, however, can be put down to the diverging perceptions among different minority groups within the Sri Lankan context, namely the Tamil youths in contrast to their Sinhalese and Moor counterparts. In India, the most peculiar feature of youth perception remains the very high level of illiteracy among the young generation, which correlates to a significant number of non-responses and a high level of disinterest in political affairs throughout the survey. Nevertheless, those young men and women who responded show a strong sense for democratic values and a clear rejection of violence as a means for political struggle.

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Youth, Conflict and Social Transformation in Sri Lanka

C.Y. Thangarajah

Introduction

Political struggle is no new phenomenon to Sri Lanka. In the contemporary history, negotiations for power-sharing began from the time of pre-independence. The struggle for restructuring the state and the issue of power-sharing took on different forms and ideas at different points of time. Similar demands for social restructuring emerged among the Sinhala youth. Both currents manifested in the form of a revolutionary armed struggle by the youth with a time lapse of a decade. While the armed struggle among the Sinhala youth began in 1971, the armed campaign by the Tamil youth emerged in the early 1980s. There has been notable analysis of the Sinhalese youth uprising and about the nature of the organisation that conducted this armed campaign. But, a similar comment cannot be said about the armed campaign in the Northeast. Very little coherent analysis, which looks at the relationship between Tamil social formation and the manifestation of the armed struggle, has been done. This paper is an attempt to bridge that gap.

The paper's major focus is on the Tamil youth. It is structured in two parts. Part I looks at the socio-political history of the Northeast with an emphasis on some selected aspects that fed into the rise of the militant movements and the extensive social transformation that took place subsequent to the emergence of the conflict. Part II, attempts to interpret the data of the youth survey in backdrop of the nearly two decades of armed struggle and the devastating social and economic destruction that has been caused. The second part, thus attempts to place the data and the responses in context to the peculiar circumstance of the north and east. In addition, the paper also focuses, to a small extent, at the response of some selected areas in the hill country where there is a substantial number of Tamil youth.

Part I:

Background of the conflict in the North and East

The conflict in Sri Lanka has been generally associated as a minority problem, between the Sri Lankan state and parts of the Tamil population, although in the post-independent history of Sri Lanka, another major violent conflict, which challenged the Sri Lankan state was the armed insurrection by the People's Liberation Front or the JVP in 1971 and the late 1980s that were led by Sinhalese rural youth. This campaign by the JVP was a programme intended not merely to capture political power but to establish new social order through the capture of political power. In contrast, the Tamil conflict is of a political nature. The youth gave expression in the form of an armed struggle, to the visions of the Tamil political leaders of the colonial and post-colonial state who tried without any significant results to structure a state with greater autonomy for the Tamils. Thus, the Tamil project was mainly of a political and not of a social orientation.

In the Tamil perception in the north and the east, however, the JVP campaign in 1971, despite actions by the state to the detriment of the Tamil community, was not viewed with understanding in its social and political project. There was also very little political consciousness of, or solidarity with, the Marxist Leninist ideology except among a few radical individuals, particularly among sections of the depressed castes in the north and east who were weaned on leftist ideologies with linkages to the Marxist movement in Kerala and with close links with the left movement in Sri Lanka (CRD). Ironically however, while these left elements sympathised with the JVP, the left movements in Colombo aligned themselves to the ruling nationalist United Front government against the armed campaign of the JVP in 1971. Soon afterwards, the continuing demands from the Tamil political leadership for greater autonomy of the North and East also led the United Front

government of Mrs Bandaranaike to take some extreme political measures, structurally transforming the nature of the post-colonial Sri Lankan state.

1. The transformation to Sinhala Buddhist nation state

The proclamation of the island nation as a republic in 1972 severing its constitutional linkage with the queen, was seen by the Sinhala nationalist political leadership, as a decisive move in bringing back the ignored majority into the mainstream. It was a programme to instil a sense of pride in the Sri Lankan nation-state by giving primacy to Sinhala language and Buddhism. The Tamil political leadership perceived this as attempts in a series of measures to further entrench majoritarian Sinhala-Buddhist rule at the expense of deprived political rights of the Tamil people. The proclamation of the republican constitution in 1972 also fundamentally altered the nature of the Sri Lankan nation state as irreversibly Sinhala Buddhist, clearly subordinating other cultures and groups, to the primacy of Buddhism.

1.1. Vernacular education

Since independence various measures were adopted by the successive Sri Lankan governments, to give greater role to the majority, vernacular educated Sinhalese. One was to make Sinhalese the official language of the state in 1958. The Sinhalese perception was that it was a long overdue remedy to the injustice done in the past where only the English educated Sinhala and Tamil elite enjoyed the privileges of the state, whereas the Tamil elite political leadership saw opportunities and potentials reduced for the English educated elite Tamils, under this new arrangement.

A large number of English educated Tamil and Sinhala professionals left the country in the late 1950s and early sixties when the vernacular educated Sinhalese began to fill the ranks of the state after the introduction of Sinhala as the official language. While it was only a matter of impact on their social and economic dominance for the upper class Sinhala elite, for the Tamils, it was also an issue of language, which mobilised sentiments of identity. They were forced to gain competency in Sinhala, which was not merely an alien language but also a language associated negatively with Sinhala domination by the transformation of the state as Sinhala Buddhist. This made many Tamils and to some extent, Sinhala professionals to migrate to the centre of the colonial state that they had served – the UK. Others went in search of employment to other parts of British Raj such as Malaysia, Fiji, parts of Africa etc.

1.2. Nationalisation of companies

Subsequently the nationalisation of companies and plantations made the Sri Lankan state – the “Sinhala Buddhist State” in the perception of the Tamil elite, the most important provider of employment with competency in Sinhala as the main selection criteria. A large number of vernacular educated Sinhalese who had thus far been excluded from such possibilities of employment were able to access these jobs. This produced a whole new generation with social and economic mobility and effectively excluded the automatic and to some extent, exclusive possibility of employment hitherto available only to the English educated Tamils and Sinhalese. While the Sinhala elite could make the switch to this new situation of greater role of Sinhala relatively easily and continued to occupy the upper echelons of the management strata, the same was not possible for the Tamil elite who found the employment base and consequently their options progressively diminished. In 1956, 60% and 50% of those who were occupying the professional and clerical posts respectively were Tamils. They were also occupying 30% of the

managerial posts. Between 1956 and 1979, their share in all three categories dropped drastically to 10%, 5% and 5% respectively directly as a consequence to the above changes (quoted in Manogaran 1987:129).

It is important to note, however, that these two issues - state language and nationalisation of industries, did not impact on the youth segment of the Tamil population. What is also significant is that the so called discrimination and adverse impact for the Tamils meant only the elite and the large number of the vernacular educated Tamil youth still remained outside the possibility of these opportunities. Those who were really affected were a small number of English educated professionals and a segment of middle rung clerks. A generation later, however, the youth constituency was to become potential candidates for a strong anti-Sinhalese Tamil nationalist movement, when educational opportunities continued to be denied to them.

The Sri Lankan Tamil professionals had always been an integral part of the Sri Lankan state from colonial times. Access to better education, the privileged position given by the colonial masters and the sense of power arising out of that context, gave them a sense of dominance. They, no doubt, served the colonial state with absolute loyalty. That loyalty and the privilege arising out of that loyalty was the essential psyche of the educated Tamil. Thus, when after independence, they began to see their role being progressively diminished by the replacement of the vernacular educated Sinhalese, they could not understand this possibility of a reduced role as the inevitable outcome of a necessary transformation of the structure of the post colonial state. The subsequent sense of betrayal was strong and deep.

The socio-economic impact of the far-reaching structural changes in the initial “Sinhala only” phase did not impact the youth segment of the Tamil population.

The real impact came to be felt with the changes brought about in the sphere of education, which entirely altered the landscape.

2. The impact of vernacular education on the Tamil youth

After the issue of employment, the second most far-reaching change came over after 1961 when the state took-over all private schools. In the 1950s, however, there have been attempts by the Sinhala and Tamil nationalists to make Tamil and Sinhala the medium of instruction in all secondary and tertiary educational institutions (de Silva 1988:106). This allowed a large number of students, both in Sinhala and Tamil mediums to access quality education through state patronage, hitherto available only to English medium private schools.

For the traditional Jaffna Tamils, who are denied of any significant natural resources within the peninsula, education was the only means of economic and social mobility. Therefore, even after the transformation in the employment sector, the performance of Tamil youth in the field of education was impressive enough. They were able to use the existing well-developed system of particularly mission-supported schools to perform well. Due to the better training imparted in these schools as well as motivation, Tamil students were able to secure greater proportion of the limited number of seats available in the university. Indigenisation of the employment sector was dependent on the university-trained professionals and the Tamil youth who were getting the benefits of this education was an important constituency in relation to the possibility of opportunities.

But, interestingly, this indigenisation took place when the Tamils were beginning to enter the university in greater proportions. This was because the well-developed system of education in the northern peninsula was geared to handle the task of training the students to perform better in the university entrance examinations.

This led to a greater number of Tamils from Jaffna and Sinhalese from the well-developed metropolitan areas such as Colombo, Kandy, Galle, and other towns which had a well developed tertiary education system, securing entrance to the universities particularly for coveted fields such as medicine, engineering, the sciences etc. The vernacular educated youth from the rural areas, still remained handicapped in this first phase of the indigenisation process. But, since entrance to the university was purely on the basis of merit, it was seen as fair that those who entered the universities were able to do so through their “superior intellect.”

The Sinhala political leaders wanted more opportunities for a large number of Sinhalese from the rural areas. In response, the Sri Lankan state brought about some far reaching changes in the access to university education since the 1970s, which, over the next five years, gradually reduced the number of Tamil students entering university. The first move was the introduction in 1971 of a system of weightage for the performance of groups on the basis of ethnicity. The impact on the number of Tamils affected and the percentages were negligible. The principle, however, was to have broader implications of ethnic wise discrimination and awaken the youth to the possibility of discrimination against them in the future.

In 1973, media-wise standardisation was introduced which adjusted the numbers qualifying for university entrance according to the proportion of the number of candidates from each medium. This made the proportion of the Sinhalese medium students in courses like engineering and medicine in 1973 increase to 73.1% and 58.8% respectively. Corresponding figures for the Tamil medium engineering plummeted to 24.4%. Even though, in terms of absolute numbers, Tamil medium entrance only fell marginally from 359 to 347, course-wise entry to specific courses such as medicine and engineering adversely affected the Tamil candidates, particularly from the north (Manogaran 1987, C.R. de Silva 1988).

The third attempt was the district quota system, which was introduced in 1974. This impacted upon the Tamil youth further. The percentage of Tamil students entering engineering fell sharply to 16.3%, medicine 25.9%, and science to 20.9% that year, while the percentage of the Sinhala students rose to 75.4% in the science based courses. Their share in the arts course had already been over 85% and some adjustments were done on ethnic-wise standardisation to reduce that number in 1971. But in any event, as a cumulative effect, the overall number of Sinhalese admissions in universities rose to over 80%, well above their national proportion. This decrease was serious, given the fact that the number of students qualifying for university admissions was on the rise, in terms of the total places available for university admissions (Manogaran 1987, C.R. de Silva 1988).

Interestingly, one factor that the changes also positively impacted on the Tamils students outside the peninsular Jaffna and negatively on the Sinhalese from selected urban areas remained ignored. For instance, while Sinhala students with high marks from Colombo could not gain admission under the new policy, Tamil students with low marks from Batticaloa and Trincomalee were also able secure places in the Universities. Under the new scheme, students from areas such as Trincomalee, Mannar, Mullaithivu, Kilinochchi and the Tamils from the plantations and areas such as Matale were able to enter the coveted streams such as medicine and engineering which inspired a whole new generation of students. Thus, students from such deprived areas were motivated to seriously compete for tertiary education. But, overall, the impact of these changes on the educated youth population from the north was politically significant since the broader perception was that the government had adopted “discriminatory” policies in place of “open competition” through a combination of pressure from the Sinhalese hard-liners and “threat of violence” (de Silva 1988:116).

3. The beginnings of Tamil nationalism

In isolation, the changes in the field of education alone would not have created such a ground-swelling sense of injustice. But, the gradual and corresponding transformation of the Sri Lankan state and its impact on the various aspects of Tamil life, the continuing failure of the political process to accommodate Tamil requests for greater autonomy, and most of all, the fear of the state aided colonisation and the publicity given to the long term threats to the cultural and territorial integrity of Tamils as a distinct cultural group, all led to a convergence of hostility.

The vocal Tamil political leadership also capitalised on the rising resentment and anxiety among the Tamil youth from the north. Ironically, the anti-government slogan of “yet another discriminatory move by the Sinhala majority state” subsumed within the unified nationalist discourse, integrated even the Tamils from outside the north who benefited from the new system of university entrance when the issue of colonisation began to pose a greater threat.

3.1. Threat of Colonisation and the Integration of Youth from the Borders

The Tamil political leadership from the time of independence have perceived the colonisation programmes as a long-term threat to the territorial integrity of the Tamil people. In that regard, the mammoth Gal-Oya Valley Development in the southern part of the then Batticaloa district began to raise anxiety among Tamil people. It was a continuation of the programme of the colonial state, which initiated a series of “openings of the dry zone,” through development of irrigation facilities primarily to increase paddy production, which was meant to minimise the foreign exchange spent on the import of rice. These programmes were part of the policies of the British colonial state in places like Punjab in India that was

followed with much gusto, although it was introduced in the then Ceylon, rather belatedly and with much reluctance (see Farmer 1957, Peebles 1990, Shastri 1990).

In the late sixties and early seventies, this new thrust was made in the north and east by the state agencies. Existing agricultural lands that belonged mainly to the Tamil and Muslim farmers were also taken over by the state for the purpose of sugar cane cultivation. Since any state related activity was also simultaneously seen as against the Tamil interest, these actions of take-over of Tamil and Muslim owned land, further raised the spectre of a threat to the territory inhabited by the Tamils. This was further given credence when these lands were redistributed to landless peasants who were resettled in these areas from the southern part of the country, introducing a new group of people in the so called Tamil areas. Similar state aided colonisation schemes were also introduced in the Batticaloa, Trincomalee, and Amparai districts.

This raised the threat perception among the Tamils, particularly the Tamil political leadership to a new level. There was a conscious attempt among the Tamil political circles to defend the borders of the north and east from the dangers of such state aided colonisation efforts. At this phase of what the Tamil political leadership saw as consistent and broad-based threat to the land, the leadership enlisted the assistance of the youth in a “defence-of-the-borders” project. The Youth wing of the major Tamil political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front called the *Ilangar Peravai* was entrusted the task of strengthening the borders.

Elaborate schemes to settle Tamils were implemented with the aid of various donor agencies. Refugees from the anti-Tamil violence of 1977, particularly from the hill country plantations, were resettled in these areas. On the contrary, the Sri Lankan state also began to implement aggressive colonisation schemes where a

large number of Sinhalese were settled. These colonisation schemes also introduced a new kind of politically motivated settlers who were actively involved in the nationalist project of defending the borders.

