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Tamils and the nation: India and Sri Lanka Compared

Madurika Rasaratnam

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Declaration

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the divergent trajectories of ethnic and national politics in the Tamil speaking regions of India and Sri Lanka. Despite comparable historical experiences and conditions, the south Indian Tamil speaking areas were peaceably accommodated within a pan-Indian framework whilst Sri Lankan politics was marked by escalating Tamil-Sinhala ethnic polarisation and violent conflict. The dissertation explains these contrasting outcomes by setting out a novel theoretical framework that draws on the work of Reinhart Koselleck and his analysis of the links between concepts and political conflict. It argues that in the era of popular sovereignty the nation and ethnicity have become central and unavoidable concepts of political order, but concepts that can be deliberately constructed through political activity in more or less inclusive ways. Setting out the conceptual connections between the nation, ethnicity and popular sovereignty, the dissertation shows how the conceptual tension between a unified national identity / interest and ethnic pluralism becomes a central and unavoidable locus of political contestation in the era of popular sovereignty. Tracing the politics of ethnicity and nationalism in India and Sri Lanka from the late nineteenth century to the late 1970's, the analysis shows that the accommodation of Tamil identity within Indian nationalist frameworks and the escalation of Tamil – Sinhala ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka cannot be linked to differences in ethnic demography, political system, historical experiences or the structure of economic incentives. It reveals instead that these divergent outcomes are best explained as effects of contingent and competitive processes of political organisation and mobilisation through which deliberately more or less ethnically inclusive national identities are asserted, established and then contested.

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List of abbreviations

ACTC	All Ceylon Tamil Congress
AI/ADMK	All India/ Anna Dravidia Munnetra Kazhagam (Anna Dravidian Progressive Association)
CNA	Ceylon National Association
CNC	Ceylon National Congress
CP	Community Party
DK	Dravida Kazhagam (Dravidian Association)
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Dravidian Progressive Association)
FP	Federal Party
INC	Indian National Congress
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front)
JYC	Jaffna Youth Congress
LSSP	Lanka Sama Samaja Party (Lanka Equal Society Party)
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MEP	Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (People's United Front)
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
TAK	Tamil Arasu Kazhagam (Tamil Government Association)
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
UNP	United National Party

1. Introduction

The strikingly divergent political trajectories of the Tamil speaking regions of south India and Sri Lanka¹ present an interesting puzzle for the study of ethnicity, nationalism and ethnic conflict. From the early decades of the twentieth century, movements and ideologies stressing a distinct Tamil political identity and interest have dominated Tamil politics in both south India and Sri Lanka. However, the relationship between these movements and their respective states has been very different and resulted in dramatically different economic and political outcomes for the two Tamil speaking regions. Tamil Nadu is at present an economically successful and politically stable component of the Indian Union. It has good development indicators, a flourishing culture industry and has been well represented at the Union level since independence. In contrast, the Tamil speaking north-eastern areas of Sri Lanka are at present devastated by thirty years of armed conflict and the Sri Lankan Tamil population, both on the island and the significant West based Diaspora, continues to express serious disaffection with the Sri Lankan state (ICG 2012a, 2012b). While Tamil Nadu's relationship with the government in Delhi has at times been fractious and tense, disputes have invariably been contained within the boundaries of the constitutional framework and never escalated into sustained violence. In Sri Lanka, however, relations between the Colombo government and Sri Lankan Tamil political actors since independence have been marked by confrontation, abandoned compromises and violence escalating into militarised conflict. The brutal end of Sri Lanka's armed conflict in May 2009 has also not led to peace but intensifying ethnic polarisation. Three years after the war ended, the Tamil speaking areas remain under intense military occupation (ICG 2012a, 2012b) and the Sri Lankan government has steadfastly refused calls for de-militarisation, greater self government for the north-east and credible investigations into persistent

allegations that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed in the final stages of the war; steps widely seen as the necessary precondition of post-conflict political accommodation and stability (Hogg 2011; ICG 2011).

What is peculiar about these contrasting outcomes of south Indian ethnic accommodation and violent ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is that they could not have been predicted from historical dynamics of Tamil politics in the two regions. In the late colonial period the south Indian Dravidian movement opposed Congress-led Indian nationalist mobilisation as a vital threat to Tamil identity and interest (Chapter Five). As independence from Britain approached, Dravidian leaders even advocated separation from India as a means of securing Tamils against the alleged threats of Indian domination. This antagonism continued in the immediate post-independence period. For example, the Indian government's attempts to replace English with Hindi as the official language in 1965 led to widespread and violent protests across Tamil Nadu. Seven people self-immolated in protest against the act while two took poison and in the ensuing days up to 150 people were killed in clashes between protesters and police (Ross-Barnett 1976:133). Conflict did not escalate, however. Instead, from 1967 onwards, Dravidian parties have held power at the state level and have worked within the Indian constitutional framework. In 1976 the Anna Dravidia Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK), one of the two major Dravidian parties, even added the All India prefix to its name in an effort to explicitly signal an acceptance of the Indian constitutional framework (Subramanian, N 1999:301), though the AIADMK has remained an exclusively Tamil Nadu party. Furthermore, from the early 1990's the Dravidian parties have also been important partners in the coalition governments that have become the norm in Delhi.

While Tamil Nadu politics has moved from separation to integration, Sri Lankan Tamil politics has moved in the opposite direction. Sri Lankan Tamil

politicians led attempts to form pan-ethnic nationalist organisations from the late nineteenth century, actively collaborating with Sinhalese politicians in these efforts. As independence approached Tamil political leaders advocated power sharing within a single unified constitutional structure as a means of promoting and protecting Tamil interests. Conflict between the Tamils and the increasingly Sinhala Buddhist state emerged in the wake of the 1956 Sinhala Only act that established Sinhala as the sole language of administration. This sparked demonstrations across the Tamil speaking areas that brought the civil administration to a standstill by blockading government offices. Although the protests were widespread and sustained, they were nevertheless quite insipid in comparison with the intensity of the language protests in Tamil Nadu. But conflict steadily escalated and in 1977 a coalition of Tamil parties, citing a history of violence and discrimination, swept the polls in the Tamil speaking areas on a platform of independence. At around the same time, episodic confrontations emerged between the Sinhala military and a nascent Tamil insurgency seeking independence through armed struggle. Military repression and continuing anti – Tamil violence, culminating in the July 1983 pogrom,² tipped the simmering insurgency into a civil war (Bose 1994; Krishna 1999).

These dramatic reversals, from separation to union in Tamil Nadu and in the opposite direction in Sri Lanka, are not easily explained by existing approaches to the study of ethnicity and nationalism. While the field of ethnicity and nationalism studies contains an irreducible plurality of theoretical and methodological approaches, two broad ways of explaining how ethnic and national identities are created and maintained are nevertheless discernible. The first set of approaches, that can be termed ‘realist’, links ethnic and national identities to foundational aspects of human psychology and human interaction or to structurally important – and relatively stable – characteristics of social life. A second set of approaches that can be labelled ‘constructivist’

characterises ethnic and national as more or less easily created effects of human interaction. Constructivism can be further subdivided into instrumental and discursive approaches. Instrumental forms of constructivism explain identities as the more or less conscious and wilful creations of self seeking political actors pursuing other and unrelated ends. A second, discursive form of constructivism, draws on post-structuralist notions of power and agency to explain identities as effects of self-regulating discursive practices that create and maintain particular conceptions of social and political order, rather than the wilful creations of particular agents.

Realist and constructivist frameworks have been used to analyse south Asian ethnic and national conflicts, including Tamil politics in India and Sri Lanka. These studies, discussed in Chapter Three, point to a range of factors to explain the production of Tamil and other identities and the consequent outcomes of ethnic accommodation or ethnic conflict between them. Analysis that begins with realist understandings of ethnic identity points to the patterns of ethnic demography and the more or less enlightened or moderate decisions of political leaders in accommodating or making ethnic demands. Instrumental forms of constructivism point to the self seeking interests of political actors, both leaders and their followers, in creating more or less accommodating identity projects. Finally discursive forms of constructivism point to the types of identities embedded in colonial rule and then incorporated by Indian and Sri Lankan actors in subsequent efforts to establish political order. However, when these factors are placed in comparative and historical perspective they cannot account for the important shifts over time within south Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil politics, as well as the important differences between them.

This is because these divergent outcomes occurred despite the range of historical, social and economic similarities between the two cases that make them uniquely comparable (Chapter Two). India and Sri Lanka have a shared

history of British colonial rule followed by sustained competitive electoral democracy. They also have similar social and economic systems, and electoral politics in both states continue to rely on patronage networks that distribute public resources of various kinds. As a consequence, the interests that are mobilised and satisfied through accommodative ethnic politics in south India are the same as those involved in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. In other words, the divergent trajectories of south Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil politics cannot be explained as effects of the various interests satisfied in the process. Likewise the types of identities embedded in the discursive practices of the colonial state and subsequent social and political movements are also remarkably consistent across India and Sri Lanka. Differences in the patterns of ethnic demography are also more apparent than real. It could be argued that India's ethnically fragmented population, where the Hindu majority is cleaved by differences of language and caste, is more conducive to ethnic accommodation than Sri Lanka's binary division between the Sinhala Buddhist majority and the Tamil minority. However, the idea of a consolidated Sinhala Buddhist – Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka overlooks regional, religious and caste cleavages that have been important sites of intra Sinhala and intra Tamil conflict (Chapters Six and Eight). Conversely in India, from the early decades of the twentieth century, Hindu nationalist organisations have sought – with temporally and spatially varying success – to create a majoritarian Hindu political identity that incorporates intra-Hindu caste and linguistic cleavages (Jaffrelot 1996; Hansen and Jaffrelot 2001). In short, the political salience of an overwhelming ethnic majority in Sri Lanka and a more ethnically fragmented polity in India are themselves outcomes in need of explanation, and not pre-given variables that can underlie the divergent outcomes of ethnic pluralism in the two states. Finally, the more or less enlightened or moderate decisions of political leaders in accommodating or making ethnic demands have been important in shaping outcomes in the two Tamil speaking regions. However, outcomes such as

sustained ethnic conflict or stable accommodation are not created by single momentous decisions but rather a pattern of sequential decisions that are cumulatively, rather than singularly, consequential. For example, while politicians in both India and Sri Lanka decided to form pan-ethnic political organisations in the late nineteenth century only in India did this produce a sustained pan-ethnic political structure, the Indian National Congress (INC or Congress). The growing importance of Congress subsequently worked to both constrain and enable in significant ways the decisions of political actors until well into the twentieth century. What is required therefore is a framework of analysis that can situate and interpret ethnic and national decision making whilst also explaining why some decisions produce sustained and politically significant outcomes whilst others do not.

1.1 The Argument

This dissertation sets out an alternative framework for understanding ethnic and national politics in which the nation and ethnicity are treated as central and unavoidable concepts of political contestation in the modern system of nation states, rather than expressions of more or less authentic and/or stable identities. The centrality of the nation and ethnicity to modern politics derives from their close conceptual connection to the doctrine of popular sovereignty, the sole principle of political legitimacy within the system of nation states. Popular sovereignty begins by distributing the source of political authority in equal packets amongst the population contained within the boundaries of the state, but subsequently demands that political authority can only be exercised in accordance with the shared national identity and national interests that unites the population as members of a political community. As a consequence the concept of a shared and unifying national interest and national identity becomes central to political contestation. It is in this context that ethnic diversity becomes a conceptually unavoidable political problem. From an

ethnically plural population, which ethnic groups will be included within the national whole and, just as crucially, on what terms? Which aspects of the populations' social and cultural life will be included as aspects of a shared national identity and which will be relegated to a lesser private, familial or personal realm? The nation and ethnicity are thus central concepts of modern political order and political actors seeking to mobilise the public power of the state or contest the boundaries of political community must do so in ethnic and national terms.

The dissertation argues that the crucial variable able to explain the starkly divergent outcomes of Tamil politics in India and Sri Lanka is the dominant understanding of national identity that structures political contestation in the two states. The politically dominant conception of national identity in India un-problematically includes Tamil conceptions of identity and interest whereas that in Sri Lanka does not. The explanatory purpose of this dissertation is to show how from very similar starting conditions, very different conceptions of national identity emerged in India and Sri Lanka, with fatefully divergent consequences for the Tamil speaking regions. Moreover, the historical and empirical analyses presented here shows that the emergence of more or less inclusive conceptions of national identity can only be explained as the contingent outcome of competitive and temporally situated processes of political organisation and mobilisation through which the conceptually unavoidable tension between national unity and ethnic pluralism was resolved in more or less inclusive ways. In essence, central to the explanation of India's ethnic accommodation and Sri Lanka's descent into ethnic conflict are the contingent and temporally situated processes of conceptually framed political contestation through which national identities were asserted, challenged and more or less securely established.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The dissertation draws on the work of the German historian Reinhart Koselleck to explain conceptual basis of political conflict and to capture the specifically modern character of the nation and ethnicity. For Koselleck, shared concepts are a constitutive feature of social and political life such that without 'common concepts there is no society, and above all, no political field of action' (2004:76). A shared set of social and political concepts is the necessary pre-condition of mutually meaningful social and political action and thereby social and political conflict. This focus on the conceptual parameters of social and political life leads Koselleck to a depiction of the modern condition as marked by a distinctive set of concepts that exist alongside, but also independently of, the economic, social and institutional changes usually considered definitive of modernity (2004:79). Modern concepts such as 'progress' and 'development' are propelled by a distinct and forward reaching temporality in which time expands into an open and limitless future amenable to human agency and control (2004:21-22). At the same time, Koselleck describes modern social and political interaction as increasingly mediated through collective and generalizable terms such as 'nation', 'class', 'citizen' and 'race' that mark a significant departure from the place and often person specific labels characteristic of pre-modern social life (2004:76-89).

The nation and ethnicity are thus forward reaching modern concepts that impel political action by projecting ideal visions of political community and the relationship between state and society. The precise meanings, and therefore the political consequences, of the nation and ethnicity are derived here from their relationship to the doctrine of popular sovereignty. While Koselleck does not explicitly mention the doctrine of popular sovereignty in his depiction of modernity's conceptual parameters, it is nevertheless closely linked to the events and timing that he identifies as marking the beginnings of

the conceptual shift to modernity, the late eighteenth century and the associated French and industrial revolutions. The global expansion of the centralised, territorially bounded state as the overarching institution of political order from the late eighteenth century and the transformation of the world into a world of nation states have also established popular sovereignty as the sole doctrine of political legitimacy. As a consequence, ethnic and national claims and identities have become unavoidably linked to the structures of the modern state.

The terms ethnicity and nation are used here therefore as publicly meaningful, conceptually unavoidable and politically consequential categories, and not treated as more or less authentic expressions of underlying subjectivities or preferences that can then be evaluated for their authenticity or validity. The terms nation and national function in politics as synonyms for the general will, the operative principle of popular sovereignty and in doing so convey both ethnic and substantive political meanings (Chapter Four). That is, the nation is a double sided political concept. On the one hand, the nation and national are terms of substantive and routine political contestation functioning as synonyms for issues, concerns and interests that are common or general to the population as citizens or members of the political association, and therefore appropriate areas of public or state action and concern. On the other hand, the nation also describes the population of the state in ethnic terms as a pre-political community bound by ties that are outside of or prior to the political contract. It is this double sided nature of the national concept, along with its close and immediate connection to popular sovereignty that makes ethnic pluralism a conceptually unavoidable problem in modern politics. The nation's function as a shared but contested reference for the public or common will that unites the population also necessarily and more or less explicitly invokes the nation's ethnic character.

The concept of ethnicity is likewise understood here primarily as a political term, rather an expression of the objective existence and/or subjective experience of pre-political forms of community or allegiance. As a political term, the meanings, and therefore consequences, of ethnicity derive from the contractarian origins of popular sovereignty and its operative principle, the national or general will. In social contract thinking political communities are held to be established by voluntary agreement between contracting individuals on the basis of shared and therefore potentially universal political interests and values. In this way the social contract as a voluntary or political association can be held to form the basis for civic or political forms of national identity.³ However, the idea of the social contract always implies both post-contractual unity in values and interests as well as pre-contractual or pre-political unity (Chapter Four). As a term of politics, therefore, ethnicity captures the existence of conceptually pre-contractual or pre-political differences amongst the population contained within the boundaries of the state. These differences are pre-political or pre-contractual in that their existence is normally understood to be outside of and / or historically prior to the political institutions and agreements (or contracts) that constitute the state.

Although the nation always invokes both a political and a pre-contractual or ethnic community, the ethnic characterisation of the nation need not be ethnically exclusive and can include a diversity of religious, linguistic, regional and or caste groups. This diversity must nevertheless be characterised as a historically constituted and pre-political and pre-state unity. For example, Jawaharlal Nehru's conception of Indian national unity consciously included a plurality of distinct ethnic groups, but depicted this plurality as historically bound and prior to the state (Nehru 1946:48-49). However the nation is conceived, in ethnically inclusive or exclusive terms, political contestation

within a shared national framework can only occur where protagonists share an understanding of the terms of ethnic inclusion.

In India and Sri Lanka the principle ethnic cleavages have been those of language, religion, region and caste, along with notions of biological race. These ethnic cleavages were politically salient because they formed the backdrop against which competing actors sought to mobilise and consolidate national political movements. Actors seeking to consolidate a pan-Indian or pan-Sri Lankan national identity had to conceptually and organisationally accommodate these differences. Meanwhile competing actors sought to consolidate alternative and ethnically more exclusive national movements on the basis of specific linguistic, religious and regional identities. The outcome of this contestation ultimately determined the fate of the Tamil speaking regions.

Treating ethnic and national politics as publicly meaningful and politically unavoidable features of a modern conceptual landscape departs from the extant literature in a number of ways. Firstly it departs from the dominant realist and constructivist approaches that treat ethnic and national politics as expressions of underlying identities, preferences or motivations that are in turn explained in a variety of ways. Against this view, the approach here insists that national and ethnic politics cannot be explained in terms of the subjectively experienced interests or identities of the protagonists involved. As the historical survey of India and Sri Lanka presented in Chapters Five through Eight shows, ethnic and national movements bring together actors with a diversity of often shifting preferences and motivations. Ethnic and national claims are therefore more usefully read for their public meaning rather than the underlying subjectivities or preferences they contain. Whereas the subjectivities and motivations of ethnic and national actors are likely to fluctuate and will always be impossible to define with certainty, the public meanings of ethnic and national claims are discernible and must be stable, at

least within defined temporal and political frameworks. Furthermore, it is the public meanings contained within national and ethnic claims, rather than the underlying subjectivities, that define the publicly meaningful, and therefore politically consequential, content of national and ethnic claims as political acts.

Secondly, in abandoning the idea of motivations and preferences as explanatory factors, the conceptual approach pursued here also rejects the attempt to explain ethnic and national movements in terms of underlying political, economic, discursive or psychological structures. Instead ethnic and national politics is understood here as a publicly meaningful activity that has a certain autonomy from the structural conditions in which it occurs. The success or failure of ethnic and national movements is explained therefore in terms of the open-ended and competitive processes of political organisation and mobilisation through which political protagonists define and contest political objectives and seek political power. The relative success and failure of political movements is defined not in terms of realising stated political outcomes but in terms of establishing a political presence that shapes the conditions of possibility for other political protagonists. A successful ethnic or national movement is thus one that is able to establish its preferred version of ethnic and national community as an important organising principle of political life. These successful identity claims are important not just for the movement's adherents but also implicitly or explicitly for others with similar, competing or antagonistic visions of national and or ethnic identity. Conversely, unsuccessful movements are those whose visions of ethnic and national community are of only marginal significance and easily undermined by countervailing mobilisation.⁴ The historical analysis of national and ethnic politics in India and Sri Lanka (Chapters Five-Eight) will show that successful political movements are not structurally determined outcomes. Instead, movements that establish a significant political presence are those that bring

together three types of activity over a sustained period: the articulation of forward reaching political objectives including the assertion of identities and interests; the co-ordination of existing social, economic and political interests behind a common political project and, finally, direct mobilisation to build support and acceptance of the stated objective and identity.

Thirdly, the conceptual approach departs from the characterisation, important in the extant literature, of ethnic and national categories as surplus to or disruptive of routine political contestation. Against this view, the close and immediate conceptual connection drawn here between the nation and popular sovereignty makes the nation and its ethnic contours unavoidable components of routine political contestation. Political protagonists can only engage in mutually meaningful political contestation in terms of non-ethnic and universally applicable values – such as freedom or equality – where they share an implicit but robust conception of national identity, including the ethnic contours of that identity. In other words, the nation's capacity to function as a vehicle for universally applicable ideologies relies on protagonists sharing an understanding of the nation as a pre-political and historically bound community defined by values and characteristics that exist outside of and prior to the state. The appearance of ethnically defined political conflict is not therefore the unnecessary or disruptive eruption of ethnic sentiments into otherwise non ethnic or ideally non ethnic politics. Rather, ethnically defined conflict is politically meaningful and profoundly consequential contestation to *define* the ethnic boundaries of national community and thereby the parameters of political legitimacy.

Finally and fourthly, this understanding of national identity as necessarily containing both ethnic and political elements questions the notion that national identities can be divided into discrete ethnic and civic types. In general terms, the literature on the civic/ ethnic makes a distinction between

ethnic forms of national identity based on shared and putatively inherited features such as language, religion or race and civic or political forms in which the national community is held together by the members' shared political beliefs and values. There is a developed sub field within the nationalism literature that discusses the validity and / or usefulness of the civic ethnic dichotomy.⁵ While proponents of the distinction argue that it captures important differences between national identities that emerge from distinct historical processes,⁶ critics find that national identities are actually much more dynamic, open to change and often contain both civic and ethnic elements.⁷ The participants in this debate nevertheless relate the ethnic or civic (political) forms or elements of national identity to the variously structural or fluctuating processes within which national identities and claims are made. As a consequence, the efforts to classify distinct forms of national identity overlook the nation's conceptual connection to popular sovereignty through which the nation becomes a double sided political concept necessarily conveying both ethnic and political implications. This conceptual approach to the nation's political functions suggests that it is perhaps more useful to classify nationalisms as more or less inclusive of the ethnic diversity contained within the boundaries of the state concerned rather than as more or less ethnic or civic. This dissertation comparatively investigates the competitive processes of political organisation and mobilisation that established a pan-ethnic nationalism in India able to incorporate south Tamil conceptions of identity and interest, whilst in Sri Lanka producing a politically dominant Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in which Tamils were viewed as threatening outsiders to be subordinated within an ethnic hierarchy.

1.3 The Contribution

The dissertation is situated within the broad field of comparative politics, focusing on the politics of ethnicity and nationalism in contemporary south

Asia. Whilst taking a historical approach to the puzzle of the contrasting political outcomes of Tamil ethnicity, it does not set out to provide a history of south Indian or Sri Lankan Tamil politics. Instead the dissertation seeks to make a contribution to the comparative study of ethnic and national politics by developing a novel theoretical framework. Drawing on the work of Koselleck, it argues that ethnic and national identities are best understood as meaningful and conceptually unavoidable components of modern political order, rather than as expressions of more or less authentic and/or instrumentally produced subjective states. The comparative analyses of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka shows that politically dominant conceptions of national identity are contingent, in that they could have been otherwise, outcomes of temporally, socially and spatially situated political processes, rather than effects of structural or static variables.

The dissertation also contributes to the literature on contemporary south Asia by offering an original explanation for the contrasting outcomes of relatively stable ethnic accommodation in south India and escalating ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. These outcomes are separately well established in the respective literatures on south India and Sri Lanka and form the basis of single case studies that seek to explain them. The escalation of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has been studied by, for example, by Bose (1994), Tambiah (1992) and Bush (2003) amongst many others. Meanwhile Ross-Barnet (1976) and N. Subramanian (1999) offer contrasting explanations of the emergence of the south Indian Dravidian movement and its subsequent peaceable accommodation within the Indian political system. These studies share, and seek to explain, well established narratives of key events in south Indian and Sri Lankan political history.

This dissertation does not set out to challenge or disrupt these narratives. Rather, the contribution of the dissertation is in the insights that are yielded

by bringing this sequence of events into systematic comparison. Most of the material is therefore drawn from the extensive and well established secondary literature. The primary material from interviews and official documents is used to add context that substantiates the analytical argument. Interviews were conducted with Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil political actors, and journalists in 2007/8 and the material from the interviews informs the discussion in Chapters Seven and Eight (the interviews are listed in Appendix Three and the interview material cited in the text is referenced in the bibliography). Temporally, the dissertation examines a period beginning in the late nineteenth century, when ethnic and national politics began in India and Sri Lanka, and ending in the late 1970's, marked by key developments emblematic of the radically divergent, and now well established, trajectories of Tamil nationalism in the two states.⁸

The explanation developed in this dissertation also departs from the accounts offered by the few studies that have thus far explicitly connected and / or compared these divergent outcomes. James Manor (1979) sets out a comparative analysis of Sri Lankan ethnic conflict and Indian ethnic accommodation. He explains the difference in terms of the relatively weakly institutionalised party structures in Sri Lanka which meant that Sinhala political leaders had little confidence in retaining their support bases. As a consequence they were fearful of implementing electorally unpopular policies, including reaching accommodation with Tamil leaders. More recently Alfred Stepan, Juan J. Linz and Yogendra Yadav (2011) have linked the divergent outcomes of the two Tamil speaking regions to the very different nation building policies pursued by the Indian and Sri Lankan states. They argue that while India's adoption of 'State-Nation' policies that recognised ethnic pluralism facilitated ethnic peace, Sri Lanka's adoption of 'Nation-State' policies that imposed one ethnic identity at the expense of others generated

conflict. Sankaran Krishna's (1999) study of Indian intervention in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict also notes the divergent ideological contents of the Tamil nationalist movements in the two states. The explanatory purpose of Krishna's study is to provide a constructivist account of Indian foreign policy making, one that challenges mainstream realist analysis (1999:3-6). However, it also includes an account of the divergent trajectories of Sri Lankan and south Indian Tamil nationalisms (1999:61-100), noting that while 'Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism went from moderation to secession, the Dravidian movement followed a trajectory that is precisely the opposite' (1999:78). He explains this in terms of the different social histories and social structures of the two regions, along with the rising political dominance of Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism as the crucial factor that pushed Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism towards secession (1999:77). These studies are discussed in Chapter Four.

By adopting a different framework of analysis, this dissertation provides an explanation for crucial factors that are overlooked in these studies. In relation to Manor's argument, the dissertation explains how party competition in Sri Lanka, despite conditions that were comparable to those in India, failed to produce a strongly institutionalised pan-ethnic party comparable to the INC, whilst entrenching Sinhala Buddhist nationalism as the politically dominant conception of national identity. The dissertation also explains why India and Sri Lanka took such divergent approaches to managing ethnic pluralism (State-Nation versus Nation-State) despite containing a comparable range of ethnic categories in similar social, economic and political conditions. Finally, in relation to Krishna's analysis, the framework adopted in the dissertation differs theoretically from his analysis of nation-building as a discursive or narrative process; an analysis inspired by Jacques Derrida's account of the production of meaning. The material in the empirical chapters also questions Krishna's analysis of south Indian Tamil or Dravidian nationalism as fundamentally at

odds with Indian nationalism and, similarly, his argument that the escalation of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is an expression of self / other logic inherent to all identity making projects (1999: 17, 77). Whilst Krishna's analysis focuses on the meanings of nationalist narratives and the implications this has for ethnic pluralism, the analysis here explains why and how very different types of national identity emerged as politically dominant in India and Sri Lanka despite the existence of a similar range of narratives.

1.4 Structure

The dissertation is set out in the following way. Chapter Two summarises the history of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka. It shows that despite evident differences in demographic scale, the politics of national identity in the two cases was nevertheless shaped in comparable circumstances and had to content with a similar range of ethnic pluralism. Chapter Three reviews the extant realist and constructivist accounts of ethnic and national politics and shows why they fail to account for the divergence in these two cases. The argument that the nation and ethnicity should instead be viewed as core concepts of modern political order is then set out in detail in Chapter Four. This chapter also defines the elements of political activity that all ethnic and national movements must combine in a temporally sustained way if they are to establish their particular conception of identity and interest as a durable and unavoidable presence on the political field; unavoidable for both their adherents and opponents alike.

Chapters Five through Eight then trace in turn the trajectories of ethnic and national politics India and Sri Lanka from the late nineteenth century to 1977. This begins in Chapter Five with an explanation of how the Congress movement was able to establish its pan-ethnic conception of Indian national identity as a dominant force in Indian political life. It also explains why

Congress conception of national identity could ideologically and organizationally incorporate Tamil but not Muslim politics. Chapter Six shows why despite comparable constraints and opportunities a pan-ethnic national movement failed to emerge in colonial Sri Lanka. This chapter also describes the simultaneous consolidation of Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil national conceptions of identity and interest that involved the more or less successful accommodation of intra-Sinhala and intra-Tamil cleavages. Chapter Seven then explains how and why the south Indian Dravidian parties were successfully and peaceably accommodated into the post-independence Indian constitutional framework. It argues that this was made possible by the important ideological overlaps between Indian and Dravidian conceptions of Tamil identity and interest. Despite their many differences, Indian and Dravidian frameworks overlapped on the need to cultivate and promote Tamil language, literature and culture and also on the need to promote Tamil interests in development, including addressing issues of caste inequality. It was this ideological overlap rather than the relative moderation of the Dravidian movement that produced peaceable accommodation in south India. Finally Chapter Eight charts the consolidation of distinct Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil nationalist conceptions of identity and interest in post-independence Sri Lanka and the subsequent escalation of conflict between them. Although the Tamil-Sinhala axis was not an important point of conflict in the colonial era, within three decades of independence there was a simmering Tamil insurgency seeking a separate state ranged against a by then ethnically homogenous Sinhala military. The chapter explains this outcome as a matter of contingent political process; the failure of pan ethnic nationalism in the colonial period and the post-independence political dominance of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism that produced amongst Tamils (but not other non Sinhala minorities) a sustained opposition framed in national terms. Conflict emerged not because of the existence of distinct Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil nationalist

projects per se but because of the ideological incompatibility between them: while there were important ideological overlaps between Indian and Dravidian nationalisms on the question of Tamil identity and interest, the Sinhala Buddhist vision of ethnic hierarchy and the Tamil nationalist insistence on political equality remain incompatible. The conclusion sums up the findings of the dissertation and also discusses the implications of these for debates on the management of ethnic conflict.

2. Ethnic politics in India and Sri Lanka: comparable and connected, yet divergent

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a historical overview of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka, showing that despite the differences of geographic and demographic scale, the problem of ethnicity and national identity in the two states are comparable. It traces the simultaneous emergence of conceptually modern politics in India and Sri Lanka during the nineteenth century. This occurred alongside the uneven processes of social, economic and political transformation associated with British colonial rule. Koselleck's depiction of modern life, as underpinned by a set of social and political concepts that exist alongside and are yet distinct from the economic and social transformations associated with modernisation (2004:79), is useful in relating conceptually modern forms of political activity to the conditions of uneven modernisation found in India and Sri Lanka. The chapter shows that the question of national identity in the two colonial states required the accommodation of a similar range of ethnic identities that included differences of religion, caste, race, region and language. Along with a broad synchronicity in the timing of important landmarks in the development of ethnic and national politics in the two states, there were also strong ideological overlaps in many of the movements concerned. This overview suggests that the very different resolutions of the national question in India and Sri Lanka were not structurally determined or indeed predictable from the range of political movements and positions visible during the early decades of the twentieth century. Thus, despite the apparent differences of geographic and demographic scale, the divergent resolutions and consequences of the national question in India and Sri Lanka are the outcome of the relatively autonomous, open ended

and mutually meaningful competitive political processes through which national identities are defined and contested on a shared and distinctly modern conceptual landscape.

The first part of the chapter establishes the historical trajectories through which modern ethnic and national politics first became conceptually meaningful in late nineteenth century colonial India and Sri Lanka. These conditions are usefully analytically separated into the following two related and synchronous processes: first, the establishment of the modern colonial state and the adoption of a conceptually modern framework of rule, including notions of popular sovereignty and representative government; second, the conceptual and social translation of the existing cultural and social diversity of the population into modern ethnic categories. The emergence of conceptually modern politics was also dependent on the social, technological and economic changes that produced an active and modern colonial public sphere. These include the introduction of mass communication technologies, beginning with the printing press, the shift to modern forms of education with westernised curricula, changes in transportation infrastructure and the integration of India and Sri Lanka into regional and global commodity, labour and financial flows.⁹ These changes did not replicate the transformations that took place across western Europe and north America. Indeed the expansion of colonial rule in the early decades of the nineteenth century was associated with de-urbanisation and de industrialisation across many parts of India (Bayly 1988). Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, modern social and political concepts, along with the political institutions of the colonial state, became crucial and established facts of social and political activity in India and Sri Lanka. The third and final part of the chapter provides a broad outline of ethnic and national politics in the two countries.

2.1. British colonial rule and conceptually modern politics

The antecedents of formal British colonial rule in India and Sri Lanka can be traced to 1611 when the East India Company first began its trading activities on the Indian subcontinent. The English company was not the first to arrive in the region and was not for many centuries the most politically or militarily dominant (Bayly 1988). An early lead was taken by the Portuguese who established trading posts primarily on the western coast of India from the early 1500's (Pearson 1987) and the south western coast of Sri Lanka in 1501 (De Silva 2005). In India European traders, including the French and the Danes, acted within a vibrant and competitive Indian political system in which Indian rulers vied for control over territory and taxable resources, including trade.¹⁰ From the dissolution of the Mughal Empire and until the mid eighteenth century, European trading companies occupied subsidiary political, economic and military roles in relation to competing Indian rulers who sought to expand and consolidate their state building projects. The shift from trade to formal colonial rule on the Indian subcontinent took place in the context of eighteenth century French and British rivalry in which India became one of the theatres of globalised military conflict. From the 1740's troops from the British and French state armies and navies regularly supplemented the troops of their respective trading companies in battles for control of Indian trading posts. By the late eighteenth century, the expansion of the French and British military presence in India and the perceived importance of Indian trade to French and British national interests altered the balance between the European companies and Indian rulers. The French and British companies increasingly used their military and financial resources to intervene in conflicts between Indian rulers and in Indian succession disputes that left their Indian allies heavily indebted to European company officials. The East India Company's decision in 1757 to depose the Nawab of Bengal, replacing him

with a succession of dependents and finally in 1771 directly assuming the governance of Bengal, was the culmination of a series of events in which British ideals of absolute sovereignty, Indian political rivalries, Indian indebtedness, as well as the global imperatives of Anglo-French competition were all present.

From the initial base in Bengal and trading posts in Madras and Bombay, British territorial possessions gradually expanded over the next century through a mixture of logics and motivations that included the need to expand and secure the 'turbulent frontier' (Galbraith 1960) against possible Indian and French threats and the growing indebtedness of some Indian rulers as well as the expanding territorial ambitions of others. British expansion was punctuated by a series of intense military encounters with Indian rulers, principally the Marathas and Mysore, who were themselves expanding their territories through the logic of militarised state building. A decisive victory over Mysore was finally achieved in 1799 while the Marathas were defeated by 1818. Some of the annexed territory was brought under direct British rule and administered through the Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. Alongside this a large number of Indian kingdoms were incorporated as Princely States, ruled by hereditary monarchs who retained a veneer of autonomy within the overall structure of the British Empire. British colonial expansion continued through the nineteenth century and by 1891 covered an area of 1.3 million square miles with a total population of over 280 million people (Government of India 1892).

For much of the eighteenth century the Tamil speaking areas of south India were the site of intense and violent contest between post Mughal successor states and European powers. The clashing territorial ambitions of Mysore (ruled by Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan), the Nawab of Arcot and the Maratha ruled kingdom of Tanjore led to frequent battles in which European companies

were increasingly involved as allies and often adversaries of Indian rulers. By the 1760's the ruler of Arcot had become a dependent of the East India Company and by the 1780's the same was true of the ruler of Tanjore. With the final defeat of Tipu Sultan and at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Tamil speaking areas were incorporated into Company rule and contained within the borders of the Madras Presidency. The vast majority of these areas, excepting the small princely state of Pudukotai and the French administered enclave of Pondicherry, were incorporated as directly administered territories. The Madras Presidency covered an area of 141,001 square miles, an area calculated at the time to equal to the United Kingdom and Greece combined and containing a polyglot population of almost 36 million, of which just over 15 million were Tamil speakers. (Government of India 1892).

Formal colonial rule and the rapid incorporation of India into a Britain centred global economy from the early decades of the nineteenth century (Goswami 2004) wrought important changes in south Indian society as well as its economic patterns and linkages (Washbrook 1988). Principally the growing commercialisation of the south Indian economy, evident from the fifteenth century and the well established links of trade and culture with the Arab Gulf and South East Asia withered. The twin impacts of the industrial revolution and the intensification and consolidation of British rule produced an economic depression during the early decades of the nineteenth century (Bayly 1988; Washbrook 1988). The overseas and internal markets for south Indian textiles and other artisanal goods along with a nascent local iron and steel industry were soon taken over by British goods. Meanwhile, the defeat of Indian rulers also dampened demand for artisanal goods, soldiers and other forms of cultural specialists as the courts and their armies were dismantled. Large numbers of former artisans and soldiers¹¹ were therefore forced back onto the land just as the Company was seeking to consolidate its rule by extracting often penal

levels of revenue from agricultural production. The overall effect was predictably to depress prices and crush economic activity such that by the time the 'depression lifted, in the 1850's, what once had been one of the early modern world's great commercial economies had been turned into a "backward" agricultural dependency' (Washbrook 1988:508). South India's own trading and cultural links with the rest of the world were thus curtailed and rearticulated along the lines of Britain's growing political and economic dominance. The Company's south Indian troops, financed in large part by agricultural revenue, were used in Sri Lanka (1795), Java (1811-15) and Burma (1822-24). At the same time the growing population combined with a depressed local economy centred on agricultural production led to pressure on the land and net labour emigration from south India, including to the expanding plantation economy of Ceylon (Kumar 1965).

The island of Ceylon was also incorporated into the British Empire against the background of global Anglo French rivalry and was prompted by the French invasion of Holland in 1794.¹² At that point most of the island, except for the inland and inaccessible Kandyan kingdom, had been under European political and economic dominance for almost three hundred years. The Portuguese initially established a trading base on the south-western coast of the island in 1501, but by the end of the century had annexed the territories associated with the south-western Sinhala kingdom of Kotte (later Colombo) and the northern Tamil kingdom of Jaffna as Portuguese dominions. Portuguese rule lasted until the mid seventeenth century when first Colombo (1656) and then Jaffna (1658) fell to the Dutch East India Company. Dutch rule in its turn was brought to an end when the French deposed the Stattholder of Holland and installed a friendly republican government prompting British fears that the Dutch territory on the island, particularly the natural harbour at Trincomalee, would be used by the French to attack India (Jeffries 1962:14-15). East India

Company troops laid siege and captured Trincomalee in August 1795 and by February the next year all of the Dutch possessions on the island had been surrendered to the British. The newly captured territories in Ceylon were initially administered by the East India Company in Madras but in 1802 were incorporated as the Crown Colony of Ceylon and brought under the control of the recently established Colonial Office.¹³

In 1815 the hitherto independent kingdom of Kandy was annexed and brought under British rule. The Kandyan areas were linguistically Sinhalese and religiously Buddhist, like the low country or south western Sinhalese regions that had been under European rule since 1501. However, the different historical experience of the Kandyan areas produced an important regional distinction between the low country and Kandyan Sinhalese. The low country Sinhalese areas and people were more commercially developed and had been under western and Christian influence for a much longer period; this cultural and economic difference also became at times politically salient.¹⁴ The capture of the Kandyan areas furthermore triggered an important change in the island's economy and demography by opening up the interior areas to plantation agriculture, initially coffee and then, from the 1880's, tea. Labour for the plantations was sourced from south India, particularly the Tamil speaking areas. The increasing commercialisation of the island's economy stimulated by its integration into global trade flows also brought large numbers of other Tamils and Indians more generally who came to take advantage of the opportunities in trade and commerce. By the late nineteenth century there were thus two distinct Tamil speaking populations on the island. The first was the population that migrated in the nineteenth century and settled mainly in the central and south-western parts of the island. The second was the population in the north-eastern parts of the island that had been established there for several centuries (Indrapala 2007). The 1891 Census of Ceylon

recorded the population of the island, a territory of 25, 333 square miles, at just over 3 million (Ceylon 1892). Of this the majority were Sinhalese (2, 041,158) and just under a third were Tamils (723, 853).¹⁵ The other significant minorities were the Muslims, called Moormen (197, 166) and Malays (10,133) migrants from Malaysia.

Although the two states were of vastly different geographical scales, they were governed through identical frameworks which, by the late nineteenth century, had established in both countries a comparable and connected politics of nationalism and ethnicity. The emergence of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka is linked to the emergence of what Thomas Metcalfe has called a 'distinctive ideology of imperial governance shaped by the ideals of liberalism' (1994:28). This ideology was associated with the emergent industrial revolution and the associated reform and evangelical movements that were transforming social, political and economic life in Britain and replaced the earlier more conservative and purely extractive mercantilist orientation of British rule (Stokes 1963). In Koselleck's terms, liberal imperialism was characteristically modern in its future orientated temporality¹⁶ and British rule in both India and Sri Lanka was legitimised as a means of effecting social and economic progress and development. This sentiment is clearly expressed in Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1857, issued to mark the end of the Indian mutiny or rebellion and the beginning of the British Crown's direct rule over India, replacing the previously existing indirect rule through the East India Company. The proclamation stated that it was 'our earnest duty to stimulate the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility and improvement, and to administer its government for the benefit of all our subjects resident therein' (quoted in Phillips 1962:10). The influence of liberal imperialism is also clearly evident in Sri Lanka. The 1833 report of the Commissioners W.M.G Colebrooke and C. H. Cameron

appointed to recommend reforms on the government, judiciary and economy of Ceylon were optimistic about the prospects for advancement on the island. The Commissioners stated that Ceylon was 'the fittest spot in our Eastern Dominions in which to plant the seeds of European civilization whence we may not unreasonably hope that it will hereafter spread over the whole of these vast territories' (quoted in Mendis 1956:152).

Self government through representative institutions was a crucial component of the liberal imperialist notions of advancement towards European standards of civilization. Thomas Macaulay, English parliamentarian, historian and law member of the Governor General's Council in India stated in 1833 that the day when India's 'public mind', expanded by 'our system', sought self-government 'it will be the proudest day in English history' (quoted in Metcalfe 1994:34). The contemporaneous Colobrooke Cameron report also recommended a legislative council with representatives – nominated rather than elected – chosen to represent interests in Ceylon society. The Commissioners noted that while the prevailing 'ignorance and prejudice' would prevent the government from adopting the Ceylonese representatives' views, a representative legislature was nevertheless consistent 'with the policy of a liberal government' (quoted in Mendis 1956:54).

By the mid to late nineteenth century, the early nineteenth century optimism of liberal imperialism had given way to more conservative attitudes and British officials were generally reluctant to grant the possibility of progress towards self government in both India and Sri Lanka.¹⁷ Despite official resistance and sometimes outright hostility to the possibility of self government, increasing number of Indians and Sri Lankans were nevertheless adopting the language of liberal representative politics to make demands of their respective states. In India from the 1830's onwards (Mehrotra 1971) and in Sri Lanka from the 1860's (Roberts 1997b), political and social actors formed associations in an

effort to reform, influence and mobilise the power of the state towards their various projects; projects always framed in terms of the ultimate ideals of progress, development and legitimate government. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century political associations emerged in both countries that claimed to be national in scope and made at first extremely circumscribed but later more expansive demands for greater Indian and Sri Lankan participation in the business of government. Congress, formed in 1885, initially sought minor constitutional administrative changes (Seal 1968) but by the early 1920's had adopted the demand for 'swaraj' or self rule (Sarkar 1989). A similar organisation called the Ceylon National Association (CNA) formed in 1888 and sought minor constitutional changes. However, the CNA failed to generate the organisational cohesiveness of the INC. In 1917 political leaders impressed by the imminent signs of constitutional reform in India formed a new organisation called the Ceylon National Congress (CNC) as a vehicle to press for reforms similar to those being granted in India. The CNC, like its predecessor, failed to develop into an established or broad based movement.¹⁸ It was thus easily supplanted in 1946 when D S Senanayake, the leading Sri Lankan politician of the time, formed a new organisation called the United National Party (UNP). In 1948 Sri Lankan gained independence under a UNP led government (Wickramasinghe 1995). The problem of national identity and ethnic diversity was conceptually hard wired into this politics and was ever present, more or less explicitly, in the wrangling and manoeuvring of all significant actors, official and unofficial alike.

While British officials were often hostile and dismissive of the claims of these organisations, they nevertheless framed their objections in the language of popular sovereignty. That is, while British officials might have eschewed the possibility of democratic self-government, they nevertheless had to rest the legitimacy of British rule ultimately in its ability to protect and promote the

interests of its Indian and Sri Lankan subjects. As Billig notes, for the modern state, 'sovereignty has descended from heaven to earth, from the clouds to the soil of the homeland and to the collectively invoked bodies of its inhabitants' (1995:29). British officials often claimed that they had a much clearer understanding of the needs of the Indian and Sri Lankan populations than Indian or Sri Lankan politicians who simply sought their own self interest. A clear expression of this sentiment was made by the Viceroy Lord Dufferin who dismissed the INC by stating that it was a 'microscopic minority' and that it was impossible to entrust to such an organisation the 'safety and welfare' of the 'majestic and multiform empire' for which the British stood responsible 'in the eyes of God and before the face of civilization' (quoted in Gopal 1965:175). At the same time, British officials also invoked the ethnic pluralism of the Indian and Sri Lankan politicians to challenge the national claims of Indian and Sri Lankan politicians. In India the INC's claim to be nationally representative was challenged along the cleavages of religion and caste by Muslim (Hardy 1972) and lower caste representatives (Zelliot 1988) with more or less explicit British support. Similarly, in Sri Lanka the CNC's claims to be nationally representative were challenged along the cleavages of region and language by Kandyan Sinhalese and Tamil representatives - again with more or less explicit British support (Wickramasinghe 1995).

Eventually the transition from British colonial rule to independence was effected through constitutional changes that saw a gradual expansion of elected Indian and Sri Lankan representation in the political institutions established during the early decades of the nineteenth century, along with greater executive power for elected representatives. These changes invariably involved contestation over the extent and balance of ethnic representation. During most of the nineteenth century, until the reforms of 1920, constitutional change was slow and incremental. In India the process of

constitutional reform¹⁹ began with the 1861 Indian Councils Act which provided Indian representation, through nomination, in the Imperial Legislative Council in Calcutta and the newly established Provincial Legislatures, including in Madras.²⁰ The next substantive step came with the 1909 Indian Councils Act (also called the Morley–Minto reforms) which introduced for the first time the elective principle to the Imperial and Provincial legislative councils, with representatives elected indirectly from the members of local district and municipal boards. The 1909 reforms also introduced the principle of separate Muslim electorates; that is, Muslims voters were formed into a distinctive electoral college to facilitate the election of specifically Muslim representatives. The intention was to ensure adequate Muslim representation as in most electoral constituencies Muslims were a minority of the eligible voters. Constitutional change in Sri Lanka was also slow during much of the nineteenth century.²¹ There was little change to the nominated legislative council created in 1833 by the Colebrooke Cameron reforms save for the addition of two extra representatives in 1886; one for the Muslims and one for the Kandyan Sinhalese, the latter seen as requiring separate representation from the low country Sinhalese.

The pace of reform in the twentieth century was comparatively more rapid than that in the nineteenth century. In India, just a decade after the 1909 Act, the Montague Chelmsford reforms of 1919 allowed for the direct elections of Indians (from largely territorial constituencies) to the provincial legislatures, and indirectly from the provincial legislature to the Imperial legislature now moved to the new capital in Delhi. The 1919 act also devolved a limited amount of executive responsibility to Indians at the provincial level. These reforms were rejected by the INC and other nationalists, including a significant number who sought to use political violence as a means of directly overthrowing British rule. The push for more extensive reform led to the 1935

Government of India Act which expanded the franchise further and granted responsible government, albeit under the final executive authority of the Viceroy, at provincial and central levels. India was governed under the provisions of the 1935 Act until independence and partition in 1947 following which, in 1952, the Indian Constituent Assembly adopted India's post independence constitution and elections were held for the first time with a universal franchise.

The gradual expansion of the elective principle and progress towards self government was marked by debates about the nature of ethnic representation, particularly the representation of the Indian Muslim population. By 1935 the INC had established an electoral dominance over the non Muslim general constituencies and in the 1945 elections the Muslim League swept the Muslim electorates.²² The failure of Congress and Muslim League to agree on a mutually acceptable constitutional structure led to independence with partition in August 1947. Following partition, Congress consolidated its dominance of the Constituent Assembly and shaped the process of constitution making over the next five years. The INC's vision of Indian national identity and national interest was decisive in shaping the form of the Indian constitution and its provisions on matters such as citizenship, language, religion and caste (Austin 1972).

The pace of reform in Sri Lanka in the twentieth century was equally rapid, with important changes to the constitutional structure coinciding with major reforms in India.²³ The electoral principle was gingerly introduced to the legislative council in 1909 with the creation of an additional educated Ceylonese seat selected by an electorate restricted on the basis of education and property. The August 1917 Montague Chelmsford announcement of reforms in India spurred the creation of Ceylon National Congress (CNC) to press for an expansion of the electoral principle and territorial rather than

communal representation. These demands were resisted by Kandyan Sinhalese and Tamil politicians who insisted on special electoral provisions to offset the demographic majority of the low country Sinhalese translating into electoral dominance. A series of reforms throughout the 1920's contained a mixture of territorial and communal electorates, a limited franchise and extra weighting to increase the representation of the minorities – principally the Tamils and the Kandyan Sinhalese. The next stage of reforms in Sri Lanka, as in India, was tasked to a Commission, the Donoughmore Commission, which remarkably arrived on the island in November 1927 just as the similarly-tasked Simon Commission arrived in India to protests and boycotts by Indian nationalist groups, including Congress. The Donoughmore commission, unlike its equivalent in India, met with a full and exhaustive range of Sri Lankan politicians and formulated a far reaching set of proposals. It set out a constitutional structure based on the London County Council system in which executive committees elected by the entire legislature – named the State Council – were tasked with responsibility for the major areas of government. The state councillors were to be elected primarily on the basis of territorial constituencies and on the basis of universal franchise.

With the expansion of mass electoral politics, the issue of minority representation had become a key area of contestation between the CNC, the political grouping pushing for full parliamentary government with cabinet responsibility, and Tamil as well as other minority politicians seeking minority safeguards. By the late 1930's, a number of Tamil and other minority politicians coalesced behind the demand for equal representation of minorities and the Sinhalese at the national level (or fifty-fifty). However, Tamil and other minority political leaders were not involved in the process of negotiating the political framework of independence – that was left almost exclusively to D. S. Senanayake, the first post-independence Prime Minister. The constitution

that Senanayake shaped along with British officials and politics did include constitutional safeguards protecting minority rights, including clearly worded clauses entrenching the principle of equality, and was adopted by the State Council in May 1946. His party, the UNP, hastily formed in 1946 to contest elections under the new constitutional framework, also articulated a multi – ethnic vision of Sri Lankan identity. However, unlike India's post-independence constitution that was closely tied to Congress' ideological vision as well as organisational coherence, the pan ethnic framework of Sri Lanka's first post independence constitution was not backed by a well established political institution. As a consequence, in the years following independence it was soon pushed aside by the politically more powerful vision of a Sinhala Buddhist nation and national interest.

The clear emergence of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka was not associated with the transformative social and economic changes that accompanied the expansion of representative politics and the elective principle in North America and Western Europe. In India, as in Sri Lanka, for the duration of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century the proportion of the population engaged in public associational politics framed through the concepts of nation and ethnicity was small and limited. This is apparent in the size of the proportion of the electorate that was eligible for the franchise when it was restricted through literacy and property qualifications; the 1919 reforms in India extended the franchise to just 2 per cent of the population, while in Sri Lanka the 1921 reforms extended the franchise to just over 1 per cent of the population.²⁴ The emergence of mass political movements in the early decades of the twentieth century also did not signal the creation of a uniform public culture. Shahid Amin's study of peasant perceptions of Gandhi in the 1920's shows that the official statements set out by Congress party workers and Gandhi himself were starkly dissonant with

millennial expectations and ambitions for social mobility through which Gandhi's rural audience reframed his message (1984). Similarly, the prevalence of significant economic inequality meant that even during the periods of limited franchise, electoral contestation was organised through vote banks and the often coercive mobilisation of patron-client networks.²⁵ Despite these limitations, ethnic and national politics is nevertheless the crucial arena through which to explain the divergent political, social and economic outcomes of the Tamil speaking regions in south India and Sri Lanka. As Chapter Five demonstrates, the electoral incorporation of the Tamil speaking areas within the Congress organisation occurred through activities of organisation and mobilisation (often dependent on patronage networks) that were nevertheless framed in ethnic and national terms. Conversely, in Sri Lanka the failure of pan-ethnic nationalism and the associated political dominance of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism were also mediated through electoral processes in which patron client networks and vote banks were equally important (Chapters Six and Eight).

2.2 Framing ethnic diversity in India and Sri Lanka

The colonial states of India and Sri Lanka brought together populations containing a diversity of social and cultural groups. By the late nineteenth century this diversity was framed and understood through the categories of caste, language, religion and race; categories that were built into the structures of the colonial state.²⁶ There is an ongoing debate on the relationship between modern ethnic categories and pre-modern cultural differences. An influential body of post colonial scholarship suggests that modern ethnic identities and therefore ethnic antagonisms are largely the products of colonial rule. However, these arguments are challenged by others who suggest that these categories were politically and socially significant in the pre-British period and their salience in modern politics is the result of Indian and Sri Lankan agency

as much as colonial systems of governance.²⁷ Chapter Four briefly sets out a possible way of understanding the relationship between pre modern cultural diversity and modern ethnic categories in India and Sri Lanka. For the purposes of this chapter, however, what is important is that the social and cultural diversity of the Indian and Sri Lankan populations was framed, administered and discussed through remarkably similar ideas and categories. As a consequence, the problem of national identity in India and Sri Lanka had to contend with the same range of ethnic categories. In both states the attempt to create a pan ethnic national identity had to contend with ethnic differences framed in caste, linguistic, religious, racial and, in Sri Lanka, also regional terms.

By the late nineteenth century, modern ethnic categories were an established part of colonial public culture. They were not only extensively used in the administrative practices of the state but also formed the basis of the expanding range of social and political activities undertaken by Indians and Sri Lankans themselves. The decennial census operations undertaken by the colonial governments of both states organised the population according to categories of language, religion, race and caste. These categories were also important in the routine administrative practices such as recruitment to state agencies – including the police and military, the distribution of public funds for education and the administration of civil law. At the same time social reform movements and political associations also based their activities on these very same ethnic categories. Religious and linguistic revival and reform movements, as well as caste associations, worked within the same frameworks and sets of assumptions as the colonial state. An important and influential set of ideas that influenced the use of ethnic categories – by officials and associational actors alike – claimed that the Indian and Sri Lankan populations could be divided into racially distinct Aryan, Dravidian and Muslim populations on the basis of

language, race, religion and caste. This racial categorisation was used by a wide range of actors in both countries to set out the substance of national identities and national histories that included some linguistic, religious and caste groups, but excluded others.

The Aryan / Dravidian distinction, with Muslims as civilizational outsiders, evolved from the late eighteenth century study of Sanskrit by British scholars who were based mainly in Calcutta and were identified by themselves and others as Orientalists (Trautmann 2004). Noticing the structural similarities between Sanskrit and European languages, particularly Latin and Greek, Sir William Jones argued that they must have at some stage come from the same root language and furthermore that speakers of these languages shared common ancestors. The term Aryan, a Sanskrit word meaning 'noble' or 'honourable', was introduced by the Sanskritist Max Muller in the 1840's and it quickly acquired nineteenth century racial implications absent from the eighteenth century work of the Calcutta Orientalists.²⁸ Thomas Trautmann has argued that Sir William Jones' study of Sanskrit was situated within a larger biblical ethnology that emphasised the unity of mankind. In keeping with this, eighteenth century perspectives of Indian society generally viewed all Indian languages and cultures as derived from the same Sanskritic roots. The Orientalist characterisation nevertheless saw the Muslims as outsiders and invaders responsible for the destruction and degradation of Sanskritic Hindu civilization; a theme that became important to Hindu nationalist interpretations of Indian history.

