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anthropological perspectives on the dynamics of power in contemporary global realities

edited by

BRUCE KAPFERER

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Anthropological Perspectives on the Dynamics of Power in Contemporary Global Realities

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Buddhist cosmological forms and the situation of total terror in Sri Lanka's ethnic civil war

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BRUCE KAPFERER AND ROSHAN DE SILVA-WIJEYERATNE

Introduction

Terrorism is notoriously difficult to define. It is widely used, though not exclusively, to describe violent acts directed against state orders, its agents or institutions and, especially, its citizens. The terrorist's aim is to challenge the authority and sovereignty of the state, often, if not always, to achieve a new basis and structure of political and social order. The concepts of terrorist and terrorism are largely pejorative, indicating persons and organizations acting outside the moral domain of the law supported by states and their embracing international organizations, e.g. the United Nations. While the concepts describe much state action (state terrorism), to which the category of *war crime* is applied, they most often function to distinguish the legitimate violence of the state from the illegitimate violence of those who oppose it. The terms terror and terrorism are tied to a state-affirming discourse, indeed are part of a structure of political dominance that those who would be terrorists are concerned to expose and to resist. For this reason, many of those who are defined as terrorists prefer such terms as rebel, revolutionary, freedom fighter, guerrilla etc. that carry a more widely acceptable moral worth. Indeed, many of yesterday's terrorists are today's state leaders.

The concepts of terrorist and terrorism are relative to context, situation and positioned perspective, rendering them particularly resistant to definition in the abstract. They can merge with numerous other forms of violence that may otherwise be conceived as distinct. The terms terrorist and terrorism are subject to much ambiguity (Hoffman 2006; Laqueur 2001). However, in our opinion the concepts broadly apply to realities, and the agents of such realities, founded on an extreme fear or overriding expectation of life's extinction

and the destruction of its circumstance. Furthermore, the concepts largely refer to attacks that radically disrupt the taken-for-granted understandings underpinning civil and social life and their routines, as well as whoever or whatsoever guarantees these; for example, the institutions of the state and/or socio-cultural values. Terrorist acts and a situation of terrorism often accompany war, but their character, at least for many caught up in them, refuse even the rules or 'laws' of war (Walzer 1997). Terrorists and, especially, the terror and terrorism that may come to define situations of daily existence, defy the conventions and moralities of ordinarily established life, and form intensely liminal moments at the edge of life, virtually spaces of death (Wyschgorod 1990). In our discussion we conceive terrorism as a phenomenon that defines an overall situation of terror in which all – even those who are deemed to be the terrorists or the instigators of terrorism – become determined or subordinated to the radical life-extinguishing uncertainty that is the situation of terror. This is such that ongoing civilian or social and cultural existence, the routine continuity of life, comes under the constant threat of imminent destruction.

The Black Tigers, key instruments of annihilation belonging to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the political organization of the ethnic Tamil minority in resistance against the order of the Sri Lankan state, until their extinction in May 2009, were the epitome of terror and terrorism for the Sinhalese ethnic majority, as for many Tamils. The Black Tigers were a suicide squad and were intensely revered as martyrs who willingly sacrificed themselves to the cause.[1] They were responsible for the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, President Ranasinghe Premadasa of Sri Lanka, and other prominent Sri Lankan politicians and state functionaries (including Tamils who sought more peaceful solutions to issues addressed by the LTTE). To the Sinhalese, the Black Tigers achieved an almost demonic status, being conceived of as virtually invincible in their destructive and disordering capacity. The Black Tigers intensely manifested the absolute threat to Sinhalese routines of life, as well as political and social hegemony, that the LTTE aim of Tamil political independence came to mean for many in the Sinhalese majority. As icons of terror, the mere rumour of the presence of the Black Tigers in civilian space could spark panic and fear, creating a situation of terrorism into which all semblances of routine and everyday order dissolved.

For Tamils in the Jaffna area of the Tamil north of the island – following the defeat and extinguishment of the LTTE and occupation of Tamil territory

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1   Selvadurai and Smith note that the Black Tigers developed the 'most extensive, systematic, use of suicide bombing as a strategic tool before 2003' (2013:547, 555–6).

by the victorious Sri Lanka Army – the figure of the 'grease demon' epitomized Tamil abjection and their subordination within a situation of terror. For a time, Tamil women reported being attacked and possessed by shadowy demonic figures, blackened in grease – a method of camouflage of the Sri Lankan (Sinhalese) special forces.[2]

In both Sinhalese and Tamil cultural and ritual traditions the demonic is the complete obverse of divine hierarchy, and threatens the total disordered fragmentation of existential orders and their coherence achieved under the sign of the divine. Typically, demons (*yakku*) are beings of rapacious and ravenous desire that come from the outside, intruding into the heart of domestic space, family and kinship, throwing them into disarray as well as the cosmic order upon which depend the routines of life in its many different social and political aspects (Kapferer 1983). The victims of demonic attack, in ordinary everyday life, are most often women, largely because they are the regenerative centres of households and embody in themselves the condition of the wider realities (affecting both women and men) that extend from the household into the external world. Demons are thoroughly voracious immoral beings who consume everything in their path. For a period the 'grease demon' was an image of the total transmutation of the Tamil situation into one determined by terror, in which life and its circumstance had become tenuous in the extreme.

We address the matters of terror and terrorism in the context of Sri Lanka's civil war, which lasted from August 1983 to May 2009. The war was initiated by an act of terrorism, the killing of 13 Sri Lanka Army soldiers by the LTTE in Jaffna in July 1983. This militant political organization was under the leadership of Velupillai Thiruvenkadam Prabakharan, a lower-caste son of a minor civil servant. Motivated by a consciousness of the social and political disadvantage of the Tamil ethnic minority (approximately 11–12 per cent, in comparison to 75 per cent of the majority Sinhalese, in a total population of 21

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2   Yasmin Tambiah notes, the Sinhalese armed forces became a 'source of cultural-moral corruption via sexual violence, liquor, pornography, and prostitution' among Tamil women in the north-east (2005: 248). In the aftermath of the war there was a spate of attacks on Tamil and Muslim women. in particular, in the north and east by individuals labelled 'grease *yakas* [demons]'. The lack of a serious response by the security forces, other than to crackdown on protesters in the north and east, especially in Jaffna, confirmed the near-total collapse of trust in law enforcement among Tamils and Muslims, in particular. This phenomenon was symptomatic of the collapse of Tamil familial and social networks that the Sinhalese military occupation precipitated with ever increasing force after 2009 (International Crisis Group 2011:30–1).

million), largely concentrated in the north and east of the island, Prabakharan's militant terrorist organization had made little headway until the Jaffna killings. The terrorist act provoked extensive rioting by the majority ethnic Sinhalese against Tamil civilians, mainly in urban centres (mostly in the capital of Colombo), in which between 400 and 2,000 Tamils died and almost no Sinhalese (Harrison 2003). The progress of the war which then developed was to take many twists and turns, including a period when the LTTE came to control most of the territory in the north and east of the island, where most Tamils lived. For a while, the LTTE created a virtual nation-state of its own, with a small navy and a tiny air force. Indeed, the creation of this virtual state in part heralded the demise of the LTTE – for by becoming spatially static it became vulnerable to attack by the official state. Consequently, the suzerainty of the LTTE and the vision of many Tamils for a separate state came to a devastating end on a tiny isthmus at the north of the island in May 2009. Here, by conservative estimates, upwards of 40,000 trapped Tamil civilians and the last cadres of the LTTE were slaughtered in the final push of the Sri Lanka army.[3]

We discuss the overall situation of terrorism in Sri Lanka as an emergent phenomenon of the civil war. As such, terror came to embrace most communities in the heterogeneous cultural and social world of Sri Lanka. The civil war is conventionally described as an explosive extension of long-simmering tensions between Sinhalese and Tamils, and so it was. But the common description of the war as an ethnic war between the two populations glosses over the facts of its complexity, in which Tamils and Sinhalese were embroiled in terrorist acts, both as perpetrators and victims, in the course of the war, as were members of other communities (e.g. Muslims).[4] There were numerous instances of cross-cutting alliances across different communities, and of violent conflict of a terroristic character within them (e.g. Tamil against Tamil and Sinhalese against Sinhalese) that cannot be reduced to ethnic, cultural or religious differences. The description of these developments as producing a total situation of and for terror in Sri Lanka, attends to a diversity of forces (some of which are not necessarily reducible to the key parties on the ground) producing a lived reality in which terror or its expectation comes to condition life. As in many current contexts of civil war (those in Iraq and

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3   Weiss (2011) and Harrison (2012) both give compelling accounts of the circumstances that led to the final massacre.