From the earlier phase of landless peasants, the new settlers were very closely linked to the political party in power. Many of these settlers were also explicitly weaned on the ideology of defending the sovereignty of the country and preventing the establishment of a Tamil homeland. Thus, the border areas were constructed both in reality and within the popular political nationalist imagination as the focal point of defending the territory.

This project of defending the respective nations both by the Sinhalese and the Tamils also created another arena of contest gradually turning the settlers into frontiersmen. Since specific areas, which were seen as important, were settled with these frontiersmen with affiliation to political parties, it also integrated other less contested areas along the borders and the earlier settlers. These dynamics unified all the Sinhala settlers as instruments of the state with an explicit agenda to deny the Tamils their land and subsequently destroy their identity. With this new level of conflict emerging, the youth also began to be integrated as a part of it, in defence of the territory. It is ironical that the many Tamil militant groups, which began to emerge, primarily based their ideology on and activity in, the so-called border areas.

Thus, from the fall-out on the impact on education and employment, the ideological campaign on the borders, which were mainly based in the east and the present day Vanni, effectively integrated another segment of the youth outside the peninsula within a unified front of Tamil nationalist campaign. While the war on defending the borders was being waged within the Tamil dominated north and east, another campaign was emerging. It was a campaign to challenge the

existence of the Sinhala-Buddhist Sri Lankan state in the Tamil dominated north and east, but at a symbolic level.

3.2. From the Symbolic to the Physical: the Contested Bodies

Parallel with the increasing hostility by the state in the political sphere, there emerged widespread feeling among the second level of political leadership from the regions and villages that negotiations have so far failed to achieve any tangible results. There was widespread disillusionment with the political process and political activists began to demand a more radical approach in winning their demands for greater political rights. They also began to work in close co-operation with the youth segment that has been progressively alienated by the policies of the successive governments. The unification of the various political parties among the Tamils under the banner of TUF in 1972 and subsequently TULF in 1975 with the word “liberation” in the title of the organisation signalled a definite shift from the unitary ideology. As part of this new approach, the youth wing of the Tamil political organisation became an integral part of the political process to be mounted henceforth. It is no coincidence that the restrictions on tertiary education and the greater role of the youth in the Tamil political process took place simultaneously.

The 1970s, thus, reflected almost a phenomenological break in the Sri Lankan political history. The overwhelming mandate received by the Tamil political party in the north and east where it secured the most number of votes for the establishment of a separate state in the elections held in 1977, was followed by the very party becoming the main opposition in the country for the first time, and probably the last. This unusual situation of a secessionist Tamil party becoming the main opposition led to the unleashing of an organised violence against the Tamils. The 1977 violence against the Tamils was the first one consequent to a

campaign involving the youth. This also made the youth segment of the Tamil population take greater responsibility for political leadership of the Tamil people. But hawkish as they were, the Tamil political leaders at that time only intended to use the youth as a potential ‘violent segment’ to be used as a chip in their political bargaining with the Sinhala political leadership. The legitimacy of winning the elections on the platform of a separate Tamil homeland also spurred the youth into anti-state activity. They felt that there was no further need to negotiate for political rights and began their campaign in earnest to dislodge the “Sinhala state” from the north and east, which was considered as the traditional homeland of the Tamils. Initially, this campaign chose to symbolically challenge and minimise the presence of the Sri Lankan ‘Sinhala Buddhist state’ in the north and east. The protests during this phase took the forms of burning of national flags, disrupting or boycotting state functions, prevention of public taking part in official functions such as independence day celebrations, de-facing of name boards of state institutions etc. But the state saw these symbolic activities as an escalation of an anti-state activity of alarming proportions, over-reacted, and took drastic measures. These measures by the state began to directly impact on the physical bodies of the individual Tamil youth who were taking part in these protests.

4. The Rise of Violence among the Tamil Youth

This shift of the state for the first time systematically punishing the physical bodies of individuals in response to a symbolic political campaign moved the conflict to another level. The Tamil youth initially began to target individuals linked to the “Sinhala state,” particularly the Tamil police officers who worked in the political sections of the police who were seen as responsible for the detention, assault and torture of Tamil youth under custody. With the gradual targeting of individuals within the police, in no time it also drew response from the state in the form of the promulgation of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1977,

infamously known as PTA. After the passing of the act, a large number of young people were detained and incarcerated for long periods without bail and many were tortured even under judicial custody.

This led to the emergence of more organised militant institutions among the youth who began to attack police stations and banks as a means of collecting arms and funds to establish and sustain their organisations, which led to further escalation of the conflict since the police stations and banks are the two premier symbols of the state in the north and east. It is at this point that the army also gradually began to be co-opted into the campaign against the Tamil youth. Thus, the survival of the Sri Lankan state in the north and east was entirely being dependent in the presence of police and the army. Since the early 1980s, there had been frequent attacks on the army and police. The response of the armed forces was swift in retaliating on the civilian population in the area where the incident took place. This pattern continued until 1983 when in July of the same year, after an ambush of an army truck in which thirteen soldiers were killed, an organised violence against the Tamils in all parts of the country were unleashed allegedly by elements within ruling United National Party regime of that time. The widespread violence unheard of in brutality in the history of Sri Lanka that took place in July 1983 saw a large number of Tamil people abandoning their dwellings and returning to the Northeast. Inevitably, this process was a tacit recognition that the Tamil people are only safe in these areas.

5. The Emergence of Tamil Militant Groups

The subsequent years saw a rise in the emergence of militant movements among the Tamils, which at one point numbered more than 20. The character of the militant movements in the north and east also varied significantly. Largely, the youth who went to swell the ranks of militant movement in the north were those

who had generally received post-secondary education and disillusioned by the lack of opportunities in employment and education. In the east, which was one of the areas with low attainment levels in the sphere of education, the threat was perceived to be in the sphere of land, which was the basis of the economy where over 60% of the population were dependent on agriculture and fishery. Thus militant movements, which gained dominance in the east initially in the early 1980s, were primarily of a Marxist Leninist orientation advocating a broader revolution of the working class (Uyangoda 2002). The character of such Marxist militant movements, which went for numbers, led to large-scale recruitment. The Sri Lankan state alarmed by the rise of militancy and having seen the control of the state diminish in the north decided to implement an “effective” counter insurgency plan in the east. According to the ideology guiding this programme, a strategy of mass terror was implemented. It relied on semi-public executions, release of suspects after brutal torture as a warning to the population, and large-scale disappearances after arrest of youth and the breadwinners, in order to break both the will of the people and economy of the region.

The Marxist groups, which were preoccupied with the education of the people with revolutionary ideals in the hope of overall social and political liberation, were not quite prepared for the brutal and specific strategy of the counter-insurgency programme implemented in the east. The disillusionment of the people with the STF because of dire consequences for even marginal involvement with these groups led to the waning in popularity of the mass action oriented non-militaristic approach of the Marxist groups. A military oriented group such as the LTTE, which was more selective in their recruitment, was more effective militarily driving hoards of highly motivated and determined young men and women into their fold.

The eventual internecine warfare for political supremacy between the LTTE and non-LTTE groups resulted in large-scale loss of life in the east. This, to some extent, led to mutual suspicion, non-involvement in political activity and other such apolitical behavioural patterns. It is against this historical background that one has to interpret the youth survey.

Part II: The Survey

This paper concentrates mostly on the trends in the north and east with some attention on the plantation areas as well. It interprets the outcomes and responses in relation to the social and political backgrounds specific to the context. It also seeks to throw some light on particular forms of behaviour in relation to the peculiar social, economic and political scenario due to the two decades of intense violence and its terrible social impact.

1. Youth and Ideology

The youth from the northern and eastern provinces are necessarily a generation of the war. If the war began in its intensity since the mid 1980's after the infamous July riots of 1983, those who are between the ages of 18-25 would have been below ten years in the mid 1980's.

The original groups that began the armed struggle were in the youth category in the late 1970's and early 1980's. They were the segment that was in charge of the project of armed struggle, which was a condition of their times. The late 1970's and early 1980's were the period when the Liberation wars in the Latin America, Africa, and the Palestine had caught the world attention. The Tamil nationalist

liberation struggle also drew inspiration from liberation wars the world over. They were also mostly couched in Marxist liberation discourse. Even today, despite the fall of the great Marxist regimes and the increasing influence of globalisation, the rhetoric and the romance of Marxism still reverberate among the youth population of the Northeast particularly in the context of the ongoing war.

This is also reflected in the youth survey where Communist/socialist ideology is the most favoured one by 86% of the youth in the east and 71.3% in the north. The threat to land because of state aided colonisation was perceived to be paramount to the identity of the Tamils in the east and to their livelihood since over 60% of the people of the east have been traditionally dependent on agriculture and fishery for a livelihood. Thus, most of the Tamil militant movements in the east have also been of a Marxist orientation such as the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam, Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, and Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students, working along the border areas particularly among the farmers attempting to conscientise them. Cash crops and petty traders had traditionally dominated the Jaffna economy. The service castes were able to get out of the caste structure through petty trade. Over 70% of the Tamils of the north belong to the dominant *Vellala* caste. A significant segment of this upper class, are also sufficiently westernised. Hence, the northern province also has the relatively highest percentage of those who favour a capitalist ideology with 17.1%, while the eastern province has the lowest preference of 7.7%.

It is indeed ironical that the revolutionary gusto, which led the bloody armed struggle in the southern part of the country seemed to have only 53% preference among the youth for communist/ socialist ideology while the northern provinces of north-western and north-central provinces have a greater preference for the communist/socialist ideology with 64% and 77.2% respectively.

2. Youth and Political Interests

In terms of interest in politics, there is a significantly high number of negative answers in the southern provinces rather than in the north and the east. Even though the overall figure for the country of only 7.7% of the youth responded with great deal of interest, 34.60% with somewhat, and 57.7% with no interest, the provincial breakdown of figures indicate a higher level of apathy in the Sinhala dominated provinces irrespective of the urban/ rural nature of the provinces. On the contrary, the Tamil dominated northern and eastern provinces have reflected a high interest in politics.

Table 1: Interest in Politics by Province

Province	Great Deal	Some Interest	No Interest	Total
Western	4.10%	32.30%	63.60%	100.00%
Central	8.20%	28.20%	63.60%	100.00%
Southern	8.90%	35.70%	55.40%	100.00%
Northern	11.00%	50.60%	38.40%	100.00%
Eastern	29.70%	43.20%	27.10%	100.00%
North-Western	4.60%	27.20%	68.10%	100.00%
North-Central	5.00%	36.50%	58.60%	100.00%
Uva	5.00%	37.80%	57.20%	100.00%
Sabaragamuwa	5.10%	38.60%	56.30%	100.00%

But, interest and involvement are two different aspects. Thus, it may be suggested that even though there are higher figures for their interest in public affairs, on par with the rest of the country, in reality there is very little involvement in public affairs. It is indeed paradoxical that the response was such. One has to look at the political history particularly of the northern and eastern provinces in order to understand and interpret the data.

In the 1980's, the eastern province saw a meteoric rise of the militant movements particularly the Marxist ones and recruitment to these movements was prolific

since their initial idea was to politically educate the youth. The Sri Lankan state made a conscious decision to prevent the east falling into the control of the Tamil militants and thus becoming a threat. It deployed the first elite counter insurgency unit trained by the Special Task Force (STF) located within the Police, directly operating under the authority of a presidential security advisor, the son of the then President Mr. J. R. Jayewardene.

This unit indulged in a widespread campaigning of terror and mayhem widely arresting, detaining, torturing, and killing young men. In this context, the LTTE, which was very selective in recruiting within its ranks, actively began to launch attacks on the STF quite successfully. The eventual internecine war which erupted between the LTTE and other Tamil political groups for dominance of the Tamil nationalist war led to a large number of young people being killed initially by the non-LTTE groups and later the elimination of non-LTTE groups by the LTTE. This was particularly after the so-called Peace Accord signed by the Indian and Sri Lankan governments as the LTTE opposed the accord and the other militant groups supported it leading to a brutal internal war.

The impact of this internal conflict was particularly brutal in the east. A large number of cadres from among the non-LTTE groups under attack from LTTE were forced to seek protection from the army. Since those episodes in the late 1980's the society has remained largely divided and weary of any involvement in militancy. The co-opting of the non-LTTE groups within the army as auxiliary units who have been largely responsible for operations to identify people sympathetic to the LTTE and to mount operations along with the army has made the people extremely careful in even expressing any opinion.

The military operations of 1990 to recapture the area under the control of the LTTE even after they had abandoned the area, led to thousands being killed by the

army. Entire villages were wiped out during this campaign of mass terror. Community leaders who were involved in Human-rights work and other public interest activities were systematically targeted and eliminated and civic activity became a life-threatening vocation.

All along the trajectory of Tamil nationalist struggle in the east, the population had paid a very heavy price in terms of loss of life and the sense of vulnerability had also been particularly acute. The brutal phase of internal struggle has left a deep scar on the minds of the people. This had, to some extent, made the people deliberately keep away from any political activity. The generation that grew up in the war, which is the present group subjected to the survey, clearly display such an apolitical tendency. They have also experienced the uncertainties of being under the control of the military for considerable periods of time as these areas seesaw between the control of the armed forces or the LTTE.

3. Legitimacy of Armed Struggle

The responses to the question on the legitimacy of violence can be approached from various angles. The two key words are “legitimacy” and “violence.” Violence is never promoted as legitimate. All social norms militate against it, particularly when framed explicitly as a category, even though certain acts, which may be considered as violent by one groups, may not be seen as such by a traditional community. An example is the rural habit of drinking toddy. Further, it was also suggested that the question framed in such a way would necessarily evoke a negative response. The gut response, then is “no.” This perhaps is what happened in the entire case of Sri Lanka. In the north and the east, the situation is further complicated because of the impact on the community.

In the initial stages, the question itself was seen as politically sensitive. Those who administered the question, particularly in the north and east said that they along with the respondents did not feel that any response could be evoked in a purely neutral environment. As mentioned earlier, the overall response would have been in any case negative. But, does that mean that the Tamil people of the north and east have rejected violence as means to an end? The response needs to be interpreted as ambivalent.

If we take the overall figure for the country, 66% have responded that it is not proper. The difference according to gender is a marginal 6%. Across educational level, it vacillates between 59% for grade 1-5 going up to 63% for A/L dipping to 52% for degree-holders and higher category. Again, 41% of those with degree and higher qualifications accept violence as proper. This is consistent with the pattern where universities have been fertile grounds for the rise of militant movements who have chosen armed struggle in Sri Lanka, in the past such as the support for the Peoples Liberation Front in universities such as Peradeniya.