The notion that all Indian languages were derived from Sanskrit was challenged by scholars working on south Indian languages, in particular Tamil and Telugu. First Francis Ellis Whyte in 1816, and then Bishop Robert Caldwell in 1856, argued that the south Indian languages were independent of Sanskrit and had an alternative source. Caldwell used the term Dravidian, also

derived from Sanskrit and originally used to designate south Indian Brahmin groups, to label the south Indian language group, language speakers and their cultural and literary heritage (Trautmann 2004:145-153). The distinction between the Aryan and Dravidian components of Indian society gave rise to two competing understandings of Indian civilization and history; one in which the Aryans became the bearers of civilization and in the other the Dravidians. The Aryan/ Dravidian distinction also mapped broadly onto a north/ south regional divide separating the Aryan north from the Dravidian south. From the late nineteenth century proponents of both accounts began to draw on then popular biological conceptions of race in which racial types, identified through physical features, particularly skin colour, was used to explain intellectual and cultural or 'civilizational' attainment.

In the Aryan narrative of Indian history, Indian civilization is created by the foundational act of Aryan migration. In this view, light skinned or Caucasian Aryans who migrated to India from the central Asian and Caucasian regions brought with them the Sanskrit language and Hindu religion.²⁹ Upon entering India they found less civilized and darker skinned people – identified as Dravidian - whom they variously either exterminated, pushed into the mountainous regions or incorporated within their social structure as low caste labourers. In India the Aryan idea was taken up by Hindu nationalists and used to characterise Indian national culture and history as racially Aryan, religiously Hindu and based on Sanskrit culture and language. The golden age of Indian civilization was identified with the Vedic period when key Sanskrit texts were first thought to have been composed. In the Hindu nationalist conception, this Vedic-Aryan golden age was brought to an end by Muslim 'invasions' that subsequently triggered the decline of Aryan social order and led to corruptions in Hindu thought and practices. Practices such as caste and gender inequality were thus blamed on the decline triggered by the Muslim

‘invasions’. Indian Muslims were thereby rendered outside the national core and, along with Muslim culture and religion, seen as an ever threatening cultural, religious and even demographic threat to the Hindu – Indian nation.

This view of the non Aryan peoples as less civilized was challenged by south Indian scholars, particularly Tamils (Sri Lankan and Indian) who, building on Caldwell’s Dravidian ideas, created an alternative Dravidian view of Indian society and history (Ravindran 2000; Trautmann 2006). The Dravidian view reversed the hierarchy of the Aryan view and argued that the original Dravidian society had attained a high level of civilization based on egalitarian and humanist principles, but was destroyed by the Aryan invasions. The Aryans, far from civilising the subcontinent, brought with them the uncivilized practices of caste and gender hierarchy associated with Hinduism. From the early decades of the twentieth century, the Dravidian category became politically significant in south India and was used to frame south Indian, particularly Tamil, language, culture, literary history and people as racially Dravidian. Using the Aryan association with Sanskrit and Hinduism, Dravidian activists argued that Hinduism, the caste structure and Sanskrit were all alien impositions on an otherwise egalitarian and religiously plural Tamil society. The Dravidian idea was also used by anti-caste movements across India to identify lower caste groups with the original Dravidians conquered and enslaved by the invading Aryans.

As discussed further in Chapters Five and Six, while the Dravidian idea was an important pole of south Indian Tamil social and political life, it was less influential amongst the Sri Lankan Tamils. Nonetheless, the Aryan/ Dravidian dichotomy did have consequences in Sri Lanka. Linguistic analysis in the early nineteenth century established that the Sinhala language had more in common with Sanskrit and the north Indian languages than Tamil and the south Indian or Dravidian languages. The Sinhalese people were thereby classified as Aryan

and this led a number of British officials and scholars, along with Sinhala scholars and activists, to produce an Aryan narrative of the island's history and national identity, one that was structurally identical to the Hindu nationalist vision (Rogers 1990; Dharmadasa 1992; Angall 1998). From the late nineteenth century, Buddhist revivalists, like their Hindu counterparts in India, used the Aryan idea to characterise Sri Lankan national identity and national history as religiously Buddhist, as well as linguistically and culturally Sinhalese. The foundational act of the island's history was deemed the migration of Aryan Sinhalese from north India who subsequently adopted Buddhism. In this narrative, the flourishing Sinhala Buddhist civilization, with its developed system of irrigated rice farming, was destroyed by the invading south Indian Dravidian Tamils. As with the Muslims in India, the Tamils in Sri Lanka were thereby rendered outside the Sinhala Buddhist core and equally seen as a cultural, religious and demographic threat to the Sinhala Buddhist nation.

Finally, the Aryan / Dravidian dichotomy was also influential in framing ideas about caste, particularly in south India. A complex, regionally as well as historically, varying phenomenon, caste practices and norms nevertheless contain a number of similarities across the subcontinent that extend to Tamil and Sinhalese society in Sri Lanka. The English term caste covers two separate indices of social hierarchy; *jati* (or birth group) and *varna* (or social class).³⁰ The *varna* classification of society into four recognised groups or ranks is derived from Hindu theology and set out in a series of Sanskrit texts. According to these, society is ideally divided into four distinct ranks or groups each with their own qualities and functions. The highest ranking groups are Brahmins (priests and ritual specialists), then Kashatriyas (rulers and warriors), followed by Vaishyas (commercial groups and other wealth creators) and finally the Shudras (or servile toilers). In Sanskrit theology an individual's position in the *varna* scheme is determined by the merits of their previous life

while their relative status in the next life is determined by their fulfilling the obligations that arise from their varna status in this life. An individual's rank is contained within the substance or essence of their body, such that people of higher caste are regarded as of purer and more auspicious substance. For those of high caste, the bodies of low castes are polluting, as is any food prepared or touched by them.

Although substance is determined by birth (such that Brahmin bodies are always more auspicious and pure than those of Shudras), it can also be affected by daily conduct; contact with substances that Sanskrit texts deem pure impart a quality of auspiciousness while contact with substances deemed polluted can render the substance of a body polluting to others. This division of the universe of substances into pure and polluting has also created a fifth order, not formally recognised in the varna status, who deal with especially polluting substances – dead flesh (animal as well as human) and human waste. Caste groups or jatis associated with polluting activities such as removing and treating dead human and animal bodies, working with animal flesh (leather workers for example) and removing human waste are subject to a set of practices known by the term Untouchability. Untouchable groups were – and in many places continue to be – denied access to public spaces such as schools, temples, common wells and public roads. From the early decades of the twentieth century the term Dalit, meaning oppressed or broken, has also been used by caste groups treated as Untouchable as a term of political and cultural resistance (Webster 1999).

The bodily practices of caste hierarchy – particularly taboos about food, engaging in work associated with untouchable groups and the prohibitions on untouchable groups' access to temples and other public spaces – became the objects of social and political protests in India and Sri Lanka from the early decades of the twentieth century. It has also produced two distinct political

and social strategies for overcoming caste hierarchy. One approach argued that that caste hierarchies and the violent exclusion of un-touchable groups was inherent to Hinduism and therefore the only way of excising caste was to abandon Hindu thought and practice wholesale.³¹ In the Tamil speaking regions this approach was closely associated with the Self Respect Movement and later the Dravidia Kazhagam. The Self Respect Movement and the DK, both working within the Dravidian framework, encouraged their followers to abandon Hindu life cycle rituals, caste names and Hindu worship whilst staging acts of iconoclasm – book burning and idol smashing – as a means of shattering the ritual status of Hindu objects of worship. A second approach was to suggest that caste hierarchy and particularly the practices of un-touchability were later corruptions of Hindu theology. In this approach, most closely associated with Gandhi and Congress, caste taboos could be overcome by reforming both upper caste and lower caste behaviour whilst all castes remained within the fold of Hindu belief and practice. Political and social associations that adopted this approach encouraged activities such as inter-caste dining, public upper caste performance of lower caste work, access for lower castes to privileged upper caste spaces and more controversially encouraged lower caste groups to adopt upper caste practices – such as vegetarianism, tee-totalism, orthodox life cycle rituals and the worship of gods from the high Hindu pantheon.

While the varna hierarchy provides the theological basis of caste hierarchy and was incorporated into colonial administrative structures, the actual experience of caste is through a second category of human community, known across most of south Asia by the term *jati* or its equivalents. The term *jati* identifies a clear social group bound generally by practices of inter-marriage and inter-dining. There are innumerable named *jati* groups, some confined to small locales and identifying a population of only a few thousand and others

ranging across vast regions and numbering in the millions.³² Only Brahmin and Untouchable jatis are clearly identifiable with their respective Varna. For most other jati identities, social position and status has rarely been a matter of fixed inheritance. Instead the social status of a particular jati has been determined by relative political and economic power and has allowed for a great deal of social mobility. Groups that have gained prestige and status through arms bearing, control of land or commercial wealth have often been able to convert this to social status by adopting varna norms, that is by restricting their marriage practices, worshipping the gods of the high Hindu pantheon and adopting appropriately Kshatriya like lordly lifestyles (for arms bearing groups) or the Vaishya like lifestyle of the pacific and settled man of worth (for commercial and landowning groups) (Bayly 1999). The Varna hierarchy is therefore better understood as an ideal index of social ranking than a description of social practice. The Brahmin's ritual status was only ever a means to legitimise the already existing wealth and power of upwardly mobile groups and many Brahmins were the dependents of their wealthy landowning or commercial patrons (Baker 1976:29).

From the late nineteenth century onwards caste, in both its varna and jati manifestations, was an established part of colonial public culture. In India the varna hierarchy was incorporated into colonial legal codes as part of Hindu personal law and also used to categorise jati groups in the census enumerations (Cohn 1987; Dirks 2001; Mallampalli 2004). This led to a number of caste associations demanding an upward revision of their varna status (Aroon 1980:31; Dirks 2001:223). Even in Sri Lanka where varna was not formally incorporated into colonial administrative practice, jati groups such as the Sinhala Karava and Salagamas sought official recognition for their claims to Kshatriya and Brahmin status respectively (Wickramasinghe 2006:140). The increasingly public prominence of the varna hierarchy had specific

implications for south Indian society, including the Tamil speaking areas. Here commercial and artisan groups as well as large landowners, many of whom had very restrictive and varna like social practices, nevertheless did not perform rituals, particular investiture of males with the sacred thread, that marked Kshatriya and Vaishya status in north India. Except for the Brahmins and the untouchables, the vast majority of south Indian Hindu jati groups were therefore classified as Shudras in the five fold varna scheme (Ross-Barnett 1976:15-17; Bayly 1999:32). This division between Brahmins and the rest of south Indian society implied therefore a racial division between Aryan Brahmins and Dravidian non Brahmins. A number of south Indian scholars argued that caste was brought to south Indian society by the racially Aryan Brahmins as a means of enforcing social and political dominance over the previously egalitarian Dravidian society (Ravindran 2000; Trautmann 2006). The Aryan (Brahmin) / Dravidian (non Brahmin) divide also became an important pole of political activity during the early decades of the twentieth century. This Brahmin/non Brahmin duality was not, however, influential within Sri Lankan Tamil politics. Instead, as Chapter Six and Eight show, the Gandhian and Congress approach to transforming caste hierarchy has been far more influential in Sri Lankan Tamil society than the radical reform agenda of the Dravidian movement.

The ethnic diversity of the Indian and Sri Lankan populations was therefore framed in comparable ways that invoked the categories of race (Aryan, Dravidian and Muslim), religion, caste, language and, in Sri Lanka, region (low country versus Kandyan Sinhalese). These categories were used by colonial officials as well as Indians and Sri Lankans themselves to make claims about the national identities and national histories of these societies. They have remained central to the question of national identity and ethnic diversity in both states. While the politics of national identity is discussed in terms of the

same categories of ethnic difference, it has been argued that the structure of ethnic demography is different. That is, India's more fragmented ethnic demography, in which the Hindu majority is intersected by divisions of caste and language, is more conducive to ethnic accommodation than the binary Sinhala – Tamil cleavage that has dominated Sri Lankan politics in the post independence period (Horowitz 1985:37).

However, this argument overlooks the important extent to which the axis of ethnic conflict within both states has shifted over time. The earliest forms of modern associational activity in the south Indian Tamil speaking areas (emerging in the early nineteenth century) were Hindu revivalist organisations (Hudson 1995; Pandian 2007) and this activity produced incidents of violent with Tamil Christians and Muslims (Suntharalingam 1974). However, Hindu revivalism in the south Indian Tamil areas did not develop into a substantial political force and by the early decades of the twentieth century had given way to the competing, though ideologically overlapping, Congress and Dravidian movements. The Dravidian movement also accommodated and incorporated Muslim identity, such that the Hindu – Muslim divide has been largely absent from south Indian Tamil politics to this day (More 1997, 2004). The Hindu-Muslim cleavage has not however disappeared, and in post independence India the Hindu nationalist movement has sought to consolidate a Hindu national identity by overcoming intra Hindu caste and linguistic divides (Hansen and Jaffrelot 2001). Furthermore, the absence of Hindu nationalist mobilisation in the Tamil speaking areas is not guaranteed and there is a debate as to whether contemporary Hindu nationalist mobilisation is eroding the largely secular political culture established by the Dravidian parties in Tamil south India.³³

Similarly, in Sri Lanka, while the majority population could be identified as linguistically Sinhalese and religiously Buddhist, the Sinhala Buddhist category

is internally divided by caste as well as the distinction between high country Kandyan and low country Sinhalese. Importantly, for much of the colonial period, intra Sinhala and intra Tamil distinctions were far more significant as axes of social and political conflict than the distinction between Tamils and Sinhalese. In the late nineteenth century, politics amongst Sinhala elites involved caste based conflict between the landowning Goyigama caste, on the one hand, and, on the other, the non landowning but commercially successful caste complex known by the acronym KSD – standing for Karava (fishing), Salagama (cinnamon peelers) and Durava (toddy tappers).³⁴ In the 1911 elections the Goyigama Sinhalese preferred to vote for a Tamil from the landowning Vellala caste than for a Sinhalese candidate from the Karava caste (Wicramasinghe 1995:31). Meanwhile amongst the Tamils there was acute political and social conflict between Hindus from the landowning Vellala caste and Christians from non landowning castes (Saveri 1993). The analysis in Chapters Six and Eight show how the consolidation of competing Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil nationalist projects in post independence Sri Lanka was effected by processes of political mobilisation and contestation that actively worked to overcome intra-Sinhala and intra-Tamil cleavages.

The structure of ethnic demography is not therefore an independent variable. Instead patterns of ethnic politics – whether organised around single or multiple cleavages – are the outcome of competitive political processes in which actors seek to consolidate more or less inclusive conceptions of national identity. The following section sets out a broad trajectory of the ethnic and national politics of the two states. Not only were there broad synchronicities in the political history of ethnicity in the two states, but also important connections. Furthermore, the divergent outcomes of Tamil politics between the two states cannot be easily discerned from the range of ethnic and national movements that were visible in the early decades of the twentieth century. As

the analysis in the later empirical chapters shows, this divergence in outcome can only be explained through specific and contingent processes of political contestation.

2.3 National and ethnic politics: an outline

In both India and Sri Lanka, the earliest significant forms of modern social and political activity were religious revival and reform movements. Hindu and Muslim revival and reform activity was apparent in Bengal from the late eighteenth century (Kopf 1969; Hardy 1972). A similar Hindu – or Saivite – revival movement was also apparent in the Tamil speaking regions of south India from the 1830's (Suntharalingham 1974; Pandian 2007) and in Sri Lanka from the 1840's (Hudson 1992, 1995; Gunasingam 1999), while the Buddhist revival was also beginning at this point (Dharmadasa 1992; de Silva 2005). These movements took similar forms. They all sought to reshape their audiences' practices and beliefs to fit the modern understanding of religion; a system of beliefs set out in core texts and a set of ritual and social practices that could only be legitimised or justified in relation to those texts. In place of the often syncretic and localised nature of belief and practice, religious reformers across south Asia sought to impose discipline by setting out standard versions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Tamil Saivism³⁵ that would fit the modern category of religion. These movements initially emerged as responses to Christian missionary proselytising, but soon adopted the Christian missionaries' methods – establishing printing presses, hospitals, schools and hostels – to counter proselytise (Van der Veer 2001).

There were strong similarities and connections between these movements, but also important differences in their outcomes. Hindu revivalism in India and Buddhist revivalism in Sri Lanka were comparable and also importantly connected. They both made comparable national claims (invoking the Aryan

idea) – asserting that Indian and Sri Lankan national history, territory and identity had to be understood in Hindu and Buddhist terms respectively. At the same time the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka was also strongly influenced by the Theosophical Society, an organisation which played a role in Indian Hindu revivalism and also to an extent in Congress politics (Seal 1968; Van der Veer 2001). The two movements were also associated with linguistic revival – Hindi in the Hindu case (Kumar 1990) and Sinhala in the Buddhist case (Dharmadasa 1992). Finally, both movements were associated with ethnic violence. In the late nineteenth century, the Hindu revivalist inspired cow protection movement led to ethnic violence against Muslims (Freitag 1980) and in the same period in Sri Lanka Buddhist revivalism was associated with ethnic violence between Sinhalese Buddhists and Sinhalese Catholics and, later (in 1915), against Muslims (Tambiah 1997). However, the political impact of the two movements was very different. In India, Hindu nationalism existed alongside Congress' pan-ethnic conception of national identity and interest, whilst in Sri Lanka, the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist conception had by 1956 established a political dominance that led to important transformations in the constitution, the ethnic distribution of economic activity and the ethnic composition of the state bureaucracy as well as access to higher education (Chapter Eight). Similarly, the Tamil Saivite movement (that explicitly linked the Tamil speaking areas of Sri Lanka and south India) was very similar in form and substance to the Hindu and Buddhist revivalisms but failed to establish a similar political presence. In south India, the Tamil-Saivite revival had given way by the early twentieth century to competing Indian nationalist and Dravidian conceptions of Tamil identity and interest. Meanwhile, in the Tamil speaking areas of Sri Lanka, it gave way to a form of Tamil revivalism that was closer to Congress' conception of Tamil identity than that of the Dravidian movement.

Indian and Sri Lankan political mobilisation to demand constitutional reform also took comparable forms, although leading to very different political outcomes. The INC and the CNA were similarly elite organisations that conducted their activities in English and confined their activities to meetings and statements.³⁶ From 1920 onwards, however, the INC in India adopted mass form and sought to directly mobilise the Indian population in mass protests intended to secure its objective; broadly Indian self government. In doing so, its style of politics became vernacular; Congress leaders spoke in the vernacular languages, adopted 'national' dress, used popular means of communication (including theatre, film and even cinema) and engaged in the revival of Indian cultural forms, such as the south Indian forms of Carnatic music and Bharathanatyam dance.³⁷ These activities also overlapped with those of Hindu revivalists in that Congress often adopted Hindu religious idioms and images to mobilise popular support (Goswami 2004; Gould 2004). Congress' activities had a strong influence on politicians in Sri Lanka. In the Tamil speaking areas it directly influenced the Jaffna Youth Congress (JYC) which had established links with Congress leaders, even organising Gandhi's only visit to the island in 1927 (Perinbanayagam 1980). The JYC adopted INC forms and strategies – such as the vernacular languages and a 'national dress' similar to the attire of south Indian politicians – to promote a pan ethnic form of Ceylonese nationalism (1980). Congress was also influential amongst Sinhalese politicians; many Sinhala political leaders attended Congress sessions in India, wore 'national dress', spoke in the vernacular, promoted Buddhism, adopted Gandhian terms such as 'soul force' and 'passive resistance', endorsed Gandhi's campaign of homespun cotton and even advocated a federation of India and Ceylon (Russell 1982; Roberts 1997b). Despite these strong connections, Sri Lankan politics lacked a pan island organisation comparable to the Indian Congress and as a consequence Tamil and Sinhala political activity produced two separate and incompatible conceptions of national identity and national

interest. As the discussion in the empirical chapters demonstrates, this difference can only be explained as the outcome of contingent (in that they could have been otherwise) competitive processes through which political actors and associations seek to establish more or less inclusive conceptions of national identity and national interest in a more or less temporally continuous way.

There were also striking synchronicities in the ethnic and national politics of post independence India and Sri Lanka, though an absence of politically significant connections. In September 1949 the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) was founded in Madras City (Ross-Barnett 1976:79) and a few months later in December the Federal Party (FP) was founded in Colombo (Wilson 1994:32). While the Federal Party sought territorial autonomy for the Tamil speaking regions, the DMK sought initially outright independence for an area it labelled Dravida Nadu, covering the Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannadam, or the Dravidian language speaking areas. By 1956 the FP was the dominant actor in Sri Lankan Tamil politics. In 1967 Congress lost power, for the first time since 1935, in the Tamil speaking Madras state and politics has since been dominated by Dravidian parties. In 1956 language became a vital issue of contestation in India and Sri Lanka; in India leading to the linguistic re-organisation of provinces (King, R.D, 1999) and in Sri Lanka to the adoption of Sinhala as the only official language (De Votta 2004). Language and the question of the official language remained issues of conflict until the late 1960s. Moves to impose Sinhala as the official language in Sri Lanka sparked Tamil protest which in turn produced a backlash of anti Tamil violence in 1958 and again mass Tamil protest in 1961. Similarly moves to impose Hindi as the official language provoked violent protests in the Tamil speaking areas in 1967. In India, however, the language issue was resolved through an uneasy but stable compromise that granted Hindi official recognition, but permitted the

continued use of English at the national or union level and the other ‘national’ languages, including Tamil at the state level (Ross-Barnett 1976:241). In contrast, in Sri Lanka conflict over language morphed into a wider set of contradictions over land policy, employment and access to higher education that were associated with escalating demands for political autonomy.

The divergent outcomes of post independence Tamil politics were also associated with an absence of strong political connections between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lankan Tamil political actors. The FP’s conception of Tamil identity and interest was strongly political, centred on need to secure territorial autonomy as a means of securing Tamil interests, particularly through economic development. In contrast, the DMK and Congress together cultivated an understanding of Tamil identity and interest organised around the promotion of Tamil language and literature, the promotion of social and economic development and the provision of welfare policies. The strong connections that existed between the Tamil – Saivite revivals of the nineteenth century and between the cultural revivalisms of the 1920’s were absent. Instead, as discussed later, Tamil politics in India and Sri Lanka was decisively shaped by the extent to which the organising principles of Tamil politics overlapped with the dominant framings of national identity and national interest in the respective states.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The study of nationalism, ethnicity and ethnic conflict is a theoretically and methodologically plural field that also contains a number of ongoing debates.³⁸ There are approaches that explain ethnic and national politics as the outcomes of rational individual decision making, testing their predictions with quantitative analysis,³⁹ others that use qualitative and interpretive methods and focus on a smaller set of cases⁴⁰ and some that use a mixture of the two.⁴¹ A common concern that runs through this literature is an effort to identify the conditions and forces driving the production of ethnic and nationalist sentiment and identities, and thereby explain why ethnic and national politics might appear plausible, attractive or indeed inevitable. National and ethnic politics have been variously explained as effects of long run structural transformations in economic, social and political life,⁴² as expressions of historically established forms of cultural community,⁴³ as linked to fundamental aspects of human psychology, as outcomes of rational individual choice, as ideological tools that conceal other material interests and as effects of discursive (or linguistic) practices, and so on.

Crosscutting the diversity of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches are a number of unresolved debates. The first and most important of these concerns the historical origins and sociological characteristics of nationalism and, principally, its relations to the transformations of modernity. Modernist approaches, such as those put forward by Ernst Gellner (1983), Benedict Anderson (1991) and John Breuilly (1993) explain nationalism as a product of the social, cultural, economic and political transformations of modernity. In contrast, ethnosymbolist arguments, as set out by Anthony Smith (1986) and John Hutchinson (2005) amongst others, argue that the

symbolic resources of modern national communities have links to pre-modern forms of social and political community. A second debate revolves around the question of whether nations can be categorised into distinct civic or ethnic types. Hans Kohn (1945), Leah Greenfeld (1992) and others have argued that civic forms of national belonging, defined by voluntary allegiance to institutions and political values can be differentiated from ethnic forms of nationalism defined by notions of blood and belonging. This distinction has been challenged on the grounds that forms of nationalism that appear civic, also always implicitly involve ethnic or cultural content (Yack 1996; Brubaker 2004). A third, and more recent, debate focuses on the constitutional and political means of resolving ethnic and national conflicts; whether constitutional design should either eschew ethnic recognition and thereby facilitate ethnic integration or constitutionally recognise ethnic identities as a means of accommodating ethnic cleavages (Choudhry 2008).

This chapter will review key studies that have sought to explain ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka, focusing in particular on the literature that deals specifically with the Tamil speaking regions or that has a bearing on explaining the divergent outcomes of Tamil politics in the two states. The studies reviewed contain a diverse array of theoretical and methodological approaches that defy easy or conclusive categorisation but can usefully be divided into two groups on the basis of how ethnicity and nationalism are characterised. The first group, labelled 'realist' here, treats ethnic and national politics as expressing a form of subjectivity that is either linked to foundational aspects of human psychology or to structurally important – and relatively stable – characteristics of social life. A second group, labelled 'constructivist', characterises ethnic and national politics as effects, more or less transient and easily created, of other factors: namely, discursive or ideological projects, political or economic incentives and opportunities or a combination of the

above. The 'realist' and 'constructivist' labels are far from precise. Many of the approaches included in the 'realist' category explain ethnic and national sentiment as a historically produced – but relatively stable and therefore significant – effect; likewise approaches in the 'constructivist' category characterise ethnic or national identity, once created, as very real in its emotive affect. The categorisation does however point to an important difference of emphasis in understanding the drivers of ethnic and national politics: for realists in significant and enduring aspects of human subjectivity or the structures of social and political life, and for constructivists in contingent conditions and/or the wilful and more or less self seeking activities of social and political actors.

The review is therefore focussed on studies that have the variable outcomes of ethnic pluralism as a focus. It does not provide a general review of the general historical and political science literature on the Tamil speaking areas. Many of the key general historical and political science studies of Tamil politics for the period covered by the dissertation are anyway concerned with explaining ethnic and national politics. This is because the emergence of the Dravidian movement in south India and the escalation of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka have been crucial and definitive political processes of the two regions. For example Washbrook (1976) and Baker (1976) in their respective historical studies of politics in Madras explain ethnic and national identities instrumentally as more or less convenient vehicles for an assortment of other interests. Similarly, in the political science literature, Ross-Barnett (1976) and N. Subramanian (1999) provide contrasting explanations of the Dravidian movement in realist and instrumentalist terms respectively. These studies are discussed further below as their arguments have a bearing on the conceptual approach to national and ethnic politics set out in this dissertation. Many of the other key historical surveys of Indian and Sri Lankan politics, including

surveys of Tamil politics, implicitly rely on the theoretical approaches surveyed below. For example while Seal (1968), Russell (1982) and Tambiah (1992) rely on instrumentalist accounts of ethnic identities, Gunasingham (1999), De Silva (2005) and Goswami (2004) adopt realist approaches. However, the explanatory intent of these studies is to situate key political developments, including the development of ethnic and national identities, in relation to wider social and economic processes. Their explanatory purpose therefore does not directly bear on the central question of this dissertation, namely why under comparable conditions, ethnic pluralism in south India led to peaceable accommodation whereas in Sri Lanka it led to escalating conflict. For this reason the review below focuses on studies that have as a central object the problem of accounting for the variable political outcomes of ethnic pluralism.

3.2 Realist approaches

Horowitz (1985) and Chandra (2004) provide explanations of ethnic politics and conflict based on the micro-dynamics of human psychology and behaviour that give rise to different explanations of the divergent outcomes studied here. For Horowitz, ethnic conflict has its foundation in the elemental forces of group behaviour; individuals identify with ethnic labels – as these constitute a visible and viable marker of group segregation- and then seek to secure the status and position of their (ethnic) group, relative to the status and position of other ethnic groups⁴⁴. Crucially, in Horowitz's explanation it is relative rather than absolute position that is vital to explaining group conflict in much of developing Asia and Africa and he highlights in particular competition for public sector employment and official recognition for ethnic markers such as religion and culture that mark groups as relatively 'advanced' and 'progressive' or 'backward' and 'traditional'⁴⁵. He argues that India avoided ethnic conflict and Sri Lanka did not because of the character of ethnic demography; namely the Indian political system is characterised by a large number of scattered

ethnic groups that prevents the emergence of binary conflict whereas in Sri Lanka the primacy of the Tamil – Sinhala cleavage provides a basis for polarised conflict (1985: 37, 39). As a consequence, in India ethnic demands were regionally dispersed, non-zero sum and also non contradictory – i.e. the demands of Tamil speakers and Marathi speakers could be accommodated by the centre through regional level recognition for their languages. In contrast, in Sri Lanka ethnic conflict led to contradictory demands of Tamil and Sinhala speakers on the centre that were mutually irreconcilable.

Also starting from the micro-foundations of human behaviour, Chandra (2004) seeks to explain a particular aspect of ethnic behaviour: the importance of ethnic identity in voter behaviour and the propensity of voters to prefer co-ethnic candidates. She suggests that in situations where democratic politics revolves centrally around political candidates' ability to access and dispense public goods (patronage), voters uncertain about candidates' intentions will use ethnicity as a marker, believing that they are more likely to receive patronage from co-ethnic candidates than from others (2004: 49-51, 58-9). Chandra assigns the stable co-existence of Indian democracy and competitive ethnic parties to the multiple cross –cutting cleavages that the Indian political system has encouraged; as Indians can organise and demand goods on the basis of language, caste and religion no single ethnic identity becomes overwhelming and no cleavage becomes the focus of a binary conflict (2005). In contrast – and by implication – in situations like Sri Lanka, ethnic parties have congealed along the most visible and numerically largest categories (namely Sinhala and Tamil). Whereas for Horowitz ethnic politics expresses a psychic need for relative group worth, Chandra derives ethnic behaviour from a rational calculation of expected benefits that are reinforced by the psychic benefits of group standing. Furthermore, for Chandra the relative ethnic stability of Indian politics is to be explained by the types of incentives created by the

Indian constitution, rather than by the existing ethnic demography of the Indian population. The Indian constitution provides for the distribution of goods based on multiple cleavages - including caste and language - and as a consequence encourages the formation of cross cutting allegiances that prevent the consolidation of polarised groups; linguistic groups are intersected by caste identities and vice versa such that caste and language based patronage networks are always at risk of being intersected by competing mobilisation.

Both these approaches effectively begin from observed patterns of ethnic behaviour and then infer motivations or rationalities that might explain this behaviour. They then go on to suggest how these ethnic rationalities or motivations might help explain and predict observed patterns of ethnic politics and conflict. The struggle for relative group worth and esteem as well as the rational pursuit of patronage have undoubtedly contributed to the growth of key nationalist and ethnic parties that have shaped south Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil politics. The empirical chapters that follow show however that the divergence of political outcomes in the Tamil speaking areas cannot be explained in terms of unchanging and temporally static variables such as human psychology or motivation. Instead, the presence or absence of ethnic conflict along the Tamil axis in these two states is an outcome of the trajectories of key political movements and organisations; primarily the INC, Sinhala Buddhism, the FP and the Dravidian movement. The growth of these movements relied on a wide, complex range of motivations and activities that established not just their political dominance but also their ideological frameworks – including the substantive content of their ethnic and national claims.

To begin with, the Indian government's willingness and ability to recognise multiple ethnic claims and institute multiple cleavages (Chandra 2005) within the Indian population is not simply an act of enlightened policy but rather the

outcome of process. For example, the Indian constitution's recognition of ethnic pluralism derives from official Congress policy, a product of Congress' temporally continuous activities of oppositional politics during the Colonial period.⁴⁶ In attempting to establish a unified national platform, Congress politicians, from the late nineteenth century, had to confront the problem of India's ethnic pluralism. In the process, they adopted measures such as secularism, recognition of linguistic diversity and positive discrimination for low caste groups. Crucially, what was important in the adoption of these measures was the need to present a unified 'national' platform that could potentially overcome the opposition of ethnic groups that charged Congress of representing only elite, upper caste, Hindu and Hindi speaking interests.⁴⁷ The measures that evolved through these struggles were later incorporated into the Indian constitution because Congress was established as the dominant party with the Constituent assembly.⁴⁸

Congress' political growth was importantly dependent upon patronage seeking politicians and voters across India, but these actors switched their allegiance to Congress during the 1930's – as an attractive vehicle for their ambitions – because it had *already* established a presence through its temporally continuous activities of oppositional organisation and mobilisation within an Indian nationalist framework.⁴⁹ The comparable absence of multiple cleavages in Sri Lankan politics is likewise the result of a different historical process, in which sustained attempts to forge a pan ethnic oppositional platform were absent.⁵⁰ Even if the activities of all the political actors who over a long historical period played crucial roles in establishing the INC's political presence were to be reduced to the struggle for relative group worth or patronage (rent seeking) activity, the temporally continuous co-ordination of such activity within a pan ethnic platform is still important. Patronage politics was equally visible in Sri Lanka during the colonial (Russell 1982:68-103) and

post colonial periods (Kearney 1973:52-3, 159; Moore 1985:224) and yet the absence of a pan ethnic platform led to very different constitutional outcomes and trajectories of ethnic politics.

Likewise, the absence of sustained and binary ethnic conflict in India cannot be explained simply in terms of a fragmented ethnic demography. The Hindu / Muslim cleavage has an established and temporally sustained presence in Indian ethnic and national politics and Hindu revivalist activity predated and then coexisted (sometimes in conflict and at other times in cooperation) with Congress' pan ethnic nationalist mobilisation.⁵¹ While the political and social salience of Hindu nationalist rhetoric has been temporally and geographically varied, Hindu nationalist associations have been able to accommodate caste as well as linguistic cleavages within the Hindu category.⁵² Furthermore, even after partition, Indian Muslims constitute twelve per cent of the Indian population (Hasan 1988a:818). Hindu nationalist mobilisation with a distinct anti-Muslim ethos continued in the post-independence period and has sustained temporally and regionally varying but persistent incidents of Hindu – Muslim violence (1998a:820). The Hindu nationalist Bharathia Janata Party (BJP) has also had electoral success, leading national governments (1996-8 and 1999-2004) and various state governments (Jaffrelot 1996; Hansen and Jaffrelot 2001). However, the Hindu nationalist project has not been able to overturn India's relative inclusive constitutional order and even BJP led coalition governments have also had to honour the tradition of extending state subsidies to Indian Muslims making the Hajj to Mecca (Stepan et al 2011:69). The absence of sustained binary conflict along the Hindu – Muslim cleavage is not therefore because such a cleavage is politically unviable but because the political trajectory of Hindu nationalism has been shaped conclusively by countervailing Congress mobilisation and the political dominance of Congress pan-ethnic conception of the Indian nation.

In Sri Lanka, meanwhile, the electoral and political dominance of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism must also be seen as the result of process and politics, rather than an unmediated expression of ethnic demography. For most of the colonial period, the most important ethnic cleavages were along religious and caste lines within both the Tamil and Sinhala categories and along a regional (Kandyan versus Low Country) axis within the Sinhala category.⁵³ Caste cleavages were so strong that in 1911 upper caste Sinhalese voters preferred an upper caste Tamil candidate over a lower caste Sinhalese candidate in elections, albeit from a very limited franchise, to choose a Ceylonese representative for the legislative council (Wickramasignhe 1995:31-4). The establishment of a unified Sinhala Buddhist framework took place through processes that accommodated (more or less equally) religious, regional and caste cleavages within the Sinhala category.⁵⁴ This consolidation, furthermore, took place in the absence of a coherent and stable pan-ethnic political organisation.

Another set of what are here termed realist approaches explain the different outcomes in India and Sri Lanka in terms of the decisions and policies adopted by political leaders. Bose (1994), for example, relates Sri Lanka's escalating ethnic conflict to the series of discriminatory measures adopted by successive Sri Lankan governments,⁵⁵ as do Stepan, Linz and Yadav (2009). Meanwhile, De Votta (2004) suggests that the escalation of conflict was a consequence of Sinhala leaders' decisions to pursue strategies of ethnic outbidding in an effort to secure the majority of the Sinhala vote, thereby eschewing the possibility of compromise with the Tamils. In a similar vein, O'Duffy (2007) argues that Sinhalese perceptions of discrimination during colonial rule along with the adoption of majoritarian institutions led to post-independence Sinhala ethnic outbidding that polarised Sinhala-Tamil relations and led eventually to a sustained Tamil insurgency. These approaches assume that ethnic diversity can be peaceably accommodated where leaders, and their constituents, show

moderation and agree to appropriate institutional reforms. Stepan, Linz and Yadav (2011) also make an explicit comparison between Tamil speaking areas in India and Sri Lanka, linking their divergent trajectories to the Indian adoption of a set of what they term 'state-nation' policies that explicitly recognize cultural plurality, in contrast to the 'nation-state' policies followed in Sri Lanka that sought to forcibly create cultural homogeneity out of deeply entrenched cultural heterogeneity. Finally, Ross-Barnett's study of south Indian Tamil nationalism suggests that the peaceable accommodation of the Dravidian movement within the Indian constitutional framework occurred in large part because of the moderation of the leaders of the DMK who in November 1960 dropped the demand for secession (1976:109).

The argument presented here does not necessarily contradict this analysis. Instead, crucially, it places often momentous political decisions within a broader historical process, suggesting that these decisions are informed by wider and politically entrenched understandings of national identity and national interest, rather than momentary instances of extreme or moderate calculation. For example, when Congress leaders adopted accommodative policies, described by Stepan, Linz and Yadav as 'state-nation' policies, they did so as a necessary means of consolidating a pan-ethnic platform. From the inaugural meeting of Congress in December 1885, Indian nationalists associated with Congress were anxious to demonstrate that their organisation had pan-ethnic and pan-Indian support.⁵⁶ To this end they rotated the annual sessions through cities across India, including cities that were important Muslim centres, such as Lucknow and Allahabad. They did this not merely because they were necessarily convinced of the normative value of a pan-ethnic platform, but because demonstrating pan-ethnic support was crucial to legitimise their claim that the INC was a truly 'national' body. In other words, to be national meant to be demonstrably pan-Indian and therefore pan-ethnic

in scope. During much of the nineteenth century, Congress' principal adversaries were British officials in India,⁵⁷ while the party's politicians sought to influence the British parliament and wider British public.⁵⁸ These claims were challenged by the anti Congress views of prominent Muslim politicians⁵⁹, whilst British officials also claimed that Congress did not represent the vast mass of the Indian population. The steady and inexorable consolidation by Congress of principles, such as secularism and the recognition of linguistic pluralism as core components of its activities, was therefore an outcome of temporally continuous activities of oppositional politics, towards the end of presenting a truly national (in the sense of pan-ethnic) platform of opposition to British rule.

The equally inexorable consolidation of Sinhala Buddhist 'nation-state' policies in Sri Lanka is similarly the result of a process including oppositional politics, competition to gain control of the state and finally through the activities of the state itself. The escalation of conflict was not the inevitable result of Sinhala Buddhist dominance. The trajectory of conflict in Sri Lanka also required that Tamil politicians responded to discrimination by consolidating an alternative conception of national identity and interest, one premised on Tamil – Sinhala collective equality rather than Sinhala first hierarchy.⁶⁰ This was by no means inevitable and required the conscious and continuous in time activities of the FP, formed in 1949. The FP's eventual electoral dominance was facilitated, but not guaranteed, by the escalation of discrimination. This becomes evident if the behaviour of FP politicians is contrasted with Sri Lankan Muslim politicians: while the FP developed along a path of oppositional politics, Muslim leaders worked within the Sinhala Buddhist framework without challenging its hierarchical implications.⁶¹ The subsequent escalation of conflict between the FP and successive Sri Lankan governments was largely inevitable given that their conceptions of national identity and interest were mutually

incompatible. All of the agreements negotiated by Tamil political leaders with their Sinhala counterparts during this period, and then again in 1981, fell well short of the demand for federal autonomy, let alone the later demands for secession, but none were implemented and all were attacked by opposition Sinhala leaders as an existential threat to (Sinhala) national identity and interest.⁶²

The importance of political overlap, rather than positions of extremism or moderation, is also evident in the Dravidian movement's peaceable accommodation within the Indian constitutional framework. As discussed further in Chapter Eight, the DMK's decision to abandon secession in the early 1960's is best understood as part of a broader shift away from (electorally unappealing) radical social reform and towards a more resonant Tamil cultural nationalism (Ross-Barnett 1976:89). EVR Ramaswamy, the Dravidian leader who most clearly articulated the demand for secession, sought it as a means of achieving radical social reform and was himself ambivalent about the aesthetic and cultural value of Tamil language and literature (Pandian 1999). In adopting Tamil cultural nationalism, however, the DMK was moving onto ground already occupied by the Congress movement, which had long been engaged in Tamil literary and cultural revival (Chapter 5). Furthermore, the promotion and cultivation of regional languages and cultures – as a core aspect of Indian nationalist mobilisation – was incorporated into the constitutional framework that recognised India as a multilingual state. In short, the areas of overlap between Congress and the DMK, particularly on the areas of Tamil cultural revivalism, set the context for political decision making and laid the basis for ethnic accommodation.

The events surrounding the hosting of the World Tamil Conference provide a clear example of the existence of political overlap in south India and its absence in Sri Lanka. The Conference was initiated in 1966 by a renowned

Tamil scholar from Jaffna, Xavier Thanninayagam (then working at the University of Malaysia), as an occasional global forum to discuss Tamil studies. The first conference was held in Kuala Lumpur and opened by Tunku Abdul Rahma, the Malaysian Prime Minister. At the first conference, the Congress Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M. Bakhtavatsalam, offered to host the second conference in Madras City. Before the conference could be held, however, the Congress government was defeated at the 1967 election by the DMK. The DMK government was therefore able to take credit for 'officially' hosting the event, which had been organised in large part by the previous Congress government. However, the conference was by no means a purely DMK event, and the opening address was given by the then President of the Indian Union, Dr. Zakir Husain.⁶³ The fourth 1974 Conference was held in Jaffna (an intervening 1970 conference was held in Paris), despite the opposition of the Sri Lankan government, but it ended in disaster when police opened fire on the final session of the conference killing nine civilians (Ponnambalam 1983:181). Whereas Congress and the DMK could agonistically compete to promote Tamil language and literature along with other issues, namely economic development and social welfare in the Tamil speaking areas, the FP and the Sinhala dominated 'national' parties had mutually contradictory positions on these issues.

Finally, James Manor has argued that Sri Lanka's escalating ethnic conflict, in particular Sinhala leaders' inability to honour agreements with Tamil leaders, is a consequence of the organisational weakness of the major Sinhala parties (1979). This weakness is a symptom of the wider failure of 'political integration' on the island; a failure that is reflected in the absence of strong institutions linking politics at the local level with national politics in Colombo. The two main Sinhala parties, the UNP and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), have failed to evolve into robust 'broadly based organisations' with

active and vital local party units. As a consequence, neither party has developed a stable support base, bolstered by strong linkages between the leadership and ordinary members, capable of assuring re-election. In comparison, the Congress party in India, which was comfortably re-elected in competitive elections from 1952 to 1977, was characterised by a coherent organisation and active local party politics. Without a comparable party structure, Sinhala party leaders and Prime Ministers, unsure of their prospects for re-election were unwilling to honour agreements reached with Tamil leaders, fearful that they might lose votes at the following election (1979: 22, 39-40). The argument is 'realist' in so far as it accepts the reality of ethnic sentiment and points to the need for a political settlement to 'ease ethnic tensions.' It also potentially links the divergent outcomes of ethnic politics in India and Sri Lanka to an important difference in their institutions and political processes; namely India's more cohesively integrated political system that sustained – and was in turn sustained by – strong linkages between the local and the national via political parties (in the period of study Congress) and a vibrant system of local government connected to provincial and national levels.

However, Manor's analysis overlooks the interlinked processes through which political parties develop cohesive organisations whilst simultaneously adopting a clear ideological framework. For example, both the pan Indian nationalism of the Indian Congress, as well as the largely cultural and social reform Tamil nationalism of the Dravidian parties, developed in tandem with organisational structures. Furthermore, the crucial factor in determining the political accommodation of the Dravidian movement within the overall Indian nationalist framework was the overlap in their respective understandings of Tamil identity and interest. Had the major Sinhala parties evolved an organisational structure in which Tamils and Sinhalese were viewed as equal

collectives, conflict would have been avoided. However, if the Sinhala parties had evolved cohesive organisations on a Sinhala Buddhist platform, the problem of mutual incompatibility would have remained but with the added feature of organisational stability. The relative organisational weakness of the Sinhala parties is therefore less consequential than the electoral dominance of Sinhala Buddhism in the post independence period and the absence of a sustained political movement that expressed any pan-ethnic alternative. The emergence of Tamil – Sinhala ethnic conflict was therefore a matter of ideological contradiction, rather than organisational weakness alone. That is, the overt political and later military conflict between Tamil nationalist actors and the Sri Lankan state was thus an expression of the ideological incompatibility between the Tamil nationalist conception of Tamil – Sinhala collective equality and the Sinhala nationalist conception of Sinhala first hierarchy.

3.3 Constructivism

The approaches labelled here constructivist share an approach that seeks to explain ethnic and nationalist sentiment as an effect of other processes. In particular, they focus on ideologies or discourses as key to shaping subjectivities and interest towards ethnic affiliation. In some approaches, ideologies or discourses are seen as world views used by existing interests, more or less consciously and instrumentally, to mobilise political action and realise common ends.⁶⁴ Other approaches, influenced by post-structuralism, use terms such as discourse and ideology to capture an amalgam of linguistic, administrative and bodily practices that shape and produce ethnic and national identities in place of previously existing subjectivities and orientations to the world.⁶⁵ There is therefore an important theoretical divide between post structuralist and other forms of constructivist accounts that revolves on their different understandings of human agency. This difference is nevertheless

bound by a common assumption that ethnic and national politics are effects of social, political and or discursive dynamics, rather than an expression of unchanging aspects of human psychology or group behaviour. Constructivist studies of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka have pointed to the often contingent, rather than structurally necessary, nature of ethnic and nationalist mobilisation highlighting in particular the inaccurate content of claims such movements make.⁶⁶ However, as Chapter Two argued and as the historical chapters will detail, the array of interests, ideologies and discursive practices available for ethnic and nationalist mobilisation were broadly comparable and cannot in and of themselves account for the divergent outcomes of the south Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil speaking areas.

The instrumentalist (or non post-structuralist) constructivist accounts relate ethnic and nationalist mobilisation to existing social, economic and political interests. There are however, differences between them on how far ethnic and nationalist appeals have subjective resonance with their constituents. In some accounts, while political leaders and elites use ethnic and nationalist slogans instrumentally, such slogans have instinctive resonance amongst their constituents.⁶⁷ Other accounts, however, suggest that both political leaders and their constituents use ethnic and national slogans to achieve other and unrelated social and economic ends.⁶⁸

Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict has been explained in terms of elite instrumentalism by Kenneth Bush (2003) and Kristian Stokke (1998). Bush links the escalation of ethnic appeals to intra-ethnic power struggles, suggesting politicians' attempts to ethnically outbid their co-ethnic competitors in the pursuit of power has thwarted attempts at ethnic moderation. In a slightly different vein, Stokke uses a Marxist approach to argue that nationalist appeals were used by Sinhala and Tamil political leaders from the dominant class as a means of mobilising co-ethnic cross class support and consolidating a system of

patronage politics that diverted and displaced appeals for more substantive forms of economic redistribution. Both of these accounts point to significant moments of inter-ethnic co-operation to undermine the claims of a structurally significant Sinhala Tamil conflict; for example, Bush notes as significant instances of military co-operation between Tamil militants and the Sri Lankan military, particularly during the Indian intervention, while Stokke draws attention to the similar class backgrounds of ethnic elites in the post independence period and their fitful attempts at negotiating political compromises. The two accounts also assume that ethnic appeals are naturally resonant amongst the target populations.

Set against a comparative framework, these elite instrumentalist accounts pose a number of problems. Firstly, while elite interests in political power and securing a highly unequal economic order might have been secured through Tamil and Sinhala nationalist projects, this cannot explain why they had to be secured through these specific projects and not others. During the period that saw the consolidation of the Tamil and Sinhala nationalist projects, Sri Lankan Muslim, Indian and south Indian Tamil elite interests in power and patronage politics were secured through other types of political project. The political consolidation of Congress, the Dravidian parties and the careers of Sri Lankan Muslim politicians could equally be explained in terms of the satisfaction of political and economic interests without the attendant ethnic conflict. In other words, while Tamil and Sinhala elite interests were no different from the interests of other political elites in India and Sri Lanka, the escalation of Tamil – Sinhala conflict was quite specific and unique. The consolidation of Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms, as well as the escalation of conflict between them, may well have satisfied elite interests but cannot be said to have been caused or driven by these interests in and of themselves. Secondly, the escalation of Sinhala – Tamil conflict had material and political consequences that were

quite apart from the interests of elites who may have instrumentally used these projects in a more or less conscious way. As Chapter Eight demonstrates the consolidation of Sinhala Buddhism transformed economic and social life on the island in significant ways that were largely in keeping with the Sinhala Buddhist ethos. At the same time, the consolidation of Tamil nationalism, as a form of oppositional politics that insisted on Tamil–Sinhala collective equality, constrained the options of Tamil politicians who arguably would have had greater access to patronage resources if they had sought collaboration with Sinhala Buddhist parties, than opposition to them, following the example of Muslim and Sinhala Christian politicians.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the presumption that ethno-nationalist appeals would be naturally resonant and appealing, above for example pan ethnic forms of mobilisation, overlooks the temporally continuous activities and processes that led to the consolidation of Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil nationalism. In other words, Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil nationalisms only became resonant as a result sustained political mobilisation and the consequences this mobilisation entailed. Finally, Sinhala Buddhist nationalism is in its ideological claims almost symmetrical with Hindu nationalism in India, yet Sinhala Buddhist nationalism has attained a position of overwhelming dominance in Sri Lankan politics that Hindu nationalism has not realised in Indian politics.

Instrumentalist logics have also been invoked by Washbrook (1976), Baker (1976) and N Subramanian (1999) to explain ethnic and nationalist politics in south India. In these accounts, political leaders as well as their followers pursue other and unrelated ends through national and ethnic mobilisation. In their respective studies of politics in colonial south India, Washbrook and Baker explain ideological labels – namely Indian nationalism and the Dravidian movement – as a means of linking and co-ordinating political and economic interests across local, provincial and national arenas. The key figures

in their explanations are rural bosses and urban magnates (Baker 1976:23; Washbrook 1976:77, 105), actors with significant political or economic resources able to command the allegiance of a multi-ethnic and inter-caste (contra Chandra) constituency of followers and dependents (Baker 1976:27-31; Washbrook 1976:143-5). They point to the frequent shifts in the allegiance of magnate politicians, regularly shifting from Congress to the Dravidian camp and back again, to suggest that party labels had little relationship to the substance of politics, which was primarily concerned with the control and distribution of economic resources.

This magnate centred analysis also challenges the realist accounts of Ross-Barnet and Stepan, Linz and Yadav who argue that the Brahmin – non Brahmin cleavage, central to colonial Tamil politics in India, expressed a real and socially significant cultural divide. Against this view Baker and Washbrook each point to the inter-caste character of magnate networks and the inter-caste co-operation evident in much of the cultural, religious and educational philanthropic activity that characterised magnate life. Furthermore, these accounts also discount the possibility that mass political activity, whether electoral behaviour or mass protest, can be explained as an expression of Dravidian or Indian nationalist affiliation. Rather, they argue that by voting or engaging in protests, south Indians were more likely motivated by a range of other factors such as magnate allegiance, opposition to specific government policies, expressing economic discontent or seeking social mobility.

The flaws in these accounts mirror those in the elite instrumentalism of Bush and Stokke. That is, an analysis of the interests that are arguably satisfied through ethnic and nationalist politics cannot explain why ethnic and nationalist politics takes one particular pattern rather than another, and also ignores the important political and material consequences of these specific

patterns. Comparable magnate interests were served in colonial Sri Lanka, although in the absence of a developed pan ethnic political movement, with very different consequences. However, Baker and Washbrook are, in common with the elite instrumentalists, dismissive of the ideological and cultural content of political movements. Washbrook for example uses the term 'publicist' to identify political actors engaged in activities such as journalism, literary production and political agitation, arguing that publicists are invariably just cogs in larger magnate machines (1976:119, 232). However, as the analysis of colonial Indian politics in Chapter Five shows, the patterns and content of publicist activity was just as important in determining the trajectory of Congress' growth. Congress' success in mobilising electoral support in the Tamil speaking areas and its failure to do so amongst the Muslim electorate is linked to the cultural and ideological content of its activities in these different regions. Through its activities in the Tamil speaking areas, Congress was able to present itself as a vehicle for Tamil identity and interests and *thereby* convinced Tamil magnates of its viability as a vehicle for their political ambitions. Congress failed to have the same effect in the Muslim majority areas and consequently did not win the support of Muslim magnates. Congress' political trajectory and its ability to incorporate Tamil but not Muslim identity cannot be reduced to the coalitions of interest Congress mobilised and satisfied.

N. Subramanian's study of the electoral growth of the Dravidian movement is located in the post independence decades, a period that saw the political clout of the magnate undermined by the growing political assertiveness of groups labelled 'backward castes' (BCs) or other backward castes (OBCs). These groups consisted of middling peasants, small shopkeepers and casual labour situated in between large landowners as well as urban professional and commercial groups. In caste terms they fall between Brahmin and upper caste non Brahmins at one end of the spectrum and Dalit or untouchable groups at the other, and

constitute up to 67 per cent of the Tamil Nadu population (1999:45, 138-9). Subramanian links the peaceable accommodation of the Dravidian movement with the core interests of these groups through an argument centred on the organisational structure of the Dravidian parties. He characterises the two Dravidian parties, the DMK and the AIADMK, as having a pluralist, rather than authoritarian, relationship with the multiple caste, religious and economic groups they mobilised. This pluralist relationship contained and muted the potential for conflict and ethnic antagonism contained within the Dravidian movement. Subramanian suggests, in constructivist and instrumentalist mode, that the Dravidian label was adopted by a diversity of emergent OBC groups for their own ends – namely social and political advancement. In doing so, such groups forced the party leaderships to blunt their more extreme ideological demands, namely for secession, and instead encouraged party leaders to seek political power through the Indian constitutional framework (1999:27-46).

In contrast to Ross Barnett who points to the strategic moderation of DMK leaders to explain the peaceable accommodation of the Dravidian movement, Subramanian's argument rests on the moderation of Dravidian party *supporters*. He also suggests that the Dravidian parties' pluralist ethos can explain the divergent ethnic outcomes in south India and Sri Lanka. The internal pluralism of the two Dravidian parties meant that party leaders abandoned their earlier concerns with 'policing ethnic boundaries' and focussed instead on their constituents' demands to cultivate and 'revalue plebian' cultural norms and practices (1999:10). The Sinhala Buddhist movement in Sri Lanka, less plural in its internal structure, retained its focus on an exclusivist ideology and the 'policing of ethnic boundaries' that prompted escalating conflict. Subramanian's argument implies that ethnic antagonism stems largely from the leadership of political movements, while ordinary followers tend to have

localised and group specific interests that are less likely to produce ethnic conflict. De-centralised and internally plural ethnic movements, such as the Dravidian movement, are therefore less likely to produce ethnic antagonism than centralised and authoritarian movements.