4   Too many accounts of Tamil resistance to the state have pathologized the agency of Tamils involved in such resistance (Hettiarachchi 2013:105–21; Samaranayake 2007:171–83). Our analysis of terror resists this and is a further development of earlier work (Kapferer 1998; Kapferer and de Silva-Wijeraratne 2012).

Syria and in the Republic of South Sudan, for instance), the terror perpetrated or participated in by all sides, willingly and unwillingly, can also be sustained, even facilitated, by shifts in the balances of power in the surrounding geo-political environment. Such was certainly the case for Sri Lanka.

Major principles in the formation of Sri Lanka's situation of terror

The situation of terror in Sri Lanka ought to be interpreted as one of a hegemonic crisis centred on the integrity of the sovereignty of the nation-state and the character of its domination by the Sinhalese ethnic majority. Nationalist and populist perspectives on national history and religio-political values (in which Buddhism grounded in folk practice rather than textual doctrine was of pivotal focus), were integral to the violence of the terror that developed.

Our discussion concentrates on two aspects: a) the central ideological discourse of Sinhalese Buddhist history founded in the texts of the great Pali and Sinhala chronicles written by Buddhist monks and relevant to much religious and ritual practice; and b) the structural dynamics of the terror, the violence of which took various directions conditioned on the one hand by the conflicts born of social and political fragmentation and uncertainty regarding sovereignty and, on the other hand (paradoxically, perhaps), by attempted institutional resolutions of these conflicts resulting in an intensification of terror which became critical to state control and sovereignty, as well as to resistance to it.[5]

Our attention to the ideological discourse based in the Buddhist chronicles and folk traditions relates to what we and others regard to be their over-determining role in the overall situation of terror that obtained in Sri Lanka. This was so for those in control of the apparatuses of the Sri Lankan state and for those who resisted it (Tamils, Sinhalese and others). Key events in the Buddhist chronicles and folk traditions assumed a central discursive position in political processes as a consequence of the struggle between fractions of the bourgeoisie (particularly Sinhalese in relation to each other, and in competition with members of other ethnic communities) for control over the executive machinery of the state. The Sinhalese elites, especially, appealed for support from the urban working-class and rural masses on the basis of common identity in ethnicity, religion, caste and the Sinhala language (*swabasha*). Their unity (of elites with the Sinhalese mass) in the imagination (Anderson 1991) of history of Sinhalese nationalism was articulated in repeated reference

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5   By 'institutional' we mean formal peace processes that created the conditions for Sinhalese nationalists to mobilize against the liberal gestures intrinsic to these processes.

to events drawn from the ancient Buddhist chronicles concerning the triumphs and tribulations of a succession of Sinhalese kings. The mythopoeia of this history became widely accepted as truth, and was made relevant to modern politics as a function of its promulgation through state-controlled institutions (educational and archaeological), further enhanced by their everyday significance in religious and ritual practice. We add that the myths of nationalist history achieved virtual existential and passionate intensity, an ontological potency, because of their embedding in everyday religious and ritual practice – these being domains of fertile ontological ground in most cultures and frequently exploited as such in popular movements that come to involve acts of terror.

Ernst Cassirer (1946) argued for the deadly potency of the political myths of Hitler's Third Reich, stating that they could, in effect, equal or exceed the destructive capacity of the material weapons for war. The myths of state history in Sri Lanka came to have a similar force, via the popular passions expressed in a terror born of resistance to the hegemonic order the narratives legitimated, and the reaction to such resistance. Moreover, the logics of the socio-political order integral to the event of the myths made the objects of nationalist ardour become, we suggest, more than mere charters for nationalist action, actually providing the performative impetus for such action and being vital in the orientation to terror and its effects.[6]

The importance of the myths in the production of the terror is not, of course, independent of grounded political and social structural processes that are through and through the effect of recent colonial and post-independence history within an overall context of globalization (Gunasinghe 1996). Indeed, the myths achieve their significance as a function of this history, as indicated by our stress on their use in the dynamics of class interest fuelled by ethnic nationalism. The terror of the civil war was built on such a basis, and we focus specifically on a structural dynamic that at once describes the process of the formation of what we understand as the overall situation of terror in Sri Lanka, and also, in certain senses, accounts for it, as it directed the course of the destruction and fear of the terror.

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6   We thus modify Malinowskian accounts of Sinhalese myth as merely charters for action (Obeyesekere 1990). The logics of the myths came to operate at ideological depths with virtually ontological impetus.

Thus we address the main lines of the terror as developing around what is the dominant ethnic political cleavage[7] between the majority Sinhalese population and the minority Tamils, which became sharper in definition as a function of the war itself (i.e. the social and political opposition between the ethnic categories evolved through the events of the war). The terror and its fluctuating intensities shifted in accordance with the balance of power between the two major populations, defined and made party, willingly, to the unfolding conflict.

Viewing the dynamics of the war as a whole, and in outline, the more the balance of power tipped in favour of the Sri Lankan state and the majority Sinhalese, the more the Tamil side became politically fractured, as was reflected in the formation of rival Tamil resistance groups and violence between them.[8] This was so both in the early stages of the war and at the end, a factor that hastened the war to its tragic conclusion (Selvadurai and Smith 2013: 555). A similar pattern occurred on the Sinhalese side of the ethnic divide when Tamil forces momentarily gained a degree of ascendancy. With the virtual elimination by the LTTE of other Tamil resistance groups by the end of the 1980s, the balance of power shifted in the direction of militant Tamil resistance. Accordingly, socio-political fractures, already apparent within the Sinhalese population and represented in the 1971 Sinhalese youth insurrection of the Maoist Peoples Liberation Front (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, JVP),

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7   The concept of 'ethnic cleavage' or structural cleavage we borrow from Max Gluckman's (1958) seminal discussion of the circumstances of developing apartheid in South Africa of the 1930s. There he described the white/black cleavage as infusing all forms of social relation throughout the socio-political formation. In Gluckman's analysis, the degree to which one or other side of the cleavage is dominant affects the intensity and pattern of conflict on either side. To put it simply, the weaker side of the cleavage experiences a fracturing or fragmentation of its social relations. In the apartheid situation of South Africa the dominance of the whites was a critical factor in producing conflicts and rivalries among Africans that augmented white power. A similar principle operated in Sri Lanka. The fluctuations in power or degree of dominance achieved by either side influenced the opening or closing of conflicts on either side. This can be conceived of as having a feedback effect. For example, when the Tamils under the LTTE began to get the upper hand, this created fissures within the Sinhalese side of the cleavage, having the effect of prolonging the terror and shifting the focus of its intensity.

8   The emergence of the LTTE as the dominant militant Tamil resistance group in the mid 1980s was itself the product of an internecine conflict between numerous Tamil militant factions in the 1970s and early 1980s.

precipitated an increase in Sinhalese violence against the state and its ruling elites.[9]

The unrest within the Sinhalese population was one motivation behind the acceptance by the Sri Lankan government of the intervention of Indian military forces to contain and subdue the now dominant power of the LTTE.[10] This inflamed Sinhalese nationalist passions, which were intensified when the Indian military forces suffered significant losses at the hands of LTTE guerrillas. Further fractures were opened in the Sinhalese population in the face of sometimes stunning LTTE military successes against the armed forces, and devastating LTTE incursions into Sinhalese dominated areas. Terrorist action by the Sinhalese JVP against the Sri Lanka government reached a peak in 1989–90 (Kapferer 1997b; Rampton 2012). This included a second insurrection by the JVP, far more violent than the first in 1971 (Halliday 1971), which was suppressed by state agencies with a great loss of civilian life, the full extent of which remains hidden to this day (Kapferer (1997a:287–97; 1997b).