The situation in the Northeast, however, reflects a rather interesting pattern. Except the central province where a high 73% have responded “not proper,” it is the northern and eastern provinces that have topped the list with an identical 69%. Only 26% and 27% respectively for the north and the east have answered that it is legitimate to use violence. Here again, the northern province, which might be seen as the hotbed of separatist violence, has a marginally lower figure. What exactly happens here? Is it, then that Tamil armed militancy has lost its attraction and social base? Is it because of some error in the data and its administration? Or is it because the respondents perceived the questions differently. A little probing below the surface seems to suggest that the reasons are a combination of all these factors.

To explain further, this issue was discussed with a group of university students and some members of the community. The overwhelming opinion was that violence was not legitimate even when it is used as a last resort. But the discussants said that violence can be used, nevertheless, when every other means to achieve a political objective has failed and met with violence. In a situation such as that exists in the north and the east, therefore, there is no question of the issue of “legitimacy.” Violence practised by the state is sustained and its impact hard and brutal on the civil society; there is very little recourse to justice. In such a context, the opinion was that violence can be deployed and *is acceptable even if it is not legitimate*. Clearly, the discussants made a difference between its legitimacy aspect as a philosophical issue and its use as an instrument in particular circumstances. Thus, it can be said that the general attitude is in keeping with the rest of the country, and even more so since, it is experienced in its intensity and brutality.

Secondly, those who use violence as a means, the youth in the armed forces and the militants, are part of the youth population. Yet, they are not part of the survey universe, as a methodological problematic. They do not come into the sampling process leading to a margin of error.

Thirdly, it is inconceivable that Tamil armed militancy can be so successful, sustained and effective without substantial support from the people. The thriving of militants clearly show the wide support they enjoy, even though there is a very heavy risk involved in supporting armed Tamil militancy (confiscation of property). That would also mean that the individuals and the community that supports armed militancy in the face of dire consequences are also likely to deny any link or support and will tend to put up a façade of neutrality.

How could anyone blame the Tamil people for support of militancy when the survey has clearly absolved them of any blame, of course, until the social scientist comes along and exposes their treachery? This, ultimately, seems to be the issue. The response has many dimensions and it gives way to a multitude of interpretations allowing the people a space of survival, in the contest of such a struggle.

Table 2: Opinion of Youth on Struggle Leading to Violence

Province	Proper	Not proper	Other	DK	Total
Western	31.40%	61.80%	3.40%	3.30%	100.00%
Central	21.00%	72.90%	1.90%	4.30%	100.00%
Southern	29.60%	64.30%	3.10%	3.10%	100.00%
Northern	25.60%	68.90%	1.20%	4.30%	100.00%
Eastern	26.40%	68.90%	--	4.70%	100.00%
North-Western	34.40%	60.70%	2.00%	2.90%	100.00%
North-Central	28.30%	63.90%	3.90%	3.90%	100.00%
Uva	52.20%	41.70%	2.20%	3.30%	100.00%
Sabaragamuwa	35.30%	56.30%	2.60%	5.90%	100.00%

It can also be argued that the number of people who “feel” that violence is “proper” is certainly not low. On the average, it is more than 50% of the negative responses. This is quite a substantial percentage. This is clearly so in the Uva, Sabaragamuwa, Northwestern, and Western provinces, while in the Northcentral and southern provinces, it is slightly less than 50% of those who considered violence “not proper.” This general trend is reflected in the figures for the entire country where those who responded violence is “proper” is 31% in comparison with 62.7% of those who considered “not proper.”

It is also interesting to note that highest percentage for legitimacy of violence is from the estate group (34.3%) than the urban and rural groups (31.6% and 30.5% respectively). This is corroborated by the unusually high positive response for violence from the Uva district -52.2% as compared to the 21.0 – 35.3 for the rest

of the districts. This may be a reflection of the mindset of the estate workers. The lack of access to education and employment opportunities combined with the poor living standards may sow the seeds for choosing violence to gain access for better living condition and opportunities, particularly in a situation where the state has done very little and state security agencies have done everything possible to alienate the Tamils living in the hill country.

4. Attitude to Democratic Processes and Civil Systems

This general feeling of vulnerability combined with internal violence and tensions within the community has led to an attitude of being apolitical. The survey also reflects this tendency of a weariness of violence and a greater yearning for peace. This is perhaps reflected in the greater proportion of people answering in the negative for question on the legitimacy of violence. But it also shows the war fatigue that people are beginning to feel, particularly the younger generation.

The policies for any militant group with regard to the east are always a great challenge. This is because of the complicated nature of the east in terms of the economy, landscape, ethnic mix and ecology. For instance, the increasing demand of the Muslims for greater identity and territorial claims within the east has led them to organise themselves politically. Their demand for greater territorial claim for the Muslims within the proposed Tamil nation had led to a thorny problem. This had created fear among the minds of the Tamils who are already threatened by the Sinhala state. Hence, elections have always been an ambivalent issue for the Tamils of the east where if they vote, then they would negate armed struggle and if they don't, then all the seats will be captured by Muslims and Sinhalese leading to political domination in the absence of Tamil representation.

4.1. Elections

The excesses of the armed forces and the pressure of the demand from the Muslims had made people seek refuge in the elections as a temporary space of survival and to maintain their existing means of negotiating territory. Similarly, the Muslims have also been playing a vital role if negotiating with the Tamil minority a clear space of communal co-existence. In this peculiar co-existence, elections have given a much-needed respite. This has meant that despite many flaws, elections have been enthusiastically participated in. Since the war people had regularly participated in elections. This does not mean that elections are a determinant of major processes, but nevertheless it has some impact on their lives particularly in the east.

This is clearly reflected in the question about the “effect vote has on how things are done in this country”, for which the response from the east has been 64.6% which is the sixth highest in the country, while the north comes at the bottom with 34.6%. This latter figure is clearly due to the total absence of any fair reason for elections to be held except when contested, it is by small groups who are aligned to the state and operating in collusion with the army. This unsavoury situation is reflected in the small percentage answering in the affirmative, while the response “makes no difference” is highest in the north with 56.6% reflecting a corresponding frustration which in the case of the east is on par with the rest of the country at 30.2%; it is also almost identical with the national figure of 30.2%. The rate of participation in the electoral processes has been significant in the north and the east since independence due to the political negotiations involving the Tamil population in the Northeast.

The increased participation was in view of the problems on negotiations with the Sri Lankan state. After the 1980s particularly, the internal fissures of contest over

land was between the Tamils and Muslims in the east with the rise of the Muslim demand for a Muslim regional council in the southeastern section of the province on the one hand, and the anxiety over the domination of the Sinhalese with state assistance in Trincomalee were also part of the reason. The recent example of the military ordering the closure of a public market built by the Tamil dominated Trincomalee Municipal Council, since it would adversely affect the Sinhalese traders in the present market, was symptomatic of these ongoing tensions and negotiations. These internal tensions always made elections an eagerly participated democratic activity. Even if one looks at the figure of participation in elections, one can see that the east has a rather impressive record, given the circumstances. Since the situation in the north is a contest between the state and the militants and in the absence of any local internal issues, elections serve very little purpose except the interest of the state in electing the crucial seats in its support. Thus, any argument about the death of the democratic processes in the context of the nationalist war, can be premature.

4.2. Society

A similar phenomenon can be observed where the figures for caste discrimination can be directly correlated to the figures for the question, “Do you consider our society as just?” The national figure for the question is a distressingly low 20.7%. In fact, in the Sinhala dominated western, central, southern, and Northwestern provinces the figures are below twenty percent with 13.9%, 19.4%, 17.9%, and 18.8% respectively. The most positive response has been recorded in the eastern province where 47.9% of the respondents have considered their society as just. This again needs to be viewed relative to the situation. What the respondents meant according to the results of additional qualitative interviews was that in view of the large-scale threat to life and property and the insecurity arising out of state and intra-militant group conflicts, they have a sense of security within their own

community. Thus, it is not simply about being just in a Hegelian sense but in terms of basic physical life security.

One of the significant factors about the societies in general is that the villages, where most of the population are found, except the peninsular Jaffna, feel that they have a secure and reasonable life within their own community. Many people responded that they feel happy within their own community as reported by the interviewers. What they fear is the violence from the state agents and agencies that are external to it.

Most of the areas in the east have been affected by violence. Often, villages have been overwhelmed by the degree of violence. In this context of violence perpetrated from outside, particularly from the state, it is possible that the local communities look inward to sustain themselves and overcome the threat. Thus, in the east the figure is impressively higher in comparison to the rest of the island. This attitude, at best can be described as ambivalent, which is also similar to the attitudes towards political leadership.

On the contrary, the youth in the Sinhala dominated areas have responded with an overwhelming sense of despair. If we look at the numbers of respondents in specific locations, the numbers are rather disturbing. In Colombo 265 out of a total of 344, in Gampaha 219 out of 270, in Galle 129 out of 164, and Anuradhapura 79 out of 119 have responded that their society is not just.

Table 3: Perception of Society as Just

District	Yes	No	Don't Know	Indifferent	Total
Colombo	51	265	22	6	344
%	14.8	77.0	6.4	1.7	100.0
Gampaha	30	219	21	-	270
%	11.1	81.1	7.8	-	100.0
Galle	29	129	3	3	164
%	17.7	78.7	1.8	1.8	100.0
Anuradhapura	35	79	5	-	119
%	29.4	66.4	4.2	-	100.0
Matara	20	102	14	-	136
%	14.7	75.0	10.3	-	100.0
Badulla	29	83	4	2	118
%	24.6	70.3	3.4	1.7	100.0
Kurunegala	47	176	16	1	240
%	19.6	73.3	6.7	0.4	100.0

Again one of the higher figures is for the Central province where 71.3 % of the youth have said that their society is not just. While the more urban provinces have responded negatively due to high rate unemployment among the educated youth and lack of access to political patronage which can secure such rewards, among the more rural provinces, the figures for the central province with a large number of youth from the plantation areas deprived of all avenues of social mobility and livelihood chances, the figures need to be taken seriously.

4.3. Opinion on Political Leadership

The overall negative response to the question “Do you have a high opinion on the present political leaders in the country is a dismal 78.5%. Clearly, this shows the low opinion towards the leadership even though there is a fairly high rate of participation in the polls for the country. Interestingly, a region, which is in war with the state and broadly perceived to be in sympathy with armed militancy, also gives out mixed signals. What is significant is in the context of the overall high percentage of those who have responded that they do not have a high opinion of

the political leadership, the east has responded with the highest percentage of those who had responded that they have a high opinion of the present political leadership. Here again there is uncertainty whether the East is different, while the north compares with some of the highest negative figures for the south.

Here again, it is presumably because of the peculiar situation in the Northeast where the politicians play a crucial role in alleviating the suffering in their day-to-day affairs that is peculiar to the north and east. While, there has been very little meaningful electoral exercise in the north where the MPs are elected by popular vote, it has been more acts of conspiracy and vote rigging by those who enjoy the support of the government in power.

Because of the peculiar situation of the east, politicians have been playing a more stabilising role as a source of ensuring minimal security in the context of state violence. Especially the Muslims in the East have a higher opinion of their politicians. Let us look at the situation more closely.

While, in the south, the politicians respond to demands for development funds, jobs and other forms of patronage politics and voters compete for their share in these factors, the politicians in the Northeast play a very different role, particularly the Tamil politicians. As one politician put it, the Tamil politics in the north and east revolve around the question of a political solution to the Tamil people. Hence, their roles have also transformed according to the vicissitudes of the political situation vis-à-vis the Sri Lankan state and the majority population in general. Today, the Tamil population is at the receiving end of the effects of war. The question of a solution is being decided from the barrel of the gun, by the state on the one side, and the Tamil militants on the other. The politicians play more of a symbolic role of providing the temporary respite to a war-affected population and articulate views mainly in terms of the human-rights situation.

According to the situation, the politicians deal with arrests, detentions, and other security related matters. Recently, the politicians have also been responsible for obtaining jobs and giving small-scale development funds, which are administered by the District Development Committees where the preference of the local MP in terms of the development project is given priority. After the introduction of the decentralised budget, the MP's have been given some authority in deciding the local level needs.

In the context of war where development work is minimal, the state has been keen to prove that it was in control and has attempted to encourage development activities in the so-called "cleared areas." This also facilitates greater visibility to the local MP. In addition, the presence of the Muslims is also a crucial issue in this scenario. Many Muslim MP's have been responsible for obtaining development funds for the war-affected infrastructure in the region. In addition, in view of the hostility of the past Tamil-Muslim violence, and the Muslim demand for some kind of special status within the Northeast, they have also been trying to convey an image of friendliness and support to the Tamil population. Having close links to the state, they also attempt to assist in alleviating the suffering of the Tamil people in terms of arrests, obtaining relief in the case of displacement etc.

This overall role of providing hope and stability to the population is also true of the Sinhalese politicians in the Trincomalee district. The Sinhalese and Muslims in the most affected areas have been able to bring about some stability with the help of the local politicians where in some cases large scale rehabilitation programmes have been implemented such as in Amparai and Trincomalee districts. Ethnic communities have been able to make use of the politicians for the survival of their respective communities in a mixed ethnic environment. The high figure is also compounded by the fact that overall, in terms of ethnicity, the Muslims have expressed a relatively higher opinion on their political leaders. For instance, the

national figures for the Sinhalese, Tamils, and Moors are 18.4%, 21.0%, and 40.2% (with a high opinion on their political leaders) respectively. Clearly, the inter-ethnic view vary considerable even at the national level where the Tamil youth of their leaders with higher opinion than their Sinhalese counterparts. But while the difference between Sinhalese and Tamil youth are only marginal, the figure for the Moors is considerable higher with over 19% lead from the closest which is a very high figure. A similar trend can be seen for the ethnic groups in the east.

4.4. Trust in Judiciary and Police

The nationalist violence, the ensuing crisis of the state, and the response of the state to the nationalist violence through excessive and brutal force has been designed to drive people to a state of despondence. This sustained pressure and terror on the populace is expected to make them war weary and wean them away from violence. This is a standard rule in the practice of counter-insurgency. The shielding of the armed forces from any legal implications subsequently is also part of this strategy. During such campaigns of violence, the people have absolutely no protection from the judiciary due to the special provision under which the security units operate. Violence by agencies directly or indirectly linked to the judiciary will inevitable lead to erosion of trust in the judiciary itself. In the north and the east, most of the acts of killing, torture, and disappearance were by the special units located within the police force. Thus, police as an institution meant for maintaining law and order who are perceived to be an auxiliary unit in the recourse to justice, will inevitably lead to a consequent erosion of trust in the judiciary as well. Thus in the east, only 16.3% have a “great deal of trust” in the judiciary. This also may be because of the inability of the population to differentiate between the judiciary and other law-enforcement agencies as a consequence to low rate of literacy. The higher rate of literacy and the fact that the northern social and political culture, which is also intrinsically linked to the

judiciary, may also be responsible for a relatively more positive response from the north with 30.2%. This is significant in comparison for a national figure of 39.2%, where the judiciary is still able to maintain its relative independence and enjoys the respect of the community.