Subramanian's analysis of Dravidian ideology, and its evaluation of the impact of party structure on the divergent ethnic outcomes in south India and Sri Lanka, is however open to question. Firstly, he characterises the initial phase of Dravidian politics, led by Erode Venkata Ramaswamy and the Self Respect Movement and, later, the Dravida Kazhagam (DK), as conveying an ethno-nationalist ideology, one that privileged the interests and identities of Hindu non-Brahmin castes over those of Dalits and non-Hindus (1999:107-119). This ideological orientation combined with Ramaswamy's centralised, doctrinaire and authoritarian leadership style gave the Dravidian movement the potential for ethnic antagonism. Ramaswamy's potential to invoke ethnic conflict was blunted, Subramanian argues, by the more accommodating leadership styles of later Dravidian party political leaders - C. N Annadurai, M. Karunanidhi and M. G Ramachandran - and the plural organisational structures of the Dravidian parties - the DMK and AIADMK. Subramanian's reading of early Dravidian politics as carrying an ethno-nationalist orientation is challenged by other analyses which points to the centrality of social reform in the ethos and activities of Ramaswamy and the organisations he led. Pandian (1999, 2007) and Geetha and Rajadurai (1998) in their respective studies point to Ramaswamy's explicit inclusion of Tamil speaking Muslims, Christians and Tamil Dalits in the Dravidian category along with his ambivalence towards, and sometimes outright derision of, Tamil literary and cultural revival activities. They also point to Ramaswamy's almost exclusive focus on purging Tamil society of customs he regarded as alien, Hindu and irrational - primarily Hindu ritual, the everyday observance of caste boundaries and gender

inequality – in contrast to the DMK and AIADMK's downgrading of social reform in favour of Tamil cultural revival. Their analysis is in keeping with Ross Barnett's view that the later Dravidian political parties (DMK and AIADMK) abandoned Ramaswamy's often iconoclastic and uncompromising social reform of the DK in favour of an electorally more attractive Tamil cultural nationalism. It is not clear therefore that Subramanian's depiction of a shift in Dravidian ideology from Ramaswamy's conflict prone ethno-nationalism to the more accommodating varieties of the DMK and AIADMK is entirely tenable. A more likely reading is of a shift from Ramaswamy's stringent reform agenda that was largely indifferent to promoting Tamil culture's alleged social and aesthetic value to the DMK and AIADMK's cultural revivalism that evaded socially controversial questions of caste hierarchy and gender relations.

Along with his atypical reading of the Dravidian movement and its shifts in ideological emphasis, Subramanian's analysis of the role of organisational structure is also open to challenge when applied to Sri Lanka. The Sinhala political parties along with the Tamil FP were not, as Subramanian presumes, centralised and authoritarian. All of them relied on recruiting locally influential individuals and winning the support of locally important caste groups. Although decision making in the Sinhala parties and the FP was characterised by centralisation, this did not imply authoritarian control over party followers. Manor's argument, for example, relies precisely on the weak control Sinhala leaders exercised over their potential voters (1979). Meanwhile, the Tamil political parties repeatedly compromised on their core political demands yet were unable to prevent escalating conflict: for example, the FP agreed to de-centralisation rather than federal autonomy, while the TULF, having stood on a platform of secession in 1977, agreed to settle on political autonomy through district development councils. The relative looseness and

pluralism of party organisations cannot therefore be seen as decisive in shaping ethnic outcomes; rather, the crucial difference between south India and Sri Lanka is to be found in the ideological content of competing conceptions of national identity and national interest through which politics was and is pursued.

3.3.1 Constructivism: post colonial subjectivities

A second stream of constructivism influenced by post-structuralism and post colonialism has emphasised the role of colonial power in constituting ethnic and national identities. In these analyses, post colonial ethnic dynamics are traced to the colonial experience, whilst colonial power itself is understood as not merely constraining or dominating the life of its subjects but also as working through language and other administrative mechanisms to actively *produce* agents and their identities. Ethnic and national identities are thus understood as effects of power, understood here in Foucauldian terms as a productive rather than merely repressive force: power that produces subjects through the disciplinary activities of administrative organisations, language, legal mechanisms, revivalist organisations and religious bodies (Foucault 1977). This form of analysis has been used for example by Dirks (2001) to study the emergence of caste identities in India, by Wickramasinghe (2006) to study ethnic identities in Sri Lanka and by Ramaswamy (1997) to study Tamil linguistic nationalism in south India. Krishna's (1999) study of India's intervention in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict similarly draws on Jacques Derrida's analysis of language and meaning to examine the production of identities in Indian foreign policy as well as in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

Like the conceptual approach adopted in this dissertation (developed in Chapter Four), constitutive forms of constructivism stress the role of language and symbolic practices more generally in understanding human agency and

power. However, there are important differences. The post-structuralist frameworks adopted by constitutive forms of constructivism understand language and related discursive practices as creating subjectivities and therefore shaping agency. In contrast, the conceptual approach adopted here, understands concepts as framing the semantic field within which political actors can engage in mutually meaningful contestation. The conceptual approach is not therefore a means to investigate the contingent and constructed nature of subjectivities but a tool to interpret the semantic foundations, and therefore the rationale, of political action and the competing visions of political order that animate meaningful political contestation.

Constitutive forms of constructivism also differ fundamentally from instrumentalist constructivism and realist accounts in its understanding of human agency, the nature of power and the role of language and symbolic practices more generally. Whereas constitutive constructivists regard language as crucial to the formation of subjects or agents, realist and instrumentalist constructivism understands language primarily as a vehicle for already formed interests and identities. Despite these important and theoretically irresolvable differences, constitutive constructivism suffers from the same shortfalls in accounting for the divergent and historically changing patterns of south Indian and Sri Lankan ethnic and national politics. To begin with, the administrative categories, scholarly frameworks and revivalist narratives through which ethnic identities were constituted across India and Sri Lanka during the colonial period were broadly the same and influenced by cross cutting intellectual trends, as in, for example, the Aryan / Dravidian dichotomy. As a consequence, it is difficult to draw a linear connection between the constitutive practices of identity construction and divergent (between cases), as well as historically varying (within each case) patterns of ethnic mobilisation.

Dirks (2001) and Wickramasinghe (2006) focus on the administrative categories and practices of British colonial rule. However, Dirks' analysis of the importance of British practices and ideas in constituting caste as a central principle of colonial Indian society, and therefore post colonial Indian dynamics, could equally be applied to British and earlier Dutch colonial practices in Sri Lanka (Roberts 1982; de Silva 2005). In India, however, caste became an important vector of mobilisation, allied to but independent of language and ideas of race, whereas in Sri Lanka, although caste divisions remained important, they were largely incorporated within Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil nationalist mobilisation.⁷⁰ Similarly Wickramasinghe's focus on colonial attitudes and policies in constituting Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Kandyan ethnic identities in Sri Lanka cannot account for the very different political trajectories of these similarly constituted categories. Twentieth century Tamil politics has been dominated by the demand for collective Tamil-Sinhala political equality and an associated rejection of a subordinate position for Tamils within the Sinhala Buddhist framework. In contrast Muslim political leaders have largely accepted and worked within the Sinhala Buddhist framework. Both arguments also ignore variations in British official perceptions, attitudes and policies over time, and also differences between British officials. British officials in south India and Punjab, for example, rejected the view that caste was a religious phenomenon and fundamental to Indian society (Balyly 1999:138-40; Washbrook 1981, 2004) whilst in Sri Lanka British officials from 1929 onwards actively sought to augment the creation of a pan-ethnic national identity and largely ignored Tamil politicians' fears of Sinhala domination (Colonial Office:1928, 1945).

Ramaswamy's study of south Indian Tamil linguistic nationalism can be subject to similar criticism (1997). Her aim is to explain the passionate and often violent expressions of south Indian Tamil linguistic nationalism, including acts

of self immolation, which occurred during the 1960's in opposition to the central government's moves to enforce the status of Hindi as the official language in India; moves that were swiftly abandoned following the protests. She locates the source of Tamil linguistic sentiment in Tamil revivalist narratives, and examines the rhetorical tropes, images and metonyms of this literature to recreate the constitution of Tamil speaking subjects moved by a passionate identification with the Tamil language. This resort to subjectivity is, however, comparatively and historically problematic. In terms of post-colonial protest, the south Indian Tamil language protests were hardly exceptionally or singularly violent. Fatal self-immolation is also not unique in recent Indian political history; there was, for example, a wave of upper-caste self immolations in the early 1990's against positive discrimination measures to benefit lower-caste groups (Dirks 2001:275). The upper-caste protests were, moreover, not associated with a previous history of thick and emotively affective literary expression. What is perhaps most intriguing about the Tamil language protests is not their passionate intensity but the fact that the language issue in India was politically resolved and by the mid 1970's ceased to be, in the Tamil speaking areas, an issue of emotive contestation. Meanwhile, Sri Lankan Tamil language protests in 1956 and 1958 were quite insipid, involving in the main limited acts of civil disobedience (Wilson 1994; Navaratnam 1991). These protests nevertheless provoked lethal bouts of anti Tamil violence. The language issue in Sri Lanka, though initially less passionately contested, was part of an escalating Sinhala-Tamil conflict that finally led to civil war in 1983.

Krishna's analysis of post-colonial nation building and ethnic conflict in south Asia similarly fails to capture important and consequential differences between India and Sri Lanka, as well as important variations within each case. He argues that the 'fixation with producing a pulverized and uniform sense of national identity (usually along majoritarian lines) has leashed a spiral of

regional, state and societal violence that appears endless' (1999: xvii). For Krishna, Indian nationhood has been an attempt to impose the ideal of 'Unity and Diversity' in which 'diversity was appreciated only insofar as it embellished Indian unity'. Meanwhile, in Sri Lanka the construction of post colonial nationhood has been the establishment of an ethnic hierarchy in which the majority Sinhala community is assured of its 'rightful' place and the minorities accept their 'proper' subordinate place. Krishna's analysis of national identity formation and the subsequent ethnic violence this creates adopts Derrida's formulation of the meaning as a process requiring continuous difference and also deferment. The attempt to create a unified national self both creates and requires different ethnic others, while the moment of national unity is deferred endlessly into the future and facilitates violent processes of suppression and assimilation in the present (1999:16, 54, 17-21).

Krishna's adoption of the Derridean framework would suggest that the link between nation building and ethnic conflict is inherent in the deep links between the creation of meaning and the formation of subjects. However, as Krishna himself notes, 'whether or not a particular segment of society commences on an ethnonationalist path is an open – ended, political question' (1999:xxxv). His study, focused as it is on challenging dominant realist accounts of foreign policy making by setting out an alternative constructivist reading of Indian intervention in Sri Lanka, does not set out to explain why Sri Lankan nation building produced a Tamil secessionist movement but Indian nation building did not. Indeed, and arguably a Derridean analysis of nation-building *could not* explain this important divergence. By treating nation building as a process of identity creation that invariably creates an ethnic other, Derridean analysis cannot capture important and substantive differences in the historically situated processes of nation building in India and Sri Lanka. As Chapter Five demonstrates the peaceable accommodation of the Dravidian

movement within the Indian 'Unity in Diversity' conception and the simultaneous exclusion of Muslim identity was a matter of contingent political process rather than an outcome of any binary self-other logic inherent in the production of identity. Similarly, as Chapters Six and Eight argue, the escalation of Tamil Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka required both the dominance of Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism *and* the successful mobilisation of a Tamil nationalist identity that insisted on Tamil–Sinhala collective equality. Muslims' acceptance of the former exemplifies an alternative outcome that Tamil politics could have taken but did not. Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict is thus a conflict of countervailing political projects, rather than countervailing identities. Important differences in the Indian and Sri Lankan nation building projects, including their divergent impacts on the their respective Tamil speaking regions and populations, cannot therefore be captured by a framework in which ethnic conflict is a binary matter of the national self provoking its own ethnic other.

3.4 Conclusion

The approaches surveyed here ask a variant of the question 'what causes nationally or ethnically framed politics and conflict?' Realist approaches suggest that ethnic and national subjectivities are relatively stable aspects of social and political life and explain ethnic and political outcomes in terms of the patterns of ethnic demography and the more or less enlightened policies adopted by political leaders. In contrast, constructivist approaches characterise ethnic and national categories as contingent outcomes. For instrumentalist constructivists, ethnic and national categories are simply convenient labels through which instrumental actors pursue unrelated ends: namely social advancement, economic gain or political power. Constitutive constructivists meanwhile focus on the discursive practices that produce ethnic and national subjectivities. While instrumentalist constructivists focus on interests to

explain ethnic and national outcomes, constitutive constructivists turn to the content of discursive practices. However, as the discussion above shows, the various causal factors that are identified through these process are inadequate to explain the divergent outcomes of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka as well the historically shifting patterns of ethnic conflict within each state.

Chapter Four sets out an alternative approach through which the patterns of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka could be explained. Instead of asking why ethnic and national conflict occurs and searching for causal explanations, it begins with alternative questions. Firstly it asks, what makes ethnic and national claims and categories meaningful, and therefore politically consequential? From this follows a second question: why are some projects of ethnic and national identity formation more successful than others? It then sets out an alternative framework based on answers to these two distinctive questions. The empirical chapters then deploy this framework to explain the trajectories of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka from the late nineteenth century to 1977.

4. Ethnic and national as working concepts

4.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that the study of ethnic and national movements must begin with an analysis of the nation and ethnicity, along with their synonyms, as key concepts of political order in the modern system of nation states. It shows that the nation and ethnicity are conceptually unavoidable terms of political contestation in the nation state system. Political actors seeking to establish or contest the boundaries of political community, as well as the legitimate basis of state action, must do so in ethnic and national terms. The specifically modern character of the nation and ethnicity are derived here from the work of the German historian Reinhart Koselleck and his analysis of the forward reaching temporality that propels modern concepts and the actions they entail. The precise meanings of the nation and ethnicity are derived from their close conceptual connection to the doctrine of popular sovereignty, the sole principle of political legitimacy within the system of nation states. The nation functions in political contestation as a synonym for the post contractual general or public will that alone sanctions legitimate state action. At the same time, the term national also describes the political community as a pre-contractual political unity. The contractarian origin of popular sovereignty thus creates a conceptually unavoidable tension between the need for national unity and the existence of ethnic or cultural differences that are conceptually outside of, beyond or before the political contract. How are the ethnic groups contained within the boundaries of the state to be reconciled into a national whole, and on what terms? Which groups will be included in the nation-state and which excluded?

This dissertation is concerned with explaining why the dominant conception of national identity in India came to include Tamils whilst that in Sri Lanka

sought to subordinate them within a Sinhala Buddhist hierarchy. As discussed in Chapter Three, this difference cannot be explained in terms of static variables such as ethnic demography, political system, differences of official policy or economic incentives. Instead, the emergence of an inclusive (of Tamils) conception of national identity in India and the simultaneous emergence of an ethnically hierarchical Sinhala Buddhist conception in Sri Lanka is an outcome of political process. National identities, the ideal orderings of ethnicity they project and the forms of public action they legitimate, become dominant when they are associated with successful political movements. This chapter also sets out an alternative understanding of the elements of political success. It suggests that successful political movements are those that bring together in a spatially and socially extensive, as well as temporally sustained, way three types of activities. The first is to articulate a coherent ideology, a vision of national identity, national interest and the ethnic boundaries of national community. This includes a more or less stable political programme setting out the concrete proposals through which this future vision is to be realised. Secondly, successful political movements also co-opt existing and powerful interest groups situated within their target audience. Thirdly, all successful political movements engage in direct political mobilisation to build a mass support base. To be successful political movements have to bring together these activities in a socially and spatially extensive way; that is they have to cover, or seek to cover, extensive sections of their relevant target audience and territory. Finally, political processes occur in time as well as space and successful movements are those that bring together these activities in a temporally sustained way. While movements that bring together all of these elements will be successful in establishing their preferred identities as unavoidable principles of political contestation, they will not necessarily realise their stated objectives of autonomy or independence. As discussed further below, the re-ordering of nation states is invariably a conjunction of

international as well as domestic politics. Strong and sustained nationalist movements are often thwarted by the international system while weak and anaemic ones often get what they – intermittently – demand. Nevertheless, the relative weakness and strength of competing national movements, and the ethnic ordering they entail, is decisive in explaining the outcomes of ethnic accommodation and ethnic conflict.

The chapter is organised in the following way. The first section discusses a possible interpretation of the relationship between modern ethnic categories and pre-modern forms of cultural diversity. The following section then sets out Koselleck's depiction of the forward reaching temporality characteristic of modern concepts and suggests how this helps explain the meanings and implications of national and ethnic claims. The third section describes the close conceptual connection between the nation, ethnicity and the doctrine of popular sovereignty through a close analysis of Rousseau's Social Contract. The fourth section describes the elements of successful political mobilisation that can account for the relative successes and failures of the national and ethnic movements discussed in the following historical chapters.

4.2 The sources of modern ethnicity

The historical origins, as well as the social and political function, of modern ethnic categories are a matter of intense debate. Realists characterise such categories as rooted in enduring aspects of human psychology and/or relatively stable components of social and political life. For constructivists on the other hand, these categories are products of discursive practices or simply convenient vehicles that are more or less consciously invoked for a host of unrelated ends. The relationship between ethnic categories and colonial rule is particularly at issue in post colonial scholarship which has argued that ethnic or communal categories in south Asia are artefacts of colonial rule and

radically discontinuous with social and political meanings associated with differences of religious practice, language and caste in the pre-colonial period. This is contested by others who point to continuities whilst also emphasising the agency of the colonial subjects themselves in effecting transformations in caste, religious and linguistic practices.⁷¹

The approach adopted here sidesteps questions of colonial power, historical continuity and the agency of colonial subjects at the centre of debates on the meanings and subjective experience of cultural difference. Rather, it suggests that by the late nineteenth century, many of the cultural practices touched by the social, political and economic transformations associated with the colonial state would inevitably have been translated into the modern categories of religion, caste and language. The long established institutions, philosophical traditions and ritual practices that were incorporated into the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Saivite religious revivalisms of the late nineteenth century could not have simply disappeared or avoided contact with modern conceptions of religion as a confessional system and potentially 'national' institution. Similarly, the established Sanskrit, Tamil, Sinhala and Urdu literary traditions and practices would also not have disappeared or avoided translation into modern languages, reproduced through print and studied through modern conventions of literary analysis. In Ernst Gellner's terminology, this process involved the translation of pre-modern high cultures into modern, academy produced, culture rather than the translation of pre-modern wild culture into modern high culture (Gellner 1983). In other words, the transformation of pre-modern cultural difference into modern categories of religion, language and caste is understood here as a matter of inevitable conceptual translation, leaving aside questions of agency and continuity.

There was, of course, a great unevenness in the extent to which modern notions of religion or language were understood or important in shaping

everyday social and cultural life. However, the use of modern ethnic categories was conceptually unavoidable in modern representative politics and the processes through which these modern differences were included or excluded from national conceptions of identity and interest are central to explaining the difference between ethnic conflict and ethnic accommodation. Popular self government is invariably national self government, with the nation understood as both a body of citizens and as a pre political entity. Almost all states have some degree of ethnic pluralism, and the principle of national self government requires therefore a solution to a central problem: how is the ethnic pluralism of the population to be reconciled with the need for a unified nation capable of self government. Ethnic categories are therefore important, not because they necessarily provide insight into the subjective experience of culture difference, but because in the era of national self government they are publicly meaningful categories of social and political life that must inevitably be reconciled with the need for a national whole.

4.3 The nation and the conceptual basis of modern political life

In treating the nation and ethnicity as first and foremost meaningful terms of political contestation, the argument here is that language is a crucial force in shaping and constraining the clash of competing identities and interests in social and political life. That is, concepts cannot be understood as either simply expressions of pre-existing identities and interests or as more or less convenient vehicles through which groups and forces realise their pre-linguistic ends. Instead, as Connolly argues, language is an 'institutionalised structure of meanings that channels political thought and action in certain directions' such that to 'understand the political life of a community one must understand the conceptual system within which that life moves; and therefore those concepts that help shape the fabric of our political experiences necessarily enter into any rational account of them' (1993:1, 39). The meanings

of national and ethnic claims and the often fateful political consequences of national and ethnic mobilisation are closely linked to the conceptual shifts associated with the processes of modernisation.

Koselleck's work and the wider project of conceptual history with which he is closely associated is centrally concerned to trace the processes of modernisation through shifts in social and political concepts. Conceptual shifts reflect and direct social and economic transformations; 'it is through concepts that a horizon is constituted, against which structural changes are perceived, evaluated and acted upon' (Richter 1995:36). Koselleck characterises modern social and political concepts as imbued with a peculiar temporality, one impelled by movement towards the future, conceived as open ended, amenable to human control and the projected site of competing ideological visions. He locates the transition to modern social and political concepts in the period between 1750 and 1850 when previous eschatological expectations of an end to the world were displaced by new anticipations of a radically improved future and encapsulated in the concept of progress that also signalled a new understanding of the term history. The modern attitude to the future can be captured in the difference between Luther and Robespierre. As Koselleck notes, for Luther, the future heralded only the prophesied end of the world with some uncertainty as to the timing of the end, but for Robespierre, calling for action to hasten the pace of the Revolution, the 'acceleration of time is a human task, presaging an epoch of freedom and happiness, the golden future' (2004:13). The opening up of the future was associated with the novel doctrine of progress that also set out altered understandings of human history, society and the imperatives of political action. The term progress had previously been used in the sense of perfection, the attainment of a defined goal, and referred to discrete areas of activity, such as art, literature, mastery of nature or technical achievement. From the middle of the eighteenth century, however,

progress became what Koselleck terms a 'collective singular' that tied together 'numerous experiences into a single term' and instead of indicating a specific goal became 'a processual category of movement.' Progress thus came to be a universal category of movement towards the future such that 'progress itself becomes the historical agent and affects the constant amelioration of the human condition in all its dimensions' (2002:230). As Koselleck notes, since the transition to modernity it has become 'a widespread belief that progress is general and constant while every regression, decline, or decay occurs only partially and temporarily' (2002:227).

This notion of progress was also closely related to a new conception of history. Koselleck describes a shift from history as a term to describe written historical accounts, which could serve as a guide to future action, to history as a collective singular, 'history in itself' without related subject or object. The singular concept of history now also contained an internal process, namely that of progress, such that human history in its entirety, or world history, could be seen as unfolding according to an inherent logic. As a consequence, past events could no longer guide future action, and Koselleck notes that Enlightenment writers 'tolerated no allusion to the past', seeking instead to dispose of the past 'as quickly as possible so that a new future could be set free' (2004:39). In other words, the 'ruse of reason forbade man to learn directly from history and indirectly forced him towards happiness' (2004:37). The combined frameworks of progress and history produced an imperative for future orientated action that marked modern social and political concepts. That is, 'since the nineteenth century, it has become difficult to gain political legitimacy without being progressive at the same time' (Koselleck 2002:230). In this way, modern political concepts and ideologies (the variety of isms) reach into the future and seek to shape, as well as describe, possible states of social and political existence. Terms such as freedom, republic and democracy

that previously had limited legal and constitutional reference gained a general and imprecise meaning that could be appropriated by a variety of groups. Political concepts thus function as 'catchwords' and political struggle involves struggles 'over the proper interpretation and usage of concepts' as political protagonists seek to exclude their opponents 'from using the same words to say and wish for that which might differ from one's own conception' (Koselleck 2004:253). This struggle is nevertheless bound by a shared temporality:

'The concepts are orientated in terms of an irreversible temporal process, loading its agents with responsibility while simultaneously relieving them of it, for the process of self-creation is included within the properties of the prospective future. It is from this that such concepts take their diachronic force, a force which sustains both speaker and addressee' (Koselleck 2004:251).

In the methodology of conceptual history, concepts are separated from words only on the basis of textual analysis; that is 'socio-political terminology in the source language possesses a series of expressions that, on the basis of critical exegesis, stand out definitely as concepts' (2004:84) That is, certain terms cannot be identified as concepts a priori but the use of terms within a specific modern context can be identified as conceptual by its ideological – that is future orientated – implications. Although words, as well as concepts, can have ambiguous meanings, words generally have stable references whereas 'a concept must remain ambiguous in order to be a concept' (2004:85). Collective singulars, such as freedom, history and progress along with terms of collective identity such as class, nation, and party that Koselleck identifies as characteristically modern, are marked by a future orientated temporality and have a general, rather than specific, reference. Freedom comes to mean freedom in general rather than specific and legally defined preferences and

also defines – when expressed as emancipation – the ideal end of most modern political ideologies. Koselleck's use of the term ambiguous can therefore be compared to W. B Gallie's description of moral and political concepts as 'essentially contested' (Connolly 1993:10-22). Concepts are ambiguous in the sense that political contestation involves endless disagreement about what counts as true freedom, and whether or not progress has been realised by a particular course of action. Similarly, competing political projects invariably invoke different accounts of the past and, while claiming for their own account the status of true history, attack their opponents as relying on or propagating false history. Similarly, the nation is not just a discrete body of legally defined citizens but also a pre- political entity, the agent of historical process and an ideal – yet to be realised - form of political community.

This study does not set out to provide a conceptual history of the nation and ethnicity or related concepts such as ethnic / communal – an effort that would require diachronic as well as synchronic analysis of the shifting meanings associated with these terms, as well as the shifting terms through which political community and cultural difference are denoted in a specific area. It is worth noting, however, that both the nation and ethnicity have had a variety of shifting references. In colonial south Asia in the late eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century the term nation was used rather loosely to define human collectives, and could be used synonymously with terms such as race and caste.⁷² It was only in the last quarter of the twentieth century that nation acquired its definite links with the demand for self government.⁷³ The term ethnic, on the other hand, was not used until well into the twentieth century; instead the term communal was often used, as in for example discussions of Hindu – Muslim politics in colonial India as 'communal politics'. The term ethnic only replaced the term communal in south Asia from the early 1980's and has gained ground particularly since the end of the Cold War

and the associated political, as well as scholarly, focus on conflict, defined as 'ethnic', in the post-Soviet states.⁷⁴ Despite these variations, the terms nation and ethnicity have also come to have a close connection with the doctrine of popular sovereignty, creating a set of recognizable and consistent meanings and implications that are central to understanding the divergent outcomes of the Tamil speaking regions in south India and Sri Lanka.

In terms of this connection then the predominant meaning of the nation is as the unit of self government; the national unit refers to the political community as a body of legally and constitutionally defined citizens and as a pre-political entity held together by pre-contractual or cultural ties. The nation always conveys both these meanings; national sovereignty is both defined by the state, as well as constituting the state. In relation to the principle of national self-government the term ethnicity, or its synonyms, invariably refers to sub-state groups defined by what are held to be pre-political or pre-contractual ties. Ethnic or communal ties are pre-political or pre-contractual in that their existence is normally understood to be outside of and / or historically prior to the political institutions and agreements (or contracts) that constitute the state. In India and Sri Lanka the principle ethnic cleavages have been those of language, religion, region and caste along with notions of biological race. The national and the ethnic / communal have therefore linked but not completely overlapping meanings. National claims are taken here to imply a form of political community defined in ethnic / communal terms as well as in political terms as a body of citizens and the legitimate unit of self government. Whereas national claims always invoke the demand for self government, ethnic / communal demands can invoke a pre-political or cultural group identity without making the same political demand. As the discussion below shows, national claims are not ever exclusively ethnic or civil but simply more or less inclusive of the ethnic pluralism contained within the boundaries of all states.

Koselleck's analysis of the relationship between concepts and action, as well as his characterisation of the forward reaching temporality of modern social concepts, are key to interpreting the meanings and implications of national and ethnic claims. In particular, the notion of the 'semantic field' – a tool of analysis in the wider conceptual history project (Richter, 1995:48-50) – can be used to link the nation and ethnic / communal to the concepts of self government, popular sovereignty, freedom and progress. The semantic field describes a 'relatively unified part of a language's vocabulary' at a given historical time, such that 'its elements are so organised that each of them delimits and is delimited by the other' (1995 48). Examples of linguistic fields such as 'kinship, morality, colors, military organization' bring together words, principles and concepts (1995). As discussed further below the meanings of nation/ ethnic / communal/ self government and progress are set in relation to each other and define the frame within which national and ethnic contestation occurs.

Koselleck describes the relationship between concepts and the material reality of life as one of unresolved tension. Social and political concepts are not merely reflections of reality, but also elements of that reality in so far as they establish a framework for registering reality and thereby set the 'horizon' of social and political action (2004:86). Conversely, concepts are grounded in complex socio-political systems that cannot simply be treated as 'linguistic communities organised around specific key concepts' (2004:76). That is, 'there exists between concept and materiality a tension now transcended, now breaking out afresh, now seemingly insoluble' (2004:86), or, more succinctly, 'language and history depend on each other but never coincide' (2004:222). The conceptual range of the nation and ethnic / communal do not exhaust the range of factors that make ethnic and national politics possible or indeed decide their outcomes. However, this conceptual range does set the framework

within which ethnic and national claims become meaningful and therefore politically and socially consequential. The 'polemical intent' of nation and ethnic / communal as key terms of political struggle is situated within a semantic field of social and political concepts in which notions of self government and popular sovereignty become, along with ideas of progress and temporal movement, key markers of political legitimacy.

As Koselleck notes, one of the key principles underlying Enlightenment conceptions of freedom is that 'rule could henceforth only be self – rule by mature human beings (first men, then later, women too) over themselves' and further that 'inner freedom can only exist if it is also realised outwardly' (2002:250). In line with broader trends in liberal thought, English Utilitarians understood progress towards self government as a necessary end of enlightened British rule in south Asia. In this process, the unit of self government was increasingly conceived in national terms. The link between the nation and self government is also evident in the wider global system of ordering; the term inter-national was first coined by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century and has come to imply since then a system of interaction between nation-state units (Billig 1995:84). Throughout the nineteenth century, the link between the nation, the state and self government was further entrenched and also became a standard rhetoric of politics in colonial India and Sri Lanka (see below). The League of Nations and then the United Nations, the twentieth century's two successive attempts to institutionalise co-operative political decision making at the supra state level defined –in terms of nomenclature and practice – their component units as national entities.

Movement towards national self government also became an important component of ranking different groups on a linear scale of progress and development. Koselleck describes how the 'opening up of the globe brought to

light various cultural levels which were, through processes of synchronic comparison then ordered diachronically'. The observation that 'individual peoples or states ... were found to be in advance of others' produced a 'constant impulse of progressive comparison'. By the seventeenth century a common motif was to order this comparison along a 'hierarchy produced through a consideration of the best existing constitution or the state of scientific, technical or economic development' (2004:238). Furthermore political action was increasingly framed in terms of the imperative of comparative development and progress; 'of promoting or superseding other positions, groups, Stände, classes, nations, sciences and knowledges' (2004:246-7). Working within a clear framework of linear development, John Stuart Mill characterised national self government through representative institutions as an ideal form of constitution suitable only for those peoples who had reached an adequate stage of development. For Mill it was the task of despotic government to move those 'backward' peoples along the linear trajectory towards a point when they would be fit to govern themselves.⁷⁵

This comparative scale of linear progression was evident in south Asia. The term 'backward' was used by colonial officials, as well as subjects themselves, to characterise groups who had lower levels of formal education, as well as lower levels of participation in public sector employment and non agricultural sectors of the economy. For example, the Viceroy, Dufferin (served 1884-1888), explained his concern for Indian Muslims in the following terms: 'naturally my liveliest sympathies will be for those who through any circumstances over which they have no control have fallen behind in the race of progress and advancement' (quoted in Hardy 1972:133). Similarly, from the late nineteenth century, colonial officials in south India used the term 'backward' to describe socially and economically exploited caste groups that were in need of special government assistance (Radhakrishnan 1990). At the same time, signs of

movement towards the expression of nationhood and nationality were linked to ideas of progress and self government. A number of Indian and British officials took the formation of INC as a sign of evolutionary 'awakening' that included the acquisition of a unified 'national' purpose (Bayly 1999:129). In December 1885, as the 'National Congress' met in Bombay and the 'National Conference' met in Calcutta, the Bengali politician S. N Banerjea remarked: 'all India seemed at present to have met in solemn conclave to think out the great problem of national advancement' (quoted in Mehrotra 1971:586). Speaking in 1952, the Sri Lankan Tamil politician S. J. V Chelvanayagam also linked national status to development, telling his audience in Jaffna: 'We in North and East Ceylon should also develop into the most advanced stage of human society, that is, we should achieve national status' (quoted in Wilson 1994:44).

The modernity of the nation is apparent in this forward reaching temporal movement; that is, the nation and its related terms are 'instruments for the direction of historical movement' – movement towards political independence and self government – however defined (Koselleck 2004:251). The nation's close association with self government, as well as the link between the nation and ethnic / communal, are rooted in the doctrine of popular sovereignty. Although the historical and conceptual links between nationalism and popular sovereignty have been noted, the emergence of the nation as the vehicle of self government has generally been understood as conceptually inadvertent (Yack 2001). Against this view, the argument here is that the meanings conveyed by the nation in political contestation have a close and deep conceptual connection to the doctrine of popular sovereignty, as set out in Rousseau's Social Contract.

The Social Contract is a key text in understanding modern conceptions of self government as it sets out the connection between the individual's inner freedom and moral progress, on the one hand, and collective self government,

on the other, that Koselleck identifies as central to modern understandings of freedom, progress and self government. It also crucially presents the unit of self government as the pre political people; that is the people as a unit that exists prior to the state. The core nationalist demand that the nation should be self governing, ideally with a state of its own, implicitly relies on the Social Contract's vision of the sovereign people as a pre political entity held together by cohesive ties that exist prior to the state. The discussion in the following section sets out the conceptual connections between the nation, popular sovereignty and ethnic pluralism. It argues that in the context of self government, the nation functions as a synonym for the general will - the operative principle of popular sovereignty. It is as a consequence of the connection between the nation and general will, that ethnic pluralism becomes a conceptually important problem for national politics – a problem that can be resolved in more or less inclusive ways.

4.4 The nation, the general will and the problem of ethnic pluralism

The Social Contract explicitly invokes two distinct images of the political community in its account of the legitimate political order; as a contractually formed body of citizens on the one hand, and as a historically constituted ethnic community, on the other. Both these visions of the political community enter into the characteristics and functions of the general will, the active principle of popular sovereignty as defined in the Social Contract. The general will expresses the interests shared by the population as members of the political association, and creates two axes of political contestation; first, to reconcile mutually competing interests within society into a singular interest, and second, to define an ideal ordering of the polity within which a singular general or national will becomes possible. While Rousseau derives the existence and characteristics of the general will from a depiction of the

political community as a contractual entity, as the following discussion shows, he turns to ethnic conceptions of political community to substantiate the general will and translate it into concrete systems of legislation and forms of government. The nation enters the Social Contract as a synonym for the general will, and, in doing so, becomes the object of contestation to reconcile competing interests into a singular will and define an ideal ordering of the polity. However, it is argued here this contestation can only occur where the protagonists have a broad but shared understanding of the nation's ethnic boundaries.

Rousseau initially describes the political community and the general will as emerging from a hypothetical state of nature. The state or political association emerges when individuals living largely isolated and independent lives enter into a mutually binding and mutually beneficial social contract. In doing so, they establish a new sovereign power and gain two distinct sets of identities and interests. As citizens and members of the sovereign, they have a common or general will that expresses their shared interest in preserving and fostering their political union. As private individuals, however, they continue to have private wills directed towards individual ends that can be in conflict with the general will i.e. 'each individual can, as a man, have a private will contrary to or different from the general will he has as a citizen' (Rousseau 1987:150). Although individuals enter into the social contract as a means of preserving and fostering their own lives and goods, once they have entered into the contract, only their shared general will can direct the forces of the state they have established through their union. The general will is therefore the active principle of popular sovereignty and mediates the relationship between the state and its subjects by ensuring that the capacities of the state are exercised only in accordance with the common interests that individuals have in preserving and fostering their political union. As such,

‘The first and most important consequence of the principles established above is that only the general will can direct the forces of the state according to the purpose for which it was instituted, which is the common good. For if the opposition of private interests made necessary the establishment of societies, it is the accord of these same interests that made it possible. It is what these different interests have in common that forms the social bond, and, were there no point of agreement among these interests, no society could exist. For it is utterly on the basis of this common interest that society ought to be governed’ (1987:153).

As the operative principle of popular sovereignty, the notion of a singular general will is also central to Rousseau’s definition of legislation and government, the concrete mechanisms through which state power is exercised. Rousseau defines the law as a statute enacted in accordance with the common interests that individuals share as members of the state; that is, a statute in accordance with the general will. Meanwhile, the government is understood as an intermediate body with executive power established by the sovereign through an act of law and charged with the ‘the execution of the laws and the preservation of liberty, both civil and political’ (1987:173) While the characteristics of the general will and its relationship to the state, legislation and government are derived from the universally applicable principles of the social contract, Rousseau turns to ethnic conceptions of political community to substantiate the general will and discuss concrete systems of legislation. In discussing the origins of legislative systems and the ends that legislation ought ideally to realise, Rousseau qualifies the universally applicable and a priori principles derived from the social contract with the compulsions that arise from specific and historically constituted national characteristics. The demands

of national character do not invalidate the universal imperatives of the social contract. Instead, historically constituted national communities can be interpreted as the constraining medium within which the principles of the social contract have to operate.

As a hypothetical device, the social contract assumes that individuals can together arrive at the universally valid principles of the social contract through a rational consideration of the compulsions driving them towards a mutually binding association. However, in discussing substantive legislative systems, Rousseau also depicts the human character and capacity to reason as socially and historically shaped. Although the principles of the social contract may stipulate that the 'populace that is subject to the laws ought to be their author' (1987:162), actual existing states and legislative systems could not have emerged from a hypothetical social contract. The associating individuals could only acquire the social capacities demanded by the social contract from a previously existing social state. As Rousseau puts it,

'For an emerging people to have to be capable of appreciating the sound maxims of politics and to follow the fundamental rules of statecraft, the effect would have to become the cause. The social spirit which ought to be the work of that institution, would have to preside over the institution itself' (1987:164).

In order to explain the historical origins of legislative systems, Rousseau turns to the idea of superhuman legislators, the 'fathers of nations', men of 'superior intelligence that beheld all the passions of men without feeling any of them' (1987:162). While the idea of a superhuman legislator is possibly no more historically accurate as an account of political community than the social contract, it is important in suggesting that nations, states and legislative systems emerge through historical processes rather than through a contractual

act of association.⁷⁶ The understanding of peoples or nations as historically and geographically formed and bounded entities enters substantively into the definition of the general will, and is therefore inseparable from attempts to reconcile competing interests and define an ideal ordering of the polity. Although the principles derived from the social contract demand that the ‘purpose of every legislative system’ is to secure ‘two principal objects, liberty and equality’ (1987:170) good legislation must also secure the specific objects prescribed by national characteristics. Rousseau cites a number of examples to demonstrate the diverse types of national character that have organised states and systems of legislation throughout history:

‘In a word, aside from the maxims common to all, each people has within itself some cause that organises them in a particular way and renders its legislation proper for it alone. Thus it was long ago the Hebrews and recently the Arabs have had religion as their main object: the Athenians had letters; Carthage and Tyre, commerce; Rhodes seafaring; Sparta, war; and Rome, virtue’ (1987:171).

The nation comes therefore to occupy a structurally integral position in the Social Contract as a means of substantiating the general will, and in doing so it does more than add a cultural or ethnic flavour to the substantive political meanings conveyed by the general will. Instead, the concept of the nation becomes active in determining the legitimacy of legislation and government action. In other words, the nation becomes a synonym for the general will and the national comes to define the interests, values and identity that the population have as members of the political association. Defining the nation’s interests, and what is appropriately national, is a means of separating what is public and political from what is personal, familial or social. Contesting the national interest and national character are therefore not just means of

expressing patriotic sentiment, but also key to making political claims about the appropriate exercise of public power. It is in this way that the nation becomes a central and indispensable political device; political power can only legitimately be exercised in accordance with the national will and national identity.

The meanings and implications of terms such as ethnicity or communalism emerge from this relationship between the nation and self government. While nationhood, nationality and nationalism were associated with progress and self government, terms such as ethnicity, communal and communalism have come to be defined as divisive and reactionary, an impediment to progress. That is, terms such as ethnic, ethno-national or communal convey the moral illegitimacy associated with the notion of the partial, factional or sectional interest in the Social Contract. While the term national imbues a demand or platform with the moral legitimacy of the general will, terms such as communal and ethno national are invariably used as terms of abuse and invoke the approbation associated with the notion of the faction or partial interest. This opposition between nationality as a principle of progress and unification, and communalism as a principle of reaction and division, was clearly articulated in the early decades of the twentieth century, as both India and Sri Lanka moved towards self government. S. Satyamurti, the Tamil Nadu Congressman, giving a speech at the Youth Congress meeting in Jaffna titled 'Communalism our great danger', stated that 'communalism, narrow and utterly selfish and circumscribed in its very nature, was the very contradiction of nationalism' (quoted in Kadirgamar 1980:45). A 1928 report on constitutional reform in Sri Lanka likewise noted that the 'evils of communal representation have accentuated rather than diminished racial differences' and went on to argue that the 'formation of parties on racial or caste lines would be fatal to the best interests of the country' (Colonial Office 1928:42).

During the 1980's, as the term ethnicity gradually replaced communal or communalism, it retained this same sense of opposition to the ideals of progress, freedom and self government: generally bad and divisive ethno-nationalism was increasingly contrasted with good and unifying civic nationalism.⁷⁷ This is apparent in the studies of ethnic and national politics in Sri Lanka. For example, two books written after the 1983 anti-Tamil riots that study in some depth the politics and process of the violence, use different terminology, reflecting different approaches. S. J Tambiah's study is titled 'Ethnic fratricide and the dismantling of democracy' (1986), and explains ethnic violence in terms of groups, interests and the construction of ideologies that have disrupted the calm of an otherwise peaceful people and island. A. J Wilson's study has a similar, but perhaps less dramatic title, the 'Break Up of Sri Lanka', but in this work the focus is on clashing political values and goods – namely the escalating conflict between the Tamils and the unitary Sinhala Buddhist state. As a consequence, for Wilson, the 'Break Up' of Sri Lanka is understood in national terms, namely the emergence of two national identities and two sovereign states (1988).

Although the opposition between 'good' unifying civic nationalism and 'bad' ethnic or communal allegiance is clear in much scholarly analysis and political rhetoric, the significant nationalist movements that emerged during this period cannot be classified as purely civic or ethnic, as all contained civic and ethnic elements. They were civic insofar as they identified the nation as a self governing body of citizens unified by shared political or economic interests, and were ethnic in that the nation was also understood as bound by pre political and historically constituted cultural ties. Furthermore, all of the nationalist movements studied here – whether they are generally regarded as civic (Indian nationalism) or ethnic (Sinhala Buddhist nationalism) – recognised and sought to incorporate (more or less successfully) a diversity of

ethnic categories within their respective national conceptions. Sinhala Buddhist nationalists consciously sought to integrate low country and Kandyan Sinhalese as well as unifying caste cleavages while Tamil nationalists in Sri Lanka recognised and sought to overcome caste as well as regional differences (between Jaffna and the eastern areas of Trincomalee and Batticaloa). Meanwhile, Congress did not articulate a form of civic identity that erased ethnic difference, but instead sought to integrate ethnic cleavages within its organisational structure. The Congress movement recognised, and more or less successfully accommodated, differences of language, caste and religion. Similarly, the Muslim League in its national conception recognised and sought (largely unsuccessfully) to integrate and manage the regional distinctions (Bengal, Punjab, northern India etc) amongst Indian Muslims. The problem of ethnic pluralism is not therefore that of avoiding bad ethno-nationalism/communalism while establishing good civic nationalism, but rather that of establishing a national framework for the competitive politics of self government that is capable of including, in a more or less equitable way, the ethnic pluralism contained within the boundaries of almost all states.

This conceptually modern semantic field in which concepts such as nation, communal and ethnic gained their meaning and import set the boundaries within which, through processes of competitive mobilisation, actors defined, contested and thereby more or less successfully established conceptions of Indian, Tamil and Sinhala national identity. Understanding the semantic field of ethnic and national politics is crucial to explaining the behaviour of the protagonists of this politics, not necessarily by 'privileging the definitions the participants explicitly give', but by making clear the 'rules they actually follow in their actions and appraisals of action' (Connolly 1993:37). That is, while political actors may not be able to give a precise account of the theory of popular sovereignty, they nevertheless invoke the binary opposition between

the general will and partial wills when they affirm values as (civic) national or deride them as ethno-national/ communal.⁷⁸ The publicly accepted and political consequential meanings of ethnic and national claims, rather than the subjectively experienced meanings, are framed therefore by these implicit rules that sustain the opposition between the national/ general and the ethnic (communal)/ particular. Deciphering the political meaning or 'polemical intent' of ethnic and national claims is crucial as it is the publicly accepted meaning – rather than the subjectively experienced understanding – that links ethnic and national claims to the material outcomes of ethnic and national mobilisation and contestation.

Congress' pan ethnic conception of Indian national identity and national interest incorporated the central claims of Tamil cultural nationalism and allowed for the peaceable accommodation of the once separatist Dravidian movement within the Indian constitutional framework. Although the Congress movement was closely associated with Hindu nationalist actors in a number of regions, and many political actors supported Congress for purely self interested and opportunistic reasons, namely to get themselves elected, the Indian constitutional framework was nevertheless shaped by Congress' publicly stated ideology of pan ethnic nationalism. Similarly the political dominance of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism produced ethnically hierarchical and materially significant social, economic and political consequences despite the fact Sinhala Buddhist rhetoric was often mobilised for clearly tactical or parochial reasons. In short, the publicly stated intentions of successful nationalist movements are crucial and linked to the social and political transformations they effect. Furthermore, the public meanings of ethnic and national claims, as well as the transformations they effect, exist apart from the diversity of interests and motivations they are able to mobilise. While the historic authenticity and normative integrity of Indian or Sinhala Buddhist

conceptions of national identity and interest are open to evaluation, this is less important than the public meanings they implicitly mobilise and the actual transformations they effect. The transformations they effect are always legitimized by invoking the principle of the general will, but in ways that can be more or less accommodative of the plurality of interests and identities existing within the boundaries of the state.

Similarly, the terminology of oppositional politics is also clearly linked to the types of power they seek. For example, before the 1952 general elections in Sri Lanka the FP released a manifesto describing that Sri Lankan Tamils as a distinct nation possessed of their own homeland and the right to self-determination. On the basis of this claim, the FP demanded a set of rights for Tamil speakers on the island, including recognition of the Tamil language and political autonomy for the Tamil speaking areas (Navaratnam 1991). This statement has been analysed for its empirical accuracy (Hobsbawm 1992) and also explained as an instrumental ploy used by self-seeking politicians to whip up Tamil ethnic sentiment and thereby secure political power (Stokke 1998). However, in claiming that the Tamils were a nation the FP's 'polemical intent' was to set out an ideal political order, rather than to describe reality. As Koselleck notes, modern concepts 'no longer serve merely to define given states of affairs, but reach into the future' (2004:80). Similarly, the argument that FP politicians' real intentions were simply to secure power fails to capture the particular form of power that they sought. By framing their demands in *national* terms, they sought specific positions of power, a form of territorial autonomy that would be outside the purview of the 'nationalising' policies of the Sinhala Buddhist state. That is, language and terminological struggle, for example on whether the Tamils actually constituted a 'nation', is inseparable from the struggle for power; 'positions that were to be secured had first to be

formulated linguistically before it was possible to enter or permanently occupy them' (2004:80).

4.5 Accounting for success and failure

The divergent outcomes of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka came about despite comparable and connected historical and social conditions. From the late nineteenth century, there was a similar range of ethnic and national movements in the two states. There were attempts at pan ethnic nationalism in Sri Lanka, whilst Indian Hindu nationalist organisations set out positions and claims that corresponded almost exactly to those of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. The discussion in Chapter Three argued that the divergence could not be explained through structurally given differences of demography or the incentives and opportunities facing political actors in the two countries. In other words, processes of political contestation – within a framework of shared concepts – are crucial in explaining the outcome. As Connolly argues, politics cannot be reduced to 'psychological factors or economic forces' (1993:6) and should instead be seen as a form of conflict conducted through mutually shared and mutually contested concepts.

'Politics involves the clash that emerges when appraisive concepts are shared widely but imperfectly, when mutual understanding and interpretation is possible but in a partial and limited way, when reasoned argument and coercive pressure commingle precariously in the endless process of defining and resolving issues.' (1993:40)

The outcomes of ethnic and national politics cannot therefore be reduced to the structural conditions – economic or political – in which they occur and must instead be located in the interactive processes through which actors define and contest competing conceptions of national identity and national

interest. Processes occur in time as well as space, and temporal patterns of activity are therefore crucial in explaining the divergent outcomes of national and ethnic politics in India and Sri Lanka. The argument, elaborated in the empirical chapters, is twofold. The first part of the argument is that politically dominant and significant conceptions of national or ethnic identity are those that are advanced by successful ethnic and national movements. The second part is that all politically successful ethnic and national movements bring together three activities in a temporally sustained way: articulating an ideological framework, incorporating significant existing cleavages and interest groups and, finally, mobilising support through activities of direct political mobilisation. Temporally situated patterns of activity, rather than temporally static variables, are central to the explanation of the difference between ethnic conflict and ethnic accommodation offered here.

The first part of the argument links ethnic and national identities to temporally situated activities of political organisation and mobilisation. The political dominance of a pan-ethnic conception of Indian national identity in the period from 1920 to 1967 is linked closely to the dominance of the INC, while the political dominance of a territorial conception of Tamil national identity and interest in Sri Lanka is linked to the electoral and political dominance of the FP. While ethnic and national claims are hardwired into conceptual framework of modern politics and are therefore unavoidable, the actual forms that national identity takes is contingent i.e. dependent on processes that were political and that could easily have been otherwise. Political dominance is taken here simply to mean a capacity to mobilise majority support across the relevant target audience - the non Muslim Indian population and the Sri Lankan Tamil population in the examples given above - and to become, as a consequence, an unavoidable presence for allies and antagonists alike. The relative success or failure of a political movement is thus

measured here by its ability to establish its conception of identity and interest as dominant, not by its capacity to realise its stated outcomes. Sri Lanka's constitutional progress to self government from 1920 onwards was dictated primarily by the decisions of British officials and was unrelated to the fairly anaemic forces of anti-colonial protest. Similarly, the FP in Sri Lanka was an abject failure in terms of securing its stated objectives, namely self government in the Tamil speaking regions, but was successful in establishing its conception of territorial nationhood as the dominant pole of Tamil politics on the island, one that has remained unavoidable for nationalist and non nationalist Tamils as well as for non Tamil antagonists of the Tamil nationalist movement.

The second part of the argument sets out the patterns of activities that all successful movements bring together in a temporally continuous way. The three processes of ideological articulation, co-option and direct political mobilisation are derived from the three functions of ideology - co-ordination, mobilisation and legitimisation - identified by John Breuilly (1993:93). However, it departs from this typology in focusing on the processes necessary for successful political action rather than the functions of ideology. As Breuilly notes, ideological claims can either be invoked to rationalise already planned action or work to motivate action (1993:93). At the same time, and following Koselleck, modern political action must be framed in temporally forward reaching concepts (and therefore be ideological) if it is to be understood by other political actors as a political act. Therefore, while ideology can have functions, it is also constitutive of political acts as meaningful acts. The three processes of mobilisation here also do not include the function of legitimisation, which Breuilly identifies as legitimisation in the eyes of powerful international actors. The international context is certainly important in the events analysed in this dissertation. For much of the colonial period, the decisions and preferences of British officials were crucial in shaping the timing and direction

of constitutional change. The decline of British power and the emergence of two new global powers - the USA and USSR –were factors in the dynamics leading to Indian independence soon after the end of the war in Europe. Similarly, British officials were decisive in determining the constitutional form of Sri Lankan independence and, later, international and regional dynamics fuelled the escalation of ethnic conflict into civil war. However, in the framework adopted here, from the late nineteenth century, international, British and south Asian political actors and movements are understood as working within the same conceptual framework that included the concepts of nation, ethnicity and self-government. Furthermore, this dissertation uses a different measure of success to the one adopted by Breuilly. Successful political movements are not those that realise their objectives, but those that establish their conception of national identity and interest as unavoidable objects of the political landscape. The three processes are essential components of political movements that are successful in establishing their preferred characterisations of identity and interest.

In setting out an ideological framework, national movements have to make claims about the pre-political ties that bind the nation together, the boundaries of the national community and the terms through which politically significant ethnic categories will be integrated into the national whole. The ethnic categories that are consciously integrated into the national whole will depend on the national identity that is sought. So, for example, late nineteenth century attempts to establish a pan-Indian national platform had to address and accommodate existing religious and regional cleavages that were already established in Indian political life. Indian nationalists therefore explicitly sought to include Muslims and all significant regional centres. Early twentieth century attempts to forge a pan-Sinhalese platform had to address cleavages between low country and Kandyan Sinhalese, whilst the FP's attempts to forge

a territorial conception of Tamil identity from 1949 onwards had to address the divisions of caste and the distinctions between northern and eastern areas.

Along with setting out a clear ideological framework, successful political movements also have to mobilise support; this involves co-opting already powerful social and political actors and directly mobilising amongst the target population. The types of groups and interests that a movement seeks to co-opt and accommodate will be framed by its ideological and tactical objectives. In its early years, for example, Congress sought to co-opt the support of established Muslim politicians and important Muslim religious institutions. Later, when it became an electoral party, it sought to co-opt the support of powerful individuals capable of mobilising vote banks. Groups and individuals who are co-opted in such a way might support the movement for reasons that are quite apart from the movement's ideological objectives – for example, because they want to win political power. However, all ideological movements that have become significant social and political forces must include, alongside the ideologically motivated cadres, others who use the movement to more or less consciously to pursue other unrelated objectives. Conversely, it can be seen as a sign of an ideological movement's success that individuals who are motivated to pursue social recognition or power come to see the movement in question as a reliable or even unavoidable way of securing these ends.

Finally, all successful movements use methods such as mass protests and the channels of mass communication to directly reach their target audience. The Congress movements' anti colonial protests, the Sinhala Buddhist temperance campaigns and the Federal Party's civil disobedience all sought in various ways to shape individual behaviour, and therefore subjective allegiance, in line with national objectives. This direct mobilisation is often conducted in the vernacular and through popular and resonant symbols and metonyms. The scope and medium of direct mobilisation has therefore an impact on the ethnic

boundaries of national community. A movement can only build support amongst a target ethnic category if it is able to directly and effectively communicate its message in the relevant language and symbols. The Indian Congress' electoral dominance in the Tamil speaking areas was associated with its extensive activities of mobilisation that used the Tamil language and culture as both vehicles and expressions of Indian nationalism. In contrast, it did not use Muslim cultural symbols or the Urdu language in the same way. As discussed in the following chapter, this difference explains why Congress was able to incorporate Tamil identity within its conception of the Indian nation but failed to incorporate Muslim identity. Finally, there is a symbiotic relationship between a movement's proven capacity to directly mobilise support and its ability to co-opt the support of powerful actors. Politically ambitious actors are more likely to support an ideological movement, for whatever reason, if it has a proven capacity at directly mobilising the support of their target audience. While powerful magnates – able to command vote banks – in the south Indian Tamil speaking areas switched their support to Congress during the 1930's, Muslim magnates did not.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has set out an alternative framework for explaining ethnic and national politics. Instead of attempting to identify dynamics 'causally' linked to ethnic and national politics, it suggested first asking what makes ethnic and national claims meaningful, and then why some ethnic and national movements were more successful than others. In response to the first question, it argued that the terms ethnic and national, along with their cognates, functioned as key terms of political contestation that gained their meaning from a close link to the doctrine of popular sovereignty. The term nation functions as a synonym for the 'general will' and in doing so, denotes the people as both a legally defined body but also as a pre-political and historically

constituted entity. It is as a consequence of the twin meanings of the term nation that ethnic or pre-political differences – of language, religion, region and ‘race’ – become politically consequential. That is, questions of which ethnic categories would be included in the national whole – and on what terms – as well as which ethnic categories would be excluded became both politically meaningful and unavoidable. Ethnic pluralism became a conceptual challenge – unavoidable but not irresolvable – to the idea of a unified ‘national’ general will. As such, in the era of popular sovereignty ethnic pluralism has to be reconciled with the need for a conception of the national whole as politically and historically unified. As the nation is always both political and pre-political, conceptions of national identity are better understood as more or less inclusive of the ethnic pluralism contained within the boundaries of the state than as either ethnic or civic.

Ethnic and national claims should thus be interpreted, not as accurate statements of reality more or less consciously used to pursue other interests, but as publicly meaningful forward reaching attempts to describe and therefore create possible social and political worlds. Ethnic and national contestation must therefore be situated in the realm of meaningful politics and while arguably linked – in specific cases – to psychological drives and/or economic interests, they cannot be reduced to either. While the political consequences of ethnic and national movements are linked to their publicly meaningful claims, the relative success and failure of such movements is an outcome of temporally situated processes of political organisation and mobilisation. Movements ought to be considered successful in so far as they establish their claims to identity as unavoidable – for allies and antagonists – aspects of social and political life. The chapter also argued that successful movements are those that bring together in a temporally sustained way the

activities of ideological articulation, interest co-option and direct political mobilization.