The major factor tipping the balance of power in favour of the Sri Lankan state was the blocking of supplies to the LTTE, and its proscription as a terrorist organization, as a consequence of the growth of international terrorism, especially following the 9/11 attacks. This, plus significant military assistance to the Sri Lanka government from Pakistan and China – to some extent related to geopolitical shifts in the balance of power, representing a challenge to the authority of Western powers that Sri Lanka was able to exploit – placed severe brakes on the potency of the LTTE (not to mention the losses experienced by the LTTE over the long period of the war, disproportionate to those suffered by the Sri Lankan state).[11] Moreover, the Sri Lanka state re-asserted its sovereign autonomy, which had been weakened by LTTE successes and political conflict between sections of the Sinhalese population.

Total political control, through state machinery, was progressively realized, and was accompanied by an increase of the ideological force of mythic history supportive of Sinhalese hegemony. This corresponded with the coming to

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9   The violence was pronounced in the southern, western and central Sinhalese dominated provinces of the island (Kapferer 1997b).

10   However, at the time the Sri Lanka Army had gained the upper hand and Rajiv Gandhi, the then prime minister of India, was at that time concerned to prevent the potential consequences of the defeat of the LTTE. Sri Lanka's openness to the intervention by India was occasioned by the threat to government from within. Political unrest among Sinhalese in the south had gathered steam with the JVP's resurgence.

11   www.thesundayleader.lk/2010/02/07/hambantota-in-the-great-game-of-the-indian-ocean/; in.reuters.com/article/2009/07/01/idINIndia-40731520090701.

power of President Mahinda Rajapakse and members of his family in 2005. That is, as a function of the dynamics of the war, one powerful fraction of a divided Sinhalese bourgeoisie (with firm ties into the south of the island, for many the heartland of Sinhalese national consciousness) gained virtually absolute command over the machineries of state. As we will develop more concretely below, the net result was that the Tamil side of the ethnic cleavage was radically weakened, and its own internal structures of relations began to fracture (a situation exploited successfully by the Sri Lankan state). The terror of the LTTE's campaign started to include Tamil civilians as well, and the situation of total terror became increasingly focused on the Tamil population alone, and then later, at war's end, expanded to include liberal civil-society actors.

We now detail key aspects of what we have outlined as the two strands of our argument concerning the development of the overall situation of terror in Sri Lanka – the ideological and the socio-political dynamics of events. We particularly focus on the final stages, where the terrible ideological potential of the ancient myths was realized.[12]

The ancient chronicles: some salient logics

The cosmology of the ancient Buddhist state,[13] to which contemporary Sri Lankan Sinhalese leaders imagine themselves to be ideologically co-extensive, presents the violent power on which its order rests as ameliorated by its righteous orientation to the Buddhist ideal of moral virtue.[14] In other words, the human-annihilating force of state power is justified when directed to the foundation of an order premised on Buddhist value. Brought into the service of the interests of a contemporary state, not only do Buddhist values legitimate state violence, they also remove many of the limitations on violence, in that Buddhist morality becomes a force for violent terror rather than a means for its restriction.

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12 For a more complete account, see de Silva-Wijeyeratne 2014; Kapferer 1998.

13 The ancient Buddhist state was more akin to a mandala. Wolters (1968) first emphasized the concept of the non-bounded mandala within the framework of Southeast Asian historiography. The mandala 'reflected the networks of loyalties between the ruler and the ruled, and among rulers, all of whom aspired to be the highest lord of the area over which they claimed sovereignty' (Chutintaranond 1990:90).

14 By 'virtue' we allude to the Pali Buddhist concept of *sila*, which means 'moral conduct'. In everyday worship, Sinhalese Buddhists will enter into periods of intense moral observance (*sil*). In Buddhist historiography, violence has a moral purpose if its telos is the restoration of the moral order of Buddhist kingship.

The ancient chronicles (the *Dipavamsa*, *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa*)[15] present an argument that the life-annihilating violence of the state in (re) formation is legitimate if directed, oriented and encompassed by Buddhist value, and describe the historical progress of the Sinhalese commanded state in these terms. The first Sinhalese state was founded by the mythic hero, Prince Vijaya, in an act of annihilation of the original inhabitants. This has a strong sense of immorality and of betrayal (symbolically condensed into Vijaya's breaking of his marriage vow to his accomplice, Kuveni, in the annihilation).[16] It is Vijaya's breaking of his vow that evokes Kuveni's curse upon Vijaya, and by extension the Sinhalese people. In popular Sinhalese Buddhist understanding, the suffering of personal anguish, including for many the suffering endured by the civil war, is put down to this curse.[17] It is crucial that Vijaya's action is not bound by Buddhist morality. The Sinhalese state of Vijaya was not a Buddhist state, hence its unmitigated violence and Vijaya's role as a somewhat dubious hero.

The *Mahavamsa* (compiled by monks in the fifth century CE) recounts the story of the main Sinhalese hero, Prince Dutthagemunu (a figure of contemporary Sinhalese nationalist mobilization), who leads the Sinhalese Buddhist resurgence against King Elara, the Tamil overlord in a period of Sinhalese Buddhist decline. Dutthagemunu, born in fulfilment of a vow to the Buddha by his mother, himself vows to restore the glory and order of the Sinhalese Buddhist state, which he does (together with his ten demonic paladins), re-establishing Sinhalese Buddhist sovereignty. The slaughter of the final battle is morally exonerated in its orientation to Buddhist value (Obeyesekere 1990:63). It marks the completion of Dutthagemenu's vow, and

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15   The chronicles represent the most significant texts among the *vamsa* literature in Sri Lanka, and constitute the principal source of mytho-history in Sinhalese Buddhism (Kemper 1991:34–41). *Vamsa* alludes to 'lineage' or 'descent'. In the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, ideas and knowledge are recited by one generation in order to be learnt by the next, this being the means by which practices and institutions survive in historical consciousness.

16   As the *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* chronicles recount, Vijaya, upon arriving with his proto-Sinhalese followers from India to Sri Lanka, enters into a pact with Princess Kuveni, the daughter of the ruler of the original inhabitants. Vijaya vows to marry Kuveni if she would help him to establish his rule. Kuveni is a sorceress and she assists Vijaya in the slaughter of her own people. But Vijaya breaks his vow and Kuveni curses him and all his successors. The anguish of Kuveni is the subject of much popular drama and poetry.

17   Common Sinhalese healing rites (*tovil*) start their process with offerings to Kuveni in order to appease the effects of her curse (Kapferer 1983).

that of his mother (Viharamahadevi), to re-establish Sinhalese Buddhist state hegemony and the values of its order. Dutthagemunu, through the sacrifice of the last battle of his reconquest, transforms, out of a virtually demonic mien, into the epitome of the ideal Buddhist priestly recluse. He becomes a figure of non-worldly attachment and non-violence, the embodiment of Buddhist value. The slaughter of his Tamil foes is represented in the texts as a legitimate and potent violence in its orientation towards the establishment of a state order within Buddhist value, the destroyed Tamils being 'willing' victims of sacrifice. The dead Tamil King is effectively given the full honours of a sacrificial victim.

There are two critical features of the ideology of state legitimacy integral to the ancient stories of Dutthagemunu: firstly its hierarchical logic; secondly the centrality of this logic for the socio-political integrity of the totality (or national whole) under Sinhalese Buddhist sovereignty. The logic of hierarchy[18] may be referred to as a system of successive encompassment that centres around an opposition between those, on the one hand, oriented to Buddhist ideals and those, on the other hand, oriented either to their contradiction (the demonic in the Sinhalese system) or to values outside Buddhism. Sinhalese and Tamil (epitomized by Dutthagemunu and Elara) are symbolic markers or terms in the oppositional logic of the hierarchical order, and in understandings of the transformations or transitory progress affecting persons in the order. Thus Dutthagemunu (his symbolic figuring) changes in the course of his progress – effectively from a demonic attitude to one of pious virtue – as he advances to his goal. In a strong sense, the demonic generates through the force of an immanent logic - the progressive emergence of hierarchical order directed towards Buddhist value.