5. Caste Discrimination

In the case of some of the social aspects of the country one can see the difference between the north and the east as above. Caste is one element of this difference. The nationalist liberation war in the Northeast is as much a case of liberation from the oppressive social structure that the Jaffna society has suffered as much as it is a case of struggle against the majoritarian rule. Traditionally, the numerically large upper caste Vellala has also been educationally and economically powerful. Jaffna was also a society that had rigid caste structure. As we saw earlier, the onset of the conflict had led to large migration abroad particularly from among the affluent sections of the society. It is the lower castes and classes that had remained at home and were persecuted by the armed forces. Almost two decades of the conflict had led to far reaching social transformation in the north. The old structures of caste dominance are no more powerful. Yet, the caste consciousness and its effects of discrimination still remains one of the significant factors in the north as the survey data indicates.

For the entire country, the caste as a source of discrimination with 83.5% is the highest in Jaffna, in comparison to the national figure that is around 30%. Only the southern and central provinces have also recorded a higher figure of 39.3% and 38.1% of the youth mentioning caste discrimination. The fact that the figure for the north is more than twice the rate of the highest figure in the south shows the seriousness of the issue of caste consciousness. It also does not reflect well on the two decades of the liberation nature of the Tamil struggle that had apparently

failed considerable to undo the most fundamental mechanism of discrimination within its own society.

6. Migration

In regard to the number of youth being interested in migration, the highest figures can be found for the northern and eastern provinces (the figures are 80.2% and 72.3% respectively in comparison to % between 30% to 45% for all other provinces). Since the infamous 1983 violence migration has become the only avenue for escaping the various forms of violence and oppression by the state and others. Two particular areas have become important in this regard: Middle Eastern migration for employment and movement towards west European and North American cities.

In the consciousness of the Tamil political history, as discussed previously, three broad patterns of migration can be discerned (Thangarajah 1988). The first phase of migration occurred with the introduction of Sinhala as the official language requiring all government servants to study Sinhala made large numbers of professionals and civil servants irrespective of ethnicity to leave the country. It particularly resulted in the migration Tamil bureaucrats. With the introduction of restrictions on education and employment in the 1970s possibilities of education was narrowed for youth (de Silva 1988, Thangarajah, 2002). This saw a substantial migration of the youth segment of the Tamil society to India and the UK. Migration for employment has always been part of the essential condition of Tamil particularly the northern societies.

The third phase began since July 1983. While the first two phases represented the upper-middle and the middle-class, the post-1983 phase represented a much broader spectrum of the Tamil society of the Northeast. The composition of the

group that migrated after 1983 was so broad and diverse that it immediately created tension when it came into contact with the earlier groups, particularly in the United Kingdom (Thangarajah 1988). Migration is usually linked to economic status since it needs substantial investment for air-ticket and other expenses of the preparatory phase, while the first two phase needed such investment, in the third phase after the violence in 1983, when people were allowed to leave as refugees. Those who were economically deprived could also venture out with minimum investment. The continuing persecution of young people, the links already established help to expand this base of migrating workers to the lower classes. So much so, since the 1980s migrating abroad has influenced even some of the deprived sections of society.

The others who are in the lower-rung of the society opted to go to the middle east for employment, often for meagre salaries, only to escape the persecution and the uncertainty. This later led to people leaving further to Western Europe or North America, after having accumulated sufficient capital and greater expectations. Minimally, the absolutely poor such as the fishermen from Mannar, Vanni and Trinco have been leaving for India as refugees. Today, Tamil society has necessarily become truly global in nature. Migration has touched and influenced every aspect of the Tamil society.

7. Employment

The Sri Lankan Tamil society from colonial times have been integrally linked to the state. During the colonial time Tamils were the most loyal servants of the colonial masters. During the period transition to independence until the 1960s Tamils continued to maintains this position. The inhospitable land the absence of other resources made the Tamils of Jaffna made their investment in education and employment. The large network of schools equipped with people for this task. The

Tamil bureaucrats, particularly from the north, were not only employed in Sri Lanka but also as far as Malaysia, Africa, Fiji and other places of the British Raj. Until the state became explicitly Sinhala Buddhist and attempted to restrict ethnic Tamils from employment, the Tamil civil servants were loyal servants of the Sri Lankan state. In later years also, the state has always symbolised long-term security. Most of the youth opt for teaching as their main source of employment. Next comes a clerical post in the state sector.

The northern and eastern provinces have the highest preference for public sector employment with 75 and 72.2% respectively. Preference for public employment remains very strong in the Tamil ethos because of its colonial past despite the persecutory nature of the Sri Lankan state. This latter issue is reflected in the question on the country's major problem by province where the law and order is listed by 28.5% from the east as a problem.

When this issue was discussed they still preferred state employment for different reasons. Having a government job was seen as giving status to an individual and life long security leading to a more secure, even though not necessarily, a prosperous future. The conflict, unpredictability of the situation, restrictions by the military forces, extraction of taxes by the armed groups, restrictions of mobility, shorter duration of business times have all led to minimal interest in private sector and self employment.

Since Tamil nationalists began to pose a challenge to the Sri Lankan state and reduce its effective presence the state had fought back and attempted return with a vengeance. The state had tried to reclaim its presence by reviving the state institutions enabling them to function in north and east as much as possible. In the so-called areas of the military control, those who are employed in the state sector are not only at an advantage in terms of job security, but also mobility within the

area and outside the north and east. More importantly, young people are ensured physical safety and freedom from detention, torture, and death if employed in the government. So ironically, while there is an armed struggle going on to minimise and eliminate the presence of Sri Lankan, ostensibly Sinhala Buddhist state, there is also a greater preference for employment in the state sector.

Conclusion

Youth are necessarily looked upon with a great deal of anxiety in our culture. The two major rebellions among the Sinhalese in the southern part of the country and the Northeast have added to that anxiety. The purveyors of knowledge in Social Sciences have seen enormous potential for intervening in order to “contain” the conflict. Two major issues arise out of this. One is that violence is seen as inherent in the third-world youth. Secondly, the very category of youth itself is problematic within the context of a culture like Sri Lanka where, the concept of the person is not the clearly defined individual with her/his own space of action as broadly perceived in the west, but rather a series of relationships, rights and obligations. But, that is fast changing in the context of the open economy and the influence of globalisation. It is the inherent flux of the society in general during this period of transition that is reflected in the results of the survey.

In that context, this paper has attempted to chart the socio-political history of the predominantly Tamil constituents in the north and east of the country and the Tamils in the hill country plantation areas. The results of the youth survey clearly show the impact of the armed violence and the intensified conflict. The attitude towards the state, possibility for a secure future, potential for democratic space all shows both positive and negative signals. While the survey does not claim to reflect absolutely exact views, it can be treated as an indicator of the potentials and

possibilities of the future of the country and in the perspective of the youth of the country.

The particular situation in the north and east is not encouraging and in view of the long and sustained conflict, it must serve as a warning for policymakers and development activist alike. The yearning for greater interaction between communities, the inherent discrimination that the youth feel in terms of caste and class are very clear. Overall, there is a great disenchantment of the sphere of politics. Resorting to terror and suppression rather than to address the issues will not lead anywhere. The survey needs to be treated as an indicator. More surveys on specific activities, issues and concerns need to be done in view of the results of this survey.

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Violent Youth Conflicts in Sri Lanka: Comparative Results from Jaffna and Hambantota⁶

Markus Mayer

Sri Lanka's past three decades are characterised by insurgencies and violent conflict that have often been instigated by, and have attracted a large number of Sri Lanka's youth population both in the Northeastern and Southwestern parts of the country. Although Sri Lanka is frequently cited as an example for internal ethnic conflict referring to the ongoing armed conflict between the Tamil militant LTTE and the armed forces of the Sri Lankan government, the prevalence of past violent conflicts and unrest in the predominantly Sinhalese South of the country and the recent revival of the JVP, the political organisation that had formerly led two youth unrest in 1971 and the late 1980's in Southern Sri Lanka, raises the question whether violent conflict in Sri Lanka is based on ethnic discrimination alone or on other underlying causes of social discrimination that are directed against youth in general, leading to a radicalisation of the younger generation in Sri Lanka.

It is noteworthy in this regard that all insurgent movements in Sri Lanka resulted from movements directed actively against the State and particularly against state policies that were seen to be exclusionary in nature. This can be taken to indicate a high degree of disillusionment and frustration among Northern and Southern youth emerging from felt experiences of prevailing social, economic and political circumstances. The question arises in how far the structures of discrimination are not based on ethnic lines alone, but rather on a broader discrimination along other lines. Geographical location of certain communities, for instance, can also be

⁶ This paper is a shortened version of a paper prepared and published for the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in Colombo. An earlier version of this paper was presented for the ICES at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban in July 2001.

construed to have an ethnical/ communal implication, leading to current allegations of exclusively ethnic based discrimination as the basis for armed conflict.

The resulting situation of ongoing violent conflict is critical for youth in two aspects. On the one hand youth are often among the main victims of a conflict. The life-chances of those youth living in conflict zones are necessarily limited by the economic and political realities of war, and furthermore all parties involved in a conflict tend to perceive youth as major threat, whether or not individual youth are active participants within the conflict, thereby creating enormous pressures on the security, safety and livelihoods of the youth population in such conflict areas. Young women are especially vulnerable with regard to personal security because of the danger of being sexually harassed or assaulted, whereas young men often face the greater risk in being detained as possible suspects by the security forces.

In the context of violent conflict, youth must also be seen as one of the critical target groups for any initiative for peace building or reduction of ethnic and communal tensions as they can be easily further radicalised if their grievances are not reasonably addressed. Hence, any policy aiming towards rehabilitation of conflict-affected areas and the reconciliation of people living in these areas needs to formulate specific measures to address the younger generation if readiness to joint violent struggle among youth is to be reduced. This is also important in that sense that many radical organisations tend to incorporate ethnic and/or racial components, mainly built on ethnic divides, into their programs and such increasing the danger of promoting violent conflict through increases in ethnic tension and racism. These strategies and processes ultimately serve the state elite to maintain the status quo rather than going towards fundamental changes in the power structures of the political system. Solutions are mainly discussed in the form of separate geographical entities for certain communities rather than thinking

about a more equal system of power sharing for all communities within the nation state.

To underline the hypothesis that at the grass-root level the source of discrimination of Sri Lankan youth is much less an ethnic issue, but rather finds its form in states of deprivation such as limited access to state-distributed resources and an increasing feeling of social injustice and alienation against democratic institutions and the state, some comparative data from qualitative and quantitative results of the National Youth Survey on youth attitudes and opinions in Sri Lanka will be discussed.

The main arguments regarding social discrimination of youth in Sri Lanka are taken from two qualitative studies on youth, the one undertaken in the conflict-affected Jaffna district in the North of Sri Lanka in co-operation with the Jaffna Rehabilitation Project (JRP-GTZ) and the other from youth in Hambantota district, one of the main areas where the youth insurgencies in the past had its origin. The interviews in the North and South followed a semi-structured guideline on a variety of topics and were carried out by undergraduate students from Jaffna University and Colombo University under the guidance of South Asia Institute. All together 24 qualitative interviews were conducted in Jaffna and another 16 in Hambantota.

This paper presents an overview of both qualitative and quantitative measures of aspects pertaining to social discrimination of youth in Sri Lanka. The proportions of interviewed youth who gave specific answers to questions on inter-ethnic relationships and perceptions, interest in other cultures, and the nature of self-identification processes, are briefly explored. The quantitative analysis also provides a background to the actual proportions of behaviour and experiences of

youth in different communities, as in migrating patterns and underlying reasons, as well as the felt needs and problems of youth.

The paper then moves on to a qualitative analysis of the major problems faced by youth in almost every community, the access to employment, and the solutions emphasised by youth in general. The nature of ethnicisation and politicisation of current youth grievances are also explored. Finally, the points uncovered from the analysis of interview material are formulated into some recommendations and interventions for the reduction of social discrimination against youth.

1. Attitudes Towards Other Ethnic Groups Among Youth in Sri Lanka

A first attempt is being made to assess the degree of negative attitudes towards other ethnic communities among Sri Lankan youth, before looking into aspects of their own felt discrimination. A few questions from the National Youth Survey allow some interpretation on this issue, such as friends from other ethnic groups, interest in contact with other cultures, or choice of marriage partner. However, it is important to note that the quantitative data mainly highlights some patterns arising out of the data, but they do not offer much of explanations on the reasons for such patterns. This will be more the focus in the second half of the paper when presenting the qualitative findings from Jaffna and Hambantota.

1.1. Friends from Other Ethnic Groups

The majority of youth interviewed in the National Youth Survey were stating that their friends are only coming from their own ethnic group. Among the Sinhalese youth, only 5% mentioned friends from other ethnic groups, among the Tamil youth 14% and among the Muslim youth 22% have friends from other ethnic groups. It is of interest that by far the highest percentage of friends from other

ethnic groups is mentioned for the Eastern province (17%), which is the most diverse province in terms of ethnic composition. Batticaloa as a district counts the highest (24%) in this regard and Ampara with 15% as the second highest. The Colombo district, again with a more diverse ethnic composition in the capital city, ranks on the third position with 13% of the youth stating that they have friends from other ethnic groups.

All together these figures indicate a very limited interaction between the different ethnic groups among the younger population. The question remains, whether this is due to a lack of interest or even dislike to get in touch with youth from another ethnic background, or whether most of the youth have only very limited opportunities to meet each other. It sounds reasonable to assume that for a large part of the country the communities are living rather segregated.

Even in Colombo, the capital city, the number of youth with friends from other ethnic communities is still fairly small (only 13%). It appears that even the majority of urban youth have very limited interactions with people from other ethnic communities in the city, revealing that the different ethnic groups rather live in a rather homogenous niche, in separate suburbs of the city without much of opportunities for interaction.

However, to get more ideas on how the above patterns could be explained in terms of concrete objections against other ethnic groups or limited opportunities for interaction, it is important to look into the pattern of interest among youth to get in contact with other cultures and the reasons for their dislike.

Around 40% of all respondents expressed an interest in contact with other cultures. Looking at the ethnic distribution 36% of the Sinhalese youth, 69% of the Tamil youth and 46% of the Muslim youth gave this answer. The male-female

distribution is nearly equal. It is noteworthy that around one-third of the Sinhalese youth as well as Tamil youth are interested in each other's culture. Even in Jaffna around 20% of the youth expressed an interest in Sinhalese culture, although the direct exposure is very limited. This was also expressed in the qualitative interviews, when asked about Southern culture.