5. Tamils, Muslims and Congress' pan ethnic nationalism in colonial India

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four argued that national identities cannot be considered exclusively civic or ethnic, but must rather be seen as more or less inclusive of the ethnic pluralism contained within almost all states. Moreover it argued that while the ethnic categories that became important from the late nineteenth century – such as Muslim, Hindu, Tamil and Dravidian – invariably concealed a great diversity of social practices, they nevertheless realised a political, social and cultural resonance in public associational culture that became politically unavoidable, even for those unconvinced of their validity.⁷⁹ This chapter explains why the pan-ethnic conception of Indian national identity and national interest associated with the INC was able to mobilise support in the Tamil speaking areas, and therefore symbolically include Tamil identity, but could not do the same with Muslim politics. The key moments at which to judge Congress' ability to incorporate these distinct identities are the elections that took place between 1934 and 1937 and again in 1945. Before and during these elections there were significant social and political movements in the Tamil speaking areas and amongst Muslims across India denouncing Congress and Indian nationalism as respectively antithetical to Tamil and Muslim interests. In the Tamil speaking areas, first the Justice Party (founded in 1916), and later the Self Respect Movement (founded in 1925), both describing the Tamils as Dravidian, denounced Congress as a vehicle of north Indian, Aryan and Brahmanical domination. Amongst the Muslim electorate, Muslim associations, most prominently the Muslim League, characterised Congress as a Hindu body and a threat to Muslim political interests. Despite this symmetrical - in rhetoric at least - opposition, Congress' ability to mobilise support amongst

the two electorates was very different. In the 1937 elections it scored one of its most impressive victories in the Tamil speaking areas securing 159 out of a total of 215 seats (Baker 1976:211). In contrast, in the same elections Congress failed to demonstrate Muslim electoral support and secured only 26 of the 482 provincial legislature seats elected from Muslim constituencies across India (Sarkar 1989:349).

This failure cannot be explained by the different strengths of the Tamil and Muslim movements; both the Muslim League and the Justice party had weak party structures and very little ability to mobilise direct political support. Similarly, it cannot be explained by a fundamental difference in the salient economic and social structures of the Tamil and Muslim electorates; in both the key to electoral success was winning over important rural and urban notables or magnates able to mobilise significant vote banks through patron client networks.⁸⁰ Importantly, the political behaviour of Tamil and Muslim patrons was equally motivated by considerations of personal advantage, rather than sustained allegiance to ethnic identity or political party. Instead of looking to structural forces, the argument presented here is that the difference lies in the extent to which Congress activists incorporated Muslim and Tamil identities in their activities of direct mobilisation and communication. In the Tamil speaking areas, from the late nineteenth century, regional Congress politicians used the Tamil language as both the medium and expression of Indian nationalism and thereby symbolically and organisationally incorporated Tamil public culture into a wider Indian nationalist project. The explanation for the absence of similar sustained efforts to present Congress and Indian nationalism in Muslim religious and cultural terms is located at the regional levels of the Congress organisation. In Punjab, Bengal and the United Provinces (UP) – the three areas that contained the majority of Indian Muslims⁸¹ – the regional Congress was dominated by groups that were also

closely associated with Hindu nationalism and therefore propagated and understood the Indian nation in largely Hindu terms.⁸²

Despite the importance of patronage networks, rather than political affiliation, in deciding electoral outcomes, direct mobilisation using ethnic categories are a crucial factor in explaining this difference. Congress' sustained efforts at direct mobilisation through Tamil linguistic and cultural categories, heightened during the mass protests of Non-Cooperation (1920-1922) and Civil Disobedience (1930-34), established the movement as an important and visible presence in Tamil political life. This presence did not necessarily translate directly into voter motivation and behaviour. Rather, when Congress entered electoral competition, many magnates, who previously had other affiliations, switched their allegiance, sensing that Congress was an attractive vehicle for electoral victory and therefore one that could be utilised against their interests.⁸³ Congress simply did not have this effect on Muslim magnates – and, nor importantly, did the Muslim League until 1945.⁸⁴

Congress' contrasting ability to mobilise amongst the Tamil and Muslim populations in India is not simply a matter of explaining electoral outcomes. Rather, the inclusion of publicly asserted and politically significant ethnic identities is *realised* through these processes of political organisation and mobilisation. The inclusion of Tamil political and associational activity within a pan-Indian framework occurred because of activities that actively sought to mobilise popular support for Indian nationalism in the Tamil speaking areas. In adopting the Tamil language and Tamil cultural forms as vehicles of Indian nationalism, Congress activists also adopted them as interests of Indian nationalism; the organisational and substantive content of Indian nationalism in the Tamil speaking areas took on distinctly Tamil concerns and interests. In other words, Indian national identity is today un-problematically inclusive of Tamils (and linguistic diversity more generally) but problematically so of

Muslim identity because of the contingent historical processes of political organisation and mobilisation. The antagonism between Hindu and Muslim associations and interests at the regional levels, while important, was not the only or even dominant vector of social and political conflict in Punjab, Bengal and UP. What was decisive for the relationship between Congress and Muslim groups, however, was the dominance of Hindu nationalist sentiment and associations at the regional level of the Congress organisation.

The first section of this chapter describes the ideological content and associational structures of pan-ethnic Indian nationalism, the competing Dravidian and Indian nationalisms in the Tamil speaking areas as well as Hindu and Muslim nationalism. The following section then describes the Congress development from 1885 to become by 1947 arguably the central institution of Indian politics in terms of three key activities of modern associational politics; that is ideological articulation; co-option of existing sources of power and influence and finally the direct mobilisation of support. It discusses in turn the Congress movement's relationship to Tamil/ Dravidian, Hindu and Muslim nationalisms to reveal the differential ways in which the identities espoused by the movements were incorporated within the larger vision of a pan-ethnic Indian national identity and national interest. The section ends by explaining why ethnic demography and rational calculation alone cannot account for the different patterns of Congress mobilisation amongst Muslim and Tamil voters.

5.2 Context

5.2.1 Congress and pan-ethnic Indian nationalism

Addressing the first session of the INC, held in Bombay in December 1885, G. S. Iyer, a delegate from Madras, expressed his sense of the momentous nature of the occasion. He stated that the assemblage of 'my chosen countrymen from

Calcutta and Lahore, from Madras and Sind, from places wide apart and difficult of intercommunication' indicated 'the beginning of national political life.' For Iyer, Congress was national because it was pan-Indian and the fact that such a meeting could be held meant that Indians could 'with greater propriety than heretofore speak of an Indian nation, of national opinion and national aspirations' (quoted in Mehrotra 1971:600). The attempt to create a pan-Indian 'national' political body had been a feature of Indian public life from the early decades of the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ These attempts gained momentum in the late 1870's and early 1880's because of a series of government decisions that were crystallised in Indian public culture – through the activity of regional associations and the press – as revealing of the contradiction between Indian and British interests, with the latter seen as unduly driving official policy. Under the Conservative Viceroy Lord Lytton (served 1876-1880) government decisions on civil service recruitment, famine response, cotton tariffs and the rising expenditure on military campaigns in Afghanistan, along with the extravagant 1876 Delhi Durbar to celebrate Queen Victoria's golden jubilee at a time of devastating famine, were widely condemned as inimical to Indian interests. Subsequently, the Liberal Viceroy Lord Ripon's (served 1880-1884) attempts to introduce the elective principle at local government elections and equalise racial anomalies in the status of European and Indian judges produced a clear divide between Indian and European opinion and led to India-wide demonstrations of support for Ripon when he made a last tour of the country near the end of his tenure.⁸⁶

The move towards holding a pan-Indian meeting was led by associational activity in Calcutta, Madras, Poona and Bombay – all areas with a growing western educated population (Seal 1968: chapter six). The Indian Association in Calcutta took an initial step and, making use of the Government's decision to hold an International Exhibition in Calcutta in December 1883, invited

delegates from across the country to attend a National Conference in the city (1968:261). From late 1884, a separate effort co-ordinated by the retired English civil servant Allen O. Hume - working with associations in Bombay and Poona - got underway to hold a pan-Indian conference in Poona the following year (Mehrotra 1971:557). Eventually the meeting was held in Bombay because of cholera in Poona and was announced in the press as the INC (1971:589, 584). At the same time, the second National Conference was held in Calcutta and S. N Banerjea remarked on the perceptible level of political activity that 'all India seemed at the present moment to have met in solemn conclave to think out the great problem of national advancement' (quoted in 1971:586). The second session of the INC was held in Calcutta, where it was nominally merged with the National Conference and subsequently became as Anil Seal describes, 'the matrix of the later nationalist movement.' (Seal 1968:267)

Over the following years, the activities of the INC expressed and established an understanding of Indian national identity and national interest that was organised around a core set of principles. The most important of these principles was that the diverse ethnic and regional identities found within the Indian population were nevertheless united by shared interests. The INC claimed to be the body that expressed these shared interests because it contained within its organisational structure the ethnic and regional pluralism of the Indian population; the official report of the first session noted the regional, professional and ethnic diversity of its delegates as a mark of the representative character of the proceedings (Mehrotra 1971:592). The notion that India's ethnic and regional pluralism existed alongside a unity of purpose and interest remained a constant theme of Congress' claims and activities. The unified Indian national interest and identity, shared by India's plural population, was defined by Congress activities over the following years as

consisting of three broad objectives: the first was to secure Indian economic progress and development, the second was greater equality and the third was demands for greater self government, leading eventually to calls for political independence.

Although the idea that British rule was economically detrimental to India was apparent from the early years of the nineteenth century,⁸⁷ in the later part of the century these arguments were, importantly, expressed in terms of the national developmental paradigm, first developed by Friedrich List as a challenge to the neo classical model associated with Britain's global economic dominance (Goswami 2004:215-224) The ideal of the national developmental state, contained within List's conception of national economic development, was explicitly taken up by Indian intellectuals and political activists. For example, Govind Mahadev Ranade, an Indian judge and member of Congress 'inner circle' for the first two decades of its existence (McLane 1988:53), described the ideal state as the 'national organ taking care of national needs.' (quoted in Goswami 2004:222) Importantly, the ideal of the national developmental state also framed criticisms of British policy. Most famously, Dadabhai Naroji, another member of the inner circle and who produced early estimates of India's national and per capita income, argued that British rule was facilitating a net drain of wealth from India to Britain (quoted in 2004:224). Naroji's arguments led to an ongoing debate with British officials, who countered by publishing their own 'official' estimates of per capita income, and, from 1890 onwards, for the 'next several decades, the accurate determination of per capita income became a sub – industry of its own' (2004:225). Importantly, the economic arguments between Indian nationalists and British officials reified the ideal of the state as the agent of national economic progress and established economic growth as a key element of a unified national interest. This was evident in Congress and wider nationalist

politics from the late nineteenth century. Resolutions and speeches on economic issues were a regular feature of the annual Congress sessions (Zaidi and INC 1985) and from 1901 there were also exhibitions and fairs on industrial development held along with Congress sessions (McLane 1977:144). The national development paradigm and the 'territorial isomorphism of economy and nation' (Goswami 2004:212) it implied also provided the basis of mass political participation. The boycotting of foreign goods and the use of alternative indigenous or Swadeshi products became key features of mass nationalist mobilisation in the twentieth century. (Sarkar 1989:111–137)

The demand for equality between Indians and Europeans was also an important element in forming the idea of a unified Indian national interest and identity in the public culture of the late nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century, assumptions of racial superiority were a crucial feature of the way many Europeans in India, government officials as well as non-official, interacted with Indians.⁸⁸ The attitude of racial superiority was also expressed in support of policies that discriminated against Indians. Issues that were important in late nineteenth century Indian political life – and subsequently taken up by Congress – include: the demand that the recruitment examinations for the civil service be held in India as well as in England, the ability of Indian judges to hear cases involving European subjects (Seal 1968: 137-143, 163-5), the admittance of Indians to the Indian Volunteer Reserve Force and restrictions on Indians carrying firearms (Sinha 1995: 162, Chapter Two). While Congress sought equality between Europeans and Indians, the principle of equality also became a means of regulating the internal pluralism and diversity of the Indian population. A broad notion of equality was expressed in a number of ways. Firstly, Congress adopted an approach of non-discrimination and sought to include all major ethnic groups within its platform – this eventually translated into an inclusive and territorial framing

of citizenship in the Indian constitution.⁸⁹ Secondly, Congress also slowly adopted measures to address the various social, political and economic inequalities amongst the Indian population. The Nehru report of 1928 adopted universal franchise as Congress policy (Sarkar 2001:29) and from 1932 Gandhi explicitly adopted measures to ameliorate the social and economic conditions of caste groups subject to the practices of untouchability (Sarkar1989:329). The post independence Constitution (adopted in 1950), framed by a Congress controlled Constituent Assembly, explicitly prohibited the exclusionary and violent practices through which individuals were treated as untouchable and committed the Indian state to measures addressing economic and social inequality.⁹⁰

The link between progress, self government and national identity was apparent in the founding of the INC. The circular note sent to regional associations inviting them to attend the first session of the INC stated: 'Indirectly this Conference will form the germ of a Native Parliament and, if properly conducted, will constitute in a few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is still wholly unfit for representative institutions' (quoted in Mehrotra 1971:576) The demand for self government became an increasingly important part of the Congress platform. Beginning in the late nineteenth century with calls for modest reforms of the existing constitutional structure, by the late 1920's Congress was demanding independence for an Indian government elected on the basis of universal franchise from territorial constituencies (Sarkar 2001). Congress' constitutional demands were initially made on the public platform, at the annual December sessions, through petitions and proposals for constitutional reform. From 1920 onwards, however, as Congress switched to become a mass party, the imperative of constitutional reform became the nominal trigger for mass agitation, the key

issue of contestation between Congress and the Indian government and - as discussed below – a source of conflict within Congress itself.

At the time of the Congress founding, however, this pan-ethnic understanding of Indian national identity and interest was not the only, or even the most important, political project in Indian public culture. Alongside and often in direct collision with Congress were other forms of public associational activity that asserted very different understandings of national identity and national interest. Three that are in themselves politically significant and also significant for understanding the political trajectory of modern national and ethnic politics in the Tamil speaking areas are Hindu, Muslim and finally Tamil / Dravidian nationalisms. These are discussed in the following sub-sections whilst the next section will discuss the public organisational and ideological presence of these three movements in the late nineteenth century.

5.2.2 India as a Hindu / Aryan nation

By the time of the first Congress session in Bombay, the understanding of India as an exclusively Hindu nation was already a well established trope in Indian public culture. Key to the Hindu nationalist conception of India was the Aryan idea, which had its intellectual roots in the Orientalist scholarship that began to study the sources of Indian cultural and religious life in the late eighteenth century.⁹¹ According to this idea, Indian civilization was founded by the migration of racially Aryan peoples who established a flourishing religious and cultural life set out in the ancient Sanskrit texts that was subsequently corrupted and degraded by centuries of intolerant and alien Muslim rule.⁹² By the late nineteenth century, the term Arya or Aryan was central to Hindu nationalist thought and activities (Van der Veer 1999) and came to represent 'a renascent Hinduism, a reformed Hinduism excised of corrupting external currents, and the traumatic imprimatur of what were seen as successive

colonial intrusions' (Goswami 2004:183). The increasing use and wide circulation of the Sanskrit term Bharat to describe India, along with the more evocative image of the nation as mother goddess or Bharatmata, also established a clear and unmediated equation between Aryan (Hindus) and the Indian national past and therefore future interest (2004: Chapter 6). Non-Hindus, and Muslims in particular, became therefore non-nationals, and a potential cultural as well as demographic threat who could only be brought into the national core through cultural assimilation (Jaffrelot 1993; Van der Veer 1999:429; Goswami 2004:267).

The relationship between Hindu nationalism and the Congress movement can be understood through two associations: the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society. The Arya Samaj was founded in 1875 in Gujarat by Dayananda Saraswati (1824 – 1883) but had most support in Punjab and the United Provinces (Jones 1968:43; Van der Veer 2001:49-52). The movement set out to reform Hindu practice to be in line with an idealised, pristine and reformed religion – labelled Arya Dharm – that did away with idol worship, practices of caste hierarchy and caste exclusion, Brahmin priests and priestly ritual, whilst also introducing a novel ritual of purification (or Shuddhi) - used to 're-convert' Muslims and Christians to their 'original' Aryan religion (Jones, 1968; Van der Veer 1999). By 1921 the Samaj had a significant social and cultural presence, with an estimated half a million members (Sarkar 1989:74) and a network of schools, colleges and hospitals across the country that were also used by non-Arya Samaj Hindus (Van der Veer 2001:52). The Arya Samaj was closely associated with Congress in Punjab (Barrier 1967) and the United Provinces (Gould 2004: Chapter 4) where its activities contributed to social and political antagonism along Hindu – Muslim lines. The Samaj vigorously promoted efforts to protect cows, including prohibitions of slaughter that not only characterised Muslims as sacrilegious but also sought to outlaw the customary

sacrifice of cows at Muslim religious festivals (Jones 1968). The Samaj also championed the use of Hindi (written in the Sanskrit or Devanagiri script) over Urdu (written in the Persian script) identifying the former as authentically 'national' and the latter as a foreign imposition (Kumar 1990; King, R.D 1999:74-91).

The promotion of an Aryan and Hindu conception of Indian national identity in south India was prominently associated with the Theosophical Society. The Theosophical brand of Hinduism was socially far more conservative than the Samaj's Arya Dharm, defending, for example, caste hierarchy and the notion that whereas upper caste bodies were composed of an pure substance, lower caste bodies were inherently polluting, and polluted upper cast groups by their mere presence (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998:96). Despite these differences, the Theosophists treated the revival and cultivation of an idealised Vedic or Aryan Hinduism as a national mission (Suntharalingam 1974:290-311). Colonel H. S Olcott, the co-founder of the Society, speaking in Madras described the Aryan religion as the 'national religion' (1974:303), stating that Indian national regeneration demanded the revival of Aryan science and religion (1974:295). The Society soon established an important presence with branches and Sanskrit schools in many districts and small towns across the Tamil speaking areas (1974:298 303). Furthermore, from the late nineteenth century, the Society also built up a presence in the print media (Washbrook 1976:290; Pandian 2007:36). These assets proved useful in the Society's close association with pan-ethnic Indian nationalist politics. The Madras Mahajana Sabha, the association that sent delegates to the first Congress in Bombay, timed its first provincial conference in December 1884 to coincide with the Society's annual meeting (Mehrotra 1971:561). The Society continued to have close associations with the Madras politicians, known as the Mylapore group (Washbrook 1976:238, 239), who effectively controlled the provincial Congress

organisation until 1920 (1976:245-248, 289). Annie Besant,⁹³ the society's President after the death of Olcott in 1907, played an important role in Congress led efforts for Indian self rule during the 1910's and 1920's (see below).

5.2.3 Muslim nationalism

Along with the idea of a pan-ethnic Indian national identity and a Hindu national identity, the notion that Indian Muslims also constituted a distinct social and political group, and potentially a national group, was also well established in late nineteenth century Indian public culture. The Muslims of India, who constituted almost twenty per cent of the total Indian population at the 1892 census, were unevenly distributed across the provinces. The majority of Indian Muslims lived in Bengal, whilst in Punjab Muslims formed a majority of the population and in United Provinces Muslims constituted a socially and culturally significant minority. Along with this regional variation, there were also other important cleavages amongst the Muslim population; 'Language, caste and economic standing worked together to divide Muslim from Muslim no less than Hindu from Hindu' (Seal 1968:300). The idea of a distinct Muslim identity uniting these disparate groups and carrying conceptual and institutional implications for modern political activity can be understood as the outcome of three distinct sets of activities that took place during the nineteenth century. The first were the Muslim revival and reform movements of the early nineteenth century that worked amongst ordinary Muslims; the second were the collective pronouncements of British officials and the third were the efforts of Muslim public figures and intellectuals who used associational forms along with modern social and political concepts to organise Muslim activity in colonial public culture.

Peter Hardy describes the activities of Saiyid Ahmed (1786–1831) and his followers across northern India, and those of Hajji Shariat – Allah (1781–1840), as well as his son Dudu Miyan (1819–62) in Bengal, as directing a message of Islamic revival and reform that sought to consolidate a sharply differentiated religious identity (1972:50-60). Preaching against customs that many Muslims shared with Hindus such as ‘intercession at the tombs of saints, consultation of Brahmins, even vegetarianism and aversion to the remarriage of widows’, these movements were ‘essentially rejections of medieval Indian Islam in favour of early Islam in Arabia’ (1972:59). Unlike the Hindu reform movements, these reformists directed their message at non elite groups. In the case of Saiyid Ahmed, there were small landowners, teachers, small shopkeepers and minor officials, and in Bengal ‘depressed Muslim cultivators sinking into the sea of landless labourers’ (1972:56, 58). These activities sought to consolidate a distinct identity by making Muslims aware of ‘what they did not share with their non Muslim neighbours’ (1972:59).

While Islamic reformers were attempting to consolidate an Islamic social and religious community, British officials from the mid nineteenth century also began to adopt the category of an all-India Muslim religious community and all-India Muslim political interest in administrative practice and official communications. At the all-India level, this first became visible in a 1871 Government of India regulation calling for the official encouragement and support of Muslim education – classical, vernacular and in the English language. The resolution, prompted by incidents of what appeared to be Islamist inspired violent opposition to the colonial state, was intended to foster Muslim loyalty to British rule (1972:81-5). A report published in the same year, and prompted by the same anxiety about widespread Muslim disloyalty, categorised Muslims in total as ‘in all respects a race ruined under British rule’ (1972:31). Although this judgement was probably only applicable to

certain groups of Muslims, it was nevertheless adopted as a blanket assessment that Muslims had not progressed under British rule and were relatively 'backward' when compared to Hindus. This assessment of relative 'backwardness' was important and, following the resolution of 1871, there were two further Government resolutions in 1873 and 1885 sanctioning official support for Muslim education (Mehrotra 1971:368-9). The introduction of elections for local governments from 1882 also led to the adoption of separate electorates for Muslim voters, thus recognising Muslims as a separate political constituency. (Hardy 1972:125)

Finally, modern associational activity was also important in establishing public life the concept of a Muslim identity. Important in this regard were the activities of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1893), a judge and Muslim reformer, who sought to reconcile Islam and western education and thereby establish a modern and progressive Muslim identity. Through his writings Sayed sought to demonstrate that Islam was 'compatible with progress, as a Victorian liberal understood it', and also that 'Islam was modern progress and modern progress was Islam properly understood' (1972:96). One of his most significant achievements was the founding of the Muhammadan Anglo – Oriental College at Aligarh in 1878. The college, founded with Government backing, educated elite Muslims along western lines whilst also providing a Muslim religious education (Seal 1968:318-9). Similarly, in 1863 in Calcutta, Abdul Latif, a civil servant, established the Muhammeden Literary and Scientific Society to 'impart useful information to the higher and educated classes of the Mahomedan Literary Community'. By 1877 the Society had over 500 members (1968:309, 310). There were also attempts to establish pan-Indian Muslim associational linkages. In 1878 Amir Ali, a Calcutta barrister, established the National Mohammedan Association and by 1888 it had fifty branches across India, including five in Madras (1968:312-3) As a consequence of these three

types of activities, by the time the INC held its first session in Bombay, the understanding that Muslims constituted a distinct interest and identity was well established in colonial public culture. The Muslim category was a reality that Congress politicians, both Muslim and Hindu, had to negotiate in their attempts to establish a pan-ethnic Indian national platform from which to negotiate with the British state.

5.2.4 Tamil as Dravidian and Tamil as Indian

By the late nineteenth century there was also a well established Tamil public culture established through the circulation of printed journals,⁹⁴ texts and related associational activity, in which the study of the Tamil language, its history and the religious traditions of the Tamils were key issues of debate and contestation through which a modern Tamil identity was formed (Baker 198; Pandian 2007:22). These activities were organised around two distinct poles and while both asserted the existence of a Tamil linguistic identity, they sought to transform Tamil social, religious, linguistic and later political practices in different and mutually incompatible ways. One set of activities was hugely influenced by the Dravidian idea, which emerged from the scholarly study of south Indian languages starting in the early nineteenth century. This second 'Madras School of Orientalism' (Trautmann 2006; xiii) challenged the Calcutta Orientalists' claim that all Indian languages were derived from Sanskrit, arguing that Tamil and the other south Indian languages were not only related to each other, forming a single Dravidian family, but were also distinct from Sanskrit and the Aryan family of languages (Trautmann 2006). Like the Aryan idea, the Dravidian idea expanded from its initial linguistic association and became by the second half of the nineteenth century a theory of south Indian society, religion, language and history. Analogous to the Vedic golden age of the Aryan theory destroyed by Muslim rule, the Dravidian theory posited a lost Dravidian golden age destroyed by the

Aryan invasion (Baker 1981; Van der Veer 2001:140-1). In the multiple uses of the Dravidian idea by religious and social reformers, the Aryan invasion is blamed for corrupting an initially pristine Dravidian religion (Saivism) and for introducing unsavoury social practices such as the subjugation of women and caste hierarchy.⁹⁵ Alongside, and often in competition with, the notion of a Dravidian Tamil identity were activities that promoted Tamil language, culture and religion as components and expressions of a wider Indian tradition (Baker 1981; Ramaswamy 1997:46-62). While the Indian orientated Tamil revivalist activities sometimes characterised Tamil as having ultimately Aryan origins (Pandian 2007:52-55) the Tamil language was also presented as the equivalent of Sanskrit in its literary and linguistic merit (Nambi Aroonan 1980:61).

During the nineteenth century the Tamil-as-Dravidian idea was associated mainly with Tamils from upper non-Brahmin castes, usually educated in English and often employed as government officials or as educationalists (Ravindran 2000). These activists produced printed editions of Tamil texts from the palm leaf manuscripts and sought to cultivate the production of literary knowledge about these texts by founding journals and literary associations (2000). The notion of Tamil-as-Dravidian prompted efforts to purge Tamil speech and writing of Sanskrit inflections and Tamil religious practice of alien accretions to what was considered to be authentic Saivite theology (Pandian 2007:121-141).

Linguistic and religious reappraisal also implied a reappraisal of racial origins and, thereby, caste hierarchy in Tamil society. The Tamil-as-Dravidian project challenged the lowly position assigned to non-Brahmin Tamils in the five fold Varna hierarchy outlined in the Sanskrit text, the Laws of Manu, and reiterated in the Aryan theory of Indian civilization. The latter, adopted in colonial law codes and census operations, and also widely prevalent in colonial public culture, categorised Tamil society into three distinct groups

(Ramaswamy 1997:25-29). At one end of the caste and racial hierarchy were Tamil Brahmins, identified as descendents of the early Aryan colonists who carried Vedic civilization to the south (Trautmann 1997:176; Dirks 2001:134-144). At the other end of the hierarchy were the Untouchable groups – identified as racially Dravidian and in daily practice treated as ritually polluting (Irschick 1969:9). In the middle, all the other non-Brahmin Tamil groups were identified as Shudras; the last of the four Varna categories and ascribed to perform menial labour (Nambi Aroonnan 1980:29-31). The Shudra category, as it was used in the Tamil speaking areas, included many high status and often wealthy mercantile, landowning or soldiering groups

From the late nineteenth century, Tamil revivalists used the Dravidian idea to challenge this classification and instead presented Tamils as outside of caste and descendents of a worthy Dravidian civilization (Ravindran 2000). Tamil Brahmins, in contrast, were seen not as civilising colonisers but as deceptive outsiders who had corrupted a once flourishing and egalitarian society with their ritualism and caste hierarchies (2000) (Pandian 2007:121-141). In the twentieth century the Dravidian idea was used by the Self Respect Movement, later DK, to challenge the Congress movement on the grounds that the latter was associated with Brahmins, Sanskrit and Hinduism (see below).⁹⁶

While the Indian and Dravidian Tamil revival and reform projects were organisationally distinct and based on mutually contradictory assumptions, there were nevertheless two important areas of overlap. Firstly, they both shared an interest in the cultivation and promotion of the Tamil language and literature, albeit for different ends. The promotion of a Tamil-as-Indian identity was closely associated with pan-Indian nationalism and as a project that sought eventually to create a political movement was crucially concerned with the creation and dissemination of a more demotic and accessible Tamil that could be used for purposes of mass communication (Baker 1981:15;

Ramaswamy 1997:46-56). This was in sharp contrast to the Tamil-as-Dravidian project which was generally concerned with scholarly activities and religious, as well as linguistic, forms that were accessible in the main to elite non-Brahmin groups (Ravindran 2000). Furthermore, the Tamil-as-Dravidian project presumed the existence of a sharp racial, cultural and caste divide between Tamils, on the one hand, and north Indians, Hindus and Brahmins, on the other. Despite these differences, the competing Tamil-as-Indian and Tamil-as-Dravidian projects nevertheless together produced a varied and complex Tamil public culture in which Tamil literary and cultural forms were presumed to be aesthetically valuable and adopted as political interests.

The two projects also overlapped on the need to reform social practices and address social inequalities – such as caste hierarchy and the position of women – that were increasingly understood as out of keeping with the wider humanist assumptions of progress and improvement. Again, the problem of social reform was framed through mutually contradictory frameworks. While the Tamil-as-Dravidian project blamed unpalatable social practices on Aryan Hinduism and Brahmin dominance, reformists⁹⁷ within the Tamil-as-Indian project presented social reform as a means of returning to a more authentic and socially enlightened Hindu order.⁹⁸ Like the promotion of Tamil literature and culture, the different assumptions were less important for the political relationship between Dravidian and Indian nationalist politics in the Tamil speaking regions than the objectives they shared. These shared objectives allowed these projects to politically and socially compete in a way that was agonistic rather than antagonistic, and meant that this competition could be accommodated within Congress evolving framework of pan-ethnic Indian national identity and national interest.

5.3 Process

5.3.1 Political History of the Congress movement

Congress' political development from its foundation to independence in 1947 can usefully be considered in two phases; the first up to 1920 and the second from 1920 to 1947. In the first phase, its activities were limited to articulating a set of political claims and co-opting the support of established interests and associations. It was only after 1920, and the adoption of the strategy of mass protest through non-cooperation, that the Congress organisation formally adopted the third prong of public associational activity; direct political mobilisation in an effort to build popular support. For forty years, therefore, Congress was mostly an annual gathering, held in different towns and cities across British India. Despite the limited nature of its activities, the fact that they were continuous was sufficient to establish Congress as a significant association asserting the existence of a pan-Indian national identity and national interest. The success of Congress during this period was not in its ability to realise any of its stated objectives – for example the introduction of simultaneous examinations,⁹⁹ the expansion of the elective principle,¹⁰⁰ or the adoption of economic policies that could stimulate Indian industrial expansion and growth.¹⁰¹ On all of these counts, Congress can be regarded as a failure. Rather the success of Congress was that it slowly became an unavoidable political presence, for both its detractors and supporters alike.

Congress' ability to establish itself as an unavoidable, whether problematic or potentially useful, presence in Indian political life, was not the result of any a priori structural givens; those factors such as the growing levels of education, political and administrative centralisation, or advances in communications and transportations technologies that facilitated pan-Indian integration as well as Indian integration into global economic flows, were also all present in Sri

Lanka during the same period.¹⁰² Rather, the gradual institutionalisation of Congress as an accepted fact of political life was realised through co-ordinated and temporally continuous activities within a shared conceptual framework in which the claim to be a pan-ethnic Indian nationalist entity was both meaningful and carried political legitimacy. The crucial elements of this activity were the predictability and regularity of the annual Congress in December, the fact that the annual event was held at a different location every year¹⁰³, and the reasonable level of commitment by nationalist politicians to maintaining the unity of the Congress organisation.

In this first phase of the Congress' political history, there were significant Hindu and Muslim challenges to the project of establishing the annual sessions as authoritative statements of pan-ethnic Indian national opinion and interest. Muslim associations argued that Congress demands for an expansion of competitive examinations would lead to Hindu domination and charged that Congress was therefore inimical to Muslim interests (Seal 1968:315, 324). Congress leaders sought to meet this challenge by attempting to demonstrate Muslim support and by adopting a rule at the 1888 session stipulating that it would not discuss issues or adopt resolutions that were opposed by a majority of either Hindu or Muslim delegates (1968:333). The attempt to create unity by excluding issues that caused disagreement was also evident in the conflict between social reformers and their opponents. For many Congress figures, Indian progress demanded not just self government, but also the reformation of Indian, particularly Hindu, social practices that contravened the principles and standards of enlightenment humanism (Suntharalingam 1974:289, 315). Efforts to reform Hindu practices – particularly those of child marriage and enforced widowhood – were vociferously opposed by associations that sought to protect Hindu orthodoxy from alien (i.e. western) intervention (Sarkar 1989:71). By 1895 orthodox opinion had prevailed and social reformers – who

from 1887 had met as the National Social Conference after the normal sessions - were prohibited from holding their meetings in association with the annual Congress sessions (Goswami 2004:232).

The 1888 rule and the 1895 expulsion of social reform issues did not conclusively resolve the relationship between Congress and Muslim political associations, or indeed between Congress and the issue of Hindu social reform. These efforts nevertheless reveal a key dynamic of Congress' attempts to maintain unity. Importantly, the effort to create a national – in the sense of pan-ethnic – platform involved an explicit recognition of distinct ethnic groups combined with an attempt to incorporate these groups within the organization. For example, the 1888 rule explicitly recognised Hindus and Muslims as distinct entities. Similarly, the 1895 expulsions confirmed the argument made by prominent Congress leaders (Suntharalingam 1974:288; Goswami 2004:232) that Congress should confine itself to political issues, leaving social questions to the relevant social (ethnic) groups, an implicit characterisation of the Indian population as containing a multiplicity of socially self-regulating groups. The pan-ethnic national identity sought by Congress involved, therefore, first the explicit recognition of ethnic pluralism and, second, an attempt to create a political space acceptable to all the groups concerned. In other words, the creation of a pan-ethnic national identity involved the incorporation, rather than negation or transcendence, of publicly established ethnic pluralism. Accommodation was also sought at the organisational level; Congress encouraged Muslim participation at the annual sessions,¹⁰⁴ invited the prominent Bombay Muslim politician Badruddin Tyabji (Seal 1968:331) to be President at the 1887 session and held its sessions in cities with substantial Muslim populations – such as Allahabad, Lucknow and Lahore.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the expulsion of social reform issues did not entail the expulsion of reform minded Congress politicians – many of whom remained in

the Congress 'inner circle' (McLane, 1988:53), and in 1905 one of their number, G. K Gokhale, was elected Congress president, at that point the youngest person to have held that post (Khan 1992:161).

The persistence of the Congress' yearly activities, and its efforts to maintain unity, established it as an important and unavoidable presence in Indian political life. The annual sessions attracted a growing number of delegates as well as non-delegates. Delegates arriving by train from other provinces were met by large, enthusiastic crowds and then taken in procession to the pandal (tent) in which the sessions were held (McLane 1977:98, 99). The sessions were also well reported in the press and, by the 1920's, the coverage was so exhaustive that the Government called off its covert surveillance of the sessions (Israel 1994:163). Conversely, the annual sessions also became a tangible object through which government officials could attack the notion of a pan-Indian national identity. In 1888, the Viceroy Dufferin (served 1884-1888) formally warned princes and chiefs of the native states not to contribute to Congress (Seal 1968:279) and there were repeated claims that Government officials worked to prevent large wealthy landowners from contributing to Congress funds (McLane 1977:140, 146). Lord Curzon (served 1899-1905) set out to pointedly ignore Congress and thereby reduce it to irrelevance during his tenure (Gopal 1965:267). The antipathy towards Congress during this initial phase signalled its growing importance in Indian political life and presaged its eventual status as a, perhaps *the*, key interlocutor in the negotiations that brought British rule to an end.

Eventually, the most important split in Congress during this period was not based on ethnic or regional cleavages, but rather on the approach that should be adopted in challenging British policy. The section labelled 'moderate' by British officials wanted to retain Congress as primarily a body co-ordinating and expressing educated Indian opinion whilst engaging in measured

constitutional negotiation with the state. In contrast, those deemed 'extremists' sought to directly mobilise the Indian population, using language and symbols that would be readily understood by the largely rural and illiterate population, for the purposes of gaining greater Indian self rule, or Swaraj (Sarkar 1989:89-100). The split between the extremist and moderate factions came in the wake of the 1905 Bengal partition that triggered mass protests and isolated terrorist attacks against British targets, particularly in Bengal, but across India, including the Tamil speaking areas (1989:111-137; Arnold 1977:26). Following a violent and fractious session in Ahmedabad in 1907, where the two groups came into open conflict, key extremist leaders were arrested and then sentenced to imprisonment for inciting violence against the state (McLane 1977:366-8). At the 1908 session the moderates locked in their control of Congress by adopting a constitution that created provincial units through which the selection of delegates for annual Congress sessions would be organised (Sarkar 1989:137). This was not, however, a permanent rupture, and the eventual return of the extremists to the Congress fold in 1915 (Arnold 1977:27) confirmed its centrality in Indian political life.

The transformation of Congress into a mass movement that engaged in direct political mobilisation took place in the context of changes associated with the First World War. The Indian contribution to the First World War led to a growing sense, amongst Indians and British officials alike, that there would have to be constitutional concessions in exchange (Arnold 2001:106). British officials were also working to the logic that the economic hardship associated with the war – including spiralling prices and the increased taxes imposed to pay for war time debt – could translate into serious political discontent unless checked by political concessions (Baker 1976:20-21). This sense of imminent political change also prompted a spurt of nationalist activity. Congress and Muslim League convened simultaneously in Bombay in December 1915 and

worked to produce a common agreement on constitutional reform (Sarkar 1989:150). Meanwhile, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the extremist leader recently released from prison, formed a mass agitation Home Rule League in Maharashtra, while Annie Besant did the same in Madras (1989:151). The anticipated reforms were finally enshrined in the 1919 Government of India Act (1989:194). Under a system termed 'dyarchy', the act provided for a level of self government at the provincial level by transferring control of some government departments to elected representatives, whilst retaining official control over key areas such as defence, revenues and foreign affairs (Irschick 1969:89–96; Baker 1976:22). The reforms were welcomed by Congress (Sarkar 1989:194) and satisfied the ambitions of many Congress politicians who were eager to contest the 1920 elections for the newly empowered legislatures (Baker 1976:32; Arnold 1977:29–32). However, crucial events of 1919 – 20¹⁰⁶ that sharply polarised Indian and British opinion led to Congress adopting Gandhi's strategy of mass protest through non – co-operation in a special Calcutta session of the Congress in September 1920 (Sarkar 1989:197).

Gandhi introduced a series of organisational reforms that provided the infrastructure for Congress' transformation from an annual convention into a mass movement (Krishna 1966). The provincial Congress committees, that previously followed the polyglot administrative structures of the colonial state, were divided into linguistic units, thereby creating for the first time a modern Tamil political unit – the Tamil Nad Provincial Congress Committee (Arnold 1977:47). At the same, an executive – the Working Committee – was also established which met regularly and provided for a less sporadic organisational presence (Krishna 1966:415). Finally, Gandhi's reforms introduced a small and nominal membership fee (1966:419) symbolic of Congress' stated ambition of expanding beyond the educated middle classes and wealthy patrons to directly reach the vast mass of the Indian population.

In the eventful years between 1920 and 1947 Congress' engaged in three phases of mass India-wide anti-colonial protest: the Non Co-operation movement (1920–2), the Civil Disobedience movement (1930–4) and, finally, the Quit India movement (1942–5). These movements saw an expansion of Congress' nominal membership, but invariably drew on resentments, conflicts and aspirations that were independent of Congress' formal programme.¹⁰⁷ In Madras, for example, the popularity of picketing liquor shops as a tactic of protest during the Non Cooperation Movement probably owed as much to the social ambitions of upwardly mobile caste groups, as it did to the publicly stated objective of targeting the liquor excise tax; a crucial element of the government's finances (Arnold 1977:65). Similarly, participation in the 1930–34 Civil Disobedience movement across the Tamil speaking areas was driven in part by the economic distress caused by the Depression (Baker 1976:169–200). Despite the gap between Congress rhetoric and the multifaceted reality of mass protest in an uneven and complex society¹⁰⁸, the protests were nevertheless important. By demonstrating its ability to co-ordinate and mobilise political activity across India, Congress established itself – in the eyes of many ordinary and politically ambitious Indians¹⁰⁹, as well as the British establishment in India and London – as a powerful actor in Indian political life.¹¹⁰ Crucially, Congress also gained publicity, not just within India but also internationally; Gandhi's salt march gained widespread coverage and consequently became an iconic moment in Indian political history (Arnold 2001:146–147).

Through the work of organising and conducting protests – marches, picketing of cloth and liquor shops, sathyagraha (openly violating official policy to entice arrest and sometimes violent repression) – Congress built a network that was to become useful during subsequent electioneering. A section of the Congress party – labelled the Swarajists – contested elections during the 1920's for provincial and national legislatures. During the 1920's the principle of magnate

power and patron client power remained paramount and successful candidates were only nominally grouped under party labels.¹¹¹ By 1935, however, whilst magnate power remained important, many candidates actively sought out Congress nominations, and in some areas the negotiations between vote-bank brokers that preceded electoral contests now took place within the Congress party structures (Baker 1976:261). This trend was accentuated during the 1945 elections as it became clear that serious negotiations for the transfer of power was imminent and many vote bank brokers sought out parties that were likely to wield power. (Jalal 1994:146)

5.3.2 Congress in the Tamil speaking areas

Congress' electoral victories in the Tamil speaking areas between 1934 -7, and again in 1947, was built on decades of Indian nationalist orientated political activity, beginning with the twenty one Madras delegates who attended the first Congress session in Bombay (Mehrotra 1971:591). Congress' activities in the Tamil speaking areas from the late nineteenth century took place alongside countervailing activities that sought to promote an alternative Dravidian understanding of Tamil identity and interest (Nambi Aroonan 1980; Ramaswamy 1997; Pandian 2007). There were, however, two important differences between Congress and Dravidian projects that explain the former's electoral triumph over the latter, evident in 1926 (Baker 162, 163), but more so from 1934 (312). Firstly, in realising its electoral victories, Congress brought together all three activities of successful political mobilisation – namely ideological articulation, co-option of existing interests and direct political mobilisation. In contrast, social and political movements espousing a Dravidian identity did not, during this period, effectively co-ordinate these three types of activity. Secondly, whereas Congress' efforts to directly mobilise support were designed to reach a mass audience and used widely familiar cultural forms

(Bhaskaran 1981:29-42; Ramaswamy 1997:46-62), the Dravidian movement was less inclined to adopt popular culture as a vehicle of mass mobilisation.

During the nineteenth century, the Dravidian idea was used to frame Tamil identity and interests by individuals and associations who were preoccupied with scholarly activities (Ravindran 2000) and tended to promote elite cultural and religious forms (Pandian 2007:125-136). The Self Respect Movement that became the most visible vehicle of the Dravidian idea in the early decades of the twentieth century repudiated many of the religious and literary concerns of the early Dravidian activists (Ramaswamy 1997:238; Pandian 1999:297 – 299). The Self Respecters did engage in direct mobilisation, often staging dramatic acts of iconoclasm (Nambi Aroonan 1980:160 – 169), but these were focused on social transformation and the eradication of Hindu practices rather than the capture of political power (see below).

As discussed above, as a consequence of their shared objectives (the promotion of Tamil literature and culture as well as social reform) the competition between Congress and the Dravidian movement was more agonistic than antagonistic. Crucially, these two objectives could also be accommodated within the broader and evolving framework of the Congress movement. Indian nationalists associated with the 'extremist' approach within the Congress movement promoted Tamil culture and language in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as expressions of an indigenous Indian tradition, and a means of mobilising mass support (Washbrook 1976:245, 246; Arnold 1977:27; Nambi Aroonan 1980:64). With Gandhi's linguistic reorganisation of Congress units, the use and promotion of the Indian languages was formally tied to the objective of greater self government (King, R.D 1999:63). Congress policy remained ambiguous on the question of a single national language – Hindi or English – as well as the redrawing of provincial boundaries. However, the adoption of linguistic units within Congress meant that India's linguistic

diversity was firmly established as a reality, and value, within Congress' vision of pan-ethnic Indian nationalism. Similarly, the 1895 expulsion of the Social Reform conference did not permanently exclude social reform issues from the Congress agenda. In the Tamil speaking areas, the poet and Indian nationalist, Subramania Bharathi (1882-1921), attacked the practice of untouchability and engaged in activities to undermine caste hierarchy (Nambi Aroonan 1980:59-62). In 1933 Gandhi initiated a campaign to eradicate untouchability (Arnold 2001:179) and the practice of untouchability was legally prohibited in the Indian constitution (Bayly 1999:269). Eventually a conflict over caste segregation within the Tamil Nadu Congress led to the formation in 1925 of the Self Respect movement, which set out a programme of radical social reform based on the Dravidian idea. These conflicts continued in the post independence era (Chapter Seven) but could be ideologically accommodated within the pan Indian Congress framework – eventually crystallized in the post-independence constitution that set progressive social reform based on humanist principles as a national objective.

The widespread expectations of constitutional reform associated with the First World War provoked intense political activity in the Tamil speaking regions. In September 1916 Annie Besant (president of the Theosophical Society), along with Congress affiliated politicians, launched the Home Rule League in Madras city (Irschick 1969:35). The League engaged in a campaign of direct mobilisation and used the press, pamphlets and speaking tours to reach the population in both English and Tamil (1969:37). The League's vociferous campaigns provoked the Madras Government into an issuing an order excluding Besant and two of her associates to rural areas outside of Madras city between June and September 1917 (1969:37, 63). The punishment of Besant furthered the League's appeal; its membership increased from 7, 000 to 27, 000 between March and December 1917 (Arnold 1977:23) and on her release Mrs.

Besant was elected as President of the forthcoming Calcutta Congress. Soon after the founding of the League in November 1916, a counter political organisation, the South Indian Political Association, was formed, also in Madras City (Irschick 1969:47). SIPA set out its opposition to the League's demand for Indian self rule in the 'Non-Brahmin Manifesto' that was published by the leading English language nationalist newspapers in the province (1969:48). Invoking ideas associated with the Dravidian theory, the Manifesto claimed that south Indian society was characterised by the social, ritual and political dominance of Brahmins over non-Brahmins and called for a continuation of British rule to hold the scales between the antagonistic interests of Indian society (1969:358 – 367). To propagate its message, SIPA launched two newspapers - the English language *Justice* (which led to SIPA being referred to as the Justice Party) and the Tamil language *Dravidian* - as well as acquiring an already established Telugu paper, the *Andhra Prakasika* (1969:51). Like the League, it held conferences and conducted speaking tours, and encouraged the formation of local Dravidian associations to engage in activities – such as running night schools, reading rooms and libraries – to promote education amongst non-Brahmins (Nambi Aroonan 1980:49, 50).

Although the non-Brahmin manifesto pointed to the disproportionate proportion of Brahmins employed in the public sector to substantiate its thesis of Brahmin domination, the actual political economy of caste across Madras, including the Tamil speaking areas, prevented any simple division into Brahmin and non-Brahmin blocks. Social, economic and political power during this period was organised around landowning or commercial magnates who controlled productive wealth (Washbrook 1976: Chapter 3). The vast majority of magnates were from non-Brahmin castes, as revealed by income tax figures (Baker 1970:90, 95), and their networks of dependents were cross-caste and often multi-religious (Washbrook 1976:145, 198). The low

representation of non-Brahmins in the public sector was more easily explained by elite non-Brahmin reluctance to enter public service employment, despite official encouragement, than Brahmin exclusivity (Baker 1976:48–51; Washbrook 1976:276). Despite the economic implausibility of the non-Brahmin manifesto, it nevertheless drew on familiar themes in south Indian public culture, namely the cultural and racial divide between Brahmins and non-Brahmins asserted by the Dravidian theory of south Indian civilization (Irschick 1969:275 – 285).

Congress responded to the Justice party by establishing the Madras Presidency Association (MPA) in September 1917, an organisation representing non-Brahmins within the party (1969:61). The MPA acquired its own newspapers – the English language *Indian Patriot* and the Tamil language *Desabhaktan* (patriot) and claimed a membership of 2000 (1969). While the MPA was more of a political gesture than a serious organisation,¹¹² it was nevertheless significant in symbolising Congress' attempts to incorporate differences of caste within the organisational structure. The formation of the MPA acknowledged the existence of an ethnic cleavage but also brought this cleavage within the organisational structure of the Congress organisation. As with the 1888 rule and the 1895 expulsions of the social reformers, the decision to form the MPA stemmed from a pan-ethnic national project in which ethnic differences were conceptually and organisationally incorporated and accommodated, rather than ignored or excluded.

Throughout the 1920's Congress – at the all India level – decided either to boycott the newly empowered legislatures created by the 1919 Montague Chelmsford reforms or sought to obstruct their work from within (Baker 1976:155–166). As a consequence, in Madras, until the 1935 elections, the legislature was nominally at least dominated by the Justice party. This was not, however, a position built on a cohesive party machine (1976:64-71). Rather,

successful elections throughout this period were dependent on the votes controlled by magnate networks and successful candidates more often than not chose party allegiances only after securing their election (1976:37, 48) and often switched allegiances once elected (1976:76, 77). As such the Justice's activities can be seen as restricted to a thin form of co-opting interests: it co-opted the interests of a number of magnates to oppose Congress and Home Rule League and did this (by distributing patronage) primarily to retain a nominal majority in the legislature. Although it held annual Conferences, the Justice's efforts to directly mobilise political support were not sustained or particularly successful; its two newspapers struggled to compete, in terms of circulation, with Congress-allied nationalist papers (Washbrook 1976:277) and were continuously in financial difficulties, finally closing in 1932 (Baker 1976:241).

Meanwhile, outside of the legislature, Congress was engaged in ongoing campaigns of direct political mobilisation. The spurts of activity during the all India Non – Co-operation¹¹³ and Civil Disobedience¹¹⁴ movements saw marches, picketing of cloth and liquor shops as well as other acts of defiance against official restrictions; many of which were beyond the official Congress programme. Alongside these protests, and ongoing throughout this period, Congress politicians and allied groups worked to promote the Congress message through cultural channels. The work of the Indian nationalist Tamil poet Sumbramania Bharathi became popular during the 1920's following his death (Irschick 1969:285–289). Bharathi's songs and poems on Indian nationalist themes and symbols – calling for independence, denigrating caste, glorifying Gandhi – were written in clear and demotic Tamil and were easily accessible to a mass audience (1969; Baker 1981:15) and contrasted sharply with the arcane style and inaccessible vocabulary that often characterised Tamil literary production (Baker 1981:14). Tamil Congress politicians built

links with the touring companies which performed plays, invariably musicals, to audiences across the Tamil speaking areas (Bhaskaran 1981:29–42). From the 1920's onwards plays were stages that extolled nationalist figures, for example Tilak and Bhagat Singh, or used familiar religious or historical stories and figures as thinly veiled metaphors of the struggles between foreign (British) oppression and indigenous resistance. The plays were always accompanied by songs, which were printed and sold in affordable song books, extolling a similar nationalist litany of themes (1981). These activities established the symbols of Indian nationalism as unavoidable badges of political legitimacy. By 1926, even the Justice Party, that had formerly denounced Gandhi and his campaign of khaddr or home spun cloth (Irschick 1969:182-3), was decorating its meetings with placards reading 'Love Live Mahatma Gandhi' and encouraging the use of Khaddr. (1969:315)

The Tamil Nadu Congress was also associated with the revival and reform of south Indian forms of dance and music that have since become characterised as emblematic of Indian 'classical' traditions. An alliance between Congress politicians and nationalist performers transformed dance styles and instrumental as well as vocal music previously performed in the temples and courts by specialist caste groups into standardised forms, performed in modern concert halls. The Madras Music Academy, founded alongside the 1927 Madras Congress, was crucial in supervising the formation of modern south Indian Bharathanatyam, from the previously plural traditions known as Sadir, and creating a standardised style of classical Carnatic Music. Through these activities, forms of music and dance that were practiced in south India, particularly the Tamil speaking areas, were made emblems of Indian 'national' culture and civilization (Allen 1997; Natarajan 1997; Subramanian, L 1999)

While the Justice party did not venture onto the streets to contest Congress mobilisation, the Indian nationalist framing of Tamil identity and interest was

challenged during this period by the Self Respect Movement that sought to radically reform south Indian, particularly Tamil, social and religious practices.¹¹⁵ The movement was founded by EVR Ramaswami Naicker, a Congressman and active campaigner during the Non Cooperation campaigns. Ramaswami resigned from the Tamil Nad Congress Committee in 1926 after falling out with the Committee members and Gandhi over separate dining arrangements for Brahmin and non-Brahmin students at a Sanskrit school funded by Congress; on learning of the separate eating arrangement Ramaswami insisted that all caste based distinctions should be abolished and resigned after senior Congress leaders refused to enforce common dining.¹¹⁶ Working from within the Dravidian framework, Ramaswami sought to transform Tamil society by arguing that social practices such as caste and the denigration of women were brought into south Indian society by north Indian, Aryan Hinduism. The message of the movement was unequivocal: south Indian and Tamil society would only be truly liberated and reformed once it had shed all alien Hindu practices including the use of caste names, caste marks, Hindu life cycle rituals, Brahmin priests and idol worship (Nambi Aroonan 1980:160-169). Ramaswami toured extensively and wrote voluminously and sought to transform individual behaviour (Visswanathan 1983). The movement achieved a significant presence in the Tamil speaking areas (1983). Ramaswami's activity, however, was solely focused on direct mobilisation to realise social transformation and was not aimed at capturing political power; Narendra Subramanian argues that Ramaswami 'lacked a clear conception of state power and a strategy to acquire and exercise it' (1999:120).¹¹⁷

While the Justice Party and the Self Respect Movement were engaged in elite co-option and direct social evangelization respectively, Congress, when it abandoned Civil Disobedience in 1934 and decided to enter electoral politics,

brought together all three types of political activity that constitute successful political mobilisation (Chapter Four). This organisational capacity had been created by the years of direct mobilisation that began from 1920. The 1935 reforms granted full responsibility for all heads of government to elected provincial legislatures, although retaining a great deal of official control at the national legislature in Delhi (Sarkar 1989:336-338). In the Tamil speaking areas, Congress' successful electoral campaign brought together the three sets of activities and cemented Tamil Nadu's integration into a pan-Indian and pan ethnic conception of politics. In terms of ideological articulation, Congress' direction at the all India level was set out in the election manifesto 'A call to the nation'. It detailed a programme that was framed by the core principles of unity amidst diversity, equality, progress (primarily through economic development) and Indian independence that had been the core of Congress' activities from the late nineteenth century. Importantly, this framework contained objectives that overlapped significantly with Dravidian politics i.e. broadly the need to address social inequality, particularly caste hierarchy, and the recognition and cultivation of (India's) plural linguistic identities.

Meanwhile, the work of co-opting interests and mobilising support was conducted at the provincial levels, and here Congress' activity over the previous decade wrought important changes in the dynamics of electoral campaigns. S. Satyamurti, a senior Tamil Nadu Congress politician, observed in January 1937 that the forthcoming provincial elections would be a test 'not only of patriotism but also of our business capacity' (quoted in Arnold 1977:172). The INC campaign was a synergy of mass mobilisation and magnate interests. On the one hand, Congress used its organisational networks to register newly enfranchised voters, held public meetings and used devices such as processions and songs to set out its programme and even offered transport to polling stations. Well known Congress politicians - including national figures

like Nehru and Vallabhai Patel – also toured south Indian districts.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, it also sought out as candidates individuals able to command local votes, in other words magnates or patrons, whatever their previous affiliation.¹¹⁹

However, Congress activity over the previous years, along with the activities of mass mobilisation it initiated for the campaign, changed magnate behaviour if not magnate interests. Local power-holders, who previously waited till after the elections to choose a party allegiance, began to associate with Congress in preparation for the elections because it appeared as a viable and attractive vehicle in the competition between rival magnate factions for political power (Baker 1976:282-293). In other words, Congress had built up a presence and a perceived capacity for electoral mobilisation that was to an extent autonomous of local interests. For example, in some districts local power-holders with competing networks and vote-banks competed for the party's nomination and unsuccessful candidates withdrew from the electoral contest (1976:301, 303), unwilling to match the organisational resources at the official Congress candidate's disposal. The career of Kamraj Nadar, a Congress activist from a humble background who joined the movement during the Non Cooperation movement, exemplifies the extent to which the Congress structure itself became a source of power (Arnold 1977:143). In the 1937 elections a successful business man stood aside to let Kamraj compete as the official candidate from a southern Tamil Nadu constituency even though Kamraj himself did not possess a factional network tied to the control of economic resources (Baker 1976:303). Kamraj subsequently rose through the party's ranks, serving as both Chief Minister (1954–63) of the province and later All India Congress President (1963–7) (Kumaradoss 2004).