The understanding of the integrity of the totality or whole, in the context of the texts, is hierarchical in the sense that every part of the whole, all the elements or differentiated parts of the whole, are conceived to be in harmonious (or mutually supportive) interrelation as a function or premise of Sinhalese dominance and the Buddhism that is the justification of such dominance. The texts recounting Dutthagemenu's reconquest, and the narrative of his progress, express the harmonization achieved in the

18   We stress this to distinguish the logic of the texts (as well as the mytho-logic of rites that makes reference to textual traditions) from common-sense notions of hierarchy as stratification in contemporary contexts and in much usage in Western discourse. Hierarchy in our conceptual usage constitutes the logic of the totality, every part of the totality manifesting the logic of the whole. This is premised on the Sinhalese/Tamil opposition with Sinhalese (and Buddhist value) being in dominant place.

establishment and acceptance of Dutthagemunu's and Sinhalese hegemony. The champion of King Elara's Tamil forces falls in an attitude of submission before Prince Dutthagemunu, ending the violence, an event that coincides with Dutthagemenu's transformation into the epitome of Buddhist value, one who compassionately encompasses and guarantees the unity of the whole.

These logics of the texts achieved particular significance through the ideas and social dynamics of thoroughly contemporary modern realities, rather than through their past relevance, or through the world of the texts in and of themselves, except in Buddhist rituals, which in many ways provide a vital vehicle for their continuity (de Silva-Wijeyeratne 2014; Kapferer 1998; Seneviratne 1999). Thus, the force of a hierarchical logic receives particular accentuation in the individualism of modernity.[19] Such individualism is a global phenomenon largely connected to the transformations of capitalism, and was established in Sri Lanka through the application of Western modernizing practices (founded on individualist and secularist values) through colonial rule. Individualism, in our analysis, is a particular value commitment that conceives social processes as reducible to the individual person or entity, so that the whole (society) is no less nor more than the sum of its parts. In effect, as most nationalism illustrates (Anderson 1991), the individual subject (part) is identical with the totality (as this is imagined). There is a part/whole identity, so that the one is the other and vice versa, and this is a hallmark of modern subjectivity. In short, nationalism builds its populist force in such a process, as a dynamic of modern individualism within an ancient hierarchical logic. This is so, regardless of the political hue of the nationalism, whether it is right or left in persuasion.[20] In the intensification of the part/whole identity of modern nationalism, the individual becomes a manifestation of the national whole and its integrity, and vice versa. It follows, in terms of the hierarchical logic of the ancient texts (which is also a powerful dimension of everyday healing rites that are performed for persons from all social classes), that the fragmentation of the national whole is also a fragmentation of the person or individual who identifies with the terms of national (state) integrity. All nationalism, in some way or another, is a force, a religiosity, of reactive suffering, but this reaches a particular intensity (what we describe as the demonic intensity of the terror) in situations such as that in Sri Lanka, where national consciousness is mediated through a state ideology framed by the ancient texts (Tambiah 1992:78–9).

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19   This is an argument developed by Louis Dumont (1980) on the basis of his earlier
     work on caste hierarchy in India including a discussion of the ethnic violence that
     occurred at the time of partition in 1947 (Dumont 1986).

20   This argument is developed in relation to other general arguments of nationalism
     in Kapferer (1998).

We stress one overall point: implicit in the logic of the ancient texts (and in some of the everyday practices of ritual) carried into the political processes of the present, is the engagement of destruction (and by extension terror) as a legitimate means for the attainment of an order replete with Buddhist values. The state was open to the great risk of an end- (Sinhalese Buddhist hegemony) justifies-the-means kind that motivated the development of an overall situation of terror.

Mythic horizons and the progress to terror

Post-colonial political leaders in Sri Lanka, such as S.W.R.D.[21] Bandaranaike, Ranasinghe Premadasa, J.R. Jayewardene and Mahinda Rajapakse, displayed a propensity to imagine themselves as embodying the transformative potential of Sinhalese hero kings. Their actions were shrouded in Buddhist morality, but this did not extend to the development of a policy framework that would address Tamil political grievances. By the mid 1970s an armed Tamil youth insurrection (organized by class and caste) in the northern Jaffna peninsula was imminent.

The background to militant Tamil nationalist resistance to the state was formed by a series of legislative and constitutional innovations between independence and the mid 1970s.[22] The key event in the undoing of the independence settlement was the passage of the *Official Language Act* in 1956. Its impact was devastating, creating a form of educational apartheid that (with the exception of the Anglicized elites) drove communities further apart. In one fell swoop, the Burgher and Tamil administrative class were disadvantaged from securing promotion in the public service, and a key avenue of material improvement for the Jaffna Tamil bourgeoisie was cut off.[23] While many in the Burgher administrative class chose to migrate, their small numbers making more militant options futile, the Tamils chose resistance to their growing marginalization.

While the mid to late 1960s saw some minor respite, the Sinhalization of the state was pursued with zeal by Mrs Bandaranaike's government in the 1970s. Consequently, constitutional Tamil nationalism gave way to a more

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21   We have used initials for Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike and Junius Richard Jayewardene, as this is how they are ordinarily referred to in Sri Lanka.

22   No sooner had Ceylon gained independence in 1948, than the first legislative enactment passed by Parliament disenfranchised vast swathes of Indian Tamils working on the tea estates.

23   The Burgher communities are formed by descendants of European settlers from Portugal and Protestant Europe that arrived in the island from the sixteenth century onwards.

militantly nationalist and class-conscious Tamil youth movement on the Jaffna peninsula, which started advocacy of a separate Tamil state of Eelam by military means. By the end of the 1970s, the competing claims of Sinhalese and Tamil nationalism increasingly revolved around the axes of contested territory – physical, institutional (by this we mean the machinery of the state) and economic.

In the eight months leading up to the anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983, the government fermented an 'atmosphere of repression and insanity' (Hoole 2001:90). This extra-legal assault on Tamil activists, politicians and people – particularly in the ethnically diverse east – was couched in terms of a response to a Naxalite conspiracy orchestrated by the Communist Party, and other Left activists. The conspiracy was masterful government propaganda, and ensured that President Jayewardene comfortably won the presidential election of 1982.

President Jayewardene appropriated the performative potency of ancient mythic reference far removed from its ritual register. Intrinsic to his self-imaginary was an invocation of the tropes of Buddhist monarchy, especially its centralizing aspect, which allowed him to see himself as the successor to a line of Sinhalese kings from Vijaya. The Buddhism of this lineage received more powerful expression from his prime minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa, who expressly articulated a link to the Buddhist hero, Prince Dutthagemenu (Bartholomeusz 2002:56).

Violence erupted In Colombo on 24 July. The spark that lit the fuse was the funeral of thirteen Sinhalese (all Buddhist) soldiers, whose bodies were brought to Colombo and prepared for burial in a mortuary next to the cemetery. In the emotionally charged atmosphere of the cemetery, as the gathered crowd awaited the burial ceremony, the Sinhalese nationalist monk Elle Gunawanse incited the crowd to move against the Tamils. The violence initially broke out in the vicinity of the cemetery itself.[24] But the attacks on Tamils and Tamil-owned enterprises spread, beyond Colombo, to Kandy and the hill country. Evidence of the state-orchestrated nature of the terror was not concealed – those leading the attacks carried voter lists, as well as the addresses of Tamil owned businesses (Tambiah (1992:73). By the end of the

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24　For accounts, see Hoole 2001:105–8; Tambiah 1986:21–33. A useful description is presented by Weiss (2011:50–5), who also sets out some of the other atrocities committed by Tamils and by members of the Sri Lanka government, prior to the full outbreak of civil war.

riots the Tamil merchant class was in ruins, with these Sri Lankan citizens reduced to refugee status, low in the hierarchy of Sri Lanka's social order.[25]

The terror was hierarchical in intent – that is, it sought to re-subordinate the Tamil other who threatened the unity of the state with a virtual ontological appeal. Refracting the logic of a healing ritual, acting 'with the force of their own cosmic incorporation' (Kapferer 1998:101), Sinhalese rioters fragmented 'their demonic victims as the Tamils threatened to fragment them, and by doing so resubordinate and reincorporate the Tamil demon in hierarchy' (ibid). Such violence, by restoring the integrity of a fragmenting Sinhalese Buddhist social order, also restored the personal integrity of the Sinhalese individual, restoring their unity with the nation(al) whole as 'both the anguish of the person and the anguish of the nation are overcome in the power of hierarchy' (1998:111).