“The culture of Southern Sri Lanka has not come to Jaffna in a great way. As such I also do not know much about it. But regarding the Sinhalese, they are enjoying lives more happily than the Tamils. I really desire the same. Further as regards the Sinhalese youth compared with the Tamil youth on the average, the majority of the Sinhalese have greater knowledge in music, dance and drama. Here in Jaffna they consider this as not respectable and have the opinion that it may disturb their studies. I like this attitude of the Sinhalese. As regards Colombo I greatly like the aspects regarding development, scientific advantages, progress in communication and urban development. But I hate the lack of idealism among Colombo students. There are spending most of their time viewing TV and cinema, with telephone conversations, or using drugs and drinking alcohol (Jaffna youth; 24 yrs old; college educated, unemployed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

However, although stereotypical, the perceptions were often quite diverse. The negative aspects mentioned are to a large extent more related to an “urbanised/westernised” lifestyles rather than based on any specific religious or cultural factors characteristic for the Sinhalese as such. This is also underlined by the fact that only 3% of the Tamil youth mentioned an interest in Buddhist culture (in comparison to 33% of Tamil youth being interested in Sinhalese culture).

As a reason for no interest in contact with other cultures the most frequent answer given was that the own culture is better (46%), followed by other cultures are unsuitable (16%) and own culture is sufficient (11%). The Sinhalese youth more strongly believed that their own culture is better (49%) than the Tamil youth

(32%) or Muslim youth (24%), who referred more to answers such as “own culture is sufficient” or “other cultures are unsuitable”.

The highest interest in contact with other cultures can be found among the youth from Jaffna (65%) and the Eastern districts (Batticaloa 69%, Trincomalee 70%, Ampara 81%). The lowest interest in other cultures comes from the Sinhalese-dominated dry-zone districts such as Hambantota (23%), Anuradhapura (22%) and Pollunaruwa (21%). It is very noteworthy that within the Tamil-dominated districts the interest in other cultures is the highest. This could be again interpreted in the sense that the East has the most diverse community structure, thus being more interested in the culture of the other communities living in the immediate vicinity.

However, especially in the case of the Jaffna peninsula (located in the northern most part of the Sri Lanka, and is separated by structural and geographical factors), where there is hardly any direct contact with other communities, this interest might also be due to the desire to seek different orientations. The low interest in the South, however, could be again explained in terms of lack of any exposure to other cultures that might reduce active interest, in combination with less need to look into other cultures. However, it is noteworthy that among those from the Hambantota district, who are interested to get in touch with another culture, around 42% are interested in Hindu/ Tamil culture (followed by 21% for Western culture and 16% for Muslim culture).

1.2. Marrying Another Caste/ Another Ethnic Group

Another more personal indicator for racial or ethnic reservations lies in the question whether youth perceive it as a problem to get married to another caste or another ethnic group. The National Youth Survey revealed that more than 60% of

the Sinhalese youth perceive marrying another *caste* not as a problem. The respective numbers for the youth from other ethnic communities are lower: nearly 50% of the Muslim youth do not see it as a problem, and 40% of the Tamil youth believe that marrying another caste is not a problem for them. Marrying someone from another *ethnic group* on the other hand is perceived more problematic: only 40% of the Sinhalese youth saw no problems in such a marriage, followed by nearly 35% of Tamil youth and nearly 30% of Muslim youth with the same attitude.

When it comes to educational level of the respondents, the perception of *caste* as a problem for marriage is the highest among those youth with higher education (nearly 52% expressed this attitude). In regard to marriage of someone from another *ethnic group* the same pattern occurs, although with higher percentages: around 72% of those youth with higher education perceive inter-ethnic marriages as a problem.

In regard to gender only 35% of the male youth perceive marrying another *caste* as a problem, whereas the number for female youth goes up to 47%. In terms of other *ethnic group* 54% of the male think that an inter-ethnic marriage will cause problems, among the female youth the respective percentage is 70%.

When looking at the regional distribution the lowest percentage of youth perceiving *caste* as a problem for marriage is found in the Western province (25%). The far highest percentage comes from the Northern province (nearly 75%) and the Eastern province (68%). The regional distribution in regard to marrying another *ethnic group* is again the lowest in the Western province (52%), although double as high as the respective numbers given for caste as a problem. The highest percentages for marrying another ethnic group as a problem can be found again in the North (80%) and East (74%). Here the numbers do not differ as much as in a

case of caste. This underlines the assumption that caste matters less for the Sinhalese than for the Tamils, whereas ethnicity matters similarly for both communities.

From the data available the picture arises that there is no strong ethnic antagonism among Sri Lankan youth, rather indifference and lack of interaction. Only in regard to marriage preferences, ethnicity matters quite strongly. However, as the financial and decision-taking dependency of unmarried youth on their parents is very high in Sri Lanka (Hettige/ Fernando 2001) the problematic perception of inter-caste or inter-ethnic marriages might be to a large extent due to societal expectations and not necessarily due to any specific objections on behalf of the youth. Nonetheless, especially the small number of friends from other ethnic communities should highlight the need to create more opportunities for Sri Lankan youth for meeting different ethnic communities and to promote appreciation of multi-ethnic heterogeneity among youth.

To assess the incidence of ethnic discrimination in Sri Lanka, a few more questions from the National Youth Survey can be taken into account to look into the youth's perceptions on matters of discrimination. Areas for indications for this purpose can be migration patterns, fulfilment of needs, and problems of youth.

2. Felt Discrimination of Youth in Sri Lanka

2.1. Migration Patterns

An aspect to assess the integration of youth into Sri Lankan society is the *incidence of migration*. Out of the total sample 26% of the Sinhalese youth have a family member who migrated away. 33% from the Tamil respondents and 38% from the Muslim respondents gave the same answer. District-wise the highest

percentage of respondents with a family member migrated away comes from Jaffna with 40% (the national average is around 27%).

Among the migrated Sinhalese *family members* nearly 50% were stated to be youth. Within the Tamil families 55% of the migrants are youth, and within the Muslim families even 63% are youth migrants. The highest incidence of youth migrants comes from the Eastern Province (with nearly 80% of all migrants were named as youth) in comparison to 58% for Jaffna and 50% for the national average. The overall number of female youth among the migrants is slightly higher than for male (54% female compared to 50% male).

In regard to the *destination* it is noteworthy that the Sinhalese community is showing to a greater extent migration within the country (60% internal migration against 40% going abroad), whereas the Tamil community is much more directed towards foreign countries (37% internal, 63% international migration). This trend is further increased when looking at the Muslim community: only 17% migrate internally and 83% internationally. The international migration is highest towards the Middle East: 34% of the Sinhalese, 24% the Tamil and 64% of the Muslim respondents have a family member who migrated to the Middle East.

Western countries are particularly popular among Tamils (nearly 29% in comparison with only 2.3% for Sinhalese and 1.3% for Muslim). This can be quite clearly connected to the possibility for Tamils to seek asylum in these countries, an option less available for the Muslim and Sinhalese communities. Province-wise this pattern is repeated: 52% of family migrants to the West are coming from Jaffna, 23% from the East. The average of family migrants to Western countries among the interviewed youth for all Sri Lanka is only 1.8%.

If asked for the reason of migration the overwhelming answer is employment, with 82% among the Sinhalese, 63% among the Tamils, and 93% among the Muslim respondents. Tamil youth are mentioning more often marriage abroad as a reason for migration (15% in comparison to 10% for the Sinhalese and 4% for the Muslims).

Only among the Tamil youth personal reasons such as security fears, harassment etc. were mentioned as well, although only among 15% of them (in comparison to less than 2% Sinhalese and no responses like this at all for the Muslims). It is noteworthy that overall the access to employment is paramount as the motivational force for migration in the perception of Sri Lankan youth (and not an active perception of any forms of social discrimination).

Table 1: Reason for Migration as %

	Jaffna	East	All Island
Employment	45	81	83
Marriage	19	8.5	10
Education	14	2	5
Insecurity	22	8.5	2

The problem of insecurity and lack of freedom was especially mentioned by youth in Jaffna, the former stronghold of the LTTE, but since 1995 under control of the Sri Lankan army. More than in any other parts of the country youth experience severe restrictions in their movements and day-to-day live due to these circumstances, reflected in the much higher desire for out-migration. The qualitative interviews conducted in Jaffna with a selected number of youth are further underlining this problem.

Being perceived as a “security problem” and potential threat is definitely a dimension most relevant for the youth in Jaffna. Social discrimination is here also based on a certain stigmatisation of youth in an acute conflict situation, where all parties involved in the conflict perceive youth as possible collaborator of the “other side”, thus leading to a victimisation of young people who cannot stay neutral in such a conflict setting.

2.2. Needs and Problems of Youth

Another question from the National Youth Survey that can shed some light on the amount of felt discrimination among youth is the perception of Tamil needs being neglected in Sri Lanka. When asked this question 46% of the total youth sample agreed that the needs of Tamils are being neglected in Sri Lanka (with 53% disagreeing and only 1% who do not know).

The majority of youth who agree with this statement is coming from the Tamil community: nearly 84% of them feel that their needs are being neglected. However, among the other main communities nearly 56% of the Muslim youth and around 37% of the Sinhalese youth also do agree on this.

Additionally it was also asked who represents the interest of the different ethnic communities. It is important to note that the majority of youth perceive politicians from their ethnic communities as the main stakeholders to represent the interests of the respective groups, whereas the state as such doesn't count much in this regard. This makes it very clear that the youth do not perceive the political institutions, but individual political actors to be responsible for the safeguarding of their interests.

Table 2: Who Represents Interests of the Different Ethnic Communities? (%)

Sinhala Interests	%	Tamil Interests	%	Muslim Interests	%
Sinhalese Politicians	36.8	Tamil Politicians	37.5	Muslim Politicians	42.9
State	7.9	State	8.1	State	8.1
Clergy:	14.1	Clergy	3.5	Clergy	6
Armed Forces	1	LTTE	13.7	Muslim Groups	1.6
Others	6.9	Others	3.6	Others	4.1
Don't Know	13.8	Don't Know	22.5	Don't Know	26.8
No One	19.5	No One	11.1	No One	10.5

To better understand the kind of needs and interests the young people might have had in mind when answering the above questions, it is useful to look into the question of main problems the youth are facing in their respective areas. The overwhelming majority of all youth in Sri Lanka mentioned unemployment as the most serious problem youth are facing. Around 80% of all respondents gave this answer. All other problems mentioned counted for only less than 5%, with the exception of security problems (arrest, no law and order) mentioned in the North with 28% and East with 22%.

However, the problem of unemployment is still ranking higher also in the North with 53% and East with 70%. Again it is noteworthy that in the self-perception of youth ethnic dimension of their felt problems are comparatively rarely mentioned. Even youth in Jaffna share to a great extent the grievances of their Southern counterparts.

When asked for the second important problem 21% of the youth mentioned poverty/ economic problems of their families, and another 10% pointed towards lack of educational opportunities as well as unemployment (10%). All other problems mentioned were below 10% of respondents with the exception of the

North and East, were again the security problem counts very high with 33% of youth in the North and 51% in the East seeing this a problem for them.

Asked whether anyone extends any help to the youth for solving their problems, nearly 80% of all respondents answered this question in the negative. In terms of social integration this indicates a very limited trust of the youth in either institutions or family. Those 20% who answered the question in the positive were mentioning mainly politicians (in nearly all cases this was supposed to be a Member of Parliament). The next common groups mentioned are NGO's, local official and religious institutions. Parents were mentioned only rarely (around 5%) as a source of help to solve youth problems.

This trend is even stronger when looking to the answer, who should help the youth with their problems. The perceived importance of politicians becomes even stronger (44%), whereas the importance of all other institutions or organisations declines in the perception of the youth.

Table 3: Help in Problem-solving as %

	Who Helps Solving Problems?	Who Should Help?
Politicians/ MP's	30.4	44.2
NGO's	24.7	19.6
Local Officials	15.1	9.6
Religious Institutions	14.2	5.2
Parents	5.1	3.9
Others	10.5	9.1
No One	-	8.4

The quantitative data indicates very clearly that unemployment is perceived as the main problem young people are facing, and that access to employment is the main line along which youth do experience forms of discrimination. The data also indicates a lack of civil society involvement of youth when looking for assistance

in their felt needs and problems and a very strong dependency on politicians. These two aspects, the importance of employment and perceptions of the political system will be analysed in more detail for the youth in Jaffna, drawing from the finding of the qualitative interviews of the National Youth Survey. As mentioned earlier, some comparative data from similar qualitative case studies on youth from the Hambantota district will be incorporated into the analysis as well.

3. Youth Discrimination and Access to Employment

Almost all youth interviewed in the survey in Jaffna identified unemployment as being a major problem for youth. Both females and males stated that they felt under much external and internal pressure to fulfil their traditional task of supporting the family in times of economic hardship. Especially for young men, an appropriate job was closely connected to the social status and social integration of men into the society, especially if that was a government job. Many youth expressed frustration and anger at the state of being unemployed themselves and at unemployed youth in general, deploring themselves as being dependent on their families. Most of the youth saw unemployment as being a problem caused by the socio-political situation in the country, and many were of the opinion that the government should be instrumental in resolving the issue by ensuring that there were enough employment opportunities for all.

“The solution for (unemployment) is in the hands of the government...the government should give employment opportunities to youth.” (Jaffna youth; 29 yrs old; college educated; private sector employment; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Perhaps bolstering the view that the government should provide the youth with employment was the strong social status and desire to get employed within the government for a number of reasons. Since getting employed in the government

ensured a permanent job and income, males found it easier to get married because their eligibility increased once the government employed them. Many were of the view that options for youth employment were limited by the desire for permanency in jobs, the social benefits of getting a government job, and the accompanying belief that the government should provide them with jobs.

A number of the youth stated that youth should be willing to accept and turn to profitable vocations and self-employment opportunities, as options in the government were limited. However, given the strong social rewards associated with government jobs, it is likely that many young people are being deterred from becoming committed to self- and private sector employment.

“Today’s youth’s ambitions for a government job and the unwilling temperament to turn to other profitable vocations are the causes of their unemployment. They look upon the government to provide them with jobs.” (Jaffna youth; 28 yrs old; secondary education; self-employed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

“There is a saying that even if one supervises a poultry farm, it must be a government poultry farm. The attraction of the government is that even after retirement, the government pays a pension. I think it is better to find your own self-employment. But our society does not respect the educated people who are not employed in the government sector.” (Jaffna youth; 22 yrs old; primary education; private sector employment; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Sinhalese respondents from the South shared this perception about the lack of social status outside the government sector as well. Especially in regard to their eligibility to get married many youth in the South expressed their sceptics about self-employment.

“Sri Lankan culture is such that it does not view self-employment as employment. It should not be like that. In marriage the male is required to have a stable job in the public or private sector; self-employment

does not count very much to people” (Hambantota youth; 22 yrs old; A/L education; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Additionally, there was a strong negative reaction to youth who remain unemployed after having completed their education. Education was often the result of a number of sacrifices and hard work on the part of the parents, and youth who were unable to find employment following education were sometimes seen as ungrateful and wasteful in society. According to the youth perceptions, the general social disapproval and the family disappointment became even more pronounced, if after tertiary education, youth were still unable to find employment.