While the new type of organisational infrastructure mobilised by Congress meant that the Justice Party disintegrated, Dravidian politics and the assertion

of an anti-Indian Dravidian Tamil political identity and interest did not disappear. The Tamil-as-Dravidian identity was invoked to challenge the INC project on two separate issues. On the first occasion, the Self Respect League allied with other Tamil revivalists and Muslim associations to oppose Congress' legislation, introduced in July 1937, making Hindi a compulsory subject in the Madras school curriculum. Indian nationalists from the late nineteenth century had sought to replace English with the indigenous Hindi as the link language between the different provinces and in 1918 Gandhi had founded an institute for the propagation of Hindi in south India (Nambi Aroonan 1980:195-215). While Congress advocated Hindi as an indigenous Indian language, the anti-Congress alliance invoked the Dravidian theory to characterise Hindi as a north Indian, Aryan and Hindu imposition. The agitation drew significant support and led to 683 arrests, more than the 504 arrests that took place during the Congress led Quit India (1942-45) movement (Ross Barnett 1976:49, 52).

Again in June 1940 Ramaswami and the Self Respect League invoked the Dravidian idea to challenge Congress' claim to represent Indian demands for independence by organising a Dravidanad Separation Conference. At the conference Ramaswami unveiled a map showing the whole of south India as Dravidanad whilst north India was divided into Muslim India and Aryavarta (Nambi Aroonan 1980:243-245). The Dravidian idea was not, however, used to mount an effective electoral challenge to Congress until the post independence period. The remnants of the Justice merged with the Self Respect League in 1944 to form a new organisation, the DK (1980:227-228). Ramaswami took leadership of the new organisation and retained his policy of staying out of electoral politics. The DK's activities consisted therefore of articulating a clear and unequivocal social world view along with direct mobilisation to realise that world view. This left the field open for Congress; its organisational base

was further strengthened by the 1942 Quit India movement and in the 1946 elections won its second convincing electoral victory in Madras (Ross-Barnett 1976:77).

Congress' electoral victory should not, however, be interpreted as a repudiation of Dravidian politics. Instead – and as a consequence of their overlapping objectives – the competition between Congress and the Dravidian movement was more agonistic than antagonistic and crucially contained within Congress framework of pan-ethnic Indian national identity and national interest. Furthermore, the Tamil Nad Congress developed these objectives – the cultivation of Tamil culture and issues of social reform, particularly the question of caste hierarchy – through its efforts to directly mobilise the Tamil speaking population. As is argued in Chapter Seven, it was the overlapping objectives of the Dravidian and Congress movement – rather than the relative extremism or moderation of the parties concerned – that explains the post independence accommodation of Dravidian parties within the Indian constitutional framework. The next section of this chapter briefly discusses the relationship between Congress and Muslim politics. It argues that the absence of Congress efforts to directly mobilise the Muslim population explains Congress' failure to mobilise Muslim electoral support, despite the importance of patronage networks in determining electoral behaviour.

5.3.3 Congress, Muslims and Hindu nationalism

By the First World War, the idea of a distinct all India Muslim Political identity was well established in colonial public culture. A clear expression of this was the provision for separate Muslim electorates for the provincial and all India legislatures in the 1909 Morley-Minto reforms (Hasan 1991:66-67). Congress sought to reconcile this political reality with the need to present a unified – and therefore national – demand for constitutional reform by

engaging in negotiations with the All India Muslim League, an association formed from the 1906 Dacca meeting of the Mohhammedan Educational Conference (Hardy 1972:164). The principal issue of negotiation was the means of securing adequate Muslim representation at the central and provincial legislature. Between 1915 and 1924 Congress and the League met simultaneously as they first jointly pursued constitutional reform and then, with the adoption of Non-Cooperation, mass protest (Sarkar 1989:150, 235). With the end of the Non-Cooperation movement, Congress and League again began to meet separately. Negotiations were again attempted in 1928, 1934, 1938, and 1944 but always failed to produce an agreement on the measures that would allay Muslim fears of being overwhelmed by an elected Hindu majority (Jalal 1994:10, 13, 44, 121). The final round of negotiations after the elections of 1946 also failed to find agreement and led eventually to an acceptance of partition.

This outcome was not inevitable and cannot be seen as an unmediated expression of the growth of Hindu and Muslim nationalist sentiments or Hindu-Muslim antagonism. Rather, the political trajectory that led to partition has to be understood partly in terms of Congress failure to directly mobilise support amongst the Muslim electorate. As a consequence Congress did not establish itself as a viable and attractive for political mobilisation amongst the Muslim electorate. This meant that the changes that took place in Tamil magnate behaviour were absent amongst provincial Muslim magnates and politicians. Muslim political behaviour in the 1935-7 elections continued to be conditioned by magnate competition and factional networks, unencumbered by the constraints and possibilities of extensive party mobilisation (1994:19-34). This behaviour only changed with the 1945/6 elections when Muslim political leaders and magnates switched their allegiance to the Muslim League; in the 1935-7 elections the League had secured only 4.4 per cent of the Muslim votes

cast in provincial elections but in the 1945/6 elections it won nearly 75 per cent (1994:171-2).

The League's victory in the 1945/6 elections was not built however on a robust party structure that brought together the three core components of successful political mobilisation. The decision to switch to the League was prompted by local considerations and conflicts along with the growing sense that momentous constitutional changes were about to take place and Muslims needed representation at the centre.¹²⁰ The League's slogan of Pakistan had different meanings in different provinces – in Punjab it was tied to the idea of a general threat to Islam and an ideal of Muslim community (Giltmartin 1998), whilst in Bengal it was linked to agricultural grievances and specifically an undivided Bengal province (Jalal 1994:151). Ayesha Jalal notes that Muhammed Ali Jinnah himself left the notion of Pakistan unspecified and argues that he intended to use the idea of Pakistan as a bargaining chip to secure representation for Muslims at the centre of a strongly centralised Indian state (1994:57-60).¹²¹ She suggests that Jinnah was finally forced to accept partition because of Congress' determination to secure its own control at the centre, at the expense of partition, and the British determination to transfer power as quickly as possible; neither of which had been part of Jinnah's calculations (1994:175, 188). Ironically, the vague resolution calling for Pakistan passed by the League in March 1940 led to the creation of new state boundaries whilst the June 1940 Dravidanad demand, spelt out as a definite territory with map included, has become a historical curiosity. The crucial factor in explaining the different outcomes of the two demands is the Congress' contrasting history of political mobilisation amongst the Muslim and Tamil electorates.

In the Tamil speaking areas, regional Congress politicians familiar and conversant with Tamil cultural forms were crucial to the activities of direct

mobilisation that established Indian nationalism's cultural as well as political presence in the Tamil speaking areas. However in areas such as Bengal, Punjab and UP with substantial Muslim populations, regional Congress politicians often had strong ties to Hindu nationalist movements and were therefore ideologically opposed to incorporating the Muslim identity with the Congress movement. In the Punjab, Congress was closely allied to the Arya Samaj (Barrier 1967), in Bengal it was dominated by Hindu Bengalis' who increasingly defined themselves in Hindu nationalist terms (Chatterji 1994: Chapter 2,3), whilst in the United Provinces the Congress structure was closely associated with the Hindu Mahasabha (Gordon 1975) and the Arya Samaj (Gould 2004). As a consequence, in the three provinces that constituted the majority of the Muslim electorate - Bengal, Punjab and UP - Congress pushed Hindu nationalist issues such as banning cow slaughter and the promotion of Hindi in the Sanskrit script over Urdu that symbolically excluded Muslims from the core Indian national community.

The joint Hindu-Muslim mobilisation that took place during the Non-Cooperation was presented by Congress and the Muslim leaders as a symbolic partnership between the cow and khilafat; Hindus agreed to protest in support of the Ottoman khalif and in return Muslims agreed to stop slaughtering cows (Hasan 1991:127-132, 220). When this participation ended Muslim participation in anti colonial mass protest declined and Congress' subsequent campaign - Civil Disobedience - had a very Hindu character in areas such as UP. Mass meetings were held in temples and at Hindu festivals, the propaganda invoked Hindu symbols and activities such as picketing often specifically targeted Muslim shops - leaving their Hindu competitors undisturbed (Gould 2004: Chapter 2,3). As a consequence of these activities, even Muslim politicians who wanted to switch to Congress in 1937 found they

could not because of the antipathy it generated within the Muslim electorate (Jalal 1994:30).

The Hindu nationalist character of the regional Congress does not, however, indicate a clear or enduring Hindu-Muslim antagonism in politics. While there were bouts of Hindu-Muslim violence, these were episodic and separated by periods of calm and co-operation (Hasan 1991:46-52). Similarly, there were also instances of Hindu-Muslim political cooperation, as in Subash Chandra Bose's ill fated Indian National Army (Sarkar 1983:411, 421). There were also ongoing intra-Hindu and intra-Muslim tensions. For example, amongst Hindus there were important differences between the reformist Arya Samaj and more orthodox movements such as the Sanatan Dharma (Gordon 1975:151; McLane 1977:283). There were also significant differences of interest between Muslims, including between the Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces and those in UP where Muslims formed a small but significant minority (Jalal 1994); between Shias and Sunnis (Hasan 1991:42) and sometimes between the political and religious leaderships (McLane 1977:113). Alongside these differences were the important differences of class and economic interest that separated Muslim and Hindu landowners from their tenants.¹²²

While all these differences became politically or culturally contentious at different historical moments, the crucial factor that determined Congress' failure to build support amongst the Muslim electorate was the Hindu nationalist character of its regional structures. This became evident during the Muslim Mass Contacts Campaign led by Nehru in 1937 to directly reach the Muslim electorate. The campaign had some success in UP, Bengal and Punjab and was able to recruit new Muslim members (Hasan 1988:209) – enough to alarm Muslim politicians (Jalal 1994:43). It was, however, severely handicapped by regional and district level Congress politicians who refused to grant funds and lend manpower to the efforts to reach Muslims directly (Hasan

1998:213-215). Within months the campaign was called off and the Congress leadership switched back to the tactic of direct negotiation, with Subash Chandra Bose opening talks with Jinnah (Jalal 1994:44).

The importance of Hindu nationalists at the provincial level does not thereby mean that Congress can simply be equated with Hindu nationalism. There are significant ideological and organisational differences between Congress' pan ethnic Indian nationalism and the varied currents of Hindu nationalism. As discussed in Chapter Seven, this became evident in the Constituent Assembly debates that framed India's post independence constitution. It is also significant that the incidence of Hindu-Muslim communal violence, extremely high in the months leading up to and following partition (Sarkar 1989:432-439), reduced significantly in the decades following partition (Wilkinson 2004:12). The rising incidence of Hindu-Muslim violence (primarily collective violence by Hindus against Muslims) from the early 1980's coincides with the decline of Congress as a cohesive political structure and the simultaneous growth of Hindu nationalist political, social and cultural forces (Jaffrelot 1996).

5.3.4 Ethnic Demography, Ideology and Political Process

It could be argued that the bare facts of ethnic demography offer a simpler explanation of the difference between Congress' electoral success in the Tamil speaking areas and its simultaneous failure in the Muslim constituencies. While Tamil speakers constituted an overwhelming majority in many districts of Madras, Muslims were in a minority in UP and a slim majority in Bengal and Punjab. As a consequence, it could be argued that Hindu nationalist politicians would dominate in the provincial structures of Congress in UP, Punjab and Bengal. Conversely, given the demographic dominance of Tamil speakers, Congress politicians wanting to build a genuine pan-ethnic movement could not have plausibly excluded Tamils. This line of reasoning

would suggest that Congress' decisions to exclude and include different ethnic groups can in part be reduced to electoral and demographic calculations. However, as the argument presented in this chapter shows, the differential patterns of ethnic inclusion and exclusion from Congress' pan-ethnic platform cannot be explained as outcomes of an objective ideal of rational decision making based on electoral and demographic calculation. Instead, the differential patterns can only be explained in terms of competing ideological frameworks of national identity and interests and the more or less successful processes of organisation and mobilisation through which these were pursued.

Provincial Congress politicians in UP, Bengal and Punjab failed to mobilise support amongst the Muslim electorate because their Hindu nationalist conception of Indian national identity and interest excluded Muslims. Instrumental calculation alone fails to explain the behaviour of Congress politicians in these three crucial provinces. Indeed, an argument could be made in instrumental terms to suggest that provincial Congress politicians should have supported efforts to mobilise Muslim support. The majority of Muslims, after all, voted in separate Muslim constituencies and mobilising support amongst them could have been in addition to, rather than at the expense of, Hindu support. However, to successfully mobilise support amongst Muslim constituencies, Congress politicians in these areas would have had to ideologically incorporate Muslims into Indian nationalism – in the same way that Tamils were incorporated. This would have involved the incorporation and cultivation of Muslim symbols (such as Urdu) as exemplars of Indian national identity and the adoption of core aspects of the Muslim political platform – for example the argument that Muslims required special provisions to overcome their relative backwardness in relation to Hindus. These positions are not inherently contradictory with the pan-ethnic framework of Indian nationalism set out by Congress leaders at the national level. However, these

symbolic and political measures were antithetical to the Hindu nationalist frameworks of the provincial Congress leaders who were central figures in directing the patterns and rhetoric of popular mobilisation. Within the Hindu nationalist frameworks, Muslim symbols (such as Urdu) and a flourishing Muslim population existed as existential threats to the Indian nation. In other words, Congress politicians in UP, Bengal and Punjab failed to mobilise support amongst the Muslims because they ideologically could not, rather than because they electorally or demographically need not. Hindu nationalist allegiances also explain why Congress leaders in these three provinces intentionally and successfully undermined the 1937 attempt by the Congress national leadership to directly reach the Muslim electorate (Hasan 1988).

Likewise, ideological compulsion, rather than electoral calculation, explains Congress' ability to mobilise support in the Tamil speaking regions. Demographically, Tamil speakers actually constituted a smaller proportion of the Indian population than Muslims¹²³ and therefore could have been more plausibly ignored in attempts to forge a pan-ethnic Indian nation. However, the ideological framework of Congress politicians in Tamil Nadu made the symbolic and electoral incorporation of Tamil speakers appear as a crucial component of the Indian nationalist project. As a consequence, Tamil Nadu Congress politicians promoted and cultivated Tamil language, literature and Tamil cultural forms as a means of advancing Indian nationalism. Many important aspects of contemporary Tamil culture – such as Tamil language journalism, the beginnings of Tamil cinema, the revival and reform of Bharathanatyam and Carnatic music as well as the influential contributions of the composer and poet Subramania Bharathi – have their roots in Congress led Indian nationalist mobilisation.

Finally, Congress' failure amongst the Muslim electorate and success amongst the Tamils is also not a matter of the different forms of ethnic difference. That

is, the fact that the Tamils were predominantly Hindu (89 per cent)¹²⁴ did not necessarily make it easier for Congress to mobilise Tamil support. To begin with, language was a crucial factor in Congress mobilisation in the Tamil speaking areas. This emphasis on Tamil was out of step with Hindu nationalists' insistence on Hindi and Sanskrit. Indeed, and as discussed in Chapter Seven, language became a central issue of contestation in post-independence India. Hindu nationalist insistence on making Hindi the national language led to widespread and violent protests across the Tamil speaking areas. Furthermore, and partly as a consequence of its agonistic competition with the Dravidian movement, the Tamil Nadu Congress early on adopted positive discrimination for disadvantaged caste groups; a measure that was an anathema to Hindu nationalists in other parts of India.

The escalation of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka along the Tamil – Sinhala axis also demonstrates that religion is not more or less difficult a marker to accommodate than language. While the Tamils are predominantly Hindu, and the Sinhalese predominantly Buddhists, the Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil national identities incorporated Sinhala and Tamil speaking Christians respectively. Interestingly, in Sri Lanka while religiously framed conflict between Buddhists and Muslims was an important part of politics in the colonial era, this largely disappeared in the post-independence period.¹²⁵ In other words the translation of ethnic cleavage into conflict depends crucially on political processes through which national identities are framed in more or less inclusive ways.

Congress' contrasting record of success and failure amongst the Tamils and the Muslims reveals the importance of ideology and contingent political processes in explaining the patterns of ethnic inclusion and exclusion in the formation of national communities. The ideological framing sets out the ethnic boundaries of national community; which groups are to be included in the national whole

and which excluded. While the pan-ethnic framework of the national level Congress could include Tamils and Muslims alike, the Hindu nationalist allegiances of provincial Congress politicians in UP, Bengal and Punjab specifically excluded Muslims. At the same time, while the incorporation of Tamils was theoretically permissible in Congress pan-ethnic framework it was actually realised by the activities of Tamil Nadu Congress politicians who used Tamil cultural forms as both objects and vehicles of Indian nationalism. These outcomes were also a matter of political process in that the emergence of Congress' pan-ethnic framework and its successful incorporation of the Tamils required the spatially co-ordinated and temporally continuous activities of political actors whose actions were motivated by a diverse array of ends, but were nevertheless meaningful and consequential within a shared conceptual framework. Finally, these outcomes were contingent in that they were outcomes of agency or political action, rather than effects of structures such that had these activities not taken place there would have been different outcomes.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the emergence of Congress as a cohesive, pan-ethnic national movement was the result of temporally continuous effort, one that brought together the three key activities of ideological articulation, interest co-option and direct political mobilisation, rather than simply the structurally determined coincidence of interests. It showed that the relationship between Tamil politics and the Congress movement was shaped by two related factors. The first was the development of Congress' explicitly multi-ethnic and multi-lingual ideological and organisational framework that could accommodate the principal issues of anti-Congress Dravidian Tamil politics: the cultivation of Tamil culture and social reform. Importantly, this pan-ethnic ideological and organisational framework emerged when Congress

led efforts to create a pan-ethnic platform were confronted with ethnic associations opposing Congress efforts. The second factor was Congress' efforts at direct political mobilisation in the Tamil speaking areas that established Congress and pan-ethnic Indian nationalism as key brands in Tamil public culture. In short, the key factor in creating a politically significant pan ethnic national identity that incorporated Tamils was the outcome not of structural factors, but of competitive and agonistic, rather than merely antagonistic, processes of organisation and mobilisation. Furthermore, these processes did not so much transcend ethnic cleavages as incorporate them within a wider pan-ethnic politics. Finally, the chapter discussed the relationship between Congress and Muslim politics and argued that the absence of Congress efforts to mobilise support directly amongst the Muslim population meant that Muslims were not ideologically and organisationally incorporated into the Congress national project in a way comparable to the Tamils. The following chapter analyses ethnic and national politics in colonial Sri Lanka and suggests that by the moment of independence, an ethnically exclusive Sinhala Buddhist understanding of national identity and interest had become electorally dominant and, while not organised through a single political structure, was nevertheless to become the organising principle of Sri Lanka's post-independence politics, a development that had important consequences for Sri Lankan Tamil politics in the post independence-period.

6. Ethnic and National Politics in Colonial Sri Lanka

6.1 Introduction

Unlike in India, at the moment of Sri Lanka's independence, the question of the political status of the Tamil speaking people and Tamil speaking areas within a wider conception of national identity remained unresolved. There was no organisation comparable to the INC with a developed political programme capable of mobilising electoral support across the island. The UNP, which came to power at independence, was formally multi-ethnic. However, as discussed below, it was a loose alliance formed in the last months of colonial rule, and its driving force was the authority and stature of its founder leader, D S Senanayake.¹²⁶ During the Second World War Senanayake had established a reputation amongst British officials as reliable leader to whom power could be transferred, despite his close and visible relationship to Sinhala Buddhist revivalism.¹²⁷ Although the UNP had a multiethnic list of candidates, it did not have a developed political framework that reconciled the island's ethnic pluralism within a unified conception of national identity and national interest. The party's organising principle was instead a tacit understanding and acceptance of Senanayake's leadership, and of majority rule.¹²⁸

In the absence of a developed and institutionalised conception of pan ethnic national identity and interest, it was the Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil conceptions of national identity and national interest that together shaped the dynamics of politics in the Tamil speaking regions. These two had mutually contradictory understandings of the history of the island's ethnic plurality, the relative historical and cultural claims of the various ethnic groups and, therefore, of the ideal means through which ethnic pluralism ought to be reconciled with the need for a unified conception of national identity and national interest. Although these two conceptions had their intellectual, and

even organisational, roots in the nineteenth century religious and linguistic revivalist movements, there was very little overt conflict or antagonism between the Tamil and Sinhala revival movements during most of the colonial period, and their relationship was mostly one of mutual indifference, with instances of collaboration, support and encouragement. It was only the advent of tangible political power tied to the conceptual framework of popular sovereignty and the nation that brought the contradictory assumptions of these two frameworks into conflict. From 1920 onwards, as self government became a distinct and plausible prospect, there was often pointed and sometimes acrimonious political conflict between Tamil and Sinhala political leaders. Conflict took place on issues such as the citizenship rights of Indian origin plantation labours, constitutional reform and the distribution of public resources (Russell 1982; Wickramasinghe 1995) - all of which raised divisive but conceptually unavoidable questions about the ethnic characteristics of national identity and the substance of national interest. As independence approached, these questions remained unresolved and the key political actors – Tamil, Sinhalese and British – all shared the view that a crucial factor in deciding the island's political future would be the relations between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority.

The appearance of two incompatible Tamil and Sinhala conceptions of national identity and national interest was not, however, an outcome made inevitable by ethnic demography or indeed the passions of ethnic revivalisms. Neither the growth of Tamil nor Sinhala Buddhist nationalisms as political platforms can be understood as the simple expressions of a pre-existing ethnic sentiment. Instead, both could only present a unified political platform – and even then not reliably so - by more or less successfully negotiating differences of religion, caste and region that remained points of conflict within the constituencies of the Tamil and Sinhala Buddhist nationalist movements. The gradual political

and electoral ascendance of these movements is not therefore a simple translation of interests, incentives or structures, but rather a matter of process. Likewise, the absence of a pan-ethnic nationalist movement capable of mobilising pan-island political support is also a matter of process, rather than a structurally given outcome. In other words, the development of the island's ethnic politics into one of competing Sinhala majority and Tamil minority interests can only be understood by examining the processes of associational activity through which modern ethnic and national identities were established and thereafter contested.

The chapter is organised in the following way. The first section examines in turn the emergence of Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil conceptions of national identity and national interest from the religious and revival movements of the late nineteenth century. The next section then sets out the trajectory of ethnic and national politics in two parts, the first from the late nineteenth century to 1920, and the second from 1920 to independence. It also examines the pivotal role played by British officials in shaping the reforms leading to independence, but also explains why differences in British policy cannot account for the relative successes and failures of pan-ethnic anti colonial politics in India and Sri Lanka. In the discussion of colonial Indian politics in Chapter Five, 1920 was a useful marker that separated Congress' pre-1920 phase of primarily elite centred development from the post-1920 phase of mass mobilisation. Whilst in Sri Lanka 1920 does not mark a clear divide between phases of elite centred and mass mobilisation politics, the date nevertheless signals an important shift in the island's ethnic and national politics. From 1920 onwards, constitutional reforms consistently adopted the principle of territorial as opposed to communal or group based representation as the basis for self government. From then on the political consequences of the Sinhala demographic majority and the Tamil demographic minority became crucial factors in the island's

politics. The relationship of mutual indifference alongside moments of collaboration was from 1920 replaced by ongoing contestation between Tamil and Sinhala politicians over issues that vitally touched the ethnic framework of national politics. The argument presented below is that the failure to find a robust and clear resolution to these issues was a matter of process - an outcome of the dynamics of political contestation, organisation and mobilisation - rather than the product of pre given structures or incentives, whether demographic, economic or indeed the categories created by colonial policies themselves.

6.2.Context

6.2.1 Sinhala Buddhist nationalism

The social and political ascendance of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism can be traced to the Buddhist revivalist and reform movements which, amongst the revivalist trends of the nineteenth century, Stanley Tambiah describes as the 'most complex, weighty, powerful and fateful for the history of the country' (1997:39). The Buddhist movement, like its Hindu counterparts in India and Sri Lanka, was a response to the intellectual and social challenges posed by Christian missionary activity. Buddhist revivalists, like their Hindu and Muslim equivalents on the island and in India, responded to missionary charges of the inferiority, irrationality and superstitious nature of their theology and ritual by adopting the very standards and definitions against which Buddhism was often held to be wanting. Buddhist revivalist activities established in public culture a separation between 'true' Buddhism – a pristine and rational confessional religion, compatible with modern science and progress that was separate from the 'false' Buddhism of popular practice, debased primarily by the corrupting influence of south Indian (Tamil) invasions and British colonial rule.¹²⁹

To propagate and defend this 'true' religion, Buddhist activists engaged in public associational activities, used print technology and engaged in debates with Christian missionaries that were staged in front of an audience understood by all as a public to be compelled by reason. Peter van der Veer has described the public associational propagation of religion in nineteenth century Britain and its colonial possessions as an 'interactional' (2001:3,4) process through which religion in both imperial centre and colonial periphery 'creates the public sphere and, in so doing, is transformed and moulded in a national form' (22). The transformation of Buddhism was thus associated with the emergence of a powerful Sinhala Buddhist national identity that fused language, race and religion with a powerful claim to the entire territory of the island. Dharmadasa describes the Sinhala Buddhist ideological tradition as having an 'explicitly stated identification of the island with one ethnic group and one religious identity – Sinhalese and Buddhist' (1992:19). The import and consequence of Buddhist revival and reform activities was therefore 'not so much the implementation of social reform as the forging of an ideology and consciousness of nationalist identity, destiny, and majoritarian privilege.' (Tambiah 1997:43)

In the expanding public culture of the late nineteenth century, Sinhala Buddhist associations, newspapers and magazines set out a clear vision of the ethnic boundaries of national community and the relative claims of different ethnic groups. This vision was derived from a narrative of the island's history that, as in India, was closely linked to the concerns and categories of Orientalist scholarship (Rogers 1990; Angell 1998). From the early nineteenth century, a set of Pali texts, known as vamsas or chronicles that were written from the sixth century onwards (Dharmadasa 1992:3), were translated into English and came to be viewed as authoritative sources by British officials, scholars and Sinhala Buddhist activists (Rogers 1990). Nineteenth century

interpretations of these texts set out a narrative of the island's history that were remarkably similar to the Hindu nationalist conceptions of Indian history of Aryan migration and Aryan civilization followed by invasion and destruction. In the Sri Lankan version of the Aryan theory, an initial act of migration by north Indian Aryan Sinhalese founds a thriving classical civilization based on Buddhist piety (1990) and an advanced practice of irrigated agricultural production able to support a substantial population, speculated to be greater than the nineteenth century population levels on the island (Farmer 1957:15). Whereas in the Hindu nationalist conception, the classical Vedic civilization was destroyed by Muslim invasions, the Sinhala Buddhist narrative had the south Indians Tamils (or Malabars as they were sometimes called) as the 'principal alien and antagonist' of the Sinhala people responsible for destroying and degrading the classical glory of Sinhala civilization. (Dharmadasa 1992:47, 79, 139).

The officially sponsored archaeological study of the ruins at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa (sites related in the Mahavamsa and other chronicles) that began in the 1870's (1992:112), lent material weight to the Aryan theory of the island's history, for both Sinhala Buddhist revivalists and British officials alike.¹³⁰ With the opening of the railways, Anuradhapura in particular became a modern site of pilgrimage (Wickramasinghe 2006:87), and by the early twentieth century the notion that the Sinhalese had a great and unbroken history on the island had become commonplace (2006:88, see also Rogers 1990:87). The chronicles were thus transformed by a modern interpretation through categories of nation, civilization, progress and race, into the basis for a national conception of history and collective agency that provided a clear matrix for social and political action, but crucially excluded non Sinhala Buddhists, particularly the Tamils.

In response to Christian missionary proselytising, Buddhist monks engaged in a series of public debates with Christian preachers (Seneviratne 1999:89), and set out to produce printed material to defend their own doctrine and attack Christian theology, often using the arguments of western secularists and rationalists (Dharmadasa 1992:79). The debates caught the attention of Colonel Olcott, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society, and, following the Society's move to India in 1879, Olcott visited the island in 1880 (1992: 106). The Theosophists efforts gave 'organizational muscle and propagandistic efficacy' (Tambiah 1997:39) to revivalist activities¹³¹ that were further developed by Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), a revivalist who 'first found his vocation and acquired his propagandist skills in association with the Theosophists' (Tambiah 1992:6). Olcott explicitly encouraged his Buddhist audiences to adopt the organisational models of the Christian missionaries and following their visit Buddhist societies, newspapers, schools and Young Men's Buddhist Associations (YMBA) were established across the Sinhala districts (Dharmadasa 1992:107-8). The myriad and expanding Buddhist associational activities were the sites at which a new and reformed 'national' Buddhist religion was expressed. Through his speeches and writings, Dharmapala was a key influence in shaping the contours and content of this new religion (Seneviratne 1999:28). Tambiah describes the core features of Dharmapala's reformed religion in the following way:

'.. a selective retrieval of norms from canonical Buddhism; a denigration of alleged non Buddhist ritual practices and magical manipulations ... ; enunciation of a code for lay conduct, suited to the emergent Sinhalese urban middle class and business interests, which emphasized a puritanical sexual morality and etiquette in family life; and most important of all, an appeal to

the past glories of Buddhism and Sinhalese civilization celebrated in the Mahavamsa and other chronicles..' (1992:7-8)

In this way, by the early twentieth century, Buddhism had become established as the national religion within an emergent Sinhala Buddhist identity in which language, race, religion and territory were closely intertwined. The nationalisation of Buddhism was thus coeval with the simultaneous nationalisation of Hinduism and Christianity in India and Britain respectively (Van der Veer 2001). The social and economic context of Buddhist revivalism – and thereby emergent Sinhala nationalism – was the rapid growth and commercialisation of the economy associated with the opening up of the Kandyan¹³² areas to plantation agriculture and the incorporation of the island into Britain centred global flows of finance and trade (Roberts 1997a; De Silva 2005:421-5). This produced a new commercial elite formed by low country Sinhala caste groups – the Karavas, Salagamas and Duravas (KSD) – who had formerly been associated with the relatively low status occupations of fishing, cinnamon peeling and toddy tapping respectively (1997a). During the course of the nineteenth century these groups acquired new wealth and status through a variety of activities such as contracting labour to clear forests, supplying food and alcohol for the new plantations, graphite and gem mining, supplying furniture, small scale retail and investing in urban property. (Roberts 1997a:160-165)

The three low country caste groups – labelled the KSD – formed the initial core of the Buddhist revivalism (De Silva 2005:432). During the twentieth century, however, Sinhala Buddhism became the dominant framework through which, Kandyans, upper caste landowners or Goyigamas and even Sinhala Christians organised their political activities. In this way, Sinhala Buddhism followed the trajectory of Hindu nationalism, which emerged first amongst urban upper caste groups but subsequently expanded to include a

wide array of non – elite groups across northern India (Jaffrelot 1996). An important difference between India and Sri Lanka was, however, that in India the force of Hindu nationalist mobilisation was contained by Congress' pan-ethnic conception of national identity and interest.

6.2.2 Tamil Revivalism

Nineteenth century revival and reform activities in the Tamil speaking areas established a clear public culture in the Tamil language through which Tamil cultural, as well as political, interests were contested and debated. Unlike nineteenth century Buddhist revivalism, however, Tamil associational activities did not produce a clear sense of Tamil identity that brought together claims about language, religion, people and territory. Tamil revivalist activities were instead organised into multiple strands – connected to the strands of Hindu and Tamil revivalist activities in India. A key figure in shaping the religious movement was Arumugam Navalar (1822-1879) who sought to counter Christian proselytising by reasserting the value of the Tamil Saiva Siddhanta tradition. While Navalar's activities placed the Saiva Siddhanta system of beliefs and rituals at the core of Tamil interests, associational activities were later focussed on the cultivation and promotion of Tamil language, literature and culture. Assertions of Tamil political identity and Tamil political interests by associations and politicians were not consistently linked during the colonial period to clear historical narratives or territorial claims. However, there was a clear consensus by the early decades of the twentieth century amongst Tamil associations that the Tamils constituted a distinct ethnic group and were, like the Sinhalese, indigenous to the island (Hellman-Rajanayagam 1990). The sense of a distinct Tamil cultural presence inspired two mutually antagonistic political movements; one in pursuit of a pan-ethnic Ceylonese nationalism and the other seeking political safeguards for Tamils and other minorities against the threat of Sinhalese domination.¹³³

Sri Lankan Tamil public culture in the colonial period bore the traces of Hindu revivalism and was closely associated with the Congress brand of Tamil revivalism. However, the Tamil-as-Dravidian idea, while sometimes asserted, did not become a pole of sustained social reform or political activity, as it did in south India.¹³⁴ In short, while the Dravidian idea was often asserted, unlike in south India, there was no sustained organisational structure committed to cultivating the Tamil-as-Dravidian idea. This relative absence, which is particularly striking given the importance of the Aryan idea to Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, makes clear that mutually incompatible ethnic and national claims are not necessarily mirror images of each other or indeed diametrically opposed. For example, while the Tamils figured prominently in Sinhala Buddhist nationalist narratives, the Sinhalese were largely absent from Tamil revivalist conceptions for most of the nineteenth century, and Navalar himself rarely mentioned the Sinhalese at all (Hellman – Rajanayagam 1989:250). The different configurations of race, territory, language and religion in Tamil and Sinhala nationalism demonstrate that the content of the ethnic and national claims that become politically or socially dominant cannot be seen as merely the oppositional and reactive pairings of self and other. Instead, Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil revivalists were not so much responding to each other as responding to the emergence of a new set of categories (religion and language) and concepts (nation, history, progress) through which they had to reconfigure existing ideas and practices. As discussed in Chapter Four, while the translation of pre-modern Tamil and Sinhala religious and literary systems into modern categories was inevitable, the subsequent conflict between Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil nationalist frameworks was not.

The career of Arumugam Navalar has a number of evident similarities with that of Anagarika Dharmapala and Indian Hindu nationalists like Dayananda Saraswati. The son of a Jaffna poet, Navalar was taught Tamil by his father

before entering a mission school at the age of twelve to study English. He was a talented student, and after completing his studies, was asked by the principal, Peter Percival, to help with translating the Bible and prayer book into Tamil. Navalar's education and later work at the mission school took place in the midst of the tensions and debates associated with missionary proselytising. Although initially attracted to Christianity (Hudson 1992:35), he was eventually moved by the desire to promote Saiva Siddhanta or the Tamil Saivite tradition and protect it against missionary attacks and criticism (Gunasingam 1999:126). His efforts to defend and cultivate Saivism were comparable to those adopted by Dharmapala, Saraswati and other revivalists. He preached sermons, published tracts, edited and produced reliable printed editions of key religious texts and established schools that provided a modern curriculum within a Saivite religious atmosphere.¹³⁵ While Navalar's efforts sought to reproduce Saivism as a modern confessional faith, in the image of Protestant Christianity, the outcome of this work did not establish a sustained public equation of Saivism as the 'national' religion of the Tamil people.

The competition between Christian missionaries and their Saivite opponents was crucial to the early development of modern public culture in the Tamil speaking areas of south India and Sri Lanka.¹³⁶ However, by the early decades of the twentieth century, Saivism had become less prominent as a means of identifying Tamil cultural and political interests – in contrast to the growing importance of Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka and (north) Indian politics respectively. There are three reasons for this. The first was that Navalar and his followers promoted Saivism primarily as a form of salvation and did not clearly elaborate a set of claims linking Saivism with Tamil political and social interests more broadly, in a manner comparable to Buddhist and Hindu revivalists.¹³⁷ Secondly, in the later decades of the nineteenth century, efforts to cultivate Saivism were increasingly undertaken

under the broader label of Hinduism, abandoning Navalar's explicit focus on the Saiva Siddhanta tradition (Gunasingham 1999:150-1). Finally, and most importantly, the relative decline of Saivism and religion more broadly as a basis for social and political community is a consequence of the growing importance - from the early decades of the twentieth century - of language, literature, Bharathanatyam and Carnatic music as means of identifying Tamil cultural, social and even political interests. This is not to say that religion disappeared as a locus of associational activity, quite the reverse. Temple committees, churches, religiously affiliated schools, newspapers and welfare associations continued to play a central role in the public culture of the Tamil speaking areas.¹³⁸ However, as discussed below, the promotion of Tamil culture, broadly defined, was a concern shared by Hindu, as well as Christian, public associations.

The expansion of associational activity in the Tamil speaking regions began in the Jaffna peninsula and was closely associated with the dominant landowning caste, the Vellalas. At the onset of British rule the social dominance of the Vellalas had already been consolidated by their position within the previous Dutch administrative structures and participation in south Indian and south-east Asian trade networks (Arasaratnam 1981). During the nineteenth century, agricultural production in Jaffna increasingly turned to cash crops and the wealth accruing from this was invested in education (Gunasingham 1999:40-113). Employment in the British administration, on the island but also in south India and in British Malaya, became further sources of income for the peninsula. Associational activity followed the linkages of employment and administration created by colonial rule. Christian and Hindu schools were established in the Tamil speaking districts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa whilst the Jaffna based press began to routinely report events from these areas, as well as from Colombo (1999:132, 140-1). There were also efforts to encourage

investment and migration from the overpopulated and capital rich Jaffna peninsula to the relatively under populated areas of Vanni and the eastern province (1999:171).

Associational activity amongst the Tamil speaking population did not, however, establish a clear narrative of national identity that integrated claims about language, religion and territory. There was no single association that could mobilise mass activity and support across the Tamil speaking population. Indeed, for much of this period, religious competition and theological conflict between Hindus and Christians dominated public life. Religious controversy was also closely related to the issue of caste. Christian missionary proselytising challenged Vellala dominance of low caste groups who were often dependent labourers of Vellala landlords. While Christians and Hindus engaged in theological debates through the print media, at a more corporeal level, upper caste Hindus sought violently to maintain the practices of caste hierarchy against efforts by low caste groups to establish their cultural autonomy and assert social equality (Saveri 1993:257-313). However, at the moment of independence, the principal political cleavage was not over the issue of caste or religion. Instead, this was centred on whether the Tamils should seek minority safeguards that would protect against the possibility of Sinhala political domination or, instead, work with Sinhala leaders to set out a common demand for political independence.

6.3 Process

6.3.1 Ethnic and national politics up to 1920

Chapter Five traced the emergence of a pan-Indian form of nationalism able to accommodate the clear sense of a distinct Tamil cultural identity and interest formed through nineteenth century revival and reform activities. The discussion centred on Congress' ability to mobilise electoral support in the

Tamil speaking regions during the 1935 elections despite the existence of countervailing Dravidian ideas and associational activity. The chapter argued that crucial to this outcome was Congress' temporally continuous activity in the period between its foundation in 1885 and 1920 which established it as an unavoidable – for its detractors and supporters – presence in Indian political life. Congress' brand of pan-ethnic Indian nationalism was established through the continuous in time activities of setting out a clear political framework, co-option of interests and direct political mobilisation. In effect, the production of a form of pan ethnic nationalism – capable of incorporating the claims and concerns of established Tamil public culture – was the outcome of sustained and continuous activities towards this end, rather than a vehicle or expression of pre-existing interests, identities or subjectivities.

The analysis presented below shows that a comparable pan-ethnic Ceylonese national organisation failed to appear primarily because of the absence of temporally sustained activities that brought together the elements of ideological articulation, co-option of interests and direct mobilisation. There were recurrent and fitful attempts to establish a pan-ethnic Ceylonese national organisation from the late nineteenth century that were supported by Sinhalese and Tamil political actors. Some associations, like the Ceylon National Association (CNA) formed in 1888, the Ceylon National Congress (CNC) formed in 1918 and the Liberal League formed in 1932 resembled the 'moderate' section of the pre 1920 Congress in confining their activities to formal meetings and petitions, eschewing direct or mass political mobilisation (Russell 1982:37-8; De Silva 1997:161-2). On the other hand, there were also organisations like the Ceylon Reform Society formed in 1905-6, and the Jaffna Youth Congress formed in 1924, which like the extremist section of Congress, emphasised social reform and the revival of indigenous cultural forms as crucial to political independence (Kadirgamar 1980; Roberts 1997b 279-80).

The Youth Congress also engaged in direct political mobilisation (see below). While all the elements of a pan ethnic national movement were present, what was absent was an organisational structure that brought together in a continuous in time way activities of ideological articulation, co-option of interests and direct political mobilisation within a pan island political framework.

Associational activity during this period (late nineteenth century to 1920) was – as in India – the preserve of a small elite defined by education, property and income concentrated around Colombo, along with a significant presence in Jaffna. The existence of substantial social and economic disparities is evident in the smallness of the electorate, which was, until the introduction of universal franchise in 1931, based on property and income qualifications. In 1912, for example, an electorate restricted to adult males literate in English contained just 2934 voters from a population of just over 4 million.¹³⁹ In 1924, when the electorate was expanded to include adult males with literacy in Sinhala, Tamil or English along with a minimum level of property or income, the number of voters expanded to 204, 997, or 4 percent of the total population of 4 million.¹⁴⁰ Education and economic prosperity were also unevenly distributed. The Ceylon Tamils were disproportionately represented amongst the English educated; although only 11 per cent of the population¹⁴¹, in 1918, for example, made up almost half of the constituency for the electorate based on English language literacy (Russell 1982:23). Meanwhile, wealth created by the plantation economy was concentrated primarily in the hands of the low country Sinhalese – those of the KSD castes, while the Kandyans were under-represented amongst groups that could be said to have elite status at the pan island level (Roberts 1997a:231).

The uneven expansion of education and commercialised prosperity meant that associational activity also relied heavily on wealthy patrons. P. Ramanathan

(1851-1930),¹⁴² descendent of a wealthy Jaffna Vellala family and Tamil representative in the legislative council from 1879 to 1893, financed – largely from his own funds – the construction and, for a number of years, the maintenance of the Ponnampala-Vanesvarar temple in Colombo and the Ramanathan College for women in Jaffna (Vythilingam 1971:544-552; Saveri 1993:52-3, 247). Similarly the Hapitigam complex of temperance societies, that often held meetings with crowds of over 20,000, was largely funded by Don Spater Senanayake¹⁴³ (De Silva 2005:464), whose fortune was built on the proceeds of an early enterprise in the distillation and selling of alcohol (Roberts 1997a:207). This concentration of wealth also played out in electoral politics where – as in India – magnate power and patron client networks played an important role in deciding electoral outcomes (Russell 1982:72-6, 90-103). Successful political organisation – especially in the context of universal franchise – relied, therefore, on the co-option of magnate interest, along with articulating a political framework and direct political mobilisation.

It was in this context that the Ceylon National Association was formed in 1888 with a stated goal ‘to help in the formation of a healthy public opinion on all questions of public importance and to promote by every legitimate means the political, intellectual and material advancement of the people’ (Vythilingam 1971:394). These objectives worked within the framework of a pan island political identity and political interest, and the organisation brought together political actors from two of the most politically active groups on the island, the low country Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils. The organisation’s first President was P. Ramanathan (1971), the Tamil representative in the legislative council, while the CNA had much of its organisational roots in the Ceylon Agricultural Association, an organisation that was set up to promote the interests of low country (primarily Karava) planters (De Silva 1997:161). The CNA continued to exist until December 1919 when it was merged with

the Ceylon Reform League (formed in 1917) to form the Ceylon National Congress (CNC) (Gunasingham 1999:211-3). While the CNA's founders were certainly aware of the INC in India (De Silva 1997:161), they did not emulate that pattern of activity by holding an annual meeting in different parts of the island. As discussed in Chapter Five, it was as a result of the problems encountered in this activity that Congress was compelled to formulate a framework for pan-Indian politics that could accommodate ethnic pluralism. It was forced to confront the difference between social reformers and conservatives, as well as the problems of co-opting Muslim support in the context of countervailing anti Congress mobilisation by Muslim political actors. The CNA did not engage in this process and therefore did not have to resolve the problem of reconciling the claims of Sinhala Buddhist associations in the south with those of Tamil associations in Jaffna. Instead, the CNA continued primarily as a label, invoked to host speakers or lobby the government on specific issues.¹⁴⁴ As a consequence, by 1920, when constitutional reforms precipitated a shift towards mass electoral politics, associational activity on the island had not generated a stable and institutionalised framework through which the ethnic pluralism could be accommodated with the need for a unified national identity and national interest.

The absence of a pan-ethnic framework on the island's politics can only be explained through the absence of a process; primarily that of temporally continuous political organisation and mobilisation that seeks actively to incorporate a plurality of ethnic groups in an effort to present a pan-ethnic political platform. This absence cannot be explained as the outcome of a fundamental difference from India in the structure of the island's politics. The factors that were associated with Congress' political trajectory up to 1920 were also present in Sri Lanka. By the early decades of the twentieth century, ideas such as self government, discrimination, progress, the need for patriotism and

economic nationalism were circulating in the island's public culture, and being used to criticise the British government (Kadirgamar 1980:11, 71-5; Roberts 1997b:273-84; Gunasingham1999:199-203). There was also a variety of local interests that sought to influence the government in Colombo. While the Ceylon Agricultural Association sought to lobby the government in Colombo on behalf of planters, the Chilaw Association protested against the policy on waste lands, whilst also seeking to influence the direction of government investments in railways (De Silva 1997:162). In 1859 a group of Kandyan Chiefs lobbied the government for a change in the marriage ordinances (1997:156) Meanwhile, in Jaffna, Arumugam Navalar campaigned against the perceived maladministration of W. C Twynam, the government agent for the province, and provided information in this regard to the Tamil representative in the Colombo legislature (Gunasingam 1999:192). Finally, from 1890, Jaffna associations, including associations of Jaffna Tamils who had emigrated to work as civil servants in Malaysia, petitioned the Colombo government to demand an extension of the railway to Jaffna; the decision to construct the line was finally taken in 1898 and it was completed in 1905 (1999:165-8).

Sri Lankan political actors eventually addressed the problem of establishing a pan-ethnic national demand for self government in the context of the rising expectations of constitutional reform in India generated by the First World War. The Ceylon Reform League was founded in Colombo by P. Arunachalem (1853-1924),¹⁴⁵ with the explicit objective of securing constitutional reform towards self government, at the same time as Congress and the Muslim League were holding simultaneous sessions in Bombay in an effort to find agreement on constitutional reform. The League set about attempting to formulate a common set of proposals that included the CNA and the Jaffna Association (formed in 1905) (Gunasingham 1999:205, 212-3). The inclusion of the Jaffna association was an explicit attempt to present a platform that was

representative of the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sinhalese – and was explicitly endorsed as such by the Hindu Organ (1999; 214), an English and Tamil language publication that was also the largest circulating paper on the peninsula (Russell 1982:109). When an agreement was eventually reached, a new umbrella organisation, the Ceylon National Congress (CNC) was launched in December 1919 with a clear set of proposals for constitutional reform. A CNC delegation travelled to London in 1920 to make the case for constitutional reform. The delegation was led by P. Arunachalem, also elected as the first president of the CNC. (Wickramasinghe 1995:43; Gunasingham 1999:212-3).

The agreement with the Jaffna association turned, crucially, on the means of ensuring adequate representation for the Tamils, given that the Sinhalese were in a demographic majority and the Tamils a demographic minority. The question gained particular urgency as reformists, led by Arunachalem, sought to transform the existing system in which individuals were nominated by the Governor to represent specific ethnic groups into one of elected representatives chosen by territorial rather than communal (or ethnic) constituencies. Such a move would necessarily transform the existing system of balanced representation into one where a majority of delegates elected from Sinhala constituencies could potentially control the legislature. Sinhala and Tamil political leaders eventually agreed that in return for the Jaffna Association assenting to territorial, rather than communal constituencies, and joining the CNC, a seat in the western province, with a substantial Tamil minority,¹⁴⁶ would be allocated to a Ceylon Tamil candidate (Gunasingham 1999:214-5). The agreement was broken in the 1921 elections that returned 3 Tamils and 13 Sinhalese to the newly constituted legislative council, without a Tamil representative from the Western Province (De Silva 2005:486). Soon afterwards, the Jaffna Association and Arunachalem resigned from the CNC,

and the latter formed a new organisation called the Tamil Mahajana Sabhai (Gunasingham 1999:212). There were no subsequent formal agreements in the colonial period between Tamil and Sinhala associations.

The brevity of the agreement between the Jaffna Association and the CNC, as well as the abruptness of its termination, does not however indicate a pervasive or intractable Sinhala Buddhist – Tamil political divide. Although ethnic categories were a key part of political life in the period up to 1920, the crucial divides and conflicts were within the Sinhala and Tamil categories. The Sinhala Buddhist revival led to violent confrontations between Sinhalese Buddhists and Sinhalese Christians in 1883 near Colombo (Tambiah 1997:48-56). In 1903 there were violent clashes between Sinhalese Buddhists and the Catholic church in Anuradhapura (Wickramasinghe 2006:117-8)¹⁴⁷. The Sinhalese category was also regionally divided between the low country Sinhalese of the southern and western regions and the Kandyan Sinhalese. In 1889 the Kandyan Sinhalese were given separate representation in the legislative council – plausibly as a counter to the emergent forms of associational activity associated primarily with low country Sinhalese (De Silva 1997:155-163). Finally there was caste competition within the low-country Sinhalese category between the KSD groups and the landowning Goyigama caste (De Silva 2005:453-457).

There were similar divides within the Tamil category. Conflict, often violent, occurred between Hindu Vellalas and low caste groups as the latter attempted to leave the hierarchical social order through conversion to Christianity (Saveri 1993: Chapter 5). In common with the Sinhalese, there was also political competition between Tamil Hindus and Tamil Christians to be selected as the Tamil representative in the legislative council (Gunasingham 1999:193). The 1889 reforms also granted separate representation to the Muslims, undermining the claim of P. Ramanathan, the existing Tamil

representative in the legislative council, that the Muslims ought to be considered part of the Tamil category (Samaraweera 1997:308-9).

Finally, the most significant episode of ethnic violence took place in 1915 and was primarily one of Sinhalese gangs attacking Muslim traders in the central and low country areas of the island (Tambiah 1997:56-81). The violence - triggered by a confrontation over the routing of a Buddhist procession near a newly expanded mosque - was closely associated with the Buddhist revival movement, particularly the temperance movement. Sinhala Buddhist nationalist magazines and periodicals - particularly those associated with Anagarika Dharmapala - portrayed the Muslims as foreigners increasingly usurping the rightful place of the Sinhalese (1997:70). Although Dharmapala and his associate Walinsinha Harishchandra excoriated the Tamils (in terms similar to those used against Muslims) (Dharmadasa 1992:138; Wickramasinghe 2006:90), the violence was directed almost exclusively at Muslims, leaving Tamils resident in the areas, unaffected (Tambiah 1997:62-68, 72). This disconnect between violent narratives of national identity and national interest and the violence that actually occurs demonstrates the importance of context - along with the presence of violent narratives and the subjectivities they may or may not inculcate - in producing violent conflict.

While violent ethnic conflict was present, albeit not along a Tamil - Sinhala axis, there were also, during this period, notable instances of Tamil-Sinhala co-operation. P. Ramanathan and P. Arunachalem, as well as cooperating with Sinhalese politicians in attempts to form political associations, also encouraged Sinhala Buddhist revivalist activities. Ramanathan addressed Buddhist associations encouraging his audience to speak Sinhalese in place of English (Vythilingam 1971:482), supported moves to get the observance of Vesak (the birthday of the Buddha) recognised as a national holiday (1971:476) and sought to establish a Buddhist - Hindu school in Colombo (Saveri 1993:53).

Ramanathan also travelled to the Colonial Office in London following the 1915 violence to protest against the harsh measures taken by the government against prominent Sinhala Buddhist leaders and associations thought to be responsible for the rioting (De Silva 2005:475-9). Similarly, Arunachalem also spoke publicly on the virtues and wonders of Sinhala Buddhist civilization and in 1919 addressed the Lanka Mahajana Sabha, a Sinhala Buddhist revivalist association, in Sinhalese (De Silva 2005:497). Finally, in 1911 Ramanathan was elected to represent the educated Ceylonese from an island wide constituency of 'native' Ceylonese literate in English. His opponent was Sinhalese, but from the Karava caste, and many of the Goyigama Sinhalese preferred to vote for a high caste Vellala Tamil over a Karava Sinhalese (Wickramasinghe 1995:33; Wilson 2000:48).

Despite the apparent lack of Sinhala-Tamil conflict and the instances of clear collaboration, the problem of reconciling the publicly established Tamil and Sinhala ethnic identities with the need for a unified conception of national identity and national identity remained conceptually unavoidable. It also became politically unavoidable because of the strength of associational activity that established distinct and incompatible conceptions of national identity and national interest in the Tamil and Sinhala speaking areas. Increasingly, Tamil and Sinhala associational activity sought to accommodate – though not necessarily successfully – differences of caste and religion within larger conceptions of Tamil and Sinhala identity and interest respectively. That is, Sinhala and Tamil associational activity was coming to identify the Sinhala and Tamil category respectively as platforms that unified internal diversities of caste, religion and region.

Anangarika Dharmapala emphasised the unity of the Aryan Sinhalese identity that overcame the divisions of caste, stating that the 'Aryan nationals belonging to the Govi caste, Karuva caste, Dura cate, Vahumpura caste, Uli

caste, Berava caste and Rada caste should take heart to maintain Aryan codes of conduct' (quoted in Dharmadasa 1992:149). Meanwhile, attempts were also made to overcome the Buddhist-Christian divide as when prominent Buddhist and Christian Sinhalese organised a 'national' day on April 15 1914. One of the organisers, E. T de Silva (also a Christian) described the day as one of 'introspection by the Sinhalese of themselves as Sinhalese ... for the celebration of our past glory and to breathe our hopes for the future' (1992:224). The following year another 'national day' was organised on the 2nd of March to mark the centenary of the Kandyan convention – as a result of which the formerly independent Kandyan kingdom came under British rule. The events of the day, including the hoisting of the Kandyan lion flag as the national flag, were attempts to symbolically bridge the gaps between the low country and Kandyan Sinhalese areas. In the process the Kandy kingdom and the Kandyan identity more generally were increasingly viewed as authentic representatives of a glorious Sinhala and thereby Sri Lankan past, by both Sinhalese and many British officials alike (Wickramasinghe 2006:103-111).

These attempts to forge an overarching Sinhalese conception of national identity and national interest of course necessarily excluded the Tamils. In Sinhala Buddhist revivalist activity, the Tamils were depicted as the 'barbaric races of south India' (Dharmadasa 1992:139) responsible for destroying the once glorious Sinhala civilization whilst Anagarika Dharmapala noted that the Sinhalese were a 'unique race, in as much as they have no slave blood in them, and never were conquered by either the pagan Tamils or European vandals' (quoted in 1992:140). Dharmapala's vision of the island as a Sinhala Buddhist territory expressed a hierarchical ordering of ethnic groups in which the Tamils, and other groups, could only have a secondary claim.

'The island of Lanka belongs to the Buddhist Sinhalese. For 2455 years this was the land of birth for the Sinhalese. Other

racess have come here to pursue their commercial activities....
for the Tamils there is South India; for the moors Egypt... But
for the Sinhalese there is only this island.' (1992:136)

Alongside the Sinhala nationalist conception of a hierarchical ordering of ethnic groups on the island, Tamil associational activity was also increasingly coalescing around a conception of Tamils and Sinhalese as equally indigenous to the island. There was a general presumption in Tamil public culture – also adopted by P. Ramanathan and P. Arunachalem – that the Tamils were one of the two ‘founding races’ of the island (Wilson 2000:48,54, 56) The Hindu Organ, the largest circulating and most influential of the peninsula’s newspapers, welcomed the pact between the CNC and the Jaffna Association, characterising it as an agreement between the ‘Sinhalese and the Tamils, the people (inhabitants) of this country’ (Gunasingham 1999:214). When the pact broke down, many of the Tamil politicians associated with the negotiations asserted that Tamil political interests required a focus on securing Tamil rights, rather than the attempt to bury differences in an attempt to secure self governance. To this end, a number of political associations were formed with a focus on securing and promoting Tamil interests. Arunachalem, speaking at the inauguration of the Ceylon Tamil League in 1923, noted that while the Tamils would not ‘abandon the proud duty and privilege of service to all our brothers of very race and creed’, they did nevertheless ‘object to being bullied or terrorised’ and intended ‘to defend ourselves and make ourselves strong’ (1999:217). Furthermore, Tamil political interests were also projected as incorporating differences of caste and religion. At the inaugural meeting of the Jaffna Association, the Hindu Organ expressed the hope that the organisation would function ‘with full unity and all earnestness, without involving caste and religious prejudices’ (quoted in Gunasingham 1999:205). Later political associations such as the Jaffna Youth Congress and the All Ceylon Tamil

Conference had prominent Hindu and Christian participants (Kadirgamar 1980:15, 39; Russell 1982:69, 83, 200).