<p style="text-align:center">✳</p>

The state-sanctioned terror of July 1983 joined modern and individualist ideological values, expanded in nationalism, to values of more ancient provenance contained in the chronicles of the Sinhalese kings. Intrinsic to the emergence of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism as an ideological practice was a specific ontology of the relation of the person to the state, such that the condition of the person and that of the state become synonymous with each other. Thus, the attack upon the national integrity of the Sinhalese nation by Tamil militants was synonymous with an ontological breach of the (Sinhalese) person and the order of the world in which Sinhalese ethnically identified persons drew their integrity (Kapferer 1998:83). Sinhalese passions fired, Tamils literally burned in their houses in order that the hierarchy of the Sinhalese Buddhist state could be restored. Terror became the performative logic and expression of the Sinhalese Buddhist subject under threat, and the means for its reintegration and the reintegration of the order upon which it depended.

The years from 1983–2015 not only witnessed the encompassing logic of state terror directed at both Tamil militancy and the general Tamil civilian population, but also saw the state unleash the terror of a regenerative violence against the Sinhalese subaltern in the late 1980s (an intra-civil war among

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25 The riot succeeded in reordering the ethno-social composition of capital in Colombo. Post-1977 economic liberalization had ruined the Sinhalese dominated light-industrial sector, while the Tamil and Muslim trading and service sectors had benefited (Gunasinghe 1984:211–12).

the Sinhalese majority).[26] This intra-civil war was precipitated by President Jayewardene's decision to enter into the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord with the Indian Government with respect to the devolution of power in Sri Lanka.[27]

Buddhist violence has canonical roots that stress the 'ethical qualities of the righteous party by showing that although they are compelled by circumstances to engage in war for the purpose of self-defence, they do not resort to unnecessary acts of cruelty even towards the defeated' (Premasiri 2006:84). Such nuances did not inform the protagonists – rather both sides were able to draw on the canonical tradition in the pursuit of ever more vile acts of terror, if the result of their execution was to be the fashioning of a more righteous Buddhist society. The Maoist JVP led the resistance to the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord and what they imagined as a thoroughly unrighteous and un-Buddhist set of proposals that would fragment the *dhammadipa* (the island of the dhamma), which in the popular Sinhalese imagination was bequeathed by the Buddha in order that his dhamma (the moral law) may be preserved in one place, the island of Sri Lanka (see Tambiah 1992:85–8).

Weber described the state as any 'human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' (Weber 1991:78). The JVP's challenge to this monopoly was met head on by the righteous fury of the state. The new president, Ranasinghe Premadasa, was not burdened by the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord and hence was able to position himself against the JVP. The destructive and reterritorializing force of the state was unleashed once the JVP made the mistake of targeting public property (as well as the families of the armed forces), both disabling the state and affecting the ability of the urban Sinhalese poor to manage their daily lives. It now became the duty of a patriotic Buddhist government to annihilate the JVP, with the defence minister, in the process of reclaiming territory that had fallen under JVP control, even claiming that he was guided by the Buddha's invocation that nothing was permanent.[28]

With the JVP insurrection crushed, the state could once again focus on combating the terror of the LTTE. Despite a number of aborted peace processes in the 1990s, the LTTE proved to be a very effective military organization, and by 2000 they had brought the state to the brink of collapse. When the last and final peace process was launched in December 2000, both the LTTE and the government committed themselves to exploring a federal

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26 See International Crisis Group 2010a.

27 Devolution was primarily directed at the non-LTTE Tamil political leadership, who had been advocating administrative decentralization since the late 1940s.

28 In 1989 and 1990, following bomb attacks in Colombo by the LTTE, many Sinhalese citizens were on the point of fleeing the city.

model of decentralization. Although both parties were culpable in the failure to find a compromise solution in the peace process, that the LTTE did not seize this opportunity now appears a major error of strategy. When President Rajapakse was elected in November 2005, the peace process effectively died. The LTTE were happy to trade on the new president's Sinhalese nationalist reputation and recommence what looked like the easy task of renewing their military campaign. However, Chinese military assistance to Colombo ensured that the LTTE would not have a second chance at peace.[29]

President Rajapakse was elected in 2005 on a platform to defeat the LTTE. Fortunately for him, the US led 'war on terror' resulted in the proscription of the LTTE as a terrorist organization, effectively cutting off most of its diaspora material support (de Silva-Wijeyeratne 2006). With Chinese technical support, the regime moved to control access to cyberspace by placing restrictions on NGOs and foreign correspondents trying to access the war zone. In the shadow of the state's military success, as 2006 drew to a close, the 'crushing absolutism of power contained in cosmic metaphors' (Kapferer 2001:61) was brilliantly invoked by Rajapakse, when posters appeared declaring him a reincarnation of Dutthagemenu who would, like the king in his struggle with Elara, vanquish the demonic forces of the LTTE (De Votta 2007:9; Kapferer and de Silva Wijeyeratne 2012:152–3). The state's military strategy also encompassed the wider Tamil civilian population in the north-east, whose deterritorializing potential would be subjected to a radical re-subordination at the base of the Sinhalese Buddhist state. In aid of this strategy (and adopting a classic state tactic deployed in myriad anti-Left counter-insurgencies in Latin America in the 1970s–80s), the Sri Lankan state also relied on an array of Tamil paramilitary forces who inflicted a reign of murderous terror on Tamil civilians (Selvadurai and Smith 2013:558). This often functioned as an extension of state terror, but could at a rhetorical level often be distanced from the state and positioned as acting beyond the legitimate violence of the state (Lofving 2009:187–209).[30]

Before the commencement of the final campaign against the LTTE in June 2006, Tamils living in Colombo and in the tea-growing hill country were required to be registered at police stations. Both private and public businesses

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29   Keim and de Silva-Wijeyeratne 2010. From 2006 China provided more than fifty per cent of Sri Lanka's external funding and arms imports. In the final military campaign, India provided intelligence and radar equipment, while Pakistan trained Sri Lankan pilots (Selvadurai and Smith 2013:562).

30   See *Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka* (2012:76–9).

were required to register details of Tamil employees.[31] The abiding image of 2007 was of Tamils being evicted from their temporary lodgings in Colombo on spurious counter-terrorism grounds.[32] The powerful analogy with the series of pre-Nuremburg administrative measures directed at limiting Jewish participation in public and private life in Nazi Germany was clear to the discerning observer.

Once unleashed, the ferocity of the military campaign against the LTTE was ontologically grounded – indeed it was this that gave the violence its ferocity: its purpose was regenerative, to re-encompass the fragmenting logic of the Tamil hinterland of the north-east within the hierarchical order of the state, with difference encompassed within the unifying moral force of the state. The intensity of the negating terror (that is 'negative' freedom in its purest form) directed against Tamil civilians in the final stages of the war was merely one more ideological gesture in the armoury of the Sinhalese Buddhist state – it refracted an ontological ground in which the demonic can take on a Tamil persona (Comay 2011:ch 3). Given that in and through Buddhist ritual the demonic can become 'Tamil' in Sinhalese Buddhist consciousness (in the healing rites of the south there is a Tamil demon), the mediation of this metaphor through a colonial/post-colonial bureaucratic register of identity has in the recent past rendered all manner of taxonomically directed terror possible. The metaphor of the demonic has become all too real, as both Sinhalese Buddhist healing rites and anti-Tamil violence are directed at the same telos: reaching an ideal aesthetic harmony between the Sinhalese Buddhist state, nation and people.

Constitutive acts of regeneration in Sinhalese Buddhist thought depend on the immanent logic of violent terror. This is an aspect of major sorcery rites for Sinhalese Buddhists, with the most widely known rite engaging the story of Mahasammata (an earlier incarnation of the Buddha and the world-originating king) to heal or re-integrate the fragmented body of the victim (Kapferer 1997a). The symbolic force of the rite involves the re-origination of the order of the state in accordance with righteous Buddhist principles, to which the victims of sorcery must be oriented. Ultimately, demonic forces destroy themselves (which is one possible interpretation of the Dutthagemunu story). A feature of the anti-sorcery rites (and also the Vijaya and Dutthagemunu myths) is that victims (or those embodying the suffering of the nation) move

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31   These requirements were eventually rescinded.