This situation was similar described by the interviewed youth in Jaffna as well as in Hambantota. Unfortunately, within the current economic and political milieu it is the case that a large number of youth remain unemployed in Jaffna as well as in remote rural areas such as Hambantota, and thus stigmatised within their society. Compounding this problem of stigmatisation of the unemployed is the negative stereotype and pessimistic outlook on the future of those who remain unemployed. While some of those who correlated unemployment with destructive lifestyles saw unemployment as the causative factor for youth to engage in anti-social behaviour, many simply associated negative characteristics with being unemployed.

“Unemployment leads youth to some bad habits such as drinking, drug addiction, crime and delinquency.” (Jaffna youth; 29 yrs old; college educated; private sector employment; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

“The future is very bleak for many youths and subject to frustration. As a result they are losing themselves mentally and leading an aimless life.” (Jaffna youth; 26 yrs old; university education; private sector employment; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Interestingly, the Sinhalese youth in the Southern Hambantota district are expressing very similar pessimistic thoughts about the fulfilment of their life

visions and proper integration into society. More than the youth in Jaffna they perceive the society as such as being hostile towards them, despite their education and service they are willing to render to society. On the one hand they also feel neglected regarding access to proper life chances, and on the other hand being stigmatised with negative images because of their unemployment status. In the case of the Southern youth this perception leads to even stronger arguments among the respondents in terms of consequences, namely the rise of anti-systemic tendencies expressed in the expectations that violent movements will come up again due to this situation. It is interesting that young women were often more outspoken on such issues although they are and have been considered as not active members of any anti-systemic groups in the South.

“Youth problems have increased, especially they are facing unemployment problems. People do not respect youth when they are wondering around without having anything to do. Thus, youth in my village are depressed about their situation” (Hambantota youth; 19 yrs old; O/L; Male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Youth do a service to society especially before marriage. But society doesn't render much of a service to them and their ideas are not much taken notice of. Youth are viewed as rebellious troublemakers. It is because parents, teachers and politicians stay away from their duties that the capabilities of youth cannot be realised. (Hambantota youth; 24 yrs old; 2nd year University student; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

The present society is not useful for youth. The majority of people are youth and without them how would the society develop to this extent? From building the foundation of a house up to crafting planes and ships, all is done by youth. The strength of old people is weakening. But what do youth get from society, do they get a reasonable salary? Not even educated brothers have jobs! When youth are shouting against these injustices they are called terrorists. Due to the lack of respect they get, they get indeed involved in terrorist movements (Hambantota youth; 18 yrs old; O/L; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

A factor that was often mentioned as demoralising and demeaning to many of the youth was their perception of unjust attitudes and practices within the hiring of people for particular jobs, both within and without the government. While most would prefer and accept hiring practices based on merit and competence, many felt that jobs were usually filled through political affiliations.

This has led to a great sense of injustice and helplessness towards the system among the youth. The interviewed youth expressed a strong desire to gain jobs and employment through what was described as ‘honest means’ of qualification and capacity. That people were often not given jobs that adequately reflected their qualifications and skills created feelings of anger and resentment not only in Jaffna, but also in Hambantota.

“Here youth are supporting politicians. After that they demand jobs. This happens because most of the jobs are under manipulation of the government. Correctly people should be appointed through assessment tests. Now people without any educational qualifications are sitting in high positions and spoiling the institutions.” (Hambantota youth; 20 yrs old; O/L; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

“If a young person needs a job today, he or she has to go after a politician. People have been accustomed in a way that they are shamelessly willing to do something like that. The fact that they have been either deprived of employment or that they are largely underemployed, aggravate this situation. When youth see social injustice, they tend revolt. The LTTE, the JVP and the riots in the universities are revolutions against not only ideology but also the political system itself.” (Hambantota youth; 23 yrs old; 3rd year undergraduate; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

It is important to note that the perceived discrimination in regard to employment is not restricted to the government sector alone, but also to the private sector. The quantitative data from the National Youth indicates that out of the total sample 54% of the youth feel that the private sector discriminates as well (with 42%

saying that the private sector doesn't discriminate and 4% who do not know). The Northern province shows the highest percentage of youth perceiving private sector discrimination (75% of all the youth in Jaffna), whereas the Southern province is closer to the national average with 59% stating that the private sector discriminates in the access to employment.

However, looking into the (perceived) reason of the youth for this discrimination on behalf of the private sector, politicisation of the employment market becomes very obvious here as well. The majority of youth in the South and the North see the entry into the private sector equally manipulated by politicians as the government sector.

Table 4: Basis of Private Sector Discrimination as %

	All Island	Northern Province	Southern Province
Favouritism/ Known to Political Groups	62.2	83.3	63.1
Discrimination on Low Income Groups	19.7	-	22.2
Discrimination on Race	4.6	10.0	1.3
Discrimination on Religion	0.8	-	0.4
Others (Mainly Caste-based)	12.7	10.7	12.9

4. Politics of Youth Discrimination in Sri Lanka

Youth discrimination in regard to a limited access to a satisfying livelihood is mainly confined to political interference and lack of civil society institutions or organisations approachable for youth to seek support. Youth rather experience a strong dependency on politicians in Sri Lanka. To understand the consequences of

this situation better, the opinion of youth on the political system and the institutions representing this system will be discussed in more detail.

4.1. Opinion on the Political System

The youth were also asked about their opinion on the political system of Sri Lanka. This section contained themes on the interest of the youth towards politics and political issues in Sri Lanka. Additionally, their ideas on the current political leaders and the political system of the country, and their suggestions for potential solutions to the armed struggle currently going on between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, were also addressed.

The majority of interviewed youth in Jaffna (two-thirds of those interviewed) explicitly stated that they were not interested in politics. The reasons for the lack of desire for involvement in politics were varied, ranging from fears of danger to personal safety to a strong desire to maintain neutrality and lead a peaceful life. Many of youth that expressed their lack of interest in political issues also mentioned that they strongly disliked talking about or even knowing about political matters.

Of striking importance was the almost universal expression of a deep sense of disillusionment and disgust with the current political systems and processes of the country and especially politicians, which contributed almost directly to the desire to stay away from and dissociate from politics and political work. It appears that the youth did not have much faith in contemporary politics. A recurrent belief among those who did not wish to engage in politics and who did not display any interest in politics was that there was no given (safe) space for youth involvement within politics.

"I don't even want to know about or get involved in politics. Politicians are the creators of political crises. They are selfish and brutish." (Jaffna youth; 23 yrs old; primary education; unemployed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

"I am not at all interested in politics and I even do not like to know about it. We have been brought up in a vulgar political situation. Politicians are dictators and spread factionalism and corruption among the people. That only, I can say about them." (Jaffna youth, 22 yrs old; A/L educated; self-employed; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Those who showed an interest in politics were mostly influenced by the belief that politics and politicians had a potentially significant impact on their everyday lives. They opined that interest in politics was essential to maintain control of one's own situation. Bolstering this belief was that perception that one had some capacity to act upon and influence current political trends, which was in contrast to the opinion of those who stated not having any political interest whatsoever. Many of the youth who expressed interest in politics were aware that they were in the minority of youth who were actively interested in political issues.

"I think I must know matters concerning politics. During my childhood, I did not have any interest in it. But during our life as political problems and the struggle arose, this might have been the cause of my interest. The idea that political leaders have made mistakes, and that their bad actions have caused the struggle and rule our lives, has also been the cause of my interest." (Jaffna youth; 23 yrs old; A/L educated; temporary government employee; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

"I have much interest in politics, as I have been much affected by it. I am politically involved but I am afraid that today's youth have been made to forget about it. They think that politics is a big headache to be avoided and the tendency to lose interest in politics is increasing." (Jaffna youth; 25 yrs old; college educated; unemployed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

All youth described current politicians in various negative terms and ascribed different negative characteristics to all politicians in general. Youth unanimously articulated politicians were seen to be working mainly for their own personal interest, despite claims of public service. Politicians were also described in terms and phrases that implied politicians to be non-trustworthy and with selfish motivations for public service. According to the opinions expressed by the youth, politicians were motivated by their own needs and they "speak lies to attract the people during election times" (Jaffna youth, 28 yrs old; O/L educated; self-employed; male). One youth also expressed that the politicians were not acceptable political figures because of their (alleged) backgrounds in armed or militant groups.

"I can say that politicians are opportunists. They promise they will do this and that to the people and then they deceive them. Those who are in the corridors of power are concerned with their position and power and are not at all concerned with the interests of the people. Today politics appear to me as cheating the people and as such is not acceptable." (Jaffna youth; 25 yrs old; university student; unemployed; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

"Those who obtained 10 or 15 votes are the politicians here in Jaffna. It is plain to everybody that they do not have a policy ideal or long-term planning. The politicians here are those who earlier had taken up arms and were from armed groups. Hence they have characteristics of the armed group they came from, and people fear to go near them." (Jaffna youth; 26 yrs old; university education; private sector employee; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

In conjunction with the negative perceptions towards politicians, most of the youth also gave blame to the politicians and the political system for the current armed struggle between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. Whether current or past, political policies were perceived to be the main cause(s) for the ongoing insurgency against the Sri Lankan government in the North. Eighteen of the twenty-four youth interviewed were definitely of the opinion that the current

policies of the government did not allow adequate representation for the Tamils and contained a failure to protect the rights of Tamil (and other minority) groups. Equally, interviewed youth believed that, as a result of implementation of certain policies there was the (intentional) consequence of discrimination against the Tamil people. Almost all of them mentioned "obtaining the (legitimate) rights" for Tamils as a pre-condition to or a necessary product for peace.

"According to myself, the political system of Sri Lanka is the cause for the creation of the ethnic or racial struggle. The political concepts held by the Sinhala ruling party ... standardisation of education for Sinhalese ... the refusal to act during the riots of 1956 and 1983 ... had roused some of the Tamils to take up arms." (Jaffna youth; 29 yrs old; college educated; government employee; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

"If our politicians had done their duties properly, the ethnic problem would not have emerged. A government should be able to fulfil the aspirations of its people, whether they are minorities or majorities, and the opposition party should be stronger in pointing it out if there is a failure to do so. But here the ruling party and the opposition party do not function according to the constitution." (Jaffna youth; 29 yrs old; college educated; private sector employee; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

In addition to the allocation of blame for the creation and maintenance of the armed struggle, the general politics of politicians were also heavily criticised. There was widespread dissatisfaction amongst the interviewed youth in reference to the ways in which politicians' apportioned favours and opportunities for people in a partial manner.

This appeared to be an immediate and topical issue that impacted almost directly on the youth life-chances. Politicians were seen to give priority in opportunities for employment, education and other development-related issues to those people who are supporters of the politicians or of particular parties. This meant that people

were necessarily constrained in their freedom of political choice and that for many people, their life-chances and livelihoods were restricted because of their political decisions. Perhaps most importantly, areas in which politicians direct partial favours are areas where the youth have described themselves to be experiencing main problems. Thus, the lived realities and felt perceptions of the youth meant that politicians (or in some individual cases, particular politicians) were seen to be personally and directly responsible for restrictions on the life-chances for (individual) youth.

"Politicians, by using their influence, take up a partisan attitude in matters concerning education, employment opportunities and development. Their behaviour is unsatisfactory. Due to political influence, even those who commit crimes go free." (Jaffna youth; 23 yrs old; A/L educated; temporary government employee; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

"Both the Tamil and the Sinhalese youth are to be pitied, as a result of politicians cheating us to maintain their personal history and posts. I have no faith in the voting system, democracy or politics in this country." (Jaffna youth; 27 yrs old; university student; unemployed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Such statements were nearly identically given by youth from Hambantota as well, especially in regard to the misuse of power and injustice experienced. It is noteworthy in this context that a number of youth in the South saw the politicians also as the main reason behind the ethnic conflict in the country and even compared their problems with those of the Tamil youth in the North and East.

"Politics is unfair on young people. Politicians associate young people only for personal gains. I would prefer socialism because the entire country would be served equally. The government is sleeping but the people are wide awake and are watching all this." (Hambantota youth; 21 yrs old; Grade 7 educated; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

“Both parties should note that they shouldn’t misuse the elections as a means to attract youth to their parties. If they continue to do this, it will be like putting serpents into sarongs.” (Hambantota youth; 18 yrs old; O/L educated; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

“I hate the talks of politicians on TV! They talk thinking that people are small babies. I’m fed up seeing their fat stomachs. It is TV that has created a dislike for politicians among us. They give false promises and they are lying without any problem.” (Hambantota youth; 24 yrs old; O/L educated; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

“The ethnic conflict came along with the open economy. Now it is possible to import weapons and drugs as a result of the open economy. So, those who are in high authority take advantage while creating problems to innocent Tamil people. Here (in the South) officials and forces are doing the same. We who are the ones in between are in a half dead state with the final breath.” (Hambantota youth; 19 yrs old; O/L educated; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Despite the negative views of many youth towards the current politicians, the ideal of politicians was still given much respect and admiration. For many of the interviewed youth in Jaffna, the role of politician held much significance, and the politician was seen as one who should be a benevolent and just figure. The youth elaborated the characteristics and behaviours of ideal politicians as being those that would "serve the people of the country and lay down a foundation for peace and development" (Jaffna youth, 23 yrs old, A/L educated; temporary government employee).

Genuine desire for service, impartiality, candour and courage were seen to be desirable traits in a politician. In addition, the ability to mingle with people from all classes of society, and the ability to understand and empathise with the needs of people from different classes of society were seen to be particularly attractive. The current (and past) government(s) came under severe criticism for serving the needs only of the higher and elite classes of the country. For this reason, proposals were

put forward for electing presidents from different socio-economic backgrounds to the current politicians.

"If a politician is from a grass-roots level of society, he must definitely work for the development of the people. Otherwise he will feel that he cannot face them again. Today as the real face of the politician is not known to the people, the relationship between people and politicians will be wide." (Jaffna youth; 26 yrs old; university educated; private sector employee; male; Young Voices, National youth Survey, 2000).

"I welcome the period of Premadasa because he was the first person who became the president of the country as someone from the lower strata of society in Sri Lanka. He functioned according to the needs and wishes of the lower class people. But royal rulers fulfil the needs of their same level people only. They do not know what other people want. What I am coming to say is if a person from the middle class level becomes the ruler of the state, the needs of eighty-five percentage of the people will be fulfilled in Sri Lanka." (Jaffna youth; 25 yrs old; university student; unemployed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Regarding their suggestions for potential solutions to the armed struggle currently ongoing in the North and the East of Sri Lanka, more than half of the youth interviewed in Jaffna were of the opinion that a negotiated solution was the only acceptable solution to the struggle. These youth proposed varying forms of government and administration that may provide acceptable political solutions to the current conflict.

However, every one of these proposals supported systems that allowed for self-governance and adequate representation of Tamils within the country's political system. The most popular proposals contained elements of decentralisation and/or devolution of state power. However, it was not clear whether decentralisation or devolution was favoured over the other, rather a general desire to limit the influence of politicians.