In contrast to the situation in India, Sri Lankan politics in 1920 lacked a developed pan-island organisational structure with a worked out conception of pan-ethnic national identity and national interest. Instead, Tamil and Sinhala associational activity from the late nineteenth century had produced two conceptions of national identity and interest that were mutually incompatible, while not diametrically opposed. The Sinhala conception – akin to the Hindu nationalist conception in India – was one of ethnic hierarchy in which the Sinhala Buddhists had a privileged historical, social and political position on the island. In contrast, the Tamil position was increasingly one of ethnic equality between the Tamils and Sinhalese, the two ‘founding races’ of the island. As discussed below, the dominant conception of Tamil identity and interest apparent in Tamil associational activity was closer to the Indianist pole of south Indian Tamil revivalism than the Dravidianist pole. Although the distinct Tamil and Sinhala conceptions were not each associated with robust organisational structures – many of the organisations established during this period were short-lived¹⁴⁸ – they were nevertheless influential and came to inform efforts to mobilise mass political participation and electoral support in the decades leading to independence. These two distinct and mutually incompatible conceptions of national identity and national interest thus became established parts of the island’s political landscape.

6.3.2 1920-1947: Towards independence

A crucial component of the process of constitutional reform during this period was the question of ethnic representation. In 1945 a Commission, headed by Lord Soulbury and appointed by the Secretary of State, made public its recommendations for constitutional reform on the island (Colonial Office

1945). The Commission described the 'problem of the Ceylon Constitution' as essentially one of 'reconciling the demands of the minorities for an adequate voice in the conduct of affairs' with the obvious fact that the constitution must 'preserve for the majority that proportionate share in all spheres of Government activity to which their numbers and influence entitle them' (1945:53). This characterisation contained the recognition that ethnic identities remained important to electoral politics.¹⁴⁹ From 1833 to 1920 representation in the legislative council had been communal (ethnic): individuals were nominated by the Governor to represent the interests of ethnic groups. Initially individuals were chosen to represent the Sinhalese, the Tamils and the Burghers. In 1889 additional representation for the Kandyans and Muslims was also granted. The elective principle was introduced on a limited basis in 1911 for the educated Ceylonese seat but from 1920 onwards there was a rapid shift away from communal representation towards territorial representation.¹⁵⁰ The political consequences of the Sinhala demographic majority and the Tamil demographic minority became therefore key issues of debate, discussion and mobilisation for Tamil and Sinhala political leaders as well as for British officials.

Two dynamics were at play in shaping ethnic and national politics during the final decades of colonial rule and in determining the constitutional structure through which the island became independent. The first was the ongoing consolidation – though not erasure – of the religious, regional and, to some extent, caste cleavages within the Tamil and Sinhala Buddhist conceptions of national identity that was coeval with a shift towards mass mobilization associated with the rapidly expanding franchise. As direct political mobilisation became a more important feature of political contestation, ethnic and national identities were increasingly communicated in the Tamil and Sinhala languages and through popular cultural forms. This was comparable

and even connected to events in India, but in the absence of a pan-ethnic framework produced very different outcomes.¹⁵¹ The second crucial dynamic in determining the final shape of constitutional outcomes were the perceptions and decisions of British officials. The views of British officials, rather than the force of political mobilisation on the island, were crucial in the decisions to abandon communal representation in favour of territorial constituencies, to adopt universal franchise¹⁵² and to appoint D. S Senanayake as the key interlocutor in the negotiations for the transfer of power.¹⁵³ These decisions were justified by two slightly contradictory strands of reasoning. The first was that the island had a Sinhala Buddhist character and that inevitably the Sinhalese would be politically dominant. The second strand of reasoning was that the development of a pan-ethnic national framework to politics was desirable and would eventually develop on the island.¹⁵⁴

The shift towards territorial representation that began with reforms implemented in 1921 produced initially a conflict between the political interests of the Kandyans and those of the low country Sinhalese politicians, largely represented by the CNC. Kandyan politicians took the position that further self government would simply mean domination by the low country Sinhalese, many of whom worked in the Kandyan areas as traders and suppliers servicing the plantation economy (Wickramasinghe 1995:42). As a consequence, the Kandyans remained aloof from the CNC and lobbied to retain communal representation, which they were granted in the first set of reforms in 1921. However, in the following set of reforms, implemented in 1923, the Kandyans lost the communal safeguards and found that many of the Kandyan electorates were won by low country Sinhalese politicians. In response, a Kandyan National Assembly was formed that demanded a federal autonomy for the Kandyan areas - the KNA's scheme envisaged a threefold

division of the island into Tamil, low Country and Kandyan federal states (1995:67-9).

This political division between the Kandyans and the low country Sinhalese was, however, bridged during the 1930's through a shared interest in excluding Indians – plantation labourers and traders – from the economic and political life of the island. The shift was precipitated by the decision in 1931 to adopt the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission report on constitutional reform that advocated universal adult franchise – including women – and territorial constituencies. The reforms enfranchised the south Indian, mainly Tamil, plantation labourers, arousing the hostility of both Kandyan and low Country Sinhalese politicians and associations, all of whom complained the Indians would demographically 'swamp' the Sinhalese (Colonial Office 1945:56).¹⁵⁵ In 1921 the Indian Tamil population (that lived and worked mainly in the tea plantations in the Kandyan districts) was almost two thirds the size (just over 600,000) of the Kandyan Sinhalese population (just over 1,000,000). The Kandyans complained that if the Indians were given the right to vote, Kandyan candidates would not be elected. Kandyan hostility to the Indian Tamil plantation labourers was therefore political and not economic: plantation owners had sought out labour from south India because the Kandyans, relatively prosperous and with abundant land, did not want to work on the plantations that were opening up from the mid nineteenth century (De Silva 2005:349). At the same time, by the late nineteenth century, economic stagnation and landlessness in south India was leading to labour emigration (Chapter Two).

In contrast, the Sri Lankan Tamils, who had been resident in the northeast of the island for several centuries, supported the Indian Tamils right to the franchise. Sri Lankan Tamils were not competing for work on the plantations; there was a relatively prosperous agricultural economy in the north-east (De

Silva 2005:385-7) which supported a growing demand for education, particularly English education. As noted earlier, this led to an over-representation of Sri Lankan Tamils in the public services (Roberts 1997a:229-230) and also led many Sri Lankan Tamils to emigrate to Singapore and Malaysia in search of similar white collar work (Russell 1982:23). Sri Lankan Tamil support for the Indian Tamils was interpreted by Sinhala political leaders as a means of 'defeating the majority community' (Wickramasinghe 1985:84).

The Donoughmore Commissioners recommended adult franchise as a means of alleviating the social and economic conditions of workers and other impoverished sections of the population, specifically mentioning the plantation labourers (Colonial Office 1928:83, 86). However, from 1929 onwards, the franchise conditions were repeatedly revised to specifically exclude Indian labourers by the Colonial Office and the Governor General at the insistence of Kandyan as well as low country Sinhalese politicians (Colonial Office 1945:13; Wickramasinghe 1995:85)

The alliance of Kandyan and low country Country Sinhalese was facilitated by the widening use of Sinhala Buddhist rhetoric and metonyms in the techniques of mass political mobilisation that was increasingly becoming a part of associational activity. Sinhala Buddhist conceptions of national identity and national history were circulating through an expanding vernacular print culture and also through forms such as the popular theatre (Wickramasinghe 2006:77-9, 89). The nationalist message exhorted the Sinhalese to change their names, forms of dress and other cultural habits to be more authentically Aryan Sinhalese (2006:81, 93) and at the same time focussed attention on the threat posed by Indian labourers and traders (Wicramasinghe 1995:134). Sinhalese labour leaders also mobilised against the Indian threat, organising boycotts of Indian owned business, calling for landlords to evict Indian tenants,

encouraging businesses not to employ Indians and even exhorting the Sinhalese not to engage in mixed marriages as it would diminish the purity of the Sinhalese (Russell 1982:249-50; Wickramasinghe 2006:130-135).

The increasing political viability of a pan-Sinhalese identity is evident in the behaviour of S. W.R. D Bandaranaike, a low country politician and future Prime Minister of independent Sri Lanka. Bandaranaike initially supported the Kandyan demand for federation in the hope of securing Kandyan backing (Russell 1982:191; Wickramasinghe 1995:69). By 1936, however, he abandoned this and adopted a Sinhala Buddhist platform forming the Sinhala Maha Sabha as a means of bridging the gap between the low country and Kandyan Sinhalese (Russell 1982:142, 236; Wickramasinghe 1995:170-1). Through the SMS Bandaranaike adopted a very shrill note on defending Sinhalese interests, stating for example that 'I am prepared to sacrifice my life for the sake of my community, the Sinhalese. If anybody were to try to hinder our progress, I should see that he should never forget' (quoted in Russell 1982:157). The conscious attempt to consolidate a regionally unified Sinhala identity was also exemplified at the 1940 annual session of the CNC where it adopted independence as its eventual goal and unfurled the Kandyan lion flag as the national flag (Wickramasinghe 1995:175).

The shift from communal to territorial electorates also precipitated a divide in Tamil politics, albeit one that was based on differences of political approach, rather than differences of region, caste or religion. There two distinct approaches to promoting Tamil political interests – although they shared an understanding of the content of these interests. The first was associated with Tamil politicians, most prominently P. Ramanathan and from 1934 G. G. Ponnambalam ¹⁵⁶ (1910-1977), who sought to retain a balance of ethnic representation in the legislative council. The second was associated with a new organisation formed called the Jaffna Youth Congress was formed in 1924

(Kadirgamar 1980). The JYC attacked its Tamil opponents as ‘communalists’ and sought instead to build a pan-ethnic form of Ceylonese nationalism that explicitly used techniques of mass political mobilization. Despite the bitter, and often violent, conflicts between the two groups¹⁵⁷ they nevertheless shared an understanding of the Tamils as indigenous to the island and sought a multi ethnic political future for the island in which the Tamils and Sinhalese could coexist as equal collectives. Their tactics to realise this end differed – the JYC sought to build political alliances with Sinhalese politicians¹⁵⁸, while P. Ramanathan and later G. G. Ponnambalam sought to build alliances with other minority representatives (Russell 1982:66-67)¹⁵⁹ but were orientated towards a similar political vision.

The JYC, for example, at its first session in 1924 promulgated a political framework of national identity that was very much like that of the early Indian Congress. Asserting that it was possible for ‘people of all religions to work of the welfare of the mother land’, the JYC resolved that ‘no distinction be made between or preference shown to any one of the various religious bodies in the country and that no sectarian issue be ever raised’ at JYC meetings or in JYC propaganda (Kadirgamar 1980:13). In a similar vein, G. G. Ponnambalam, in a 1939 speech setting out the case for balanced representation, argued that ‘we are a composite of different races and nationalities who have to live and move and have our being in this country.’ He went onto state that the ‘rights of every component part must be accepted and the claims recognised if this country is to march on for the highest good of the greatest number if not of the people as a whole’ (2001:5).

The JYC was strongly influenced by the Indian Congress – particularly the adoption of mass mobilisation and questions of social reform, poverty and the promotion of indigenous cultural forms that occurred under Gandhi’s leadership. During the height of its political presence between 1924 and 1931,

the JYC held sessions addressed by well known Indian figures including Gandhi and Nehru as well as the Tamil Nadu Congress figures Satyamurti and V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar. The JYC also promoted Gandhi's campaign of using homespun cotton or Khaddr over imported cloth, encouraged the use of the Tamil language in public life, led campaigns to end caste discrimination in Jaffna's educational institutions and raised issues of imperialism and economic underdevelopment in its annual sessions (Kadirgamar 1980).¹⁶⁰ The JYC's cultivation of Tamil language and culture – an explicit part of its programme since its founding – was part of a broader movement of Tamil cultural promotion that was shaped by the Indianist pole of south Indian Tamil revivalism. In the course of the 1930's, for example, Bharathanatyam and Carnatic music – the south Indian traditions of dance and music adopted and reformed by the Indian Congress as 'national forms' – replaced western classical music and dance in the curricula of Jaffna schools and colleges (Russell 1982:122).

Over a period of six years, the JYC established a presence in the island's political life – concentrated in Jaffna¹⁶¹ – by setting out a clear framework of national identity and national interest and directly mobilising political support. As a consequence, it was also briefly able to influence ambitious politicians seeking election in a manner in ways comparable to the Indian Congress in the elections. In 1931 the JYC called for a boycott of the elections to the State Council created by the Donoughmore Commission reforms. The decision was taken on the basis that the reforms did not go far enough towards independence and echoed the Indian Congress' campaign of Civil Disobedience taking place at the same time (Kadirgamar 1980:58-60, 72-82). Within days of the JYC announcing its decision and holding public meetings to dissuade people from voting, a large number of the more notable candidates withdrew their nominations (1980:78). The fact that candidates, who operated

within an electoral landscape in which patronage networks were crucial, withdrew suggests that the JYC brand had nevertheless become an independent source of electoral legitimacy within northern electoral constituencies.¹⁶² The boycott was also, however, the cause of the JYC's eventual demise. Its optimistic hopes of a reciprocal boycott in the Sinhalese areas were entirely unfounded (Russell 1982:31, 33) and indeed its activities were even misrepresented by many, though not all, Sinhalese politicians and later by British officials as a demand for communal electorates.¹⁶³

By 1934 Tamil politicians who sought to negotiate balanced ethnic representation, most prominently G. G. Ponnambalam, had persuaded the then Governor R. E. Stubbs, to hold elections in the areas affected by boycott and entered the state council. From that point on, the demand for balanced representation between the majority Sinhalese and non Sinhalese in any future constitutional reforms became an important – though not dominant - platform in Tamil politics. The demand, commonly known as 50-50,¹⁶⁴ was promoted as a means of protecting the non-Sinhala minorities against discriminatory acts by ensuring a balance of political power between the majority and the minorities. Although the JYC and its members remained politically active, they lost their former influence. When two key JYC members stood for election in 1947 they fared dismally and lost their deposits. In the meantime, the notion that Tamil political interests were threatened by Sinhala domination gained momentum. At the 1947 elections Ponnambalam's All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) won six seats (out of nine) in the northern province and one seat (out of seven) from the eastern province (Wickramasinghe 1995:242) on a platform of seeking 'responsive co-operation' (Russell 1982:324) with Sinhala leaders. In the elections Ponnambalam abandoned his home constituency of Point Pedro and directly challenged A. Mahadeva, standing as a candidate for D. S. Senanayake's UNP in the Jaffna

town constituency. In what he described as an 'ordeal by election' (1982), Ponnambalam beat Mahadeva¹⁶⁵ demonstrating that his argument of the threat posed by Sinhala majority rule to Tamil interests had gained traction in Jaffna town, an important locus of Tamil politics.

6.3.3 British perceptions and the transfer of power

The Donoughmore commission's recommendations were intended to overcome the ethnic cleavages that were apparent in the island's politics. However, in the period between 1931 and 1947, when the Donoughmore constitution functioned, ethnic cleavages continued, and more importantly, mutually incompatible Tamil and Sinhala conceptions of national identity and interest became established in public culture and political life. From 1931 the Sinhala Buddhist framework also became the basis for economic policy. D. S. Senanayake, as the minister for Agriculture and Lands,¹⁶⁶ implemented a policy of state support for peasant colonization of the largely under-populated areas in the north central, northern and north-western areas of the island.¹⁶⁷ The colonization schemes resonated with the Mahavamsa vision of the island's history in which the glorious Buddhist, hydraulic civilizations centred on the cities of Anuradhapura and Polunnaruwa were destroyed by Tamil invaders. The schemes were widely presented as the re-conquest of Buddhist land and Senanayake himself presented himself as a direct descendent of an old Rajarata (or King's country) family (Farmer 1957:144). Tamil politicians criticised these policies as discriminating against Tamil interests. The emphasis on (Sinhala) peasant colonisation led to a radical reduction in public funds spent on irrigation works in the North-east, where previous investments had to rapid increases in productivity.¹⁶⁸ At the same time they also noted that rates of landlessness in the Jaffna peninsula were comparable to those in the overcrowded south-western parts of the island.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the public services also became hugely politicized as Sinhala politicians criticized Tamil

over-representation in the public services, while Tamil politicians complained of administrative measures that discriminated against Tamil candidates (Russell 1982:25, 169; Wickramasinghe 1995:150-1). A 1943 debate in the State Council on the issue of replacing English with a national language also revealed deep differences between Sinhalese and Tamil representatives. (Russell 1982:286-7).

The Soulbury Commission, appointed in 1944 to recommend further constitutional reforms, recognised that ethnic categories continued to dominate the island's politics (Colonial Office 1945:33, 71). The commission noted Tamil and other minority complaints of discrimination but suggested that these were simply the effects of the Sinhalese majority correcting for previous deficiencies. The Commission was however optimistic that a more ethnically inclusive form of politics would naturally develop in the post independence period and encouraged Sinhalese leaders to take minority concerns into account (1945:47-50). From 1943 onwards D. S Senanayake emerged as the leader to whom power would be transferred, and from that point onwards Tamil politicians were largely excluded from discussions on constitutional reform.¹⁷⁰ The Soulbury Commission's recommendations – approved in early 1946 – set out a parliamentary system with cabinet government and territorial, rather than communal, constituencies. Senanayake's demand for dominion status and finally independence were eventually granted, largely as a consequence of the pace of events in India and as means of shoring up Senanayake's political credibility on the island in the face of growing labour unrest (Jeffries 1962:112,-3). The problem of reconciling the island's ethnic pluralism into a singular national framework was left to the future – strikingly it was agreed that if the minorities no longer had a third party to whom appeals could be made, compromise was more likely (1962:115-6).

6.3.4 British policy and pan-ethnic politics

There are, of course, some important differences in British attitudes to ethnic pluralism in India and Sri Lanka, particularly in the years leading up to independence. However, this cannot be easily correlated with the relative success or failure of pan-ethnic politics in the two states. There were substantial moves towards self-government in India and Sri Lanka during the 1930's. The Donoughmore reforms in Sri Lanka led to effective self government with universal franchise, but without ethnically defined constituencies. Likewise, in India, the 1935 Act led to provincial self government and greater Indian participation at the national level in Delhi. However, in India the franchise was highly restricted and separate Muslim constituencies remained. In Sri Lanka, however, Sinhalese political actors' ability to exercise political power, and indeed their demands for further self government, were not undermined by their inability to mobilise pan-ethnic support. In fact, British officials accommodated Sinhalese leaders' insistence that Indian Tamils be excluded from the franchise in an effort to get the Donoughmore proposals accepted. Furthermore, British officials did not protest or oppose when Sinhalese ministers used the powers granted to them by the Donoughmore reforms to pass legislation that directly discriminated against Indian Tamils. In Sri Lanka therefore the absence of a pan-ethnic consensus was not a key factor in British official decision making; quite the reverse, British officials arguably condoned the ethnic exclusion of Indian Tamils in their efforts to maintain a working relationship with Sinhalese political leaders. In that sense, from the 1930's onwards, Sinhalese leaders were not under any pressure from colonial to form a unified national front.

In contrast, in India, British officials insisted on including representations from a wide range of actors in formulating the provisions of the 1935 Act. Muslim and Dalit representatives were, for example, invited to the 1931-2 London

Round Table Conferences that Congress leaders boycotted. In October 1939 the then Viceroy, the Marquis of Linlithgow (served 1936-43), explicitly stated that there would be no further progress towards self government without Muslim agreement (Sarkar 1989:377). This in part formed the conditions in which the Muslim League adopted the Pakistan resolution of March 1940 (1989:378). However, as Ayesha Jalal (1994) has argued, by early 1947, British priorities had switched to transferring power as early as possible, even at the cost of finding agreement between Congress and the League. As in Sri Lanka, therefore, in the final months before independence British officials were focussed on transferring power rather than maintaining their rule through the use of ethnic categories. In the last stages of British rule what mattered was not British policy as much as the League's ability to win the overwhelming majority of Muslim electorates in the 1945/6 elections and, conversely, Congress' failure to do the same. If the League had not won this overwhelming mandate, it would not have been a key player in the final months that led to the transfer of power. However, as Chapter Five argued, Congress' failure to win Muslim support was not so much a matter of British policy but the Hindu nationalist orientation of Congress politicians in the three key provinces of Punjab, Bengal and UP. Furthermore, Congress' contrasting ability to win Tamil electoral support was an outcome of its long run ideological and institutional development, beginning in the late nineteenth century. In other words, the divergent trajectories of ethnic and national politics in the two states are outcomes of political process, rather than the contrasting policies of British officials.

There are also substantial problems with the argument that greater British resistance to self rule in India led to a more developed form of nationalist movement there compared to in Sri Lanka. From the late nineteenth century until 1920, Congress politicians, like their Sri Lankan counterparts, were not

seeking independence but rather limited constitutional reform. Furthermore, the first two of Congress' three India wide protests (Non Cooperation and Civil Disobedience respectively) had very little effect on the direction of British reforms. The Non-Cooperation movement, which followed the 1919 Government of India Act that granted limited self government, insisted on independence but failed to effect any change in the legislation. Furthermore, once Gandhi had called off the Non Cooperation movement in 1924, many leading Congress politicians joined to form the Swaraj party and contested elections for institutions created by the 1919 reforms. Similarly, the Civil Disobedience movement (1931-4) – launched with the objective of securing Dominion status - failed to make any substantial change to the content of the 1935 Government of India act. Congress nevertheless participated in the institutions created by the very Act it had spent four years resisting.

To reiterate, despite the failure of Congress-led mass mobilisation in realising its stated goals, these processes were nevertheless crucial in developing a pan-Indian ideological and organisational structure. While relations between British officials and the Congress movement were arguably more fractious than similar relations in Sri Lanka, this is better understood as the result, rather than the cause, of Congress mobilisation. The organisational strength of Congress led anti-colonial nationalism, demonstrated during the Quit India movement (1942) and continuing through strikes and demonstrations till independence, was nevertheless decisive in pushing for a rapid pace of decolonisation at the end of the war in Europe in 1945 (Sarkar 1989: Chapter Eight). The rapid momentum towards independence in India also pushed British officials towards granting Sri Lanka independence, rather than simply further self-government (Jeffries 1962:113). As such, Sri Lanka gained independence within months of India despite the absence of a sustained anti-colonial movement. The presence or absence of sustained pan-ethnic anti

colonial politics was therefore not clearly correlated with the direction and speed of self government until the 1940's and the impact of the war on Britain's relative power and ability to hold the Empire together against Indian and international resistance. However, the presence or absence of sustained pan-ethnic, anti-colonial politics is the crucial factor in explaining the very divergent political, social and economic outcomes of Tamil identity in India and Sri Lanka.

6.4 Conclusion

The analysis of the Indian Congress movement in Chapter Five demonstrates that the emergence of a pan-ethnic framework of national politics is not an act of compromise or statesmanship. Rather, in India it emerged through continuous in time efforts of political mobilisation and organisation that sought to present a pan ethnic platform that could demonstrate credible support across India. As a consequence, Congress' political framework developed institutional depth and went onto structure the post-independence Indian constitution. In Sri Lanka, a pan ethnic political platform failed to develop because of the absence of this process. Organisations such as the CNA and the CNC did not engage in continuous processes of organisation and mobilisation in an attempt to establish a pan ethnic platform that could demonstrate support across the island. As a consequence, they could be easily ignored and quickly supplanted by new organisations. In April, in preparation for the first elections to be held under the auspices of the Soulbury constitution, Senanayake bypassed the CNC and formed the UNP (Wickramasinghe 1995:223). Most of CNC's parliamentary candidates simply switched allegiances to the UNP which won 42 out of a total of 95 seats in the 1947 elections (1995:242). The UNP did not have a developed framework of national identity and national interest and functioned primarily as a label that co-ordinated the interests of ambitious politicians of local standing; its chief

asset was Senanayake's status as the most likely future Prime Minister (1995:224).

This chapter has argued that the absence of a pan-ethnic Ceylonese nationalism was a matter of process rather than structure. That is the absence of a pan-ethnic platform cannot be explained in terms of the island's ethnic demography or indeed the structure of incentives facing political actors. The dominant trends in Tamil and Sinhala associational activity were comparable to those in India; Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka is the equivalent of Hindu nationalism in India, whilst Tamil politics was closely linked to the Indianist pole of south Indian Tamil revivalism. Similarly, the types of social groups that were associated with Congress' growth and expansion were also present in the island. There was, for example, from the late nineteenth century a small and unevenly distributed group of actors engaged in funding and organising associational activity that sought in various ways to shape government policy. Electoral competition on the island, as in India, was also hugely dependent on local magnates able to command votes through networks of patronage. The conditions and possibilities of ethnic and national political contestation were therefore comparable and the differences of outcome can only be explained through the processes of organisation and mobilisation through which identities were asserted and then contested.

Indeed, the pattern of ethnic politics on the island was in some ways more favourably disposed towards a pan-ethnic form of politics than those in India. Unlike the relations between leading Congress and Muslim political leaders, important Tamil politicians and Tamil associations were central to efforts to create a pan-ethnic form of politics. The brothers P. Ramanathan and P. Arunachalem played important roles in the founding of the CNA and the CNC respectively, both of which sort to advance a pan-ethnic politics. Later, Jaffna politics was for a period dominated by the Youth Congress which also sought

to create a popular movement in support of a pan-ethnic form of anti-colonial nationalism; its 1931 boycott was the only instance of anti-colonial mass protest in the island's history comparable to the pan-Indian agitations through which Congress built its support and organisational structure (Russell 1982:42). However, in the absence of continuous in time activities to establish a pan-ethnic and pan-island organisational structure, associational activities amongst the Tamils and Sinhalese came instead to be organised around two incompatible – though not diametrically opposed – conceptions of national identity and national interest.

The Muslim and Tamil politicians who endorsed Senanayake's leadership and the UNP explained their decision in terms of the legitimacy of accepting majority Sinhala rule – not as a means of evolving a pan ethnic national identity. However, the understanding of the island's national character as essentially Sinhala Buddhist failed to gain traction in Tamil politics. Instead, as discussed in Chapter Eight, in the post independence period, Tamil politics was dominated by the Federal Party which continued to insist on the notion of Tamils and Sinhalese as equally indigenous to the island. The escalating conflict between this momentum in Tamil politics and the Sinhala Buddhist framework that was systematically being incorporated into state structures was a crucial component of the island's politics in the post independence decade.

7. Tamil identity and the Indian nation in the post-independence era

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the relationship between political dynamics in the Tamil speaking areas and Indian national identity in the post independence era. It will first outline the understanding of Indian national identity contained in the Indian constitution. The constitution was an expression of Congress doctrine and set the dominant framework through which ethnic pluralism was reconciled into a unified national whole. The chapter will argue that the electoral competition between the Dravidian movement and Congress in the Tamil speaking areas took place in terms of shared notions of Tamil identity and interest that were compatible with constitutional understandings of Indian national identity. The chapter explains Congress' electoral decline in the Tamil speaking areas as the outcome of the DMK's effective mobilisation compounded by an economic crisis and contingent political factors that worked against a Congress revival. It will suggest that the political accommodation of Tamil identity within Indian nationalism was due to the ideological contours of the political dominance of an ethnically plural understanding of Indian national identity rather than the federal provisions of the constitution or the political moderation of the Dravidian parties.

In the post Independence era, the Indian state was redefined in national terms. A key act in this formal redefinition was the drafting of a new Indian constitution. The constitution expressed and enshrined an understanding of Indian national identity that recognised the internal ethnic pluralism of the Indian population, but reconciled this within a shared and unifying national interest in economic and social development.¹⁷¹ This understanding of Indian national identity and national interest captured in the phrase 'unity in

diversity' was the outcome of Congress' ideological and political development from its inception in the late nineteenth century (Sarkar 2001). In the decades following independence, Congress' electoral and political dominance established the twin principles of ethnic pluralism along with a unifying national constitutional framework and commitment to economic development as central facts of Indian political life.¹⁷² Whilst Congress eventually lost power at the national level in 1977, the constitution has remained in force to become the most durable of the constitutions that succeeded British colonial rule in south Asia. The Constitution's understanding of Indian national identity has likewise remained a critical force in Indian political dynamics, acting as both a restraint and a resource for social and political movements that have sought to capture or exercise state power in line with their preferred understandings of national identity and national interest.

In the Tamil speaking areas, the Congress party and its articulation of Indian national identity was challenged by the political growth of the DMK, a party that had its ideological roots in the once separatist and outspokenly anti-Indian DK.¹⁷³ However, the growth of the DMK and its replacement of Congress as the governing party in the Tamil speaking areas by 1967 took place without a fundamental redefinition of Indian national identity in the Tamil speaking regions or indeed a complete reorientation of Dravidian ideology. This accommodation was possible because there was sufficient ideological overlap between Dravidian and Indian notions of Tamil identity; an ideological overlap that was developed through the Congress movement's mobilisation in the Tamil speaking areas. Although not infinitely elastic, the Constitution's characterisation of the Indian nation has been capacious enough to withstand the ascendance to political power of the once separatist Dravidian movement in the Tamil speaking areas.

7.2 Congress party dominance and framing Indian national identity

The framing of the Indian constitution and its relative stability are inseparable from Congress' organisational, ideological and electoral dominance of Indian political life from the late colonial period until 1977. While the political values that eventually defined the constitution reflected the party's political doctrine, its ability to dominate discussions in the constituent assembly reflected its electoral strength.¹⁷⁴ The values of democracy, socialism, pluralism and unity that guided the framing of the Indian constitution were outcomes of Congress ideological development and its struggle to present itself as the legitimate representative of Indian national identity and interests (Sarkar 1999). Although there was a diversity of views within the constituent assembly, the drafting of the Constitution was closely controlled by a few key individuals whose authority rested on their status in the Congress party. Corbridge and Harris suggest that the Constitution was effectively written by Nehru and Bhimrao Ambedkar (2000:269), while Austin argues that the drafting process was managed by an oligarchy consisting of Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Patel¹⁷⁵ (1972:18). Whatever the precise role of these figures, and despite important differences on issues such as land reform, economic policy¹⁷⁶ and the problem of caste hierarchy, their political careers had all been at a pan-Indian rather than provincial level, and they all agreed on the need for a strong centralised state capable of securing national unity and directing the processes of economic development and social transformation (1972:21, 187-207).

The Indian constitution, and the process of constitution making, established an authoritative framework for reconciling the ethnic pluralism of the Indian population with the need for a unified national identity. The constitutional process was legitimised through the principle of popular sovereignty and

invoked the pre-political authority of the Indian people; the objectives resolution stated that the constituent assembly 'derived from the people all power and authority' (1972:2) while the preamble to the constitution declared 'We the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India, into sovereign democratic republic' (cited in Corbridge and Harriss 2000:20). In invoking the authority of the pre-political people in this way, the constitutional process inevitably raised the population's ethnic pluralism as a conceptually unavoidable problem. As a consequence, the political accommodation and representation of India's ethnic pluralism became a central part of the constitution making process. The Congress leadership directed provincial units to ensure that candidates representing minority religious and Untouchable caste groups were nominated to the Constituent assembly to ensure that it would be 'the mirror of the nation' (Austin 1972:11). The constitution making process was thus marked by a series of debates on the appropriate means through which to represent and recognise caste, religious and linguistic differences within an overarching 'national' framework. The constitutional resolution of these issues has proved remarkably stable and relatively capacious, enabling a stable political accommodation between Tamil politics and the national framework of Indian politics.

The constitutional accommodation of ethnic pluralism was framed by the overarching objectives of preserving Indian unity and securing Indian national interests in social and economic progress and development. The two were linked in so far as unity was seen as a pre-requisite for progress. The imperative of securing the social and economic transformation of India was forcefully expressed by Nehru at the opening of the Assembly in December 1946; the 'first task of this assembly' he stated 'is to free India through a new constitution, to feed the starving people, to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his

capacity' (quoted in Corbridge and Harriss 2000:20) There was a broad consensus amongst assembly members that the state would play a central role in effecting economic and social transformation (Austin 1972:41-3), a view that was rooted in the nationalist critique of the colonial state as an agent perpetuating India's social and economic backwardness (Chatterjee 1986). In the words of K. Santhanam, a south Indian assembly member, India needed a social revolution to get out 'of the medievalism based on birth, religion, custom and community' and towards a society based on 'law, individual merit, and secular education' along with an economic revolution to move from a 'primitive rural economy' towards a 'scientific and planned agriculture and industry' (quoted in Austin 1972:20).

Indian unity was understood as crucial to realising these far reaching objectives but the precise means of realising that unity was contested. During the constituent assembly debates, as during the anti-colonial struggle, the need for unity was often juxtaposed to the fissiparous tendencies of ethnic / communal pluralism and demands.¹⁷⁷ There were, however, two antagonistic views on how ethnic pluralism ought to be reconciled within a unified Indian national whole. The first was the Hindu nationalist conception that was most forcefully expressed during the debates on the question of national language. Hindu nationalists sought to establish a Hindu conception of India by cementing the dominance of a Sanskritised version of Hindi that would lead to the linguistic, and therefore cultural, assimilation of Muslim Urdu speakers and the speakers of south Indian Dravidian languages.¹⁷⁸ During the assembly debates, Hindu nationalists insisted on a Sanskritised version of Hindi, purged of Urdu references and the Arabic script (Singh 2005), whilst demanding that south Indians learn Hindi (Austin 1972:275). In contrast to this ethnically assimilationist project, the Congress leadership, along with most south Indian, Muslim and other ethnic minority members, advocated the idea of 'unity in

diversity' in which political relations between plural ethnic groups could be managed in a non – antagonistic manner.

The 'unity in diversity' conception of the Indian nation as a pre political and organic whole that was nevertheless marked by great pluralism is best captured in Nehru's autobiographical impressions of India. He noted that the 'diversity of India is tremendous' and 'obvious' and pointed to the differences between the 'Pathan of the North-West and the Tamil in the far south'; their 'racial stocks are not the same' and the two differ in 'figure, food and clothing and of course language.' Despite these differences which had persisted for 'hundreds of years,' Nehru argued that there had also been a unifying tendency, something 'distinctively Indian, with the same national heritage and the same set of moral and mental qualities.' He characterises this timeless unity as a striving for internal harmony rather than a homogenization of external manners and habits:

'Some kind of a dream of unity has occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilization. That unity was not conceived as something imposed from outside, a standardization of externals or even of beliefs. It was something deeper and, within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom was practised and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged' (1947:49).

This 'unity in diversity' conception of Indian unity was the one that was eventually dominant in framing the Indian constitution. Although the constitution did contain some Hindu nationalist inflections, notably the inclusion of the Sanskrit term Bharat to describe India and an injunction on the state to work towards the prohibition of cow slaughter (Goswami 2004: Chapter 6; Singh; 2005), it also contained a large number of provisions that

formally recognised and entrenched the existence of religious, caste and linguistic diversity (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011: Chapter 2). It is these latter provisions that are invoked by Stepan, Linz and Yadav in describing the Indian polity as 'robustly multinational' in its institutional framework. Furthermore, these provisions have also resisted later Hindu nationalist attempts to overturn them. The measures through which the categories of caste, religion and language were recognised varied – and included a number of positive and negative rights – but all the measures were legitimised and mediated by the need to secure Indian unity and Indian interests in progress and development.

One of the most contentious issues was the political representation of caste and religious groups. Soon after partition, the Constituent Assembly (CA) abandoned the colonial policy of separate electorates for religious groups on the basis that this undermined a unified national identity (Austin 1972:144-155). It did, however, retain a form of special representation Dalits and tribal groups - known as Scheduled Castes and Tribes as they were listed in a schedule of the constitution. A number of constituencies were marked as reserved and in these only SC and ST candidates could be elected. Furthermore, SC and ST groups were also granted a reserved quota of spaces in public sector employment and higher education. Both these measures were initially adopted for a limited period of time as a means of ameliorating the 'backward' condition of these groups (Bayly 1999:Chapter Seven). While the political representation of religious groups was rejected as incompatible with national unity, the constitution nevertheless sought to protect and encourage the religious pluralism of Indian society. Not only was freedom of religion guaranteed as a fundamental right, public subsidies were also granted to religious activities, such as education and pilgrimage – including subsidies for the Muslim pilgrimage of Haj (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2011:69). Religious freedom was not, however, sacrosanct and was instead circumscribed by the

imperative of social reform; Hindu religious freedom was circumscribed by laws explicitly prohibiting the practice of untouchability (2011:69) whilst Muslim religious freedom was circumscribed the state's obligation to work towards the creation of a uniform code of civil law, one that would override separate Hindu and Muslim personal laws (Austin 1972:80). In making these incursions, the CA accepted that the 'right freely to practice religion should not prevent the state from making laws providing for social welfare and reform' (1972:64).

The problem of reconciling linguistic diversity and national unity was also acutely contested within the CA and involved two separate issues. The first was the need to define a national or official language and the consequent problem of the political status afforded to the non-national and non-official languages. The second issue was that of the linguistic re-organisation of the India's provincial boundaries. Both raised the possibility that India's linguistic pluralism undermining the search for national unity. Questions of language again polarised debate between Hindu nationalists, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, those advocating a 'unity in diversity' conception of Indian identity.¹⁷⁹ Hindu nationalists (within Congress) demanded official / national status for Sanskritised Hindi over and above the claims of English and the other Indian languages. Those advocating a 'unity in diversity' approach, including Nehru and most of the actors identified as crucial in the constitution making process, favoured a long term switch from English to Hindustani, understood very much as a composite of its Persian and Sanskrit roots. Nehru and most south Indian delegates also favoured the continued use of English as the state language and were unwilling to insist that south Indians learn Hindustani / Hindi to participate in the public life of the state. The eventual agreement on language was in keeping with the broad Congress doctrine of 'unity in diversity'; Hindi was ascribed the prosaic title of 'official' language in

place of the more emotively resonant 'national' status while English was also retained as a recognised official language, initially for a period of fifteen years until 1965 when the switch from English to Hindi for all official purposes was to be effected. The constitution also went on to list thirteen regional languages, including Tamil, which could be adopted by the state or provincial legislatures. According to Durgabi Deshmukh, who helped draft the language provisions, this was done for 'psychological reasons and to give these languages status'; Nehru suggested that formally listing the languages in the constitution would ensure 'their due place' in the new India (quoted in Austin 1972:298). As 1965 approached, conflict continued between Hindi advocates insisting on an immediate switch to Hindi and non Hindi speakers demanding the continued use of English. The conflict was eventually resolved, under Nehru's leadership, by the passage of legislation in 1963 that mandated the continued use of English alongside Hindi for official purposes after 1965 (King, R.D 1999:131).

The assembly also had to decide whether to undertake the linguistic reorganisation of provincial units along with the promulgation of the new constitution. Linguistic reorganisation had been a consistent part of the Congress platform since 1920 and Congress itself was organised on linguistic lines from that time. At independence there were also growing and insistent calls, especially from the Telugu speaking areas, for immediate reorganisation.¹⁸⁰ The linguistic reorganisation of provinces was initially promoted as a necessary element of democratic self governance and progress. The 1928 Nehru Report envisioned a system of linguistic provinces on the basis that language 'corresponds with a special variety of culture, of traditions and literature' and argued that in linguistic provinces 'all these factors will help in the general progress of the province' (King, R.D 1999:64) As independence approached, however, the Congress leadership increasingly began to see demands for immediate linguistic reorganisation as divisive; in a

December 1948 note Azad deplored 'the demand for linguistic provinces and other particularistic tendencies' (quoted in Austin 1972:239). In response to the insistence of assembly members demanding immediate linguistic reorganisation, two commissions were formed during the term of the Assembly to report on the issue and both, influenced by Nehru, advised against immediate linguistic reorganisation as inimical to the national interest (King, R.D 1999; Chapter Four). The first report submitted in December 1948, allegedly drafted by Nehru, found that linguistic reorganisation was 'not in the larger interests of the Indian nation' (quoted in Austin 1972:242), while the second commission, of which Nehru was a member, reported in April 1949 that any reorganisation of provincial boundaries must be 'subject to certain limitations in regard to the good of India as a whole' (1972:242). The new constitution was adopted in January 1950 with the provincial boundaries of the colonial era largely in place and the process of linguistic reorganisation was only reluctantly initiated by Nehru in 1953 following mass protests in the Telugu speaking areas demanding the immediate creation of the Telugu speaking state of Andhra Pradesh with the city of Madras as its capital (Mitchell 2009). This movement triggered a more widespread process of linguistic reorganisation and the creation of new states across India (King, R.D 1999:12) including the Tamil speaking state of Madras renamed Tamil Nadu in 1967 (Ramaswamy 1997:157).

Although linguistic reorganisation transformed the India into a union of largely linguistically defined states, federalism was not envisaged or indeed created as a mechanism for accommodating linguistic identities per se. The new constitution did organise Indian government along federal lines with power distributed between the central, union or national government in Delhi and provincial or state governments located in the various capitals of the component states of the union. However, this distribution of power was more

an outcome of the institutional history of the colonial state than an expression of federalism as a component of Indian national identity. While concepts such as democracy, progress, unity and socialism had been core components of Congress' ideological development, federalism had not. In terms of national identity, the principle of unity was far more important in organising the constitution than the principle of federalism. In keeping with colonial administrative practices, power was centralised in the union government so that the federal autonomy of the state governments could easily be over-ridden; Ambedkar, chair of the drafting committee, described the constitution as avoiding the 'tight mould of federalism' and could be 'both unitary as well as federal according to the requirements of the time and circumstances' (quoted in Austin 1972:188). As such, control over the boundaries of the states rests entirely with the central government which acting through the President can redraw existing boundaries to create new states or merge existing states regardless of the linguistic principle. The constitution requires only that the President ascertain the views of the states concerned, rather than secure formal consent through majority votes in state legislatures. The federal provisions of the Constitution have therefore been less important in accommodating linguistic identities within a national whole than the notion of India's linguistic diversity firmly embedded in Congress doctrine and expressed through the official and national language provisions of the Constitution.

The overarching objective driving the framers of the Indian constitution was to create a strong and centralised unitary state that would secure Indian political unity and the drive for economic development.¹⁸¹ A central part of this process was the constitutional recognition of the Indian population as ethnically plural. This constitutional recognition was not, however, an act of shrewd statesmanship, wise moderation or enlightened policy making, but,

rather, an outcome of process; the long and temporally continuous process of anti-colonial nationalism that had established the Congress party as the dominant political force in India, the only institution capable of mobilising pan Indian un-coerced and co-ordinated political activity. This process created and established an ideology of Indian national identity and national interest in which the Indian population was conceived as a plural but ancient and historically unified people with a shared interest in realising a future of development and progress. The progress of the Indian people was moreover understood, as Koselleck would argue in world historic terms; Nehru, for example stated that Congress sought freedom as a 'means to an end ... that end being the raising of the people ... to higher levels and hence the general advancement of humanity' (quoted in Austin 1972:26). The political recognition of ethnic pluralism was in line with this vision of progressive development; religious groups were granted social and cultural rights, but not political recognition; SC and ST groups were granted political representation and positive discrimination quotas as a means of alleviating their 'backwardness'. Linguistic pluralism was acceptable in so far as it expressed India's 'composite culture', but resisted if it expressed 'divisive' tendencies. Finally, this plural conception of Indian identity cannot easily be categorised as a civic form of national identity, one defined by allegiance to the state or a set of abstract political values. Instead, the metonyms and rhetoric of Indian nationhood invariably invoked the sense of an organic and ancient peoplehood. Indian nationalism was not therefore civic, in the sense of transcending ethnic pluralism, but rather inclusive of a range of ethnic identities that included a language based Tamil identity.

7.3 Tamil cultural nationalism and Tamil Nadu electoral politics

Post-independence political developments in the Tamil speaking regions of south India are often characterised as the electoral defeat of Congress' vision of pan Indian nationalism and its replacement with a specific form of regional or cultural national identity. In the two decades following independence, the Congress party gradually lost its electoral dominance in the Tamil speaking regions to the DMK, an ideological and organisational offshoot of the DK – an organisation that had open secessionist objectives and in the post independence period staged public burnings of the Indian flag and constitution as acts of iconoclastic protest. Although Congress won comfortable majorities in the three sets of elections following independence, in the 1967 elections it was defeated by a coalition of parties headed by the DMK. The DMK led coalition won the majority of seats in national elections and in the state assembly elections, pushing the Congress party into opposition in the Tamil speaking areas for the first time since 1935. After the 1967 elections the Congress' electoral fortunes in the Tamil speaking areas went into permanent decline; it has subsequently never won a majority of seats in either the national or state assembly elections. Congress' political position in the Tamil areas was further marginalised in 1972 when M. G. Ramachandran (or MGR as he is commonly known), a popular actor, left the DMK to form the ADMK. In 1976 MGR added the prefix All India, to the ADMK as a gesture of explicitly accepting the pan Indian framework and identity, although the party remained a Tamil Nadu entity (Subramanian, N 1999:40). The DMK and AIADMK have subsequently become the two largest parties in the Tamil areas, acting as the major partners in the electoral coalitions contending in the state and national assembly elections. Congress, along with the Communists and other minor

regional parties, has been reduced to the position of minor alliance partner to either the DMK or the AIADMK.

Explanations of the Dravidian movement's ascendance have suggested that the DMK offered a more culturally resonant understanding of Tamil identity and interest than Congress' vision of Tamils as a component of a pan Indian nation struggling for progress and development. In his study of Dravidian Politics, N. Subramanian characterises Nehruvian nation building as attempting to build a shared national identity on the basis of the strategy of economic development and industrialisation at the expense of a more cultural understanding of nationhood. When Nehruvian national building did attempt to characterise the state bearing nation in cultural terms it 'drew on the syncretic Mughlai culture of the North Indian elite, with which few Tamils felt an affinity' (1999:134). In contrast, Tamil or Dravidian 'mytho – history' was central to the DMK's vision of Tamil identity as it presented itself as the vehicle of a Tamil plebeian class left out by Congress' vision of economic development (1999:145). In an earlier study of south Indian Tamil politics, Margueritte Ross Barnett makes a similar argument equating Tamil cultural nationalism with the DMK:

'The founding of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam .. in 1949 was a turning point in the political history of Tamil Nadu, south India, because it ushered in the era of Tamil cultural nationalism. Nationalism existed before 1949, but in nascent form, encompassed and overshadowed by other political themes. In the hands of the DMK, Tamil nationalism became an ideology of mass mobilisation, and has shaped the articulation of political demands for a generation' (1976:3).

David Washbrook adopts a similar explanation, suggesting that there existed a 'cultural gap, centuries wide, between Indian nationalism and the Dravidian

ideology.’ As a consequence, the Dravidian movement simply had ‘no means of comprehending policies and arguments geared to the development of a modern bourgeois nation state’ (1989:249). The timing of the DMK’s victory, just two years after an intense and widespread wave of protests across the Tamil speaking areas against the adoption of Hindi as India’s official language, adds to the impression of the DMK as representing a growing Tamil nationalist sentiment at odds with Congress’ pan-Indian vision of national identity. The DMK declared the 26th of January 1965, the date on which the Constitution sanctioned the switch from English to Hindi, as a day of mourning, and called on its supporters to raise black flags and engage in protest. The protests demonstrated widespread and intense hostility to the introduction of Hindi. Between the 26th of January and early February, five people self immolated in protest and two more poisoned themselves. Although the DMK leaders were placed in preventive detention to avoid unrest, the anti-Hindi agitations triggered violence and rioting that was comparable in scale and intensity to the 1942 Quit India agitations. There were widespread attacks against public buildings, leading to confrontations between the police and protestors and police firing; according to the government, seventy people were killed while the DMK put the figure at one hundred and fifty (Ross-Barnett 1976:133).

The apparent ideological divide between the DMK and Congress on the language issue was compounded by the fact that the latter was in government (in Tamil Nadu and in Delhi) at the time of the anti-Hindi protests while the DMK was the largest opposition party in Tamil Nadu. Although Congress leaders from Madras frequently expressed their preference for retaining English as the official language, along with Hindi, they were nevertheless associated with the national government’s language policy. The Congress Chief Minister at the time, M. Bhaktavatsalan, who refused to meet protestors and discuss their demands, was also prominently associated with the Dakshin

Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, the organisation founded by Gandhi to promote the learning of Hindi in the non-Hindi speaking areas (Subramanian, N 1999:193). However, the appearance of an intense and passionate confrontation between the Congress led state government and the DMK on the language issue did not signal an irrevocable ideological gap. Rather than representing disparate and incompatible visions of Tamil identity and interest, the DMK and Congress can be interpreted as working within a shared set of ideological norms that could be accommodated within the constitutional framework of Indian national identity. The Congress and DMK ideologies, while distinct, overlapped in two important areas: the promotion of Tamil speakers' interest in progress and development, and the encouragement of Tamil language and culture.

The notion of progress and development shared by the DMK and Congress was broadly defined and included the need to promote economic growth and industrialisation of the Tamil speaking areas, abolish poverty and improve living conditions whilst also encouraging social change in line with egalitarian and liberal norms focussing in particular on the eradication of caste oppression and exclusion.¹⁸² For Congress, these commitments were encompassed in the term Socialism, which united a variety of groups and interests whose specific economic policies and priorities were often quite divergent (Austin 1972:41-3). Whilst the DMK never articulated an explicit position on industrialisation or economic growth that was comparable to its emphasis on protecting and promoting Tamil cultural interests, notions of progress and development were nevertheless implicit in its vision of Tamil identity and interests and particularly its criticisms of Congress rule. The DMK regularly asserted that the Congress party prioritised the economic development of north India whilst neglecting the south, and argued that the common Tamil man was excluded from the benefits of Congress' developmental strategy (Subramanian, N

1999:143). Meanwhile, both parties committed themselves to abolishing the exclusions and hierarchies of caste and presented themselves as championing the interests of socially and economically marginalised lower caste groups.

The two parties' were also comparable in their approach to the promotion of Tamil language and culture in the public / political sphere. Following independence, the relationship between Tamil and Indian national identity was at stake in two language related issues: the linguistic reorganisation of India's federal boundaries and the question of the official language. As discussed later, the Tamil Nadu Congress and Congress affiliated organisations were far more important than the Dravidian movement in the efforts to create a Tamil speaking state out of the polyglot Madras presidency. Congress leaders were crucial in efforts to ensure that Madras city remained within the Tamil speaking Madras state, rather than the Telugu speaking Andhra Pradesh, and were also important in other border disputes over areas claimed by more than one of the soon-to-be formed linguistic states. The Dravidian movement, at that stage committed to the idea of a pan-south Indian Dravidistan, remained aloof from these essentially intra-Dravidian disputes. While the DMK played an important role in the anti-Hindi agitations, Congress' commitment to Hindi as the official language was not incompatible with the Tamil Nadu section promoting Tamil language and culture as appropriate emblems of India's 'composite culture.' The DMK's efforts to promote the Tamil language as an emblem of a Dravidian heritage when it finally took power were not radical departures from Congress' previous policies (Ramaswamy 1997:161-178).

The electoral ascendance of parties associated with the Dravidian movement cannot therefore be interpreted as the displacement of the Congress vision of Tamil identity with a notion of Tamils as Dravidian. Rather the growth of the DMK has to be interpreted in the light of pan-Indian social and political factors that produced electoral defeats in 1967 for the Congress party across

India, including Tamil Nadu. The short term factor that produced these defeats was the acute food crisis that affected India from 1964 as a result of droughts and poor harvests. The food crisis led to acute shortages, spiralling prices and also compulsory requisitioning of grain from all farmers (Swamy 1998:115; Corbridge and Harriss 2000:67-73; Subramanian, N 1999:191-198). The DMK made the food crisis an important part of its electoral strategy; party activists regularly held protests outside ration shops and reducing the price of rice was a prominent part of the election manifesto (Subramanian, N 1999:193; Swamy 1998:116). Congress' electoral demise was a contingent outcome rather than an expression of a structural shift away from pan-Indian politics to Tamil cultural nationalism. In the 1967 elections the party's share of the vote (41.4 percent) was slightly higher than that of the DMK (40.6 percent) and the DMK's electoral victory was an outcome of the first past the post electoral system that translated the DMK's lower vote share into a higher share of seats; the DMK won 59 percent of the seats while Congress was reduced to just 21 percent (Ross-Barnett 1976:149). The DMK's electoral victory was therefore also crucially linked to shrewd electoral alliances that allowed for an efficient translation of votes into seats.

The DMK's success is also closely related to expanding political participation amongst the Indian population and particularly amongst groups variously labelled the intermediate or Backward Classes / Castes. Margueritte Ross Barnett identifies the DMK support base in class / caste terms as 'the rising urban lower middle class, the educated unemployed youth, and the middling (film – going) farmer in the backward castes' (1976:99-100). Narendra Subramanian characterises the groups who formed the DMK's early support base as small shop keepers, small peasants, artisans and the new white collar worker all of 'intermediate caste origin'. This newly important electoral demographic comprised a substantial component of the Tamil Nadu population;

in caste terms the BC's account for 51 – 67 per cent of the state's population ,whilst in class terms small property holders and white collar workers comprise 50 – 60 per cent of the population (Subramanian, N 1999:139). In the decades since independence these groups have been granted affirmative action quotas similar to those granted to SC's and ST's; first at state level and then from the early 1990's at the union level (Bayly 1999: Chapter 7). The caste groups eligible for these benefits are identified in official documents as in much political discussion as Other Backward Classes (OBC's) (1999). The mobilisation of Backward Classes / Castes across south India from the 1940's onwards prefigured their mobilisation across northern India during the 1980's (Yadav 1997).

The relative electoral successes and failures of Congress and the Dravidian parties within these changed political conditions can be analysed in terms of the three facets of successful political mobilisation: ideological articulation; co-option and direct political evangelisation and conversion. In terms of the first two facets, the performance of Congress and the Dravidian parties were broadly comparable; Dravidian and Congress notions of Tamil identity and interest could be contained within the Indian constitutional frameworks while the DMK, AIDMK and Congress attempted to co-opt the support of actors, groups and institutions with established sources of power. The relative success of the Dravidian parties can be attributed to their more effective techniques of direct evangelization that included the use of the growing Tamil print media, cinema, street theatre and popular oratory. As a consequence, the Dravidian parties were more effective at presenting themselves to voters, particularly from OBC groups, as custodians of Tamil economic and cultural interests, even though Dravidian policies were not vastly different from those pursued by Congress.

7.4 Tamil identity and interests in Congress and Dravidian ideology

The Dravidian ideology, as articulated by the DK, considers Tamil society to be linguistically, culturally and racially Dravidian, and therefore distinct from Hindu and Sanskrit speaking Aryan north India. Hinduism and the caste structure are deemed to have been forcibly imposed on an initially caste free Dravidian Tamil society by the invading north Indian Aryans who used the systems of caste to perpetuate their economic and cultural dominance over Tamils and other Dravidians. In this conception, Tamil society's interests demanded the rejection of Hindu theology and ritual and the adoption of modern, rational and secular practices and norms, as well as improvements in the material wellbeing of economically oppressed Dravidians. Like the Congress party, the Dravidian movement also conceived of the state as an important agent of social and economic transformation. This was, however, deemed impossible in a Congress dominated India. The DK, particularly its chief ideologue EVR Ramaswamy, characterised Congress as a vehicle of north Indian, Brahmin interests and sought a separate independent state of Dravidistan in which a full programme of social reform could be pursued, unencumbered by the Hindu dominated Congress. This radical social reform agenda was less interested in the promotion of Tamil culture and literature, than in removing the signs and symbols of Hindu and Brahmin domination. As such, the state and political realm was envisaged by the DK ideally as a space of rational, secular, progressive and scientific symbols and values.