32   In a rare instance, the Supreme Court intervened and suspended the evictions, following a petition by the Colombo based NGO, the Centre for Policy Alternatives.

from a liminal, marginal position ('virtually' outside the state) to a position at its generative centre, one encompassed and potentiated by Buddhist value.

Rajapakse similarly moved from a liminal or peripheral position in the Sinhalese southern hinterland (near the mythical place of Dutthagemunu's birth) to become president, overcoming the grip on the Sri Lanka Freedom Party held by the influential Bandaranaike family. The latter were associated with the ruling landed aristocracy of the Kandyan kingdom of the last Sinhalese kings, conquered by the British in 1815. Rajapakse's lineage were largely representative of a powerful rural and urban bourgeois class fraction in many ways opposed to the Kandyan elites. In a certain sense, he was a ritualist of modernity, an articulator of rising Sinhalese (and Sinhala-speaking) petty-bourgeois interests who was able to forge a new unity between the bourgeoisie and the general populace. Such a unity was expressed in a further intensification of the mytho-history of Sinhalese Buddhism and the fundamental righteousness of its motivation to terror and the violence of a 'final solution'.

Writing of significant government victories, the capture of Kilinochchi and Elephant Pass, that were preliminaries to the defeat of the LTTE, Dr Susantha Goonatilake wrote in the *Sunday Times* (18 January 2009):

> It was a victory reminiscent of Dutu Gemunu who over 2,100 years ago as a child in the deep South described the helplessness of being pushed into the country's extreme corner by a Tamil invader. Gemunu broke loose. But keeping with Buddhist ethos he paid homage to his dead adversary Elara. Prabhakaran is no just adversary. He must be eliminated.

As a consequence of defeating the LTTE, in some Sinhalese quarters, Rajapakse had achieved the status of a Buddhist king. Like Dutthagemunu, whose own journey toward encompassing his own terrifying demonic potential began from the margins of the polity (Magama), in the south of the island controlled by his father, Rajapakse's own transformation in status to that of ordering beneficence began in Hambantota, also in the deep south of the Sinhalese Buddhist heartland.

In and through the final phase of the war, as well as the post-war settlement that the Rajapakse's sought to consolidate, terror became an overt

and open dimension of the everyday.[33] This found awful expression in the final moments of the LTTE and of a large number of Tamil civilians who found themselves trapped on a tiny isthmus in the north of the island at the end of war in May 2009, the LTTE having corralled civilians into this strip of land. Some forty thousand Tamil civilians, herded into a small 'no fire zone' (defined as part of an agreement between UN Agencies and the Sri Lanka military high command), were slaughtered by concentrated Sri Lankan artillery fire using coordinates supplied by the UN for the dropping of relief food parcels (Weiss 2011).[34] This was a force that redefined the conditions of possibility of both the social and the political. The grim conclusion to the war – which involved the virtual erasure of the LTTE's material presence and the execution and often mutilation of symbolic figures in the LTTE, as well as the humiliation of survivors – carried echoes of the logic of the military struggles between Sinhalese hero kings and Tamil 'usurpers' in the ancient Pali chronicles (Kapferer 2001:56–63; Roberts 2004:151–3).[35] The humiliation of the Tamils continued, from the post-war internment of over 300,000 Tamil civilians, to the act of forcing Tamils in Colombo to fly the Sri Lankan national flag; these were acts designed to facilitate the reterritorialization of the deterritorializing consequences of Tamil militant agency, while simultaneously reintegrating their demonic force at the base of the hierarchical order of the Sinhalese Buddhist state.

The Rajapakse's and their allies in the media and military sought to reduce the Tamil civilian population to a permanent subordinate status. In the aftermath of the war this agenda was driven by Gotabhaya Rajapakse and Basil Rajapakse in particular; the latter, as head of the all-purpose Ministry of Economic Development, sought to occlude the participation of Tamil civil-society groups in the redevelopment of the north-east (Fonseka and Raheem 2010; Rampton 2009).[36] In spatial terms, the Tamils (and Muslims in the east) became subject to a process of physical encompassment as an ideologically

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33 On the violation of international humanitarian law by the state, see International Crisis Group 2010a. The state's post-war strategy has had a devastating impact on Tamil women in the north, many of whom increasingly head households – the men having either been killed in the war or disappeared in the silent terror unleashed by the security forces in the north in the aftermath of the war, leaving these women increasingly vulnerable to hidden violence in the new domestic arrangements that they have to forge (International Crisis Group 2011).

34 See, www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIJav9HgEwc.

35 See, vimeo.com/26647448.

36 See also, Minority Rights Group International 2007; Centre for Policy Alternatives 2009, for more details on this.

motivated programme of resettling Sinhalese colonists and their families was rolled out, at the expense of resettling displaced Tamil civilians back to their ancestral lands.[37]

In the course of a thirty-year civil war against the Tamils in general and the LTTE in particular, Sri Lanka was transformed (perhaps partially as a consequence of the war) from a nation-state into a corporate state, with new rhizomic forces of caste and family alliance (other than those connected with the Anglicized elites of the colonial and immediate post-colonial past) capturing the apparatuses of state and further subverting the residual principles of good government upon which state offices and functions had been based in the period up to the early 1970s. Since the end of the civil war, and simultaneous with the increasing economic role of the military, the 'controlling agents of the corporatized Sri Lankan state [started] to redraw the internal ethnic and social delineations of the state in line with the sentiments of popular sentiment, but no less in the oligarchic interests' (Kapferer 2010:143) of those who control the institutions of the state.[38]

Under the Rajapakses, Sri Lanka's future was clear – 'the emergence of Bonapartism centred on the capture of centralised state power' (Kadirgamar 2010:24) and the subsequent physical and existential encompassment of the

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37   In many instances Tamil owned land has been expropriated with a view to either resettling Sinhalese families or developing niche tourist resorts over which there exists no local accountability, including tourist resorts controlled by the Sri Lankan armed forces. As an instance of the pervasive presence of the Sinhalese military in Tamil civilian life in post-war Sri Lanka, Kumaravadivel Guruparan (2016) notes that 'reading camps for school children, organizing village development committee meetings, conducting pre-school teachers training, recruiting farm workers and preschool teachers into the civil defence force to work in Sri Lankan army run farms and Montessori schools, filling teacher shortages are example of projects through which the Army seeks to normalize its presence in the North and East'.

38   Under the Rajapakses, dominant capitalist interests generally associated with global capital simply switched sides, aligning themselves with the Bonapartist trajectory of capitalism. By late 2014, these very same economic interests made a strategic decision to abandon the Rajapakses, with their dependence on popular Sinhalese sovereignty, when it became clear that the US-EU-Indian axis was moving to subvert the Rajapakses' dependence on Chinese aid and investment in light of the threat to Western interests that such aid posed – these interests moved back towards supporting their traditional political allies in the pro-Western United National Party led by the current Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe (Ratnayake 2016; Sunil 2016).

Tamils in the hinterland of the state.[39] Encouraged by Sinhalese nationalists, the regime sought to reorient Sri Lankan politics along the lines of Malaysia's '*bumiputra*' model, featuring a ruling national party controlled by the majority Sinhalese while incorporating ethnic minority politicians and granting 'them patronage to distribute to their ethnic constituencies, with some limited regional power but no independent political power at the centre' (International Crisis Group 2010b:13–14). That this lacked any democratic accountability and would become the basis for further instability in the north-east was lost on the regime (Buruma 2009; Khoo 2005).