"There shouldn't be too many so-called politicians. There should be fewer administrators to rule the country, but with greater representation. The administration should be diversified from the centre to the regions, districts and divisions respectively." (Jaffna youth; 26 yrs old; university student; unemployed; female; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

"(The ethnic problem) can be solved by setting up a federal form of government where the minorities can live with all rights and be free. That too under a North-East linked federal set up." (Jaffna youth; 28 yrs old; A/L educated; self-employed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

While most of the youth interviewed from Jaffna mentioned the word 'rights of Tamils (and other minority communities)' in relation to a negotiated solution, it remains unclear what would constitute 'legitimate rights' in the perception of the interviewed youth. As can be seen by the statement of the one youth below, the interpretations and practice of the actual details of the negotiated solution will dictate whether the proposed solution will be acceptable to those for whom it will become a lived reality. This highlights the issue that any political solution would need to pay meticulous attention to the details of the proposed package and that strategies would need to be evolved to guide the actual implementation and practice of the proposed activities within the negotiated solution. Additionally, special emphasis needs to be given to research and to identify the various meanings attached to different practices. This must necessarily include all people who will be involved in, and affected by the proposed solutions.

"Saying that Jaffna is being industrialised, they are only providing aerated water, clothing and food. The current devolution package is breaking our ethnic identity and aspirations. This is being done to show the world that the Tamils have at last been given all rights. This is a fraud." (Jaffna youth; 26 yrs old; university education; private sector employment; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

From the youth who did not propose negotiated political solutions, half of the interviewed youth believed that political solutions did not have potential for bringing about peace to the country, mainly because of the lack of capability and motivation on the part of the current political leaders and parties. Rather they stressed that the promotion of understanding between the Tamils and the Sinhalese as strategies for creating harmony in the country. As both communities come to understand and accept the toll of the conflict on themselves and each other, there will be greater scope for the restoration of peace.

"What I feel about the current conflict is that our politicians and political parties are using this conflict for their own political purposes. Only solution for this is for everyone to understand each other. Sinhalese should understand the situation of Tamils and Tamils should understand the situation of Sinhalese. We should not get involved with the politicians or the political parties." (Jaffna youth; 26 yrs old; university student; unemployed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

The remainder of youth did not articulate direct suggestions as resolutions to the conflict, rather perceiving the conflict as irresolvable and 'never-ending'. As this represents almost twenty percent of the interviewed youth, this is a significant proportion who does not believe that the potential for peace exists in the country. However, the majority of the youth continue to have faith in the belief that an end to the conflict can be brought about by concerted efforts of the people and the politicians of the country, if particular conditions are fulfilled.

4.2. Perceptions of Local Institutions

Along with their opinions on the politics of Sri Lanka, the interviewed youth in Jaffna were also asked about their perceptions and experiences of the existing local institutions. Local institutions as such were not defined within the framework of the question, however, almost all youth interpreted local institutions as grass-

root level governmental and non-governmental agencies/organisations, including councils, committees and religious institutions. The institutions mentioned included village councils, trade unions, sports and society clubs, religious committees, locally organised societies and associations, community centres, and a variety of local non-governmental organisations.

Approximately two-thirds of the interviewed youth in Jaffna were actively involved with or maintained some connections with local institutions, while the remainder of youth mentioned that they had no connections or involvement. Exactly half of the females stated that they did not have any connections with local institutions while the figure was relatively lower for males.

There were a number of organisations in Jaffna that were seen to be particularly active in regards to the interests and needs of youth. Institutions that were most frequently mentioned as being of specific concern to youth and that maintained interest in youth matters were the schools, universities and religious institutions of different faiths. The main reasons why the institutions were seen to be active and helpful were the provision of legitimate (non-political) space for youth to get together and engage in various personal and social developmental activities. Religious institutions such as the Young Men's Hindu Association, the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Temple Committee were seen to be relevant for personality development, but also because of its political neutrality. The same can be said for educational facilities. The limited availability of institutions supporting youth interests was similarly felt in the North and South.

"I think that the institutions that are concerned with today's youth are schools and universities. It is due to them that the youth are able to act independently to some extent." (Jaffna youth; 19 yrs old; A/L student; unemployed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

“There are no institutions that support the interest of youth in my village. Only the monk in the village is suitable to help solving youth problems because he doesn’t belong to a political party.” (Hambantota youth; 27 yrs old; A/L educated; male; Young voices, National Youth survey, 2000).

However, a number of youth also declared the local institutions to be non-functional, and inefficient, and levelled severe criticism at the existing institutions. Among these, village councils, trade unions and different clubs were the most frequently mentioned. These institutions were described as being self-centred and motivated for economic and financial gains rather than genuine service to those they purport to help.

Especially interviewed youth who were from less educated and/or economically disadvantaged families accused the institutions and organisations of being inefficient and non-constructive. This again is an opinion widely shared by youth from Hambantota as well.

"Our local village societies, trade unions, and clubs are worthless groups. They just hang the name-boards and advertise their names only. They don't do a single proper work." (Jaffna youth; 23 yrs old; primary education; unemployed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

“More than 100 NGO’s have come to our village; they come and do something useless and leave. Most of them donate spectacles or provide some facilities for fishery. They all say that commonly work is being done. Only their big shots gain commonly.” (Hambantota youth; 27 yrs old; A/L educated; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

"The local government institutions, village institutions and clubs are giving facilities to some particular people or groups. It is high time they should change for the better. They are set up with the aim of serving the people but they have failed in their purpose." (Jaffna youth; 28 yrs old; O/L educated; self-employed; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

*“The benefits of development are spread according to politics.”
(Hambantota youth; 23 yrs old; O/L educated; female; Young Voices,
National Youth Survey, 2000).*

Additionally, the interviewed youth in Jaffna also stressed that local institutions maintained class/caste differences through the organisational structure and ethos, especially the continuance of power differentials between the beneficiaries and the service providers. Youth stated that the service providers of local institutions could not access, and could not empathise with, the needs of the people from disadvantaged backgrounds because of the existing class differences.

The perceived class gap between the beneficiaries and the service providers could be a contributory factor for youth from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to view local organisations as ineffective and unhelpful. A further explanation given was the security policies that encouraged NGOs and other organised events for youth to be viewed as a cover-up for LTTE activities.

"Organisations that are functioning today are elitist and they are unable to identify the needs of the people. The gap that exists between the educated upper class elite and the people of the lower classes is maintained through these clubs." (Jaffna youth; 26 yrs old; university education; private sector employee; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

"Many local NGOs are not functioning today. Even if the government takes steps to activate them, they are unable to function because people are afraid to assemble and discuss matters. Army might suspect that it may be a cover for LTTE activists." (Jaffna youth; 26 yrs old; university education; private sector employee; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

In the case of youth from the South the perception of unequal access to development benefits is even more connected to the political influence that is even

overlapping traditional stratification based on class on caste, replacing them to a certain extent with political affiliations.

“If one can call the ruling PA party a caste possibly a caste could be benefiting more from the country's development activities (...). So there is a problem in Sri Lanka about unequal distribution of resources. At one level the resources are divided up according to the political party that is in power. When a successive government takes over, immediately the workers in the opposition lose their jobs and the ruling party supporters replace them. The Gramasevaka decides who gets the monthly Samurdhi payment. He helps those who help him.” (Hambantota youth; 18 yrs old; O/L educated; male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

5. Conclusion

The overall picture arising from the interviews with youth in Jaffna as well as in Hambantota revealed that youth are getting increasingly marginalised by society, one of the main causes being the lack of spaces for constructive engagement within the community, such as employment or social service oriented activities. As an increasing number of youth remain unemployed and are perceived as non-constructive, existing negative perceptions and stereotypes of youth strengthen within society. In the North as well as in the South this is also connected with the perception of youth as rebellious troublemakers, prone to join violent, anti-systemic movements. This perception of youth in derogatory terms by society contributes to a number of negative experiences for youth, thus alienating them further from mainstream society.

Increasing negative perceptions of youth lead to the increasing marginalisation of youth from society. Rather than seeing youth as members of the community possessing the potential to contribute meaningfully to community development,

people within the community tend to see youth as a problematic human developmental phase and therefore as one to be excluded from participation in community processes and events. Both negative experiences for youth and the specific exclusion of youth lead to widening the gap between youth and other community sub-groups, ultimately contributing to the social discrimination of youth.

Limited employment opportunities impose serious drawbacks on chances of getting married for the majority of youth living in conflict situations. Given that consultations during the National Youth Survey reveal that the main cultural marker for the end of youth (notwithstanding a particular age limit) is marriage, under current circumstances youth are required to remain for an indefinite period of time in transition to adulthood. Youth unanimously agreed that much emotional and psychological stress resulted from this denial of attaining adulthood status. Adulthood confers accepted and recognised competence within the community and, with it, autonomy and participation in decision-making at family and community levels.

Such a disruption exacts enormous pressures on individuals and on society as a whole. Not only is the society then responsible for the socio-economic upkeep of these youth, but also the society is denied the constructive resources associated with having youthful members in the community. Additionally, the individual youth have to delay the fulfilment of their life visions and ideals, and as a result of dependence on kin for financial support, a number of their (constructive) activities and energies have the potential to be curtailed. Their restricted efficacy to act upon felt grievances creates torsion in an already tense situation. Youth feel increasingly frustrated in, and alienated from their community.

The interviews show that Northern and Southern youth have similar grievances and common experiences in relation to their perceived and actual life chances and to the processes of social integration (and gaining adulthood status). The agitation of youth against this existing gap has been interpreted in many ways; one of which that is easily formulated is that of ethnic domination and discrimination. While it is inarguable that ethnic tensions do exist, and that these have been exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, it is impossible also to ignore the very real and felt concern of youth from two different communities (Tamil and Sinhalese), who appear to have similar major concerns. In such a case, reducing the potential of violent conflict simply to ethnic discrimination belies the complexities of social discrimination and the very real lack of adequate employment and livelihoods of youth both

Social integration of youth should be seen both as a process and a state where youth (along with the defining characteristics ascribed to youth within society) are accepted and where youth play a significant role in the functioning of community. Analysing the current situation of youth and the routes to being accepted in community, it is possible to identify various strategies that can be employed to enhance the status or position of youth in society, and also to facilitate youth transitions to adulthood. Currently, two venues are clearly established as markers of adulthood; the civil status of marriage, and a pre-determined age limit beyond which persons clearly cannot be defined as youth. It is unclear whether employment *per se* is directly contributory to social and economic integration of youth. Rather, it is clear that certain types of employment and social service oriented activities served as measures of constructive engagement for youth.

One of the most serious aspects of youth discrimination is the politicisation of civil-society structures at all levels in Sri Lanka and the resulting dependency from politicians. This results in a strong feeling of social injustice on behalf of the youth

and must be seen as a major reason behind anger and frustration among youth not only in the North, but also in the South.

“The education only benefits the rich people. The poor, having spent 7-8 years for a degree have to wait at home requesting a job. No matter how far we study we cannot live a satisfying life in this country. In order for people like me to serve the country and to be appointed for work as we wished to in gaining education, the existing political system has to be wiped out. (...) The point is: when have youth gained their demands easily? Everyone has acquired his or her demands through propagandising or through protesting. But nowadays this also doesn't work; only threatening one's life will work in order to pursue demands and necessities. I also know that violent conflict are not favourable in the event of pursuing one's interests but what are the instances where people succeeded in pursuing their interests without violence? Since so many years there is no positive sign of acquiring our needs. Therefore, one has to take violent ways even reluctantly” (Hambantota youth; 27 yrs old; A/L; Male; Young Voices, National Youth Survey, 2000).

Although Sri Lanka is often referred to as a development model, providing welfare and other social services to a large number of the population, the political system in which the distribution of social and economic opportunities is embedded, has led to a situation of widespread feeling of social injustice and felt discrimination, especially among the younger population. In order to strengthen their electoral vote base the political elite in Colombo is directing development benefits more and more on ethnic or regional lines, providing services for certain communities with ethnic or regional arguments, but channelling such support mainly into their personal electorates and into the hands of their respective supporters.

The general opinion among youth is such that without the support of a MP there is no scope for any development, hence a structural barrier to enter into an acceptable and desired position in life. This favouritism and denial of access to resources to other groups can easily be instrumental for the power holders to disguise matters such as lack of democracy, equal opportunities, etc. and to turn

the grievances towards ethnic or communal discrimination where people can easily steered towards.

Consequently, the foremost task for the politicians in power must be to promote an unpoliticised civil society, to get especially young people involved in local development activities as a means to strengthen their participation in society, and to promote equal opportunities for youth from different background (whether caste, class, regional, or race based), in ways that promote and fulfil economic and social rights as well.

With regard to employment, a concerted effort should be made to change social attitudes of both youth and non-youth towards self-employment and private sector employment, thereby enhancing the social standing of self-employed youth and those employed in the private sector. Additionally, communities can also be encouraged to support self-employment ventures of youth. The more integrated is a project or employment scheme into the fabric of community, with considerable benefits for members other than the direct beneficiaries of employment, the more likely that community members support and protect the scheme. Self-employment schemes can be made more secure by establishing safeguards against income instability and by providing long-term social security.

Additionally, projects implemented in conflict-affected areas can make a special effort to include components that create opportunities for youth to articulate their needs, and to fulfil their aspirations without resorting to violent means. Indeed, development projects were already appreciated by the youth interviewed as providing services that enabled youth to express and share experiences and grievances. However, there is a need to render these spaces inclusive of and accessible to youth from all socio-economic and ethnic-cultural backgrounds. The creation and institutionalisation of safe, legitimate, and non-violent means for

expression and articulation of their felt needs may be of much significance in the overall reduction of violent conflict in Sri Lanka.

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ANNEX

National Youth Survey Sri Lanka

Part 1: Personal questions

1.) Basically what type of activities you are involved at the moment?

- 1 permanent employed
- 2 casual employed
- 3 unemployed/ seeking job
- 4 schooling/ studying
- 5 unable to work
- 6 domestic work
- 7 others

2.) Up to what age would you consider a person as a youth?

3.) Are you dependent on others (*such as parents, relatives, friends*) for your basic material needs (e.g. food, clothes)?

- 1 yes/ 2 only partly/ 3 no
- (*if dependent*): Please specify, on whom

4.) Do you play any role in decision-making in your family?

(*question should be answered whether living together with the family or not*)

- 1 yes/ 2 no

5.) In general, would you describe your life these days as:

- 1 very happy
- 2 fairly happy
- 3 unhappy
- 4 not sure

6.) How do you see the situation of the country at the moment?

- 1 good/ 2 bad

7.) How do you see the future situation of the country?

- 1 getting better
- 2 getting worse
- 3 stay the same

8.) Some people have a role model such as actors, sport-stars, politicians or family members. How about you? Is there anybody whom you see as a role-model for yourself? (Please name)

Part 2: Youth and Culture

9.) Who is your favorite singer (male and female)?

Male singer: _____

Female singer: _____

10.) Who is your favorite actor and actress?

Actor: _____

Actress: _____

11.) What is your favorite book?

12.) What is your favorite magazine?

13.) What is your favorite newspaper?

14.) Which films do you like to see most?