Despite the DK's opposition to Congress rule, its conceptions of the state were not diametrically opposed to Congress doctrine and the constitutional understanding of Indian national identity. In both Congress and DK doctrines, the state was an agent of social transformation and the political realm ideally an arena of secular, rational, modern values (Chatterjee 1986: Chapter 5;

Pandian 1999). Where the DK and Congress differed was on the relationship between Hinduism and social reform; while the DK sought to eradicate Hindu symbols and practices from Tamil society, Congress commitments to social reform, including the reform of Hinduism, was balanced by the state's responsibility to recognise and protect the plurality of existing norms and practices in Indian society. As a consequence of these overlaps, and despite the DK's avowedly secessionist demands, it was not subjected to the same levels of repression as parties such as the National Conference in Kashmir or the Akali Dal in Punjab which were deemed secessionist by the Congress government.¹⁸³

The formation of the DMK produced a new conception of Tamil society, interest and identity that was less orientated towards social reform and more concerned with promoting Tamil culture as well as the interests of the OBC category. C. N Annadurai, one of Ramaswamy's principal lieutenants, split with his former leader over ideological and organisational differences; the bulk of the DK membership left with him and joined the newly formed DMK. The DMK retained a conception of Tamil society as Dravidian, rather than Indian, but welcomed Indian independence as a step towards realising Tamil interests, and also saw electoral contest as a viable means of capturing political power. In contrast, EVR Ramaswamy observed Indian independence as a day of mourning and condemned electoral politics as a distraction from the more important work of social reform. The new party insisted on its ideological loyalty to the DK, and the Presidency of the Party was left symbolically vacant, to be occupied when he was chosen by Ramaswamy.¹⁸⁴

In its early years, the DMK's activities complemented the DK's emphasis on social transformation and the eradication of Hindu ritual and symbolism. During the 1950's, for example, the DMK participated in DK protests over visible symbols of caste hierarchy, attacked polytheism and superstition and the party's first election manifesto, produced for the 1957 polls, emphasised

social reform themes. However, during the 1960's the emphasis of the party's electoral campaigns shifted and it focussed on issues such as the supposed (see below) economic neglect of the south, measures to improve the welfare of the Tamil Nadu 'common man' and expanding reservations for the BC's. The Dravidian political parties have since been associated with an expanding sphere of welfare provision. Successive DMK and ADMK governments have expanded the scope of reservations for OBC and SC/ST groups such that they now account for 50 per cent of all public sector employment and publicly controlled higher education institutions in the state (Subramanian, N 1999; 291). Meanwhile, the AIADMK's electoral success during the 1980s was closely associated with a series of high profile welfare measures, such as free midday meals for children, targeted at low income groups (Swamy 1998).

Social reform issues were not completely abandoned; the DMK government did, for example, enact legislation to provide legal recognition for Self Respect marriages (Ross-Barnett 1976:269) and sought, unsuccessfully, to open up the Hindu priesthood to all castes (Dirks 2001:264). However, DMK leaders have distanced themselves from the DK's trademark shrill iconoclasm; in 1971 Muthuvel Karunanidhi, the then DMK chief minister, openly censured a DK campaign of publicly mocking and attacking Hindu deities and scriptures, saying the DMK government would not tolerate 'anti God activities' (Ross-Barnett 1976:291). AIADMK leaders have gone even further and explicitly associated themselves with Hindu rites and rituals. In 1968 MG Ramachandran, whilst still in the DMK, organised special poojas (or ritual offerings) in Hindu temples across Tamil Nadu for the speedy recovery of C.N Annadurai when the latter fell ill (1976:273). When MG Ramachandran fell ill in 1984, Jayalalitha, the AIADMK second in command, organised similar poojas. Although Jayalalitha is a Brahmin and regularly engages in public acts of Hindu piety, this has not precluded her from assuming the role of a Dravidian

leader, revealing the shifting meanings and associations of the term Dravidian from its early twentieth century links to the non-Brahmin movement (Subramanian, N 1999:232).

In abandoning social reform, the DMK and subsequently the ADMK have adopted and promoted Tamil culture, language and literature as emblems of Tamil identity and Tamil interest. This is a notable departure from the DK, and particularly Ramaswamy, who often denounced the Tamil language as 'barbaric' and sought to modernise and liberate Tamil society, rather than return it to a more authentic cultural past (Pandian 1999). During the 1960's the DMK prominently associated itself with the movement against Hindi as a means of burnishing its Tamil credentials; although as Margueritte Ross Barnett notes, the anti Hindi movement was a much wider coalition that the DMK actually struggled to control (1976:242-248). Once in power, the party sought to promote the Tamil language; it changed the official name of Madras to Tamil Nadu, adopted a new flag and also instituted a song in praise of the Tamil language to open state assembly sessions - rather than the customary prayer (Ramaswamy 1997:157, 161-178; Subramanian, N 1999:222). In February 1968 it hosted the international Tamil studies conference in Chennai attended by scholars from around the world and used the event to present itself as custodian and advocate of the Tamil cultural and literary heritage (Subramanian, N 1999:222). In 1970 the party introduced proposals to make Tamil, rather than English, the language of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels but withdrew the proposals after protests from students (Ross Barnett 1976; 248-9).

Although the DMK's association with Tamil language and popular culture along with its advocacy of Tamil economic interests, particularly those of the intermediate social groups, were important in its electoral rise, these factors did not serve to radically distinguish the Dravidian parties from Congress. On

the promotion of a specifically Tamil political and cultural interest, on welfare measures and promotion of OBC interests and on promoting the economic development of the Tamil speaking areas, Congress' record was comparable to that of the Dravidian parties. While the Dravidian movement was closely associated with the anti Hindi protests, Congress leaders and Congress linked activists played an active role in the move to create a Tamil speaking linguistic state. In the years following independence there was growing momentum across India for the immediate linguistic re-organisation of state boundaries.

One of the most developed was the Andhra movement (1920's-1952) which sought to create a Telugu speaking state out of the polylot Madras presidency. The Andhra movement's insistence that Madras city be incorporated into a new Telugu speaking state was actively resisted by Tamil activists, including prominent Tamil speaking Congressmen (Mitchell 1999; King, R.D 1999). Along with the tussle over the status of Madras city, the movement towards linguistic re-organisation also led to disputes over other 'border' areas that were linguistically divided between Tamil and Telugu or Tamil and Malayalam speakers (Rengaswamy 2006).

Nehru reluctantly agreed to linguistic re-organisation in December 1952, following the death of an Andhra activist who had undertaken a protest fast insisting both on the creation of a Telugu speaking state and the incorporation of Madras city as the capital of the new state (King, R.D 1999:114). The wider process of linguistic re-organisation opened up a series of disputes not just on the Tamil / Telugu border but also on the Tamil / Malayalam border. The DMK and the DK were absent from these protests and campaigns as they continued to work within a pan-south Indian Dravidian framework. In the absence of the DMK, an important role was played by Congress figures as well as organisations and activists with close affiliations to the Tamil Nadu Congress. The linguistic boundaries of the southern states was finally agreed in

September 1955 but until that point there were constant protest marches and meetings on the political status of the 'border areas'. These campaigns were led by the Tamil Arasu Kazhagam (TAK), an organisation that had close affiliations with Congress (Rengaswamy 2006; INT 01; INT 02).

In January 1946, when the TAK organised a public celebration of the Tamil harvest or Pongal Festival in Madras to reinforce the Tamil claim on Madras city,¹⁸⁵ both Kamraj Nadar and Chakravarti Rajagopalachariar attended, despite their then factional differences.¹⁸⁶ Soon after independence, the TAK launched a campaign to retain the northern districts that bordered the Telugu speaking areas within a Tamil speaking state. The TAK also worked with the Travencore Tamil Congress, when the latter initiated protests in 1954 demanding the merger of the Tamil speaking areas of that state with Tamil Nadu. The status of Madras city was finally decided by Rajagopalachariar, the then Congress Chief Minister, and the DMK was largely absent from the Tamil campaign, although the city later became a DMK electoral stronghold. As both Tamil and Telugu Congressmen were equally insistent in their respective claims, a commission was formed to adjudicate. Before the Commission could formally announce its results, however, Rajagopalachariar forced Nehru's hand by threatening to resign unless Madras city was retained as the sole capital of the Tamil speaking Madras state. Nehru relented, and in October 1953 announced the formation of Andhra Pradesh, excluding Madras city.¹⁸⁷

The Tamil Nadu Congress party and affiliated figures were also closely associated with campaigns and protests to promote and cultivate the Tamil language in the public sphere. Following the process of linguistic re-organisation, the Tamil Nadu Congress adopted Tamil as the official language of the state (Ramaswamy 1997:161). Tamil Nadu Congress leaders also consistently demanded the continuation of English alongside Hindi as the official language at the Union level (Ross-Barnett 1976:134)(Subramanian, N

1999:193), and Rajagopalachariar, after leaving the Congress party in 1958, played a prominent role in the anti-Hindi protests of 1965 and 1967 (Subramanian, N 1999:198-9). Moreover, the initiative and planning for the 1968 World Tamil Studies Conference hosted with great pomp by the DMK government actually began under the previous Congress administration. The public promotion of Tamil literary heritage even extended to the ADMK/AIADMK, which was more explicit in its acceptance of a pan-Indian identity. In 1984 the then AIADMK government again hosted the World Tamil Studies Conference amidst great fanfare with party founder and Chief Minister MG Ramachandran playing a visible and prominent role (1999:301). Arguably, during the 1950's, Congress had a much stronger record of promoting and protecting Tamil cultural and political interests than the DMK and DK which were still closely linked to the protection and promotion of Dravidian interests in radical social reform.

Congress could also plausibly present itself as promoting and protecting Tamil economic interests. Contrary to the DMK's criticisms of northern prosperity and southern neglect, during the period of Congress dominance Tamil Nadu experienced higher than average rates of economic growth and industrial development. The state became one of the most urbanised in India, had high levels of literacy and started to bring down population growth to replacement levels. Tamil Nadu's high levels of economic growth and investment during this period reflected the state level Congress leadership's success in bargaining for resources from the central government and party hierarchy (Spratt 1969:51-60; Kumaradoss 2004). The regime of planned economic development implemented through the five year plans that started from 1951 was meant to direct economic and industrial investment through nationally orientated priorities. In reality, however, the process of national planning became a national framework of bargaining through which powerful state level Congress

leaders fought over economic resources that could be used to maintain support bases and patronage networks within their respective states. Tamil Nadu's success in securing resources was related to the power of Kamraj Nadar, the Tamil Nadu Congress President from 1946 to 1952 and Chief Minister between 1954 and 1964, in the national level Congress organisation. Kamraj was known to be close to Nehru and was an important figure in the group of state Congress leaders, known as the syndicate, who controlled the Congress organisational machine at the regional level (Kumaradoss 2004). Tamil Nadu's economic performance during this period reflected therefore a relatively powerful position within the national Congress structure, rather than a position of marginality as claimed by the DMK.

Finally, Congress could also make credible claims to be challenging caste hierarchy and exclusion whilst promoting the welfare of under-privileged groups. Kamraj Nadar came from a relatively humble background and had worked his way up through the Tamil Nadu Congress structure. Although Kamraj's immediate family had been small traders, the Nadars traditionally were engaged in the relatively low status occupation of toddy tapping and were included within the BC category (Hardgrave 1969). During his tenure as Chief Minister, Kamraj launched a midday meal scheme as a welfare measure and also built over 12,000 schools in rural areas; school attendance between the ages of 6 and 11 increased from 45 to 75 percent in the seven years after he became Chief Minister in 1954 (Kumaradoss 2004). Both Kamraj, and his predecessor as Congress Chief Minister, CN Rajagopalachariar, included in their Cabinets ministers from both Backward and Scheduled caste groups (Subramanian, N 1999:219). Kamraj explicitly committed the Tamil Nadu government to promoting the interests of the SC's and in 1951 Madras became one of the first state governments in post-independence India to introduce reservations for BCs in education and public sector employment. Congress

introduced a quota of 25 percent for BC groups - later expanded by a DMK government to 31 per cent and then by a ADMK government to 50 per cent (150, 290-1).

Electoral competition between Congress and the DMK was not, therefore, a conflict between two competing visions of Tamil identity and interest; rather it took place within a shared political culture in which the promotion of Tamil political, cultural and economic interests were unquestioned norms. The DMK quietly abandoned the link between Tamil identity and the rejection of Hinduism once central to DK ideology, and, like the Congress party, linked Tamil identity to language and literature. Congress and the Dravidian parties also defined Tamil economic interests via similar types of policies: infrastructure and industrial investment in the Tamil speaking areas, as well as the provision of special economic benefits to SC and BC groups. While Congress sought political legitimacy from the large scale infrastructure and industrial projects that were implemented in the Nehruvian period, the DMK also associated itself with Tamil interests in progress and development. While in opposition the DMK criticized Congress policies for the apparent industrial underdevelopment of the south in relation to areas such as Bombay and Allahabad - the central government's failure to provide investment for a steel plant in Salem was an important part of the DMK's 1967 electoral campaign. When the DMK came to power, it adopted a high profile policy of slum clearance and urban housing provision that was promoted as an indicator of development. Finally, successive Congress and Dravidian governments mandated the provision of educational and employment quotas as special measures to overcome the effects of caste hierarchy and exclusion on SC and BC groups.

7.5 Ideology and Congress decline in Tamil Nadu

The electoral demise of the Congress party in Tamil Nadu was not therefore the result of a radical ideological conflict and is better explained as the outcome of contingent factors working alongside the more effective strategies of mobilisation deployed by the Dravidian parties. Congress' electoral hegemony between 1937 and 1967 rested on the co-option of powerful groups and the distribution of patronage through networks that brought together landlords, industrialists, business people, bureaucrats and their dependents into a relatively stable coalition (Corbridge and Harriss 2000:50). During the 1960's this system of electoral dominance was undermined by a series of economic problems and a split within the Congress party. As a result of these manifold crises, Congress' 1967 defeat in Tamil Nadu was mirrored in electoral reversals across India; the party's vote at the national level fell by 5 percent (Chatterjee 1997:15) and it failed to gain a majority in eight other states in which a variety of coalition non-Congress governments came to power.¹⁸⁸

The electoral success of the Dravidian parties was also associated with expanding political participation in Tamil Nadu, particularly amongst the backward or intermediate classes, a development that prefigured similar changes across northern India during the 1980's (Yadav 1997). The entry of these groups into politics was signalled by the growing use of the vernacular media, popular mobilisation around linguistic identities and demands for positive discrimination policies tailored to BC groups in employment and education. This new political culture was described by Selig Harrison as the 'pulp culture of popular writers who will address themselves to the swelling millions of new literates in the regional languages' (quoted in Corbridge and Harriss 2000:53). The relative success and failure of Congress and Dravidian parties in the context of these pan Indian contingent and structural factors can best be explained in relation to the three facets of successful political

mobilisation; ideological articulation; co-option of powerful groups and individuals and direct political evangelization.

As discussed above, there was an enormous amount of ideological overlap between Congress and the Dravidian parties. This was evident not only in the remarkably similar policies they pursued when in power and advocated when in opposition, it could also be seen in the political alliances that brought together actors across the Congress / Dravidian organisational divide.¹⁸⁹ There was, for example, a longstanding personal friendship between Ramaswamy and Rajagopalachariar that from 1959 also produced a political alliance on opposition to Hindi as the official language. Meanwhile, between 1954 and 1963, Ramaswamy and the DK officially supported Kamraj and the Congress party with DK activists actively canvassing for Congress party candidates. The differences between Congress and the Dravidian parties can best be explained therefore in relation to their relative effectiveness in co-opting individuals and groups and mobilising support through direct political evangelization. An analysis of Tamil Nadu electoral dynamics in terms of these two factors suggests that Congress decline and Dravidian ascendance was the result of successful Dravidian mobilisation compounded by contingent factors that fatally hampered Congress' revival in the Tamil areas.

The DMK's electoral rise in the post independence decades was associated with a steady expansion in electoral participation, particularly amongst intermediate or backward caste groups that were largely outside the Congress' networks of support. The expanding political participation of this intermediate class / backward caste cluster significantly changed the electoral dynamics of the Tamil speaking areas. There was a substantial expansion of voter participation from 49.3 per cent in 1957 to 76.6 per cent in 1967 and simultaneously the proportion of votes gained by independent candidates, who invariably relied on networks of personal loyalty and deference, declined (from 24.7 to 6.6 per

cent) in the same period. In the context of these changing dynamics, while Congress' electoral support remained steady, from 45.3 per cent of the popular vote in 1957 to 41.4 per cent in 1967, the DMK's support expanded from 12.8 to 40.6 per cent in the same period (Ross-Barnett 1976:141). In effect, the DMK expanded its vote in part by attracting Congress supporters but also by increasing voter turnout (1976:140). The Congress network, excessively dependent on aggregating the support and dependent networks of notables and magnates, did not accommodate these newly emergent groups. In contrast, the DMK built support amongst those of 'less wealth and status,' (Subramanian, N 1999:147, 172-4) engaged in voter registration drives (1999:171) and pursued an electoral strategy that had a strong element of direct political mobilisation:

'The DMK attempted to win support by aiming appeals at castes and classes not already politicized by Congress; by trying direct rather than indirect methods of mobilization in order to erode that portion of the Congress vote based on social deference; and by penetrating new regions and rural areas that the Dravidian movement had not as yet thoroughly organised' (Ross-Barnett 1976:138).

The DMK communicated directly with this newly enfranchised group through a variety of media and cultural forms. The party had close associations with the film industry; C.N Annaduria and M. Karunanidhi¹⁹⁰ were script writers for plays and films and many of the major figures of the 1950's cinema were associated with the DMK. M.G Ramachandran, who went onto become 'the most popular film star and public figure of modern Tamil Nadu', joined the DMK in 1953 and starred in a number of films scripted by Karunanidhi that contained several allusions to the DMK and the Dravidian movement (Subramanian, N 1999:164). Along with cinema, in its early years of expansion, the DMK also used street performances to reach the illiterate and semi literate

majority with even the major leaders 'wearing the players' makeup' (1999:145). DMK leaders also popularised their messages through numerous magazines and newspapers that were not just intended for private reading but were also discussed and circulated at street corner meetings and the 'talk shops' that were central to the DMK's early growth. The social base of the DMK's expansion facilitated this type of mobilisation:

'The shops of some early activists served as the party's primary recruiting grounds, where Dravidianist journals were available, people congregated to gossip and discuss social issues, and the latest statements and directives of party leaders were made known' (Subramanian N 1999:162).

Although the Congress movement used a variety of popular and high cultural forms to communicate its message from the 1930's, by the 1950's the party had lost most of its links with the film industry and the print media. This was partly due to the death S. Satyamurthy in 1943, the key figure who forged the links between the Congress movement and the Tamil popular theatre and early cinema industry during the early part of the twentieth century (Baskaran 1981). His successor, K. Kamraj, was less enamoured of actors and musicians (INT 01), and as a consequence Congress also failed to cultivate its association with Sivaji Ganeshan, a popular actor of the 1950's and 1960's, to the extent that the DMK cultivated the film image of MGR (Subramanian, N 1999:165).

However, the DMK's electoral growth and dominance was not entirely built on a strategy of direct mobilisation. As the party expanded, not only did it seek alliances with sources of existing power, it also became a route to power and influence. As Narendra Sumbramanian suggests, as the DMK grew it attracted more substantial merchants and landlords to augment its base of small property holders, and all those who joined the party 'gained greater social eminence

through their role in the DMK's social networks' (1999:174). Once the party was in power, like the previous Congress administration, it used its control over public resources to build support by co-opting local notables, magnates and their dependents (1999:209). The continuing importance of strategies of co-option in the DMK's, and also the ADMK's, success suggests that the expansion of political participation and the more widespread use of direct political communication associated with the Dravidian movement did not produce a wholesale transformation in the political economy of electoral competition. As with the previous Congress system, the distribution of patronage through local notables remained an important element of party building during the period of Dravidian dominance. Finally, the DMK's adeptness at forming electoral coalitions with other political parties was also consequential. The DMK first adopted this tactic in a systematic way in 1962 but it has subsequently become an entrenched feature of the Tamil Nadu, and now national, electoral campaigns. The electoral coalitions take the form of seat sharing alliances which, given India's simple majority electoral system, works to minimise electoral competition and therefore the fragmentation of votes within a particular constituency. From the late 1970's the electoral dominance of the two Dravidian parties has reduced Congress - and the Communists - to the role of minor alliance partners in DMK or ADMK led electoral coalitions.

Although Congress' relative ineffectiveness in direct political mobilization was an important element in the Dravidian parties' electoral dominance, Congress' electoral demise was far from inevitable, and cannot be predicted from the sheer force of Dravidian ideology for the newly politicised intermediate classes. Not only was Congress' share of the vote in 1967 (41.4 per cent) slightly higher than that of the DMK led coalition (40.6 per cent), Congress' support also remained steady at about 30 per cent during the 1970's. Congress' electoral

demise must therefore be seen against contingent and structural pan Indian factors that hampered the party's electoral revival during the 1970's. This included a series of poor harvests that led to nationwide food shortages and prompted an unpopular system of grain requisitioning. The general malaise caused by food shortages was compounded by a wider economic crisis that produced a breakdown of the system of five year plans inaugurated in 1951 and forced a devaluation of the rupee in 1969 (Corbridge and Harriss 2000:67-8). In Tamil Nadu this led to a down turn in industrial output that preceded a similar downturn across India. Although the DMK led coalition successfully capitalised on the manifold discontents produced by the economic and food crisis, Congress might have recovered power in Tamil Nadu had it not been for the national split in 1969 and a series of factors that hampered Congress' ability to mobilise growing opposition to DMK rule in the early 1970's.

The Congress party split in 1969 following a series of disagreements between Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, and a powerful group of regional Congress leaders, including Kamraj, the aforementioned syndicate (1999:72-3). The Congress (R) faction led by Indira Gandhi retained the support of most Congress parliamentarians, but the Congress (O), or Organisation faction, led by the state level party bosses, including Kamraj, retained the most of the organisational assets (Subramanian, N 1999:237-243). In particular, while some Tamil Nadu Congress parliamentarians joined Congress (R), the bulk of the Tamil Nadu Congress party remained within the Congress (O) structure. Thus, the split in the national Congress organisation in 1969 for the first time created a division between the national and state level Congress organisations. In 1971 Congress (R), which had little organisational presence in the Tamil areas, formed a seat sharing alliance with the DMK for the state and parliamentary assembly elections. Under the agreement the Congress (R) refrained from competing in the state assembly elections in exchange for a proportion of

Tamil Nadu seats in the national elections. Meanwhile, the Congress (O) formed an alliance with other smaller Tamil Nadu parties and competed in both state and parliamentary elections against the DMK alliance, which included the Congress (R). These strategies arguably worked to divide the Congress vote in the parliamentary elections and prevented Congress from capitalising on Indira Gandhi's growing popularity in the state assembly elections. From the early 1970's, until his death in 1974, Kamraj attempted to bring about a reconciliation of the two factions but was opposed by other Congress (O) leaders at the national level. In 1977, following the end of the emergency, the Congress (O) joined the national Janata Coalition and from that point Congress in Tamil Nadu more or less disintegrated into a set of factions that competed for the national leadership's attention and favour.

Another factor that compounded Congress' ability to recover was the emergence of the ADMK in 1972. The ADMK's popularity was assured by the star appeal of its leader, MG Ramachandran, whose films communicated a message of benevolent paternalism to groups such as the scheduled castes, women and the rural and urban poor who were largely excluded from the DMK's base of small property holders and white collar workers. The ADMK proved its appeal in a series of spectacular electoral victories following its formation, in some places forcing the DMK into third place behind Congress (Ross-Barnett 1976; 298). Congress' strong electoral showing in elections after 1972 suggests the party's fate in Tamil Nadu was finally sealed as a consequence of national political alignments, rather than an ideological sea change in Tamil Nadu politics. The importance of contingent rather than structural factors is further underlined by suggestions that following the split with the DMK, MGR had initially thought of joining the Congress (O) – he was dissuaded by Kamraj's well known aversion to film stars and the presence of the rival actor, Sivaji Ganeshan, within the Congress organisation (INT 01;

INT 06). Thus, it is possible that if MGR had joined the Congress (O), electoral politics in Tamil Nadu might have taken an entirely different course.

7.6 Tamil Nadu politics and the Pan-Indian framework

The shared framework of Tamil cultural nationalism that structured electoral competition in Tamil Nadu was compatible with the Indian constitution. The peaceable accommodation of the Dravidian parties was therefore not a matter of the moderate choices of its leaders, or the moderate preferences of its followers, but rather the DMK's decision to switch from an agenda of Dravidian social reform to one of Tamil cultural nationalism. The Dravidian agenda of radical social reform jarred with the constitutional understanding of Indian society and interest in two key areas. Firstly, its insistence on a thoroughgoing purge of Hindu symbol and ritual from Tamil society sat uncomfortably alongside constitutional protections of religious practice in social life. Secondly, its demand for a separate Dravida Nadu transgressed the demand for unity that was central to the constitutional construction of Indian national interest. In moving away from the DK's radical social reform agenda, the DMK adopted a position on Hindu social reform closer to the constitutional position that sought to balance the interests of progress and development with the protection of religious rights in the private sphere. However, the DMK's decision to abandon Dravida Nadu was not an act of political moderation, but coeval with its decision to shift away from radical social reform as the key marker of Tamil collective identity and interest. In the DK's ideology, the demand for Dravida Nadu was always tied to the imperative of social reform: the Indian state dominated by north Indian Hindu interests would be an obstacle to radical social reform which could only be achieved in a separate state. Conversely, the DK's insistence on social reform led to its ambivalence on the creation of a Tamil linguistic federal state; a state that would not address the fundamental issue of Hindu / Brahmin dominance.

The call for a separate Dravida Nadu was central to the DMK's 1957 election manifesto, but by the early 1960's DMK leaders had privately decided to abandon the separatist demand (Ross-Barnett 1976:109-110); a decision made public in 1963 following India's border war with China and the promulgation of central government regulations that penalised parties suspected of separatist tendencies (1976:127). Since abandoning Dravida Nadu the DMK has sought greater state autonomy for Tamil Nadu within the Indian union; a demand that brought the DMK into ideological alliance with organisations like the TAK that explicitly combined the demand for a Tamil state with a commitment to preserving Indian unity and territorial integrity (Rengaswamy 2006).

An examination of the TAK's position on Dravidian ideology demonstrates the important ideological differences underlying the demand for Tamil Nadu as opposed to Dravida Nadu, and also helps explain the significance of the DMK's shift from Dravida Nadu to Tamil Nadu. The TAK sought a Tamil Arasu, or Tamil state, within the Indian union in order to better promote 'Tamil language and literature in every field of human activity' and encourage the 'development of the art and culture of the Tamils.' In this vision, Tamil society was identified through language and culture, rather than caste and the reform of caste, and the TAK disavowed the Brahmin / Non Brahmin conflict as 'communal' declaring that 'all those who spoke Tamil as their mother tongue and considered Tamil Nadu as their mother land would be treated as Tamils' (Rengaswamy:64-7). The TAK, whilst insisting on Tamil Nadu, opposed the demand for Dravida Nadu and participated in the anti-Dravida Nadu movement in collaboration with Congress and the Communists. In shifting from Dravida Nadu to Tamil Nadu, the DMK was therefore adopting an acceptable and therefore non-communal form of cultural nationalism over its previous radical, unconstitutional and therefore 'communal' commitment to social reform. The DMK has intermittently reiterated its commitment to

greater state autonomy; however autonomy is now sought for a Tamil speaking state and justified as necessary to facilitate better governance and greater fostering of Tamil in the public / political realm rather than to expedite social reform.

The Dravidian movement's drift towards a purely cultural understanding of Tamil identity and explicit identification with the Indian union can be said to have reached an apotheosis when in 1976 the ADMK officially changed its name to the All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in an effort to signal an explicit acceptance of the Indian constitutional framework. The ideological inconsistency between the all India framework and the Dravidian ideology, as articulated by EVR and the DK, is less important than the fact that one of the two largest parties in Tamil Nadu, at the moment of its ascending popularity, explicitly identified its commitment to the all India framework. The ADMK also disavowed the search for greater state autonomy (Subramanian, N 1999:301), but this has not signalled a departure from the norm of promoting Tamil language / literature in the public political sphere; not only did MGR visibly identify himself with specifically Tamil causes and issues such as the 1984 World Tamil Conference, the AIDMK has also joined other Tamil nationalist parties and associations in opposing moves to enforce greater use of Hindi in place of English at the national level. As N. Subramanian notes, the 'ADMK joined the Tamil nationalist chorus on such occasions, even pre-empting it at times' (1999:300).

The ideological accommodation of Tamil identity within the Indian constitutional framework has also produced the political integration of the Tamil areas within pan-Indian networks and alliances. Kamraj and Rajagopalachariar, powerful figures in the Tamil Nadu Congress, were also prominent figures in national Congress structures. Rajagopalachariar had been one of Gandhi's close allies and held the post of Governor General of India

between 1948 and 1952. In 1958 he left the Congress party to become an important leader in the Swatantra, an all-India party representing landed and commercial interests. Meanwhile Kamraj was an important figure in the 'syndicate' of powerful Chief Ministers who controlled the Congress organisation and was known to be close to Nehru. Indeed in 1962 Nehru unveiled a statue of Kamraj in Madras city (Spratt 1970:77). Following Congress' disappointing performance in the 1962 national and state assembly elections, Kamraj negotiated an agreement through which a number of Congress chief ministers would resign and work to revitalise the party machine, the so called Kamraj plan. As part of the plan, Kamraj himself resigned as Chief Minister of Madras and was elected Congress Party president. Following Nehru's death in 1964, Kamraj played an important role in the negotiations that led to the choice of Lal Bahadur Shastri as Prime Minister. Kamraj's support was again influential in the choice of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister following Prime Minister Shastri's unexpected death in 1966 (Chatterjee 1997).

The 1969 split in Congress and the division between the Indira Gandhi led Congress (R) faction and the Kamraj led Congress (O) faction did not disrupt the integration of Tamil Nadu and national level politics. The Dravidian parties sought alliances with the Congress (R) in an effort to displace the Congress (O), as well as each other, at the state level. The DMK entered into a seat sharing alliance with Congress (R) for the 1971 national and state assembly elections but in 1974 Indira Gandhi dismissed the DMK government because of lobbying by the ADMK (Forrester 1976). The ADMK and the Congress (R) then entered into an alliance for the 1977 elections. Despite their regionally focussed ideology and organisational structures, the Dravidian parties have since become key actors in pan-Indian coalition politics and have thereby

retained the linkages between Tamil and pan-Indian politics that were present during the period of Congress dominance in Tamil Nadu.

7.7 Conclusion

In 1976, just as the ADMK was embracing the All India prefix, the main Sri Lankan Tamil party, the Federal Party, was abandoning its then almost three decade old demand for federalism in favour of outright independence or secession. This chapter has argued that the ADMK's decision, and the wider incorporation of the Dravidian movement into the all-India framework, cannot be understood in terms of the relative moderation of its leaders or followers. Rather the peaceable accommodation of the separatist Dravidian movement is a consequence of the overlaps between Dravidian and Indian nationalist conceptions of Tamil identity and interest which meant that the Dravidian parties and Congress could engage in agonistic rather than antagonistic political competition. The Dravidian parties and the Congress in Tamil Nadu competed within a political culture in which promoting the Tamil language and culture, as well as securing Tamil interests in economic development, social reform and welfare provision, were accepted as norms. Furthermore, these shared norms were compatible with the constitutional definition of Indian national identity and national interest that had evolved through Congress' political struggle to establish a pan ethnic platform beginning in the late nineteenth century.

8. National Politics and Ethnic Conflict in Post Independence Sri Lanka

8.1 Introduction

Chapter Seven argued that the political contestation between the Dravidian movement and the Congress in Tamil Nadu was framed by large overlaps in their competing understandings of Tamil identity and Tamil interest. In contrast, in Sri Lanka, political contestation from independence to 1977 consolidated two mutually incompatible Tamil and Sinhala conceptions of national identity and national interest, leading to a violently escalating ethnic conflict. The results of the 1977 general elections crystallised this opposition. The UNP won a landslide victory (140 out of 168 seats) but its conception of the 'national' had by this stage become explicitly Sinhala and Buddhist.¹⁹¹ In the North-eastern Tamil speaking areas, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) - a coalition of Tamil parties that stood on a platform of seeking an independent state (Tamil Eelam) - won 17 out of the 19 seats¹⁹² with Sri Lankan Tamil majorities,¹⁹³ and, as a consequence of the fragmentation of the opposition Sinhala parties, became the official opposition party. The UNP - along with the other major Sinhala parties - worked within an ethnically hierarchical conception of national identity and national interest in which the state was seen as rightfully an instrument of and for the preservation of Sinhala Buddhist identity and interests.¹⁹⁴ In the post independence period, Sinhala Buddhist nationalist mobilisation and political action was increasingly directed in opposition to the Tamils, seen to pose a social, economic, political and even demographic threat to the Sinhalese (Smith 1979; Bose 1994; Krishna 2000). The result of these processes was that by the late 1970's Sri Lanka had 'regressed into an illiberal, ethnocentric regime bent on Sinhalese superordination and Tamil subjugation' (De Votta 2004:6).

Quite apart from producing a stable ethnic hierarchy, the steady consolidation of this Sinhala first order produced an enduring orientation of Tamil politics around the demand for Tamil-Sinhala *collective* political equality. Tamil political actors sought a variety of means to give form to this political equality – initially balanced representation, then federal autonomy and, by the mid 1970's, political secession. Sri Lanka's post-independence constitution was unitary and centralised, with all effective power concentrated in the parliamentary government in Colombo. This was effectively the same structure created by the 1833 Colebrooke-Cameron reforms (see Chapter 2). In the colonial period, leading Sinhala politicians had often advocated alternatives to this, including federalism, greater devolution to local government (SWRD Bandaranaike) and even federation with India (JR Jayawardene). However, as Tamil politics consolidated around the demand for territorial autonomy, initially through federal reform, Sinhala Buddhist opposition to Tamil demands converged on the need to maintain the unitary and centralised structure of the state. Tamil political autonomy was framed as an existential threat to Sinhala national identity and interest, whilst entrenching centralised administrative and, increasingly, military control over the Tamil speaking areas became a central concern of Sinhala Buddhist politics.

This chapter traces the emergence of sustained conflict between these two antagonistic and mutually incompatible conceptions of national identity and national interest. It argues that there are two crucial factors in explaining this. The first is the clear incompatibility between the two conceptions of national identity and national interest. Unlike the Dravidian and Indian nationalist conceptions of Tamil identity and interest, in Sri Lanka there are no points of overlap between the Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil conceptions of Tamil identity and interest. Secondly, these two conceptions of national identity and interest were not just ideas or even subjectively experienced identities but concrete

political projects that were embodied in cohesive and robust organisations. The Sinhala Buddhist conception was embodied in the major Sinhala parties and soon in the Sri Lankan state itself, such that the state became a vehicle and agent of Sinhala Buddhist transformation. At the same time, the Tamil conception became consolidated through oppositional mobilisation to the state, led from 1956 by the Federal Party (FP). The ideological antagonism between the Tamil and Sinhala conceptions of national identity was expressed and made visible in concrete instances of confrontation –over specific issues – mobilised by Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil organisations and actors.

The following two sections trace – in turn - the organisational consolidation of Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil conceptions of national identity and national interest. This shows that the consolidation of these projects was a matter of process that brought together a diversity of interests and motivations. Furthermore, once consolidated the Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil national identities became the dominant frameworks within which actors could pursue unrelated interests. These projects also cannot be understood as the simplistic articulation of Sinhala or Tamil ethnic identity respectively as both acknowledged and sought to accommodate – more or less successfully – internal divisions of caste, region and religion. Furthermore, once consolidated, as dominant frameworks, the competing Tamil and Sinhala conceptions of national identity and national interest came to shape the conditions of plausible public action for their adherents and opponents alike. The third section analyses the escalating confrontation between these two projects; one that increasingly involved the use of overt force. The argument is that escalation cannot really be understood in terms of the relative moderation or extremism of the protagonists. Rather, the escalation of confrontation into the regularised use of violence is the inevitable outcome of the conceptual incompatibility of the two conceptions of national identity and interest, the

significant support that both projects could mobilise amongst their target populations and fortuitous international circumstances that supported the use of force by the Sri Lankan state and Tamil militants alike.

8.2 Consolidation of Sinhala Buddhism

The consolidation of the Sinhala Buddhist framework was coeval with the consolidation of a fairly stable system of party competition amongst the Sinhala speaking electorates. The rising importance of political parties can be seen in the declining share of the vote won by independent candidates.¹⁹⁵ In the 1947 elections independent candidates won just over 29 per cent of the vote, but by 1970 this had fallen to a low of just 4.56 percent. At the same time, the share of vote won by the major two largest political parties – the UNP and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) – averaged at about 67 per cent (+/- 7 per cent) between 1952 and 1977. The third major force in Sinhala party politics during this period were the two Marxist parties, the Trotskyite Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the pro Moscow Community Party (CP). The Marxist parties had their best performance in the 1947 elections with 23.4 per cent of the vote, but this subsequently declined and from 1960 averaged about 11 per cent reaching a low of just 5 per cent in the 1977 elections. Since 1965 the Marxist parties have generally been in coalition with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), formed by a split from the UNP in 1951. This steadily consolidating system of competition primarily between the UNP and SLFP was framed throughout by a shared commitment to a Sinhala Buddhist framework; in Michael Billig's terminology, Sinhala Buddhism became the 'banal' and taken for granted framework of political contestation (1995). That is, the differences between and within parties on specific policies were framed by a shared commitment to a conception of Sri Lanka as a Sinhala Buddhist country and an ethnically Sinhala Buddhist framing of national identity and national interest. Sinhala Buddhism was thus not 'a particular political strategy' but 'the

condition for conventional strategies, whatever their particular politics' (1995:99).

The consolidation of the Sinhala Buddhist framework can be usefully broken into two phases; the first is that of the UNP dominated government of 1947 to 1956, and the second the period of alternating UNP led and SLFP dominated governments from 1956 to 1977. In the first phase, a Sinhala Buddhist conception of national identity and interest sat uneasily alongside a more multi-ethnic framework. In the second, after the escalation of Tamil demands for federal autonomy, and the success of the Federal Party in 1956, there was a more determined commitment to a Sinhala Buddhist transformation of the state and polity. The two phases were also marked by two distinct political economies of political contestation; the first predominantly revolved around patronage and the dispensation of welfare, while the second saw the emergence of a 'state controlled economy' regulated through a system of 'licenses, quotas and permits' (Gunasinghe 2004:100). The second phase was also marked by escalating conflict along the Tamil – Sinhala axis. Although intra-Sinhala and intra-Tamil conflict along caste, region and religious cleavages continued during this period, these were more or less successfully contained within the wider Tamil and Sinhala categories. In contrast, conflict along the Tamil – Sinhala axis escalated and opposing Tamil political demands became an increasingly central focus of Sinhala Buddhist mobilisation; this was captured by Srimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister from 1960-4 and again from 1970-7, who declared in 1967, 'The Tamil people must accept the fact that the Sinhala majority will no longer permit themselves to be cheated of their rights' (quoted in Kearney 1975:163).

8.2.1 1948 to 1956

The consolidation of Sinhala Buddhism during these two phases of electoral contestation was the outcome of the activities of political contestation in a context where the Sinhala Buddhist framework had been established as the unavoidable marker of national identity and interest in Sinhala public culture. From independence up to 1956, electoral politics continued along a pattern that was established with the introduction in 1931 of universal franchise. During the 1930's party structures were absent and electoral mobilisation relied primarily on candidates' established ties of patronage and dependence within their locality. The politics of vote banks and dependent networks was however, quickly augmented by an expanding range of welfare provisions (Manor 1979). Elected politicians then used the powers newly available to them within the Donoughmore constitution (1931-1947) to establish a range of welfare services such as free medical and educational facilities, milk for infants and expectant mothers and, most importantly, subsidies and rations for rice and wheat flour (Moore 1985:226). By 1947, the scale of welfare services was such that expenditure on social services accounted for 56.1 per cent of total government revenue (1985:226). Welfare provision thus came to occupy a crucial place in representative politics as politicians used their control over the distribution of public goods as a key asset in their electoral campaigns. As Mick Moore explains, not only did this establish individuals' and groups' access to welfare goods as crucial issues in party politics, it also introduced a strong 'welfarist' element to political language and legitimacy such that:

'... government support for any activity, locality or population is commonly couched in terms of the granting of "relief" or of "due privileges", while allegations of past failures to provide support are termed "Cinderella" or "stepmotherly" treatment" (1985:226-7).

The Sinhala Buddhist framework was also, however, an important element in the combination of welfare provision and patronage networks that drove representative politics. It sat uneasily alongside a more pan-ethnic conception of national identity and national interest. Sinhala Buddhist rhetoric and metonyms played an important role in electoral campaigns and in the public activities of Sinhala politicians. Electoral candidates invoked their Buddhist credentials, sought support from the Buddhist clergy and, in the case of SWRD Bandaranaike, the future Prime Minister, converted from Christianity (Anglican) to Buddhism (Manor 1989:110-5) whilst making shrill statements about his commitment to defending the Sinhala 'race' (Russell 1982:157). This is despite the fact that Bandaranaike was regularly elected from a constituency that straddled his family estate and subsequently became a safe area for the SLFP (Jupp 1978:194, 198), the party he founded in September 1951 (Wilson 77:285). The Sinhala Buddhist framework was also important in forging a political alliance between the Low Country Sinhalese and the Kandyanans that included not just a commitment to a common set of symbols – notably the Kandyan lion flag as the national flag – but also a commitment to excluding Indian Tamil labourers from the franchise. Sinhalese political leaders were notably careful to invoke pan-ethnic conceptions of national identity and interest, particularly during the colonial period when the establishment of a pan-Ceylonese nationalism was the stated objective of British officials in decisions on constitutional reform. However, unlike the Sinhala Buddhist conception, pan-Ceylonese nationalism was invoked only in discussions on constitutional reform and in dealing with Tamil politics (voters and politicians alike) and not as a means of mobilising mass electoral support or indeed legitimising government policy in the Sinhala areas.

The post independence governments headed by the UNP from 1947 to 1956 produced a mixture of policies that were inspired by the Sinhala Buddhist

framework as well as a more pan-ethnic conception of national identity and interest. In keeping with the Sinhala Buddhist conception, the government passed legislation in late 1948 and 1949 that stripped Indian Tamil labourers of citizenship rights and the franchise. In 1951 it passed legislation sanctioning the use of the Kandyan lion flag as the country's national flag. Finally, the UNP also continued with land colonization in the Dry Zone as the mainstay of its economic development policy (Wilson 1979:101). Although the policy was justified in terms of easing landlessness and improving agricultural productivity,¹⁹⁶ there was a clear purpose of settling Sinhalese peasants in Tamil and Muslim areas (Moore 1985:46; Manogaran 1987: Chapter 3). However, at the same time, the UNP led governments refused to acquiesce to a number of demands made by leading Buddhist associations and activists. These were principally for Sinhala alone – rather than Tamil and Sinhala –to immediately be awarded the status of official language, for the Christian denominational schools to be brought under state control, for preferential treatment to be given to Buddhist students in access to higher education and for senior posts in the civil administration and military hierarchy to be reserved for Buddhists. The UNP government therefore only partially accommodated the Sinhala Buddhist programme. However, it also expanded welfare provision and this led to an improvement in its electoral performance: in the 1947 elections the UNP polled just under 40 percent of the vote but at the 1952 elections this increased to just over 44 percent. There was also a rapid increase in voter turnout between the two elections (from 61 per cent in 1947 to 74 per cent in 1952) and Mick More explains this as a reaction to welfare provision: 'the rapid spread of state welfare activities, especially the rice ration.... and fears that the government was contemplating cutting or abolishing the rice ration for financial reasons' (1985:219).

8.2.2 1956 and beyond

The 1956 elections abruptly established Sinhala Buddhist nationalism as the dominant framework of electoral competition and indeed government policy, and by the general elections of July 1960 a new pattern of politics was evident. This pattern was one of two party competition between coalitions led by the UNP and the SLFP with both parties committed to policies that sought to establish the social and political dominance of the Sinhala Buddhists, coeval with expanding state control over economic activity, including a determined push to expand Sinhala peasant colonization in the Tamil and Muslim areas of the island. The trigger for the rapid switch was over the issue of the official language in which the opposing sides provided two distinct visions of national identity and interest. The policy of having two official languages – one supported by all the major political parties at the 1952 general elections – contained an understanding of national identity in which the Tamil and Sinhala ethnic groups were equals. This was opposed by a variety of Sinhala Buddhist associational actors who sought a policy of Sinhala Only – in keeping with the ethnically hierarchical Sinhala Buddhist conception of national identity and interest. Eventually, in the run up to the 1956 elections both the UNP and the opposition led by the SLFP advocated the policy of having Sinhala only, rather than both languages, as the national language (Manor 1989:227-253; De Votta 2004: Chapter 3). The rapid switch was followed by an equally rapid adoption of policies that were within the Sinhala Buddhist framework and within a few years Sinhala Buddhism went from being a widespread and sometimes oppositional social movement to being the dominant and background framework of political contestation. Discussing the functions of ‘banal’ or background nationalism in relation to political contestation, Michael Billig notes that in ‘order for political argument to take place within the nation, there must be elements that are beyond argument’

(1995:96). The Sinhala Buddhist conception of national identity, interest, territory and history were key elements that were placed beyond argument in disputes over specific policies or the distribution of resources.

SWRD Bandaranaike, Prime Minister from 1956 to 1959, played a crucial role in this radical change. In mid 1951 Bankaranaike resigned from the UNP government, largely from a sense that his ambitions to be Prime Minister would be frustrated within the UNP (Manor 1989), and formed the SLFP, which he positioned as taking an economic middle course between the right wing UNP and the Marxist parties of the left (Wilson 1979:125). The party's founding manifesto, issued in September 1951, committed the party to a policy of Tamil and Sinhala as official languages stating that such a policy was necessary to ensure that that 'the people of this country may cease to be aliens in their own lands' (quoted in Ponnambalam 1983:84). This policy remained in place until late 1953 and Bandaranaike himself sometimes expressed an ambivalent attitude towards the Sinhala language (Wilson 1994:52). However, in the run up to the 1956 general elections, the force of Sinhala Buddhist opposition to the two language policy strengthened in the atmosphere of the Buddha Jayantha celebrations, marking 2500 years since the enlightenment of the Buddha (Tambiah 1992: Chapters 5-7). The Sinhala Buddhist challenge was also strengthened by the UNP government's growing unpopularity, not just over its hugely unpopular and soon reversed decisions to cut subsidies in 1953, but also because of the extremely high profile and decidedly non-Buddhist lifestyle of the Prime Minister Sir John Kottelawala (Manor 1989:229-230). In this charged atmosphere, that included high profile defections from the UNP, Kottelawala made a speech in Jaffna in late 1954 committing the UNP government to ensuring parity of status between Tamil and Sinhala (Wilson 1994:52). This was seized upon by major English and Sinhala language newspapers as suggesting that the Sinhalese would be forced to learn Tamil

(Ponnambalam 1983:94). By late 1955 the SLFP had switched its position to that of 'Sinhala Only', with Bandaranaike explaining his decision in terms of the Sinhala Buddhist trope of the perpetual Tamil threat and warning that parity of status would 'mean disaster to the Sinhalese race' because the Tamils 'with their language and their culture and the will and strength characteristic to their race ... would come to exert their dominant power over us' (Wilson 1994:59). By early 1956 the UNP had also switched its position to 'Sinhala Only' (Jupp 1978:60) but it was too late and the advantage was with the opposition. An SLFP led coalition of parties, called the People's United Front (known by its acronym in the Sinhala language as the MEP), won the election, gaining just over 40 per cent of the vote and a thumping majority of 51 seats in a legislature of 95. The UNP's share of the vote fell from 44 per cent in 1952 to just 27.3 per cent and it was able to retain only 8 seats.

At every election between 1956 and 1977 there was a change in government between left leaning governments headed by the SLFP and right leaning governments headed by the UNP. Having come to power in April 1956, the new SLFP-led government promptly passed legislation in June to make Sinhala the only official language. The bill passed with the support of the UNP and was opposed by the Tamil MPs, predictably, but also by MPs from the two Marxist parties (the LSSP and the CP) who had campaigned on a policy of equal status for Tamil and Sinhala, and between them won just over 15 per cent of the vote. By the early 1960's, however, both the LSSP and the CP had also switched their positions to 'Sinhala Only', and in the following years their 'attitude towards the Tamil minorities could scarcely be differentiated from the strident bigotry of the SLFP' (Bose 1994:67).

In 1972 the SLFP-led government introduced a new constitution that changed the name of the country from the colonial Ceylon to the new Republican Sri Lanka whilst unequivocally affirming the Sinhala Buddhist character of the

state. The constitution enshrined the status of Sinhala as the sole official language and declared that the 'Republic of Sri Lanka' shall 'grant to Buddhism the foremost place, and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism' (quoted in Ponnambalam 1983:164) It also explicitly described Sri Lanka as a 'unitary' state (1983:164), thereby constitutionally excluding the Tamil demands for territorial autonomy. In 1978 the newly elected UNP government again changed the constitution, importantly replacing the system of parliamentary government with a powerful and directly elected executive presidency. The 1978 constitution nevertheless retained the articles enshrining the status of Buddhism, the Sinhala language and the unitary, therefore Sinhala dominated, nature of the state (1983:197-8).

8.2.3 Votes and voters

This rapid rise of the Sinhala Buddhist framework cannot, however, be linearly correlated with voting behaviour. The 1956 elections saw the widespread mobilisation by Buddhist monks and Sinhala public sector workers on behalf of the MEP and yet, as Mick Moore notes, the overall voter turnout actually dropped slightly to 71 percent from a high of 74 per cent in 1952, suggesting that the language campaign did not draw any new voters into politics (1985:219). [A more significant increase in voter turnout took place between 1947 (56 per cent) and 1952 (71 per cent) and Moore explains this as a result of 'the rapid spread of state welfare activities, especially the rice ration, in the war and post-war periods and fears that the government was contemplating cutting the rice ration for financial reasons (1985).] Furthermore, the relationship between MPs and their constituents continued to be dominated by questions of access to resources. Janice Jiggins states that from 1956, for the next twenty years, MPs characterised their role 'as largely, if not wholly, relating to the satisfaction of their supporters' demands, the solution of their problemsby personal intervention and the securing of tangible benefits for

their constituents' (1979:150). In other words, politics at the local level was 'about who will be employed by the Ceylon Transport Board as bus conductors' (Moore 1985:224).

However, this localised and transactional politics did not entail the exclusion of wider political categories or the national context. As Jiggins goes onto explain, 'neither the voter nor the MP is typically seen in isolation, as an independent entity capable of staking a claim on resources or winning votes solely in his own right' (1979:154). Political parties thus became increasingly important to electoral contestation¹⁹⁷ and, along with a decline in independent candidates, party allegiance also become increasingly important to individual candidates' electoral success (Kearney 1973:103; Jupp 1978:91-7). The entrenched localism of political bargaining has therefore coexisted alongside the consolidation of party labels and a stable pattern of two party politics. It is at this wider national level of party politics that Sinhala Buddhism became established as the unavoidable and profoundly consequential framework of political contestation. In other words, the Sinhala Buddhist framework thus set the context within which local struggles over public goods and services could be linked to wider national frameworks.

8.2.4 Erasing intra ethnic cleavages

As the overarching framework of political contestation, Sinhala Buddhist nationalism was also able to contain cleavages of caste, region, religion and socio-economic strata within the Sinhala category, whilst also accommodating the representation of Muslim and Indian Tamil, but not Sri Lankan Tamil, votes. The UNP and SLFP drew electoral support from distinct regional and socio – economic strata; the UNP was concentrated in the low country and urban areas, and drew support from the slightly better off sections of rural society, whilst the SLFP was dominant geographically in the largely 'dry zone'

areas and was identified with the less well off sections of society. Caste cleavages were also important in political allegiance and determining political behaviour; political leadership in the UNP and SLFP has been exclusively with the dominant landowning or Goyigama castes, while the Karava, Durava and Salagama (KSD) castes found mainly in the low country regions are generally identified with the Marxist parties. Furthermore, both major parties combined their commitment to Sinhala Buddhist nationalism with the recognition that caste continued to be a tangible category of political mobilisation and representation. From 1958 both parties have used the constitutional provision that allows for the appointment of MPs to represent minority groups to appoint members from low caste Sinhalese groups who would normally struggle to be elected from the largely Goyigama dominated Sinhala districts (Kearney 1973:185). The UNP's striking electoral victory in 1977 (when it gained a striking 50.92 per cent of the total popular vote) included an explicit attempt to divest itself of the image of being the party of the Goyigamas and build support amongst the KSD caste groups (Wilson 1979:139). Relatedly, the Janaka Vimukthi Perumana's (JVP) failed armed insurrection against the state in April 1971 – which combined revolutionary Marxism with strident Sinhala Buddhism (149) – had its support base mainly amongst the non-Goyigama youth of the low country and some Kandyan districts (38). Sinhala Buddhism was therefore a political category, rather than an expression of ethnic sentiment, as it sought to include – more or less successfully – a plurality of Sinhala Buddhist caste groups.

While caste and regional cleavages within the Sinhala category were relatively easily reconciled within the Sinhala Buddhist framework, the shifts produced by the 1956 electoral victory were associated with a series of confrontations that threatened sustained and ongoing conflict along the Tamil-Sinhala axis – and, separately, along the Catholic – Buddhist axis which was contained

primarily within the Sinhala category. Between 1956 and 1961 two successive SLFP led governments passed legislation and effected the administrative changes to make Sinhala the only official language, including the language of the law courts in the predominantly Tamil speaking areas. To protest against these changes the Federal Party, the largest Tamil party following the 1956 general elections, launched mass participation civil disobedience demonstrations in 1956, 1958 and 1961 (Navaratnam 1991). The 1956 and 1958 demonstrations led to anti-Tamil violence across many areas of the island that were framed – whatever the actual motivations of individual rioters themselves – by participants, victims and political actors as expressing Sinhala antipathy to Tamil political demands. The 1961 protests by the Federal Party, which involved occupations of government offices across the north-east that brought the civil administration to a standstill, were ended with repressive use of the military, the declaration of a state of emergency in the North-east and the imprisonment of FP leaders, including the ageing leader SJV Chelvanayagam (Wilson 1994).

In the same period, there was also escalating conflict along the Catholic – Buddhist axis. The flashpoint of this conflict was the nationalisation of denominational schools undertaken by the SLFP government of Srimavo Bandaranaike in late 1961. The move led to protests by Sinhala Catholics who occupied the schools, refusing to hand them over to educational authorities. Eventually a confrontation was avoided by the intervention of the Catholic hierarchy, namely Cardinal Valerian Gracias from India (reportedly sent by Nehru), who persuaded Catholics on the island to relent (Wilson 1977:302). Since the flashpoint of Catholic – Buddhist confrontation in the 1959-62 period however, conflict along this axis has been largely accommodated within the Sinhala Buddhist framework. In contrast, conflict along the Tamil – Sinhala axis has simply escalated. To begin with, the Catholic Church through

the 1960's continued the process of 'nationalising' itself with masses conducted in Tamil and Sinhalese (Jupp 1978:37) and this trend was reflected in voter allegiance. From the 1947 elections onwards, there was a trend of Catholic support for the UNP, partly as a result of the Catholic hierarchy's antipathy to Marxist parties - heightened in the context of the Cold War (1978:149-51). The conflict over denominational schools also appeared to strengthen Catholic support for the UNP (1978:148-9). However, by the time of the 1970 elections, there were swings against the UNP led government in the majority Christian districts of the Sinhala areas, reflecting patterns across the Sinhala districts more generally (1978:149-151). Following the landslide victory of the SLFP led United Front in 1970, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Ceylon called on the faithful to give 'loyal and enlightened support to the new government', and similarly supported the UNP government that came to power in 1977 (Wilson 1979:46).

The narrowing of the Catholic – Buddhist divide can be seen in the shifting categories used to define educational entitlement. In the early 1950's leading Buddhist educationalists had demanded special quotas for Buddhist students in higher education to compensate for the disadvantages they suffered under British rule, allegedly because they 'have stuck to the religion which binds them to their native soil' (Kearney 1973:172). However, in the early 1970's, when the United Front government adopted policies to correct Tamil overrepresentation in the coveted Medical and Engineering faculties, the measures were framed to benefit not the Buddhists but the Sinhalese. For example, the schemes worked by lowering the entrance marks for students studying in the Sinhala language stream and those from rural districts. As a consequence, the ethnic composition of the Medical and Engineering faculties was substantially altered, but along a Tamil-Sinhala rather than a Catholic – Buddhist axis.¹⁹⁸

Finally, these rapid changes provoked an attempted coup, the first of two since independence, in late 1961 by a group of officers in the military and police forces who were motivated primarily to stem the ascendance of Sinhala Buddhism and the conflict it was causing, as well as the ethnic transformations it was effecting on the civil service (Horowitz 1980). The coup was discovered in early 1962 – and hence referred to by that year – and arrests were made throughout February. Despite the mixed ethnic backgrounds of the coup plotters, it was framed in terms of the over-representation of Catholics and Tamils in the military. Successive governments have since then followed a policy of creating an ‘ethnically pure’ Sinhala Buddhist military (Blodgett 2004:54). As a consequence, the proportion of Tamils employed in the Police and Armed services dropped from 40 per cent in 1956 to 4 per cent in 1980 (Manogaran 1987:129).