The mission of the Rajapakses was clear: to systematically alter the demographic landscape of the north-east, a project motivated by the ideology of Sinhalese myth given new ontological ground in modernity. It was anointed with Buddhist zeal – no sooner had the war ended, than President Rajapakse's wife visited Jaffna, at the northern tip of the island, in June 2009. She accompanied a statue of Sanghamiththa, the first woman Buddhist missionary to Sri Lanka, and the daughter of King Asoka, the great ruler of the Buddhist Mauryan Empire that dominated north and middle India from 320-180BCE. The statue was enshrined in a newly built Buddhist temple in Maathakal in the high security zone – once gazetted in parliament, Tamil and Muslim landowners were unable to seek legal redress in the courts with respect to establishing title to land within these designated 'high security zones' (Minority Rights Group International 2007:3). This symbolically unifying moment, in which the link between the dhamma and the land was re-established, was simultaneous to the continued dispossession of non-Sinhalese residents in Maathakal – Buddhist value and violent dispossession went hand-in-hand with each other.

State terror also extended to eviscerating the memory of the Tamil struggle in the north-east, where the army methodically erased all traces of the LTTE and their fallen.[40] Kilinochchi's cemetery for the LTTE dead has been

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39 We refer to the Rajapakses in the plural in order to include the President's two brothers (Gotabaya and Basil), the architects of the military defeat of the LTTE and the post-war settlement respectively.

40 As a precursor to events after 2009, between 2006 and 2007 the army, pursuing the logic of reterritorializing a landscape that under the LTTE had been severed from the spatial imaginary of the *dhammadipa*, destroyed ten cemeteries for the LTTE fallen in the eastern districts Batticaloa, Ampaa'rai and Trincomalee (McDowell 2012:33).

totally eradicated and the Tamil dead effaced.[41] In the centre of Kilinochchi, the army erected a victory monument: a giant concrete cube with a bullet hole cracking its fascia and a lotus flower rising from the top (McDowell 2012:34). Writing in *The New Yorker*, Jon Lee Anderson recounts how soldiers stood to attention before a marble plinth, whose inscription extolled the Rajapaksas' leadership during 'a humanitarian operation which paved the way to eradicate terrorism entirely from our motherland, restoring her territorial integrity and the noble peace' (2011:49–50).[42] The emotive force of this inscription is driven by an ontological appeal, one which imagines violence in the service of Buddhist value. Violence in the name of humanitarianism is analogous to the regenerative logic of violence in Buddhist myth – that which is external to the encompassing order of the Buddhist state (and hence Buddhist value) is in a potentially threatening and violent relation to it. It is this potentiality which generates the terror of the state as immanent within it, and this, in its performative, force, that guarantees the unity of the Sinhalese nation(al) whole.

The terrifying potential and totalizing unity of Buddhist piety married to violence is further exemplified in the form of the Jaffna war memorial for the fallen of the state. In the inscription on the memorial, Rajapakse – in the manner of a Buddhist monarch – is fashioned as the 'Lord of the Three Sinhala Countries' (TriSinhala), a unifier of the island under the umbrella of an all too actual Sinhalese Buddhist popular sovereignty.[43] Through the memorial, Rajapakse establishes a genealogical link to the ancient kings like Dutthagemenu, who built relic shrines to the Buddha in the aftermath of having waged war. Within this mythic horizon, Rajapakse's defeat of the

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41   The Sri Lankan army website at the time drew on the Sinhalese nationalist invocation of the Aryan racial trope. It referred to the Indo-Aryan settlers who had first settled the island. Such sentiments drew on Max Muller's conflation of Sinhalese linguistic and racial identity and the characterization of Sinhala as an Indo-Aryan language (Tambiah 1992: 131).

42   Nearly all LTTE memorials and graveyards in Jaffna and Vanni constructed for their dead have been destroyed (groundviews.org/category/issues/end-of-war-special-edition/page/2). The evisceration of memory has extended to the Sinhalizing of Tamil town names in the Eastern Province (De Votta 2007:48; Ranetunge 2011; McDowell 2012:34). Since the election of the President Sirisena in 2015, there has been a relaxation in the restrictions placed on Tamil civilians commemorating their own war dead (International Crisis Group 2017:23).

43   The construction and placement of such monuments speaks to the continuation of a Sinhalese nationalist war by other means (Hyndman and Amarasingham 2014).

Figure 1   Victory Monument, Puthukudiyiruppu. Northern Province, Sri Lanka. Photo by Adam Jones, Ph.D./Global Photo Archive/Flickr.

LTTE momentarily brought to an end the cyclical cosmic journey of unity, fragmentation and reordering; the Sinhalese Buddhist state, nation and people finally seemingly unified within a hierarchical relation. The memorial expresses ontological force – Rajapakse's journey from the margins of the Sinhalese Buddhist heartland in the south occupies the same ontological ground as that of the Buddha, who in the *Mahavamsa* ordains the island as the *dhammadipa*. It is full of ontological meaning, grounded in a terror lacking all restraint.

Conclusion: aftermath and rumblings

While Rajapakse was defeated in presidential elections in January 2015, the institutionalization of terror is not completely undone – all evidence points to a fraught process in which the Sinhalese security establishment will take their time, with Rajapakse and the violent potential of Sinhalese nationalism remains ever present on the political horizon. Indeed at the time of writing in 2017, the failure of President Sirisena to pursue liberal constitutional change effectively has enabled the Rajapakse cabal to mobilize the forces of Sinhalese populist opposition to any constitutional accommodation with the Tamil minority structured upon greater autonomy for the Tamil dominated north-

east of the island.[44] The activation of cosmic metaphors under Rajapakse's presidency, within the contemporary state's bureaucratic register, has resulted in a continued movement towards greater and centralized totalitarianism. In the manner of a Buddhist king, Rajapakse, and Sinhalese leaders before him, pursued a thoroughly ordering violence, one whose performative logic is writ large in Sinhalese Buddhist historiography. Akin to the repetitive structure of a musical chorus the dominant refrain of this historiography is that of transformation, a cyclical movement through unity, fragmentation and reordering – constitutive acts of regeneration in Sinhalese Buddhist myth that reveal the immanent logic of terror, terror actualized in the name of Buddhist value. A state order that is unencompassed by Buddhist value is effectively a potential threat to both individual Sinhalese Buddhists and the state order itself, as both are threatened by fragmentation; for the ideal Buddhist state is one that encompasses the individual. It is in these terms that we must understand the violent logic of state transformation in both the Sinhalese Buddhist myths of kingship and the all too real acts of state regeneration engineered by President Rajapakse.

An ordering or reconstitutive terror became a characteristic of the post-war dispensation under President Rajapakse. This is a terror that resonates with the encompassing logic of Buddhist kingship – as, for example, presented in a Buddhist *sutta* (sermon) called *The Lion's Roar of the Wheel-turning Emperor*.[45] But the logic of kingship in the aftermath of British colonial unification of the island is mediated through the logic of the bureaucratic state – one that is fashioned in a very utilitarian vein as a result of the

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44   Not only do some Tamil political prisoners remain unreleased (Somachandran and Jayanth 2016), but more recently the Mahanayakes (senior Buddhist monks) have started to agitate against constitutional reforms on the grounds that the process was being orchestrated by the Tamil diaspora and the West – external, potentially demonic forces that threaten the physical integrity of the island (www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/president-represents-litmus-test-for-political-reform).

45   The *Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta* is a narrative on Buddhist kingship (*rājadhamma*). In it, the *dhamma* as a cosmological law regulates the world and, as truth (embodied in the Buddha), shows the path to *nibbāna*. This encompasses the rules of kingship and simultaneously kingship has its 'source in [the] *dhamma* and is ideally a concrete manifestation of it' in the socio-political order (Tambiah 1976: 40). The *cakkavatti* is portrayed as a wheel-rolling monarch who extends his kingdom by conquest merely to increase the geographical scope of the *dhamma*. The text portrays a social order that is in a state of degeneration, a process that is only put in reverse by the birth of the *Metteyya*, the next Buddha to be.

recommendations of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission of the 1830s.[46] Having shifted the register of terror and violence from the ontological to the epistemological, devastating consequences can befall those who threaten the hierarchical order of the Sinhalese Buddhist state as they are resubordinated within a resurgent hierarchy – indeed resubordination is the condition on which hierarchy can be regenerated and the world renewed.[47] Herein resides the echo of classical Buddhist kingship and the association of the latter with 'constitutive acts of world renewal, in which the king-elect was transformed into a god or re-renewed as a god' (Roberts 1994:68).