1 Sinhala films

2 Tamil films

3 Hindi films

4 Western films

5 No particular preference

15.) What are the languages you can speak (please prompt)?

0 Sinhala *very good/ good/ poor/ not at all*

0 Tamil *very good/ good/ poor/ not at all*

0 English *very good/ good/ poor/ not at all*

0 Other language (please specify) *very good/ good/ poor/ not at all*

16.) What are the languages you can write? ➡ (same as question 15)

17.) Which of these languages should be the official language (or languages)?

➡ Why?

18.) Do your close friends belong to your own ethnic group or do you have friends from other ethnic groups?

1 yes/ 2 no

(if yes please tick) 0 Sinhala friends

0 Tamil friends

0 Muslim friends

0 from other ethnic groups

19.) With whom do you mostly spend your day?

1 family members

2 neighbors

3 peers and co-workers

- 4 relatives
- 5 friends
- 6 others (*please specify*)

20) I would now like to ask you some questions about marriage. Are you planning to get married in the near future? 1 yes 2 no)

21.) Do you already know your future partner?

- 1 yes 2 no

22) What kind of marriage will you prefer?

- 1 Arranged marriage
- 2 Love marriage
- 3 Living together without marriage
- 4 Do not know

23.) Do you think your parents would agree in case of love marriage or living together?

- 1 yes 2 no

24.) If they disagree would you still go for it?

- 1 yes 2 no
- 3 cannot say

25.) Would it be a problem for you to get married with a person from (*please prompt*):

- another caste 0 yes 0 no
- another ethnic group 0 yes 0 no
- another religious group 0 yes 0 no

26.) What do you expect from your future husband or wife? I will now mention some possible expectations and would like to know, if you consider them as very important, somewhat important or not important at all for yourself (*please prompt*):

- property (e.g. land, house)
- high income
- good social status
- security in life (e.g. pension)
- good character
- suitable age
- matching horoscope
- physical appearance
- chastity
- others (*specify*)

27.) Do you consider dowry as an essential thing in marriage for yourself?

- 1 yes/ 2 no

28.) There are certain behavior patterns on which people have different opinions. Do you object or do you not object those behavior patterns (please prompt):

- Divorce *(object/not object)*
- Homosexuality *(object/not object)*
- Premarital sexual relationships *(object/not object)*
- Abortions *(object/not object)*
- Prostitution *(object/not object)*
- Use of drugs like ganja *(object/not object)*

29.) Do you consider yourself as a religious person?

- 1 yes 2 no

30.) Do you participate in any religious activities, e.g. going to the temple, praying etc.?

- 1 yes 2 no

31.) Are you happy with the conduct and behavior of local religious leaders?

- 1 yes 2 no

32.) Are you interested to get in touch with other cultures?

- 1 yes → *(if yes)* specify the most important culture
2 no → *(if no)* give the reasons

33.) What is your opinion on Western culture? Do you think Western culture is a good thing or do you think Western culture is a bad thing?

- 1 good/ 2 bad
 → What are the good qualities? - What are the bad qualities?

34.) What is your opinion: do men and women have the same rights and opportunities in Sri Lankan society?

- 1 yes 2 no

35.) Would you like to change this situation (in regard to the rights of women)?

- 1 yes 2 no

36.) Some people say that most adults don't care about the future of youth. Do you agree or disagree?

- 1 agree 2 disagree

37.) Some couples are living together for several years, but some times they will not get married. Do you agree or disagree with such a behavior?

- 1 agree 2 disagree

38.) What would be the favorite region place in Sri Lanka for you to live or settle down? (please name the region or place)

39.) What are you doing in your leisure time?

40.) How much do you like to engage in the following leisure activities? (please prompt)

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | Sports | <i>(very much/ somewhat/ not at all/ don't know)</i> |
| 2 | Stage-dramas | <i>(very much/ somewhat/ not at all/ don't know)</i> |
| 3 | Cinema | <i>(very much/ somewhat/ not at all/ don't know)</i> |
| 4 | Music | <i>(very much/ somewhat/ not at all/ don't know)</i> |
| 5 | Reading | <i>(very much/ somewhat/ not at all/ don't know)</i> |
| 6 | TV/ Teledramas/ Video | <i>(very much/ somewhat/ not at all/ don't know)</i> |
| 7 | Computer games | <i>(very much/ somewhat/ not at all/ don't know)</i> |
| 8 | Others (specify) | <i>(very much/ somewhat/ not at all/ don't know)</i> |

41.) What kind of media (like newspaper, radio, TV) do you mostly use to get information?

42.) How reliable are the following sources of information? (please prompt)

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Government TV | <i>(very reliable/ reliable/ not reliable)</i> |
| 2 | Private TV | <i>(very reliable/ reliable/ not reliable)</i> |
| 3 | Government radio | <i>(very reliable/ reliable/ not reliable)</i> |
| 4 | Private radio | <i>(very reliable/ reliable/ not reliable)</i> |
| 5 | Government newspaper | <i>(very reliable/ reliable/ not reliable)</i> |
| 6 | Private newspaper | <i>(very reliable/ reliable/ not reliable)</i> |
| 7 | International media (CNN) | <i>(very reliable/ reliable/ not reliable)</i> |
| 8 | Personal talks with friends | <i>(very reliable/ reliable/ not reliable)</i> |

43.) How is your relationship with your father?

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------|---|--------------|---|-----|
| 1 | good/ | 2 | indifferent/ | 3 | bad |
|---|-------|---|--------------|---|-----|

44.) How is your relationship with your mother?

- | | | | | | |
|---|------|---|-------------|---|-----|
| 1 | good | 2 | indifferent | 3 | bad |
|---|------|---|-------------|---|-----|

45.) How is your relationship with your kinsmen?

- | | | | | | |
|---|------|---|-------------|---|-----|
| 1 | good | 2 | indifferent | 3 | bad |
|---|------|---|-------------|---|-----|

46.) How do you identify yourself?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | According to race and religion |
| 2 | As a Sri Lankan |
| 3 | According to both of above |

47.) Are you proud to be a Sri Lankan?

- | | | | |
|---|-----|---|----|
| 1 | yes | 2 | no |
|---|-----|---|----|

Part 3: Youth and Politics

48.) Now let us talk about problems facing the country. What in your opinion are some of the major problems facing the country? (record exactly and in the order mentioned)

49) Now let us talk about the relationship among the people in your village/town/city. Would you say that compared to 5 years ago, the relationship between various groups of people has become more harmonious, remained the same or tensions among these groups have increased?

- 1 more harmonious
- 2 same as before
- 3 tensions have increased

50.) Do you consider our society as just?

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 do not know

51.) Do you think you have the same opportunities in life than other young people of your age?

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 do not know

52.) In your view, is there any person, group or institution which is best suited to resolve the tensions among various groups in your area? (please name)

53.) People hold different opinions about struggle. Some people say that struggle, even when it leads to violence, is a proper method for people to fulfil their demands, while others say that struggle is not a proper method if it leads to violence. How do you feel -- is struggle leading to violence proper or not a proper method for fulfilling peoples' demands?

- 1 proper
- 2 not proper
- 3 other (*specify*)
- 4 don't know

54.) Some people say that the readiness of young people in Sri Lanka for violent struggle has increased over the last 5 years. What do you think? Has it increased or decreased?

- 1 increased
- 2 decreased

55.) How much interest would you say you have in politics and public affairs?

- 1 great deal
- 2 some interest
- 3 no interest at all

56) How much in your opinion do political parties in Sri Lanka help to make government pay attention to the people

- 1 good deal
- 2 somewhat
- 3 not at all

57.) Have you ever contacted any political leader for any need or problem?

- 1 yes
- (*if yes*): For what purpose?
- 2 no

58.) Generally speaking: Do you have a high opinion on the present political leaders in the country?

- 1 yes
- 2 no

59.) Some people say, that politicians in this country are excessively privileged. Do you

- 1 agree
- 2 disagree

60) Did you vote at the last election?

1 yes 2 no 3 not eligible

61.) Now I would like to ask you about the things that were done by the current government. during the last years, that you have liked or disliked. Was there anything that the government did during the last years that you particularly liked?

1 yes 2 no 3 don't know any work done by the government

62.) What was the most positive thing done by the present government?

63) Was there anything this government did during the last 5 years that you did not like?

1 yes 2 no 3 don't know any work done by the government

64.) What was the most negative thing done by the present government?

65.) Do you think your vote has any effect on how things are run in this country or do you think that your vote makes no difference?

1 has an effect 2 has no effect 3 other (*specify*)

66.) Suppose there were no parties and elections were not held -- do you think that the government in this country can be run better?

1 yes 2 no 9 don't know

67.) I will read now some opinions of people and would like to know if you agree or disagree to these opinions: (please prompt)

"What this country needs more than all the laws and talk is a few determined and strong leaders." 1 agree 2 disagree

68.) "It is not desirable to have political parties struggling with each other for power."

1 agree 2 disagree

69.) "It is the responsibility of the government to protect the interests of minority groups."

1 agree 2 disagree

➡ (*if agree*): Which group needs most protection? (*please name*)

70.) Would you say that people we elect by voting generally care about what people like you think, or that they don't care?

1 care 2 don't care 3 don't know

71.) In our country there are different communities living together. Some people say, that the rights of certain communities have been neglected. What do you think? (please prompt)

The needs of Tamils in this country have been neglected. Do you

1 agree/ 2 disagree

72.) The needs of the Sinhala people in this country have been neglected. Do you

1 agree/ 2 disagree

73.) The needs of Muslims in this country have been neglected. Do you

1 agree/ 2 disagree

74.) In your opinion: who represents best the interests of the different communities?

75.) Peoples opinion are divided on the issues of war in the country. Some people say that the government should suppress the conflict through war by any means while others say that this conflict should be resolved by negotiation. What would you say -- should the conflict be suppressed or resolved by negotiation?

1 should be suppressed by war
2 should be resolved through negotiation
3 can't say
4 other (*specify*)

76.) Do you think the government should talk directly to the LTTE to solve the conflict?

1 yes 2 no

77.) Do you think the government should ask for foreign mediation to solve the conflict?

1 yes 2 no

78.) How much trust do you have in the following institutions: great deal, somewhat, not at all?

- Government
- Local government
- Provincial Councils
- Judiciary
- Political Parties
- Government officials
- Elected representatives
- Police
- Military

79.) Who is mainly benefiting from development schemes and programs?

1 Only the to well-to-do
2 Poor and needy also benefited
3 Only those with political connections benefited
4 Other (*specify*)
5 don't know

80.) What is your opinion: how should public resources like land, jobs etc. be distributed: on the base of political patronage or through competition on the base of merit such as educational qualifications, suitability etc. among people?

1 on the base of political patronage 2 on the base of merit

81.) Among the following political ideologies, what is your favorite one?

- 1 Capitalist ideology
- 2 Communist/ socialist ideology
- 3 Any other (please specify)
- 4 Not any ideology

Part 4: Youth and Development

82.) Now let us talk about problems of young people nowadays. Please name the two main problems of youth in your area. (record exactly according to the importance)

83.) According to the area you are living which class do you belong to?

- 1 Middle class
- 2 Working class
- 3 Upper class
- 4 Others (*specify*)
- 5 don't know

84.) Is caste a source of discrimination in your area?

- 1 yes
- 2 no

85) What do you think: Are young people doing enough on their own to overcome their problems?

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 can't say

86.) Do you consider yourself in a position to take own initiatives to improve your life?

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 3 can't say

→ (*if no*): Please give reasons

87.) What do you think is necessary for young people to improve their life chances?
(record according to the importance)

88.) In which regions of Sri Lanka do you think it is most difficult for young people to make a good living?

89.) Is there anyone who is actually helping young people to solve their problems in your area? (*record exactly and in the order mentioned*)

- 1 yes → (*if yes*): Who is helping?
- 2 no

90.) Who do you think is best suited to help young people with their problems?

91.) During the last few years, has your financial situation improved, worsened, or has it stayed the same?

- 1 improved
- 2 worsened
- 3 stayed the same

92.) In whatever financial situation you are placed today, on the whole, are you satisfied with your present financial situation, somewhat satisfied, or not satisfied?

1 satisfied 2 somewhat satisfied 3 not satisfied

93.) Now looking ahead and thinking about the next few years, do you expect that your financial situation will stay about the way it is now, get better, or worse?

1 will stay the same 2 get better 3 get worse

94.) Let us now talk about your education. Do you think that schools in Sri Lanka provide good education?

1 yes 2 no

95.) What are the major problems you have faced with your education? (record according to the importance)

96) Would you like to go for any further education?

1 yes 2 no 3 not sure

➡ (If yes) Please specify: What kind of further education?

97.) How would you describe your personal access to educational facilities such as schools you have or had? (in comparison to other people/ other regions)

1 good 2 satisfactory, but could be improved 3 bad

98) What type of employment you would like to engage in?

➡ if the person is employed please mention if the employment differs

99.) In which sector do you most prefer to have a job?

1 Government sector 2 Private sector 3 Self employment

100.) Do you think that the private sector is discriminating against certain people in recruiting employees?

1 yes 2 no (if yes, why)

101.) If you have the possibility to make a good living with cultivation, would you like to work in agriculture or would you prefer in any case a job not related to agriculture?

1 prefer agriculture 2 prefer non-agriculture 9 don't know

102.) There is a lot of talk these days about environmental problems. What are the most serious environmental problems in your surrounding? (record exactly and in the order mentioned)

103.) Many people these day are migrating to other places. How about you? Are you planning to migrate?

1 yes 2 no

104.) If yes, voluntarily/ not voluntarily? To which place? What are your reasons?

105.) What do you think should be more developed among the following: the rural areas, estates or towns in your vicinity?

106.) What are the main services you are making use of in urban centers? (*record 2 in the order mentioned*)

107.) What kind of service facilities in small towns in your vicinity are you missing? (*record 2 in the order mentioned*)

108.) Do you know any untapped potentials for development in your area? (*yes/no*)
→ (*if yes*): What are the potentials?

109.) Do you take part in any youth organizations in your area? (*yes/no*)
→ (*if yes*): Which one?

110.) Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- One should stay in the country and help to develop it
- One should see one's own advancement even by migrating to another country

Part 5: Youth and Health

111.) Do you smoke *dumpanaya kirima* ("smoking things") now?

1 yes, regularly 2 no 3 occasionally

(*if 1*): How old were you when you began to smoke regularly?

112.) On average how many "smoking things" do you smoke a day?

113.) What type of "smoking things" do you smoke?

114.) On how many days a week do you smoke "smoking things"?

- 1 usually on one day a week (or less)
2 usually on 2 to 4 days a week
3 almost every day
4 every day
5 not smoking

115.) Did you ever smoke "smoking things" regularly in the past?

1 yes 2 no

(*if yes*) When did you stop smoking "smoking things" regularly? (*record the time period*)

116.) If you have a serious personal problem, do you have someone to discuss it with confidence?

1 yes (*if yes*): Who is that person? 2 no

Part 6: Household background information