Our argument has asserted that terror is fundamental to the (im)possibility of the state, and that the state and counter-state organizations (be they Sinhalese or Tamil) are in an immanent relation. Counter-state bodies do not represent a deformation of the liberal promise of constitutional rights intrinsic to the telos of the constitutional state (not that we suggest that post-colonial Sri Lanka has ever been a constitutional state), but are rather the very agents that render the state possible, whether at the level of the imaginary or of actuality. We have shown that the Sinhalese myths of state, which have their

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46   We believe it is pertinent to draw a comparison with European historiography here, Hegel's engagement with the French Revolution in particular. Our argument has maintained that paradoxically, as terror may be ranged against and destructive of social and political orders, a key dimension of terror is frequently its emergence as a constitutive force and the very condition of political and social orders. A classic example of this paradox of terror is the Terror of the French Revolution, whose dynamic of destruction was an emergent property of its paradox, at once ending one order and creating another. The intensity of the French Terror was, perhaps, as Hegel suggested, because it was confined within its own annihilating logic and, most importantly, operated without constraint, and these conditions of possibility of absolute freedom paradoxically unleashed an annihilating terror directed at any potential restriction, including any posed by the citizenry themselves (Comay 2011:ch. 3). Not surprisingly this negative freedom is encapsulated in the logic of negation that characterizes all nationalist terrors, and which is directed at identifiable ethno-religious others who threaten the absolute freedom of a dominant ethno-religious self/group.

47   In the precolonial period, Buddhist texts and chronicles, and conceptions of kingship grounded in Asokan principles, spoke to a karmic understanding of the political. That is, the telos of the texts or rites of kingship were ontological inasmuch as they spoke to questions of being-in-the-world. However, under the conditions of colonialism as instituted by the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms, these texts and rites began to be read as outlining how the social and the political ought to be organized in the future, ideas that related specifically to the context of Sinhalese nationalism.

origin in the ritual world of Sinhalese Buddhism, only achieve their ideological value within their actualization in the political, including war as a critical dimension of the political. The reliance on mutilation and dismemberment of those Tamil insurgents opposing the state suggests that Tamils (both insurgents and civilians) were imagined as posing an existential threat to the 'sacred fate of the community' (Strathern 2012).[48] This point is not unique to Sri Lanka's state of total terror, it is one that has been made in reference to the Rwandan genocide: under certain socio-political conditions threats to the state, to the spiritual domain and to the person can become conflated, rendering the existential challenge of territorial division always thoroughly political (Taylor 2012).

Overall, this essay has explored what we understand as the total situation of terror that discovers its dynamic through social-structural processes mediated by the state. The state is implicated in the production of what we describe as the creation of a general situation of terror; and we have shown how the Sri Lankan state was central to the terror that engulfed much of the population. Most striking in this intensification of terror was a mobilization of myth in popular consciousness, demonstrating the political potency of the Sinhalese Buddhist myths of state. This mobilization released these myths from their moorings – they ceased to be limited to the domains of temple and ritual.

Most analyses of terrorism in Sri Lanka have focused on the Tamil insurrectionists. This reduces discussion of the contribution of other parties to the overall situation of terror, the Sinhalese JVP for instance, whose anti-state action was sometimes modelled after Tamil LTTE practice. Most under-examined was the action of state agents (the military and paramilitary organizations in which ordinary citizenry became involved). But critically, the Sri Lankan state itself (both institutionally and ideologically) was the key player in the definition and orientation of terror, itself an essential instrument in the human and social destruction that was to render Sri Lanka, for well over 30 years, a demonic-plane of terror and terrorism.

Our focus began with the mythology of state legitimacy, one premised on Buddhist value, that in its articulation in the context of the post-colonial state became a focus of Tamil contestation and violent resistance, as well as a force in the terrorism of state reaction. As such, the situation of Sri Lanka is another instance of the way religious value harnessed to state power can exacerbate what much political philosophy relevant to contemporary democracies would conceive as the underlying contradiction between the egalitarian potential of

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48   In the popular Sinhalese imaginary, the Buddha bequeaths the Sinhalese with the task of preserving the *dhamma* in the island.

the social and the limiting force of state power. This is particularly so where religious ideology is tied to sectional interests of an ethnic and class character, as in Sri Lanka. The situation is exacerbated further, as in Sri Lanka, where the mythologic is already integral to routine practices of self-affirmation and social constitution (and restitution) or is deeply hegemonic in the sense that Gramsci (2005), for example, expressed.

What is possibly more distinctive, regarding the role of Buddhist value in Sri Lanka, is that in Sinhala folk traditions especially, Buddhism is integral to the crisis of the state. Furthermore, the state, and the circumstance of society within it (in conflict or harmony), is a metaphor for manifold personal crises (often expressed in the form of illness, frequently characterized as demonic). This is overtly acknowledged in the Sinhalese Buddhist texts of healing that recount events in the history of the Sinhalese Buddhist state as intimately reflective of issues pertaining to the restoration of individual well-being through the transformation of destructive anti-human and anti-Buddhist-order-of-things into a force submissive to and constitutive of Buddhist value. Metaphors of the righteous (and encompassing, totalizing) Buddhist state are central to many rites concerned with affecting both individual health and the order of community and society. In post-colonial Sri Lanka what was metaphor was reinvented as political and social reality, and as we have described, became a motivational and structuring dynamic integral to the development of an overall situation of terror and terrorism. Our approach then has been holistic and has resisted the reductionism that conceives of terror and its dynamics as either an anti-state or an anti-social-order process. Our analysis has re-centred the importance of the state in the understanding of contemporary terrorism. Our aim has been to set the ideology of state crisis (and their resolution) in a global context of state transition and transformation, and of the shifting networks of the global corporate state – it was, after all, the Washington-New Delhi axis that masterminded the demise of the Rajapakses' programme, as China's intervention on the side of the Sri Lankan state proved too destabilizing for dominant Western-Indian interests in the island (Parajasingham 2017). The situation of terror and terrorism in Sri Lanka assumed its dimensions in the context of global forces affecting state sovereignty and changes in the balance of world power. Sri Lanka was a state in political and economic crisis that opened fractures among the political elites formed in the various relations of caste and ethnicity. Terror was shaped in the conditions of such crisis and itself (terrorism) became a vital element (both as a state and state-resistant practice) in the political transformation of Sri Lanka into a more authoritarian form, in which the rights of all citizens were threatened, a realization in modernity of the potential of the illusory imagination of an ancient polity reinvented as the resolution of the fissures

that are thoroughly of contemporary political and economic processes. What we have shown is that the mythic achieves its popular potency through the mythopoeia of everyday rites whose dynamic logic (of myth and rite) embeds a particular discourse of state power, and that this became a vital force in the contemporary circumstances of Sri Lanka's state crisis.

Acknowledgements

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The territorially sovereign nation-state – the globally dominant political formation of Western modernity – is in crisis. Though it is a highly heterogeneous assemblage, moulded by different histories involving myriad socio-cultural processes, its territorial integrity and sovereignty are always contingent and related to the distribution and organization of authority and power, and the state's position within encompassing global dynamics.

This volume attends to these contingencies as they are refracted by the communities and populations that are variously incorporated (in conformity or resistance) within their ordering processes. With ethnographically grounded analyses and thick description of locales as various as Russia, Lebanon and Indonesia, a vital conversation emerges about forms of state control under challenge or in transition.

It is clear that the politico-social configurations of the state are still taking new directions, such as extremist populism and a general dissatisfaction with the corporatism of digital and technological revolutions. These are symptoms of the dilemmas at the peripheries of capital growth coming home to roost at their centres. Such transformations demand the new forms of conceptualization that the anthropological approaches of the essays in this volume present.

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Penny Harvey, Professor of Social Anthropology,
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This is political anthropology on a truly large canvas. The standing question about how 'state' and 'society' relate, and whether the distinction between them makes sense in the first place, is tackled deftly through the lenses of varying conceptions and practices of power and resistance.

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Cover image: ice cliffs at the end of the Barne Glacier (H.G. Ponting, Captain Scott's Antarctic Expedition, 2 December 1911).