The political ascendance of Sinhala Buddhism cannot be linearly related to ethnic demography. The fact that the majority of electorates on the island contained a Sinhala majority facilitated, but did not cause, the ascendance of Sinhala Buddhism. To begin with, mediating access to public goods was a vital part of representative politics at the local level, and increases in voter turnout were more associated with the expanding scope of public goods provision than with the stridency of Sinhala Buddhist rhetoric. Furthermore, adopting a strident Sinhala Buddhist stance did not produce direct electoral results: for example between 1956 and 1960, the UNP’s share of the vote increased by just over 2 per cent (from 27.44 per cent to 29.62 per cent) despite the party having visibly and vociferously adopted Sinhala Buddhist rhetoric. Sinhala Buddhist nationalism did not function as a means to mobilise voter sentiment, but worked instead as the underlying framework within which political contestation occurred. Following the elections of 1956, all political parties that aspired to power at the national level worked within this framework and, as

Moore notes, soon afterwards ‘differences in the degree of Sinhalese chauvinism were greater within parties than between them’ (1985:218).

8.2.5 Political process and the Sinhala Buddhist transformation of state and society

The explanation for the dominance of Sinhala Buddhism, firmly established by the mid 1960’s, must be sought in the processes of political organisation and mobilisation, rather than in the static variables of ethnic demography. The Sinhala Buddhist ethnically hierarchical conception of national identity and national interest were well established in Sinhala public culture through ongoing associational activities that began with the late nineteenth century Buddhist revival. Nevertheless, these activities were not organised into a single organisation with a well established political framework that could mobilise support across the Sinhala districts. The organisational weakness of the Sinhala Buddhist movement was however matched by the weakness of its principal oppositional target, the pan-ethnic conception of national identity and interest then associated with the UNP. As discussed in Chapter Six, the attempts by Sri Lankan politicians to form pan-ethnic nationalist associations in the late nineteenth century did not generate the temporally continuous activities that in India were associated with the establishment of Congress as a dominant and unavoidable presence – for Indian politicians and British officials alike – in colonial Indian politics. As a consequence, a pan-ethnic conception of national identity and interest had a very weak organisational presence in Sri Lankan politics. The UNP, hastily formed through between June and September 1946 out of existing organisations, including the overtly Sinhala nationalist Sinhala Maha Sabha, used the pan-ethnic conception primarily as a rhetorical device to co-ordinate the activities of its Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil members. The party did not develop or deploy a pan-ethnic conception of the island’s history (comparable to that invoked by Nehru) to compete with the Sinhala Buddhist

narrative and nor did it have a developed framework that accommodated the island's ethnic pluralism within a shared set of interests and values. Instead, its senior Sinhala leaders regularly invoked the Sinhala Buddhist framework and closely associated with Sinhala Buddhist associations. Furthermore, UNP candidates in the Sinhala districts explicitly invoked their Buddhist credentials during electoral campaigns. A pan ethnic-conception of national identity was therefore absent in Sinhala popular culture. It is in this historically produced, rather than demographically determined, context that when the SLFP demonstrated electoral success by adopting the Sinhala Buddhist framework and then introduced legislation to give it effect (such as the 1956 Sinhala only act), the other political parties rapidly followed suit, making explicit at the level of formal policy its already widespread use as a means of direct political mobilisation and social reform.

Once established as the dominant framework of political contestation, Sinhala Buddhist nationalism became a powerful and constraining presence in the island's social, political and economic life. Political contestation among the Sinhala parties was bounded by the commitment to preserving the Sinhala Buddhist character of the island, particularly against the threat poses by Tamil demands for political autonomy. There were important differences between the parties, for example on economic policy, with the SLFP and the Marxist parties favouring greater state control, while the UNP was willing to allow space for private enterprise. However, any compromise with Tamil political demands could not be accommodated in this framework. An attempt in 1957 by the SLFP Prime Minister, SWRD Bandaranaike to negotiate an agreement with SJV Chelvanayagam, the Federal Party leader, was abandoned after sustained Sinhala nationalist opposition, spearheaded by the UNP. A similar agreement in 1966 between the UNP Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake and SJV Chelvanayagam was also abandoned, but this time as a result of sustained

mobilisation by the SLFP and its Marxist partners, the CP and LSSP.¹⁹⁹ The Sinhala-Buddhist framework thus came to dominate, even actors who may have sought to use it tactically, without real conviction. SWRD Bandaranaike, for example, played a crucial role in initiating the switch to the Sinhala Buddhist framework but then found that his efforts to come to an agreement with the FP were thwarted by Sinhala Buddhist mobilisation. J. R Jayawardene, the UNP politician who led a high profile and symbolic march to mobilise popular Sinhala opposition to the agreement between Bandaranaike and the FP, subsequently played an important role in the abortive 1966 negotiations between the UNP and the FP. The actual intentions and the motivations of the politicians themselves are therefore less important in explaining outcomes than the constraining conceptual boundaries within which they must operate.

Although the electoral dominance of Sinhala Buddhism was driven through a system of representative politics dominated by local arenas and serving often parochial interests for public goods and services, the consequences were nevertheless systemic. The changes triggered by the 1956 elections produced an expanded state. However, this state was one that was in personnel and ethos increasingly Sinhala. While membership of public sector trade unions expanded from 52,000 in 1952 to over 257,000 in 1968, the proportion of Tamils employed in the various sectors of the public sectors fell.²⁰⁰ By the early 1980's public sector trade unions played a crucial role in organising anti Tamil collective violence. Public rituals and spaces were marked by Buddhist symbols and rituals, while the nationalisation of schools introduced the Mahavamsa narrative of Sinhala civilization and Tamil invasion to all students in the Sinhala stream. The 1956 elections also triggered the rapid creation of a 'state controlled' economy regulated through 'licenses, permits and quotas' that were needed for all forms of commercial and manufacturing activity. Although these economic rewards were distributed through patronage networks – which

were determined more by factional and kinship considerations than ethnicity – Tamils found it difficult to access the necessary resources and, as a consequence, were largely squeezed out of private sector activity as well (Gunasinghe 2004). The sum effect of these changes could be seen in average income figures; in the decade between 1963 and 1973, average Sri Lankan Tamil income fell from 327 rupees per month to 309, that of the Low Country Sinhalese increased from 292 to 343 and that of the Kandyan Sinhalese increased from 219 to 277 (Wilson 1979:11).

Following the 1962 coup attempt and the subsequent policy of establishing an ‘ethnically pure’ military and police, these institutions also came to operate within the Sinhala Buddhist framework and were at the leading edge of the state’s confrontation with Tamil opposition, both political and later armed. Emblematic of this change is a shift in the stated motivations of the two attempted coups of Sri Lanka’s post independence history. The 1962 coup was led by officers – multiethnic and cosmopolitan in outlook – who sought to check the rising dominance of the Sinhala Buddhist framework. One of their complaints was the escalation of ethnic tension; they blamed the 1958 anti Tamil violence on ‘Bandaranaike’s yielding to crude communal feelings’ (Horowitz 1980:112). The officers involved in the coup were also critical of the decision to send in the military to break the FP led civil disobedience protests (known as Satyagraha after Gandhi) across the north-east. As the Satyagraha was peaceful, the officers believed the ‘government was using unnecessary force in handling it’ and ‘some officers felt the government was even attempting to provoke violence’ (1980:113). In a further incident, the two Tamil commanding officers in the regiment sent to quell the protests in Jaffna were ordered not to accompany their troops; a move that ‘impressed the officers more deeply than the regime’s needless use of troops or its excessive repression of peaceful protest’ (1980:113). The 1966 coup, by contrast, was

launched by 'extreme Buddhist elements' who were opposed to the UNP's negotiations with the FP over its demands for regional autonomy and official status for the Tamil language (Jupp 1978:24). The overwhelmingly Sinhala military and police were subsequently deployed in increasing numbers in the Tamil speaking areas from the early 1970's to confront the then incipient insurgency.

The ascendance of Sinhala Buddhism involved therefore the wholesale transformation of the state, society and the economy. This affected a variety of ethnic categories – including Sinhalese Catholics, Muslims and Indian Tamils, as well as Sri Lankan Tamils. However, Catholic, Muslim and Indian Tamil political actors in practice acquiesced to the dominant Sinhala Buddhist framework. In contrast, amongst the Sri Lankan Tamils the ascendance of Sinhala Buddhism was associated with countervailing mobilisation by the Federal Party, which sought to establish political equality between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in opposition to the Sinhala first ethnic hierarchy of the Sinhala Buddhist framework. The FP's growth was in part a result of the impact of post-independence state policies on a diversity of interests within Tamil society; bringing together for example Jaffna students denied access to higher education, Colombo based civil servants working within an increasingly Sinhala Buddhist hierarchy and eastern province farmers living alongside growing state aided colonization schemes. However, discriminatory policies alone are insufficient to mobilise opposition. For example, the category that arguably suffered the most at first from Sinhala-Buddhist policies were Indian Tamil labourers. They were also the easiest to mobilise; the large majority living and working in identical conditions and in a concentrated geographical area. Yet Indian Tamil political leaders, many of them plantation owners, collectively sought to co-operate with the Sinhala leadership rather than mobilising opposition from their constituents' disenfranchisement and

ongoing conditions of relative economic servitude (Wilson 1979:22-31, 155-160). The consolidation of Sri Lankan Tamil opposition must therefore be understood as the outcome of step-wise and temporally continuous processes of organisation and mobilization that established the idea of a Tamil national identity as a dominant and unavoidable presence in Tamil political life.

8.3 Federal Party and Tamil nationalism

The electoral and political consolidation of Sinhala Buddhism occurred through contestation to gain control of the state, and then through the agencies of the state itself. It was not associated with a single organisation or party. In contrast, the consolidation of the Tamil nationalist framework during the same period was associated with the electoral growth and expansion of the Federal Party. The party's main efforts were in seeking election to Sri Lanka's parliament. It did this primarily as means of negotiating with the government on its core demands for territorial autonomy and gaining official recognition for the Tamil language. To this end, the FP from its foundation stated that it would not accept cabinet posts until its demands had been met; M. Thiruchelvam, an FP MP, served briefly as a minister in the UNP led government of 1965-9, but resigned because of failure to progress on the issue of territorial autonomy and the government's refusal to categorise a Hindu temple in Trincomalee as a site of cultural importance (Wilson 1994:107-111). The FP also initiated mass protests against the Sinhala only policy - in 1956, 1958 and again in 1961 - and used the support it was able to demonstrate through these, as well as through its electoral campaigns, as a means of expressing Tamil sentiment to the government but also to the larger world (1994:96).

The period of the FP's electoral rise and dominance (1952-1977) was certainly coeval with the rising material impact of the policies of Sinhala Buddhist

majoritarian dominance. As discussed above, following the adoption of the 1956 Sinhala Only Act, Tamils were rapidly excluded from the public sector (Wilson 1979:11), their access to the private sector was restricted (Gunasinghe 2004), the military and police were transformed into overwhelmingly Sinhala 'ethnically pure' structures (Blodgett 2001, 62) and Tamils' access to higher education was also curtailed (Manogaran 1987:129). Meanwhile, Sri Lankan governments funded and subsidized ethnically Sinhala colonies in the Tamil speaking regions (Manogram 1987:88-114). These programs produced – as they were intended to (Moore 1985:46) – significant changes in the ethnic demography of the Tamil regions. These changes were punctuated by bouts of collective anti-Tamil violence (1956, 1958, 1977, 1981, 1983), in which the ethnically transformed police and military were increasingly complicit (1977, 1981, 1983) (Bose 1994; Krishna 1999).

While the impact of escalating Sinhala majoritarianism certainly provided the conditions for the rising dominance of the Federal Party, this cannot be seen as a natural consequence. The Sri Lankan Muslims for example, who are equally outside the Sinhala Buddhist framework, have adopted an 'almost entirely instrumentalist approach to politics' evident in 'repeated party changing, support for independents and refusal, in the main, to be the captive of either of the major parties' (Jupp 1978:152). A distinct Muslim political party, the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress (SLMC), was only formed in 1981 and until that point Muslim politicians joined either the UNP, the SLFP or stood as independents (1978:153). This approach has had tangible material benefits and there have been Muslims in every cabinet from independence (1978:152). However, Muslim political participation has been on the basis of, publicly at least, accepting the Sinhala Buddhist framework.²⁰¹

Sinhala political leaders have sought to convince Tamil politicians and voters of the virtues of accommodation and acquiescence, rather than the FP path of

opposition. Governments led by the both the UNP and SLFP sought to co-opt Tamil politicians and engineer defections from the FP and ACTC (Ponnambalam 1983:154-5). Meanwhile, the Marxist parties and the SLFP often nominated candidates in the northern constituencies who campaigned on the platform that the FP's 'methods had worked against the interests of the Tamil majority who still persisted in voting for them' (Jupp 1978:140). These efforts met with limited success; defections were rare.²⁰² Meanwhile in the constituencies of the north-east the vote share of candidates and parties not adopting a platform of Tamil-Sinhala political equality remained low: it fell from high 25 per cent in 1952 and then remained between 14-17 per cent (1978:138). There are two factors that explain the relative failure of efforts to establish Sinhala Buddhist dominance as a principle of Tamil politics, and the simultaneous electoral and political consolidation of the Tamil demand for territorial autonomy. The first is that the principle of Tamil – Sinhala equality was already well established in Tamil politics, particularly in the Jaffna peninsula, from the early decades of the twentieth century. This principle would have been available to any actor seeking to capitalise on the diverse discontents created by the escalating Sinhala majoritarianism. However, as noted earlier, the experience of exclusion does not necessarily provoke sustained opposition. Instead, the activities of the FP were decisive in translating diverse Sri Lankan Tamil experiences of Sinhala Buddhist majoritarianism into a sustained demand for territorial autonomy as a means of ensuring collective equality between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. From its formation in 1949 until it merged with smaller Tamil parties to form the TULF coalition in 1976, the FP brought together the three processes of successful political mobilisation in a temporally sustained way. The temporally continuous as well as spatially and socially extensive character of the FP's activities established the principle of Tamil nationhood and territorial autonomy as both an enabling resource and constraining framework for all

political actors – whatever their actual intentions or motivations – who sought to mobilise political support in the Tamil speaking regions.

8.3.1 FP agenda and strategy

The central plank of the FP's agenda was the demand for territorial autonomy through a federal re-ordering of the Sri Lankan state. In justifying this demand, the FP explicitly used the language of nationhood and self determination and invoked a narrative of historical continuity to assert a Tamil 'homeland' in the north-eastern Tamil speaking areas of the island. At its first convention in 1951 the FP adopted a resolution claiming that the Tamil speaking people had an 'unchallengeable title to nationhood' to be realised within a 'federal union with the Sinhalese' that included a 'separate historical past ... at least as ancient and as glorious as that of the Sinhalese' and 'territorial habitation of definite areas' (quoted in Wilson 1994:74). The FP's explicit adoption of the legal and political language of nationhood was both a development of, and departure from, Tamil politics in the colonial period. As discussed in Chapter Six, Tamil politics before independence turned on a conception of the Tamils as equally indigenous to the island as the Sinhalese. There were disagreements between politicians and organisations (such as the JYC) that sought to advance Tamil interests by building a pan-ethnic form of Ceylonese nationalism and those who (like G. G. Ponnambalam and the ACTC) sought specific political guarantees of Tamil rights within an all island political framework. These conceptions cannot easily be categorized as Tamil nationalist as the Tamils do not appear within them as the subject of *national* rights but rather as a component – albeit on equal terms with the Sinhalese – of a broader Ceylonese national unity. The notion of territorial autonomy had been occasionally raised during the colonial period - most notably by P. Arunachalem²⁰³ – but it had not become the basis of a sustained campaign of political organisation and mobilisation. For the FP, however, territorial autonomy was its core demand,

as well as a crucial aspect of its organisational strategy. The rationale for territorial autonomy nevertheless retained the logic of Tamil / Sinhala political equality developed during the colonial period, but sought a different means of securing this end. As C. Vanniasingham, an FP leader, argued, the federal principle was necessary to preserve the mutual non-domination of the Tamils and the Sinhalese; a federal union would be 'fair by the Sinhalese, as they Tamils did not want to dominate them even as they, the Tamils, did not want to be dominated by them... federalism would enable them to live as equal partners of a new union' (quoted in Wilson 1994:54).

The demand for territorial autonomy, while continuous with previous politics, was not automatically resonant: the FP did very poorly in the 1952 elections,²⁰⁴ and during the campaigning the ACTC derided its claims, arguing that if Tamils achieved an autonomous state, the trains from Colombo would not pass through the narrow isthmus of the Jaffna peninsula (Wilson 1994:32). However, in the run up to the 1956 elections, the ACTC's strategy of securing Tamil rights by working with UNP had visibly failed and it was in this context that the FP's alternative demand for territorial autonomy gained ground. In August 1948 G. G Ponnambalam agreed to join the UNP government in return for a cabinet portfolio, namely industry and fisheries. Chelvanayagam, then an ACTC MP, reluctantly supported this decision having already made public statements on the need for territorial autonomy, and even secession, as a means of ensuring Tamil rights (1994:25). Chelvanayagam split with Ponnambalam in December 1949 and formed the FP following the UNP government's decision to strip the Indian Tamil plantation labourers of their citizenship and franchise rights. Ponnambalam stayed on in the cabinet pointing to the material benefits of co-operation, namely a number of publicly funded projects across the north-east (1994:72). However, by October 1953 Ponnambalam had been expelled from the cabinet by the new Prime Minister

John Kotelawalla,²⁰⁵ and in February 1956 the UNP abandoned its commitment to Tamil – Sinhala linguistic equality prompting the resignation of Tamil party members (1994:59). The FP's rise to political dominance occurred therefore in the context of the failure of the ACTC's strategy of 'responsive co-operation', while the mainstream Sinhala parties could offer only limited material benefits in exchange for acceptance of the Sinhala Buddhist framework.

Unlike the ACTC, the FP made direct political mobilisation a crucial component of its strategy, and at its inaugural meeting, its leader Chelvanayagam, stated that the FP was not an ordinary political party but a 'movement' and its ultimate purpose was the mobilisation of the Tamil speaking people. Even if the FP did not realise its key demand, namely Tamil autonomy, it should nevertheless 'at the very least mobilise and marshal our younger generation to carry the banner forward and fulfil our mission' (quoted in Wilson 1994:70). To this end, the FP held public meetings to set out its views, published a weekly newspaper, the *Suthanthiran* (advocate of freedom), held yearly conventions in different locations across the north-east and also mobilised mass protests in 1956, 1958 and in 1961. At the same time, it also sought to win parliamentary seats as a means of creating a disciplined parliamentary block that could be used to extract concessions from Sinhala leaders. Agreements, albeit abortive, were reached on three occasions between the FP and Sinhala political leaders (with the SLFP in 1957 and 1960 and then with the UNP in 1965).

By the early 1970's it was evident that the FP's project had singularly failed to realise any of its stated objectives. The FP's three mass protests ended with violence directed primarily at Tamils, the imprisonment of FP leaders (1958 and 1961) and with the imposition of emergency rule in the Tamil areas (1961). At the same time, the three pacts it negotiated ended in abrogation and two (1957 and 1965) were abandoned amidst vociferous opposition framed in

Sinhala Buddhist terms. The 1970 constitution also entrenched the unitary and Sinhala Buddhist character of the state, thus apparently closing off the possibility of constitutional change through the parliamentary process. The FP's failure to realise its stated objectives turned out, however, to be an integral component of the consolidation of a territorial Tamil national identity. Indeed, FP political mobilisation, and the responses it generated from Sinhala political actors, were linked in an escalating dialectic of protest and violent response, negotiation and abrogation that consolidated the Tamil and Sinhala Buddhist nationalist projects and their mutually incompatible conceptions of the 'right' ethnic ordering of the island.

By 1976 the ACTC, which had once derided the idea of federalism, had joined the FP in demanding an independent Tamil state. The growth of a Tamil militant movement that sought independence through armed struggle also showed that the territorial conception of Tamil identity had escaped the bounds of the FP's politics. Importantly, this process was also important in consolidating Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. Until the late 1970's opposing and resisting the FP's demands was a crucial element of the Sinhala Buddhist platform. From the early 1980's onwards, confronting and containing the growing Tamil insurgency, and later the LTTE's armed state building project (early 1990's-2009), along with Tamil demands for independent statehood, became a central component of the Sinhala Buddhist domestic, as well as international, agenda.

The FP's first protest was held in June 1956 as the 'Sinhala Only' act was being enacted into legislation. Three hundred FP volunteers who staged a sit down protest in front of the parliament in Colombo were attacked by an assembled crowd and thrown into a nearby lake. There followed several days of rioting, principally attacks against Tamils and Tamil property in Colombo but also notably in the areas of the eastern province that contained Sinhala colonies

(Ponnambalam 1983:105-6). In August of that year the FP held its convention in the eastern port city of Trincomalee and set out its core demands: a federal re-ordering of the constitution, parity of status for Tamil and Sinhalese, an end to Sinhala colonization in the Tamil speaking areas and the restoration of citizenship and franchise rights for Indian Tamil plantation workers. It also threatened to launch a mass civil disobedience campaign unless these demands were met. In order to recruit volunteers for the campaign Chelvanayagam and C. Vanniasingham, two key leaders, toured the towns and villages of the north-east establishing branches and setting out the FP's programme and strategy (Wilson 1994:85).

The FP's demands and Prime Minister Bandaranaike's own personal inclination to compromise led to an agreement in July 1957 (the Bandaranaike – Chelvanayagam, or 'BC', pact). There was immediate resistance: in October 1957 J. R Jayawardene led a march from Colombo to the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy (which contains a relic believed to be the Buddha's tooth). The march was loaded with symbolic meaning and was staged as a 'pilgrimage to worship and to protest at that shrine, where the relic that served as the palladium of earlier Sinhalese kingdoms, and by extension, of the modern polity rested' (Tambiah 1992:49). As Bandaranaike hesitated, the FP took the initiative and in January 1958 launched civil disobedience protests across the north-east, with volunteers courting arrest by publicly tarring Sinhala characters on vehicle license plates in the Tamil speaking areas. Chelvanayagam participated in such a protest in Batticaloa, was arrested and imprisoned for a week (Wilson 1994:87-88). By April that year, and following a protest by a group of Buddhist monks in front of his private residence, Bandaranaike agreed to abrogate the pact. There followed a second, more intense, as well as spatially widespread, episode of ethnic violence, primarily Sinhala violence against Tamils.²⁰⁶ The violence has been explained in a variety

of ways; Manor has for example argued that economic interests that had 'suffered during Bandaranaike's two years in power contributed to the rioting in order to destabilise the government' (1989:293). However, the violence also has to be read against the framework of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and its project of establishing a Sinhala first hierarchy of ethnic relations on the island. As Sankaran Krishna suggests,

'Viewed against this hierarchy, the periodic pogroms and explosions of collective violence against the Tamils (1956, 1958, 1977, 1981, 1983) in Sri Lanka represent efforts to put them back in their place on grounds that they need to be taught a lesson, according to an oft-used phrase. It is hardly coincidental that the bouts of collective violence in recent times have all occurred immediately after or during efforts to open a dialogue on redressing minority grievances in Sri Lanka' (1999:54).

The final FP mass protest lasted from February to April 1961 and was again in response to government policy on the language issue. An SLFP led government elected in July 1960 announced that it would bring the Sinhala Only act into full effect by January the following year and included provisions to make Sinhala the language of the law courts in the north-east. In response, the FP led mass demonstrations across the north-east. Protestors sat in front of government offices in Jaffna, Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Batticaloa, the largest population centres in the north-east, blocking all government functions until late April.²⁰⁷ The protests were eventually ended by the use of military force; all of the FP MP's were arrested and detained for two months and a state of emergency existed in the Tamil speaking areas for two years (Ponnambalam 1983:131).

Although the protests ended without any substantial gains in terms of securing the FP's objectives, they were nevertheless important in demonstrating – to opponents and allies– the party's capacity to mobilise support. As Chelvanayagam stated, the purpose of the Satyagraha had been 'to demonstrate to the world that the Tamil speaking people were united in the defence of their language rights and in their opposition to the government's discriminatory policies' (quoted in Wilson 1994:96). The protests consistently drew large crowds and the increasing political centrality of a Tamil political identity based on national demands for territorial autonomy were also evident in the FP's improving electoral performance. In 1952 the party secured only 2 out of the 11 seats with Tamil majorities, by 1956 it secured 6 out of 11 and in July 1960 it secured 12 out of an available 16 (a fresh delimitation of constituencies in 1960 added the extra seats). At the same time, its share of the vote in Tamil majority constituencies expanded from 15.79 per cent in 1952, to 43.03 in 1956, reaching a high of 59 per cent in July 1960.²⁰⁸

The FP was about to launch a second civil disobedience campaign in 1964 when the SLFP government fell as a result of defections (Wilson 1994:102). The FP then entered into negotiations with the UNP leader Dudley Senanayake (son of the former leader D. S Senanayake), ironically at the home of Dr. MVP Pieris, who had served as the medical advisor on Jayawardene's 1957 protest march to Kandy (1994:104). The negotiations led to a second agreement, labelled the Senanayake – Chelvanayagam (SC), pact that contained provisions on limited self government for the northeast and some limitations on Sinhala colonisation in these areas. The FP subsequently became a partner in the UNP-led coalition government of 1956-1969, and M. Thiruchelvam took the local government portfolio as a means of implementing the SC pact. However, by 1968 it was evident that Senanayake was backsliding, again in the face of growing Sinhala Buddhist hostility, and the provisions of

the SC pact remained unimplemented (Ponnambalam 1983:146). The FP finally left the government in late 1968 when the Prime Minister overrode Thiruchelvam's decision to designate the area around a Hindu temple in Trincomalee a Hindu religious site – thereby preserving it from commercial development and colonization. Senanayake acquiesced to Sinhala Buddhist opposition to the designation, led by a Buddhist monk from Trincomalee, who argued that if the land was designated as a Hindu religious site it would 'get into the hands of those who were neither Sinhalese nor Buddhist' (quoted in Wilson 1994:110 see also Pfaffenberger 1990:92).

The SLFP led coalition's landslide victory in 1970²⁰⁹ and the adoption of the new constitution in 1972 was coeval with a radicalisation of Tamil politics as the FP itself abandoned federalism for secession. In 1972 Chelvanayagam resigned his seat to protest at the new constitution and stated that he would fight the by-election on the platform of independence. When the by-election was finally held in 1975 he won with 72 per cent of the vote, his opponent, a candidate for the Communist Party (an SLFP ally), got 26 per cent of the vote (De Silva 1979:196). In the 1977 general elections, an FP-led coalition, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), stood on a platform of independence citing a history of violence, discrimination, economic exclusion and colonisation along with the failure of political compromise (Ponnambalam 1983:185). The TULF won 17 out of the 19 constituencies with Tamil majorities with 59 per cent of the vote (Appendix Two).

At the same time there was growing militancy amongst Tamil youth seeking independence through armed struggle. This included, amongst numerous others, the Tamil New Tigers (formed in 1972), the organisation that subsequently became the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which became the dominant Tamil armed movement from the mid-1980's (Balasingham 2004:21-6; O'Duffy 2007). The militancy was first expressed in

widespread student protests against government ministers and other officials visiting the Northeast, particularly Jaffna. There was also a spate of bank robberies, assassinations of police officers and Tamil politicians seen to be collaborating with the Sri Lankan state (INT 18; INT 19). The state responded with intensified police and military repression (Ponnambalam 1983:184) in an escalating cycle of violence. A notable incident was the police firing into the crowd attending the fourth World Tamil Conference, hosted in Jaffna in 1974 (the first was held in Malaysia in 1966, the second in Tamil Nadu in 1968 and a third in Paris in 1970). The police firing left nine dead and hundreds injured (1983:182-3) and signalled the growing importance of violence in relations between the Sri Lankan state and Tamil political as well as cultural activity.

8.3.2 Votes and voters

The consolidation of a territorial conception of nationhood in Tamil politics cannot be seen as the unmediated expansion of nationalist sentiment. In a pattern that reflected trends in the Sinhala speaking areas, voter turnout in the Tamil speaking areas appeared to correlate more closely to expanding welfare provision, than FP mobilisation. The largest expansion in turnout was between 1947 (55 per cent) and 1952 (71.12) a period which saw the expansion of welfare provision, particularly rice subsidies, along with fears this may be withdrawn. The FP was formed in 1949 and while it engaged in campaigns to mobilise political opinion – through public meetings, for example – in 1952 it won only 2 of the 18 Tamil majority constituencies and gained 18.6 per cent of the vote. The increase in voter turnout was not therefore the outcome of FP mobilisation. The 1956 elections were however, an important landmark in the FP's trajectory; it expanded its vote share to 40 per cent of the vote in the Tamil majority constituencies. But average voter turnout at the 1956 elections across in the Tamil constituencies (as in the Sinhalese ones) was actually slightly less in 1956 (69 per cent) than in 1952 (71 per cent). This is despite the

FP's successful mobilisation of mass protests in 1956 and 1958 and the anti Tamil violence this provoked. Welfare provision was therefore likely to be an important factor in mobilising Tamil votes. Meanwhile FP MPs, when they were not leading protests, behaved much like other parliamentarians and worked to mediate their constituents' access to publicly provided goods and services; some also used their parliamentary positions as a means of advancing personal interests (Pfaffenberger 1990).

Like Indian and other Sri Lankan political parties, the FP did not rely on direct political mobilisation alone to mobilise support. Instead, it often co-opted locally powerful individuals as a means of building and expanding its support base. Although many FP candidates were individuals of local standing who often financed their campaigns with personal resources, the party label and the Tamil nationalist framework did make an important difference. For example, in the Eastern Province, from 1956 onwards, as the FP entered electoral contests and gained significant vote shares, three candidates who had previously stood as independents hastily adopted party labels advocating a specifically Tamil political interest.²¹⁰ Similarly, in the Jaffna constituency, the independent candidate Alfred Durayappah, who was elected in the 1960 elections for the Jaffna town constituency, nevertheless felt constrained to identify himself with the FP led Satyagraha in 1961 and made high profile visits to the protests on several occasions (INT 20). [Durayappah later joined the SLFP, and as mayor of Jaffna, ordered the police raid on the World Tamil Conference, which is said to have led to his assassination in 1975 by militants]. C Arulapalam, the successful candidate for the ACTC in the Nallur constituency (Jaffna) during the 1970 elections polled 46.6 per cent of the vote (de Silva 1979:241). However, he subsequently crossed over to the SLFP and in 1977 stood as the SLFP candidate, but this time polled just over 3 per cent of the vote. Similarly, in the Jaffna constituency, C. X Martyn who stood in the

1970 elections as the successful FP candidate gained 35 per cent of the vote. However, in the 1977 elections, standing as independent he also gained just over 3 per cent of the vote (1979:186). The FP's failure to mobilise new voters does not, however, diminish its political significance. Instead, its activities worked to establish the Tamil nationalist framework as the 'banal' and taken for granted framework of political contestation (Billig 1995). In other words, the FP's activities were decisive in establishing the principle of territorial autonomy as core to Tamil politics, a principle that has since to be invoked by all actors seeking Tamil support, whatever the actual political motivations.

8.3.3 Erasing intra-ethnic cleavages

The Tamil nationalist platform, like Sinhala Buddhism, was also not a mere assertion of organic ethnic solidarity, but a complex political project that involved a recognition of, and effort to mediate, the pluralism within. While seeking equality with the Sinhalese, the FP also sought to regulate the differences of caste, region and religion within the Tamil category through the principle of equality, expressed through the notion of 'non-domination'; that is, no one section (however defined) would dominate the other. In terms of religion, for example, the party made explicit commitments to secularism (Wilson 1994:75). As discussed in Chapter Six, the differences between Christians and Hindus had largely been overcome by the late colonial period through a shared understanding of Tamil identity and interest as political and cultural; Chelvanayagam, the pre-eminent Tamil leader of this period, was Anglican (1994:50), whilst one of his principal lieutenants, C. Vanniasingham, was an orthodox Hindu (1994:64). The principle of secularism was therefore enshrined this historically created framework – and was intended as a means of also including the Tamil speaking Muslim population. However, although the FP had some success in mobilising Muslim support, it was not able to successfully incorporate Muslim voters stably into its electoral base. This is

primarily because Muslim associational activity from the late nineteenth century had primarily identified Muslim cultural and political interests in terms of religion (Samaraweera 1997) and as therefore distinct from Tamil public culture organised around language and culture, as well as the explicit demand for Tamil – Sinhala political equality.

The principle of non – domination was also intended to cover the issue of caste (Wilson 1994:74). Caste hierarchy continued to exist in much of Tamil social and cultural life, particularly in the Jaffna peninsula and was to some extent reflected in voting behaviour; for example, the CP and LSSP had a base amongst caste groups subject to the practices of untouchability in two Jaffna constituencies - Udipudy and Nallur (Jupp 1979:143; De Silva 1979:241, 277). The issue rose to prominence in the late 1960's as a number of associations amongst caste groups treated as untouchable began to organise protests demanding entry into temples; often being met by organised violence from upper caste temple patrons (Pfaffenberger 1990). By the early 1970's, partly as a result of these protests, caste began to figure more prominently in the FP's activities. Caste figured in the six point programme adopted by an FP led coalition of Tamil parties in 1972 (Ponnambalam 1983:178) and a number of FP leaders began to suggest positive discrimination measures such as those adopted in India to alleviate the effects of caste hierarchy and exclusion (INT 20).

The attitudes of FP politicians towards caste were mixed; most, including SJV Chelvanayagam, were members of the dominant landowning caste and some were known to be rigidly observant of caste hierarchy in their own lives. Others such as Navaratnam, the FP MP for Chavakachcheri, engaged publicly in activities – such as intercaste dining and the cleaning of latrines in lower caste houses - that were intended to symbolically overturn caste hierarchy (INT 20). These activities copied Gandhi's approach to caste; by publicly

engaging in activities that broke caste taboos, such as cleaning latrines (a task normally reserved for castes treated as untouchable) Gandhi sought to undermine upper caste prejudice whilst retaining other aspects of Hindu practice and belief. The FP's approach to caste was therefore very much in keeping with the dominance of the Indianist rather than Dravidian strand of Tamil revivalism; the DK's wholesale rejection of Hindu belief and practice remained absent as a substantial or visible part of Tamil associational activity in Sri Lanka in the post-independence period. Caste also became a category of political representation; in the 1977 elections T. Rajalingam, the successful TULF candidate for Udupiddy (Jaffna), was from a formerly untouchable or Dalit caste. His campaign involved extensive canvassing by members of the FPs youth wing who were deployed to win support for the candidate amongst the predominantly upper caste voters (INT 20; INT 21).

Caste remains an important aspect of Tamil society – influencing, for example, marriage patterns amongst both Christians and Hindus. However, successive Tamil nationalist actors – the FP and the LTTE – have explicitly sought to address the question of caste. The LTTE, for example, adopted positive discrimination measures within its own – by the mid 1990's well developed – military and political structures (INT 23; INT 24; Bose 1994:105). Caste issues have therefore been contained, rather than erased, by Tamil nationalist actors' efforts to create a pan-Tamil (inclusive of caste) national movement. This is of course exactly what happened in India where caste has not disappeared but instead caste based demands have been contained within the Indian constitutional framework.

The attempt to create a unified Tamil national platform also had to address the differences of region. From the mid 1920's onwards, the Jaffna peninsula had become an important centre of Tamil associational activity, mirroring its economic and cultural dominance over the rest of the north-east (Moore

1985:133-4). The activities of the JYC and the ACTC were concentrated mainly in the Northern Province and specifically the Jaffna peninsula. In contrast, the FP sought explicitly to build a support and organisational base that incorporated the northeast as a whole. Its electoral campaigns as well as its mass protests were organised on this regional scale. The eastern port town of Trincomalee was declared as the putative capital of a federal Tamil state (Wilson 1994:73) and N. R Rajavarothiam, the FP MP for Trincomalee, was named the party's vice president at its inauguration in 1949 (1994:32). The FP's first convention in 1951 was held in Trincomalee and was staged as something of a spectacle as party members organised processions from Jaffna and Batticaloa to converge at the convention site; their route physically tracing the geography of Tamil national claims (Navaratnam 1991). The 1956 sit down protest in front of parliament organised by the FP included volunteers from the North as well as the East (1991). Similarly, the 1961 protests brought civil administration to a standstill across the North and the East. Although the FP's electoral base was more far more consolidated in the Northern Province, through a combination of direct mobilisation and the co-option of existing important politicians, the FP was able to mobilise significant electoral support in the East, where it regularly polled an average of 40 per cent of the vote in constituencies with Sri Lankan Tamil majorities.²¹¹

The escalation of the Tamil-Sinhala conflict was therefore a matter of ideology and political process. The Tamil and Sinhala conceptions of national identity, national interest and the ideal orderings of the island's ethnic pluralism are mutually incompatible. This is in contrast to the Dravidian and Indian nationalist conceptions (discussed in Chapters Five and Seven). This ideological antagonism is also not a simple case of identity always being formed in opposition to an oppositional other. Tamil nationalism and Sinhala Buddhist nationalism can both be traced to the late nineteenth century Tamil /

Saivite and Buddhist revivals respectively. As discussed in Chapter Six, these movements did not develop in opposition to each other but rather in response to the same conceptual framework. In the post-independence period, however, the rapid Sinhala Buddhist transformation of the Sri Lankan state, economy and social life was associated with a countervailing Tamil nationalist project. The escalating conflict is an expression of the ideological contradictions between the two projects rather than an outcome of their mere existence as separate bases for identities. Muslim political leaders have for example accepted and worked within the ideological framework of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.

8.3.4 Tamil nationalism and secession

The consolidation of the Tamil nationalist framework also cannot be explained as an outcome of its utility as an instrumental vehicle for a variety of unrelated ends and purposes. For example, at times of intra-Tamil caste conflict, FP leaders may well have mobilised Tamil nationalist rhetoric more or less consciously as a means of subordinating these tensions against the broader Sinhala-Tamil axis of conflict (Pfaffenberger 1990). Some hopeful candidates may have used Tamil nationalist rhetoric as a means of getting elected, still others as a bargaining chip to extract concessions from the government. However, the argument that Tamil nationalist rhetoric could be used to conceal intra-Tamil caste conflict fails to explain why it was meaningful and successful in doing so. The argument that Tamil nationalism was instrumentally used by Tamil politicians to mobilise electoral support similarly fails to explain why they did so in specifically Tamil nationalist terms, rather than for example following Muslim politicians and working within a Sinhala Buddhist framework. Finally, some Tamil politicians may well have been seeking individual political power, rather than a fundamental restructuring of the unitary, centralised Sinhala Buddhist state. However, this also fails to

explain why such a course of action was deemed meaningful; after all Muslim and Sinhala Catholic politicians were able to gain access to public resources and ministerial portfolios by working within the Sinhala Buddhist paradigm. In short, the dominance of Tamil nationalism as an organising principle of politics had an existence outside of the interests that might have been served by it and so cannot be explained as an consequence of these interests.

The escalation of Tamil demands from federalism to independence must also be seen within this ideological framework. The FP's decision to adopt independence can be seen as a response to pressure from the growing armed insurgency (INT 18; INT 19). Amita Shastri has suggested that Tamil politicians made the switch to independence when they saw the possibilities for the economic development of the Tamil speaking regions being realised by state sponsored colonisation schemes and the public investment that followed the nationalisation of the Trincomalee port (1994). The proximate causes that triggered the switch are however, less important than the fact that the demand for secession was logically contained within the framework of stressing Tamil and Sinhala collective political equality. The demand for self determination had been made, perhaps rhetorically but nevertheless meaningfully, by Tamil politicians from as early as 1947 (Wilson 1994:30). Furthermore, the economic potential and viability of the Tamil speaking areas had long been discussed by the FP as a means of promoting its demands for territorial autonomy (1994:69); indeed territorial autonomy had been demanded primarily as a means of realising this potential for the benefit of the Tamils (Navaratnam 1991). The motivations and proximate causes driving the switch were less important than the fact that it was meaningful within the logic of the Tamil conception of national identity and national interest. The difference in 1975 was that the demand for secession was backed not just by a political coalition that could mobilise electoral support but also by a nascent armed insurgency. The armed

movements' objective, independent statehood, clearly had its ideological roots in recent Tamil politics. However, the factors that created an escalation of armed conflict are to be found in the shifts of regional and international politics, rather than in Sri Lanka's political dynamics.

8.4 The regional and international politics of Sri Lanka's ethnic war

The appearance of sustained Tamil nationalist armed militancy in the early 1970's is situated within a context of local, regional and international factors. The adoption of the 1972 constitution was interpreted by many Tamil political actors, particularly youth and student activists, as the door finally closing on the possibility of peaceful constitutional change (O' Duffy 2007:260). On the day the constitution was adopted most of the Jaffna schools were empty as students staged impromptu strikes and held demonstrations burning the Sri Lankan flag (INT 19). Secondly, Tamil public opinion had closely followed the insurgency in East Pakistan, Indian intervention and the formation of Bangladesh in 1972 (Krishna 1999). Tamil students, inspired by the Bangladeshi example, sought to organise material and political support for the Mukthi Bani (the Bangladeshi insurgents); they were unsuccessful and arrested (INT 19; INT 20). Finally, the international context is also important. The late 1960's and early 1970's was the era of armed national liberation struggles, most prominently in Vietnam and in several African locales, and the idea of armed resistance to the state – whether national or from within a Marxist framework – was prevalent. It was in this context that armed opposition to the state emerged on a Tamil nationalist basis in Jaffna, whilst in the Sinhala south the JVP uprising of 1971 was inspired by Marxist and Sinhala nationalist themes (Kearney 1973:202-207). By the mid 1970s, Tamil militants had carried out a small number of attacks on banks and police posts as well as assassinating Tamil politicians seen to be colluding with the Sri Lankan state. However, the

scale of the Tamil militancy at this stage cannot be said to presage the escalation into full-scale civil war during the 1980's. In 1983, the LTTE that had been in existence since 1972 and eventually became the dominant militant group had only carried out a handful of attacks and had only a few dozen members (Balasingham 2004; INT 22). In comparison, armed anti colonial activity in India during World War One and in the immediate post war period was much greater; with at least 51 political assassinations in the 1914-16 period and several thousand arrests, including those of the Ghadr movement (Sarkar 1989:147-8).

The switch from small scale insurgency to full scale civil war turned on a number of other factors. Locally important factors were the escalation of anti Tamil violence from 1977, rising Tamil militancy and a growing militarisation of the Tamil speaking areas, particularly Jaffna. The 1977 elections, and the TULF's spectacular victory on a mandate of secession, were followed by island wide anti Tamil violence. In response, the newly elected President J. R Jaywardene explicitly adopted the language of terrorism in dealing with the growing Tamil insurgency. A Prevention of Terrorism Act was passed in 1979 and the military, now almost completely Sinhalese, was despatched to the north with orders to 'wipe out the terrorists' (Ponnambalam 1983:203). Along with a rising arrests, indefinite detention and extra-judicial executions targeted at individuals suspected of militants links, the growing Sinhala police and military presence in Jaffna also produced an escalation of more general violence. In June 1981, on the eve of local council elections, Sri Lankan police committed widespread arson attacks in Jaffna town, attacking shops, business and the FP offices. They also torched the Jaffna public library along with its 90,000 volumes, including some rare Tamil manuscripts. The simmering insurgency finally tipped into civil war following perhaps the worst episode of anti Tamil violence in July 1983. Jaywardene responded to the violence by

adopting a constitutional amendment that explicitly prohibited secessionist advocacy, prompting the resignation of most TULF parliamentarians who were unwilling to publicly renounce the possibility of secession (Wilson 1988; Bose 1994).

With the possibility of parliamentary protest effectively closed, international factors and wider geo-political concerns were also important in the escalation of conflict (Bose 1994; Krishna 1999). J. R Jayawardene's programme of economic liberalisation and pro-west 'tilt' produced substantial western military and diplomatic support for military efforts against the Tamil insurgents, understood as 'communist terrorists'. Conversely, Indira Gandhi's government, wary of growing US influence on the island, began to arm and train Tamil militants as a means of gaining leverage over Colombo. Sri Lanka's escalation to a full blown civil war was therefore not the inevitable outcome of small scale armed militancy, but the product of a confluence of factors – including the impossibility of finding an accommodation between the rival Tamil and Sinhala Buddhist conceptions of national identity and interest.

8.5 Conclusion

By 1977 two mutually incompatible conceptions of national identity and national interest had become firmly established as organising principles of the island's political life; the Sinhala Buddhist conception was reproduced by political parties and the activities of the state whilst the Tamil conception was reproduced through political parties and later armed movements opposed to the state's project. The rise to political dominance of these two contrasting conceptions cannot be explained through temporally static variables – such as ethnic demography – or indeed the proximate interests and motivations that might have been served through their ascendance. Rather, the dominance of these two conceptions is a matter of political process that can be traced to the

absence of engaged and temporally sustained work to establish a pan-ethnic conception of the nation from the late nineteenth century. As a consequence, mass electoral contestation on the island began in the absence of a shared understanding of how the island's ethnic pluralism could be reconciled with the need for a unified sense of national identity and national interest. Electoral contestation instead established two competing conceptions of reconciling ethnic pluralism and national identity; the hierarchical conception of Sinhala Buddhism and the 'two equal collectives' conception of Tamil nationalism.

Furthermore, this escalation of conflict is not just a matter of the relative extremism or moderation of political leaders, but rather of the logic and political success of the respective national frameworks within which they operated. S.W.R.D Bandaranaike, having led his SLFP to power on a Sinhala nationalist platform, sought to reach an accommodation with the Tamil parties, but was prevented from doing so by growing opposition – including from the UNP – framed in Sinhala Buddhist terms. Then in 1965 when UNP leaders sought to accommodate FP demands for territorial autonomy and language rights, they met stiff resistance both from their own backbenchers and from opposition parties, led by the SLFP. Similarly, the Tamil FP, on two occasions – in 1956 and again in 1965 – agreed to proposals that clearly fell short of its demands for federal autonomy but nevertheless failed to prevent the inexorable centralisation and Sinhala nationalisation of the Sri Lankan state.²¹² Finally, the TULF, despite the strident rhetoric of its 1977 election manifesto demanding an independent Tamil state, came to an agreement with J. R. Jayawardene, the UNP president, on proposals to establish District Development Councils with limited autonomy in the Tamil speaking areas (Wilson 1988). These efforts were thwarted by a number of factors; notably resistance from the cabinet, his own ambivalence, steadily escalating clashes between Tamil insurgents and the military and finally growing collective

violence against Tamils and other minorities that culminated in the 1983 anti-Tamil violence. All of these factors are, however, subordinate to the larger political problem - notably that between the Sinhala Buddhist hierarchical and centralised conception of order on the one hand, and the Tamil conception of equal nations, on the other, there is very little overlapping space in which agreement can be found. Violently clashing political projects, rather than violence per se, has subsequently come to define Sri Lanka's Tamil – Sinhala politics and the still unresolved national question.

9. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the fatefully divergent trajectories of ethnic and national politics in Tamil speaking regions of India and Sri Lanka from the late nineteenth century to 1977. It has argued that this divergence can only be explained as the contingent outcome of competitive and temporally situated processes of political contestation and mobilisation through which the conceptually unavoidable tension between ethnic pluralism, on the one hand, and the need for a unified conception of national identity on the other, was resolved in more or less ethnically inclusive ways. In doing so, it has departed from the extant literature on ethnicity and nationalism and extant explanations for the outcomes in both places. Rather than treating ethnic and national politics as self-evident expressions of ethnic and national identities – themselves explained in a variety of ways – the approach here has been to treat ethnic and national claims as meaningful, conceptually unavoidable and therefore consequential acts of political contestation in the modern era of nation-states and popular sovereignty.

While the study of ethnicity, nationalism and ethnic conflict contains an irreducible plurality of theoretical and methodological approaches, it is nevertheless characterised by a common concern; notably the effort to identify the factors that produce and sustain ethnic and national identities, interests, motivations and affiliations. Some approaches have suggested that ethnicity and nationalism are relatively permanent characteristics of the human condition, linked to basic structures of cognition, social interaction or features of stable social and political structures. Others have suggested that ethnic and national identities, far from being stable factors of the human social condition, are in fact the relatively fleeting and more or less consciously instrumental creations of social and political struggle. The attempt to identify the underlying sources of ethnic and national politics in India and Sri Lanka points

to a bewildering array of factors and processes that could explain the divergent outcomes; notably the more or less consciously instrumental tactics of self seeking politicians, patterns of ethnic demography, the more or less enlightened decisions of political leaders, the integrity of party structures and finally the discursive practices of the colonial state and / or revivalist actors.

What all of these potential causal explanations cannot adequately capture, however, are the striking similarities across the two cases, the Tamil-speaking areas of South India and Sri Lanka, in the range of interests pursued by self seeking politicians, the patterns of ethnic demography, the array of ethnic and national discourses adopted by colonial and revivalist actors, as well as the levels of political moderation and or excess exercised by leaders and or their followers. Instead of attempting to identify the sources of ethnic or national identities, and thereby the causes of their potential conflict or accommodation, this dissertation has sought to explain the similarities and divergences in the two case studies by treating ethnic and national claims primarily as meaningful and therefore consequential statements of political contestation.

The nation and ethnicity are thus understood as central and unavoidable concepts of political contestation, rather than as vehicles to express or invoke underlying interests or identities. As political concepts, the nation and ethnicity – along with related terms – act as the frames that shape the experiences, expression and description of identities and interests as well as the struggles to secure them. This analysis of the conceptual characteristics of the nation and ethnicity draws on the work of Koselleck and the techniques of conceptual history with which he is closely associated. In this way, the nation and ethnicity, along with their close cognates and synonyms, are understood as terms imbued with a forward reaching temporality that reach out to establish future possible social and political worlds, rather than to capture existing reality.

The political meanings of the nation and ethnicity are defined by their close relationship to the principle of popular sovereignty. The nation functions in political language as a metonym for the notion of the general will – the operative principle of popular sovereignty – and in doing so conveys both political and ethnic meanings. The nation as general will requires an accommodation of the plethora of partial interests or wills competing in society while the nation as pre-political community requires a harmonisation of the pre-political ethnic diversity of the population into a culturally and historically unified national whole. The nation, ethnicity and linked terms such as communal are thus situated in a semantic field in which terms and issues define the boundaries of political community and the legitimate uses of public authority. Popular sovereignty demands that the power of the state, or public authority, should only be moved in the national interest and competing protagonists in political struggle put forward alternative conceptions of the national interest and, relatedly, national identity. Yet, the nation is also a pre-political entity and in order to contest the definition of the national interests political protagonists must have a shared understanding of the terms through which plural ethnic categories are accommodated within a culturally and historically unified conception of the nation. The nation is thus not more or less civic or ethnic, but more or less inclusive of the ethnic pluralism found within the boundaries of all states.

The analysis presented in this dissertation shows that the difference between ethnic accommodation and ethnic conflict is a matter of contingent, in that they could have been otherwise, processes of political organisation and mobilisation in which more or less ethnically exclusive national identities are asserted, contested and more or less successfully established as dominant frameworks of political contestation. In essence, central to the explanation of Sri Lanka's descent into ethnic conflict and India's peaceable accommodation

of Tamil politics are the contingent and temporally situated processes through which dominant conceptions of Indian and Sri Lankan national identity came to be framed in ways that accommodated or excluded politically dominant conceptions of Tamil identity and interest.

There are two distinctive features of these divergent trajectories that make the Indian and Sri Lankan cases uniquely comparable. Firstly, a shared and connected historical experience of British colonial rule, subsequent competitive democratic politics and comparable social and economic conditions have been associated with a striking synchronicity in political developments marked by a similar range of politically significant ethnic categories. In both India and Sri Lanka, from the late nineteenth century, there have been significant political movements that have invoked, in overlapping ways, differences of religion, language, race, caste and region. Secondly, Sri Lanka's post independence history of violently escalating ethnic conflict framed in Tamil – Sinhala terms and the peaceable accommodation of Tamil politics within the Indian national framework, could not easily have been predicted from the range of political movements apparent in the early decades of the twentieth century. Politics in colonial Sri Lanka was marked by intra-Sinhala and intra-Tamil caste and religious conflict, intra-regional Sinhala conflict (between low country and Kandyan Sinhalese) while the most notable incident of pre-independence collective violence was directed by Sinhala Buddhists against Muslims. Meanwhile, in colonial India, the south Indian Dravidian movement's opposition to the Congress movement was comparable to Muslim nationalism in the types of claims it made and in its initial sources of support. Finally, the south Indian Tamil protests (1965-7) against Congress led attempts to introduce Hindi as the 'official' language arguably expressed a much greater level of violent antipathy towards the Indian government than the largely peaceable demonstrations by Sri Lankan

Tamils (1958-62) against the adoption of Sinhala as the only official language in Sri Lanka.

The dissertation explains the emergence of escalating ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and peaceable ethnic accommodation in India, despite the apparently unpromising beginnings of both, as a consequence of the contingent outcomes of competitive political mobilisation in which the nation and related ethnic categories functioned as meaningful and unavoidable categories of political contestation. In Sri Lanka, the Sinhala Buddhist conception of national identity was politically more successful than a pan-ethnic conception, while in India the pan-ethnic conception was politically more successful than the Hindu nationalist conception. These differences in the relative success and failure of differing conceptions of national identity and interest were furthermore not due to pre-given structural differences but rather, the success of ethnic and national movements depended on their ability to mobilise a diverse array of existing interests and motivations – in a temporally continuous way - in support of their specific claims and demands. Although the interests and motivations mobilised by ethnic and national movements are often only incidentally related to the movement's claims and assertions, the social and political consequences of successful and politically dominant movements are nevertheless closely linked to their core ideological frameworks. Successful ethnic and national movements have transformative social and political consequences that are in keeping with their core ideological claims, but these effects are often quite separate from the often unrelated ends and interests pursued by self regarding actors who are invariably associated with any successful movement. In short, the consequences of ethnic and national movements cannot be explained by the various ends pursued and/ or satisfied through such movements.

There are a number of implications from the arguments presented here both for the study of ethnicity and nationalism, and also for ongoing debates about the means of resolving ethnically framed conflict. In terms of the still unresolved question of whether nationalism is an inherently modern phenomenon, the argument presented here would suggest that the present meanings and consequences of national and ethnic politics are tied to a modern conceptual framework and could not have had the same meanings prior to the conceptual shifts associated with the processes of modernisation and in particular the principle of popular sovereignty linked to the modern territorial state. Secondly, and as a consequence of the close conceptual connection between the nation and popular sovereignty, national conceptions of political community are never either exclusively civic or ethnic but rather more or less inclusive of the ethnic pluralism contained within the boundaries of almost all states. Departing from the extant approaches to ethnicity and nationalism, this thesis has also suggested that the outcomes of ethnic conflict and ethnic accommodation cannot be explained in terms of the factors that reproduce ethnic identities or the activities of self-seeking politicians; ethnic pluralism and self seeking political actors can be found in situations of ethnic conflict and ethnic accommodation. Rather, the outcomes of ethnic conflict or ethnic accommodation can only be explained as outcomes of temporally situated effects of nationalist mobilisation and the more or less ethnically inclusive conceptions of identity and interest that successful movements are able to establish as dominant and organising principles of political contestation.

Finally, the arguments presented here have important implications for ongoing debates about how best to manage ethnic pluralism and ethnically framed conflict. There are broadly two mutually antagonistic approaches; the first that can be labelled 'accommodationist' favours a political framework that explicitly recognises ethnic diversity while a second, labelled 'integrationist', advocates a

framework that would marginalise ethnic groups in favour of a unified national identity. Those who advocate 'integrative' approaches suggest that accommodating ethnic identities will simply entrench and exacerbate ethnic divisions while those who advocate accommodative policies reply that integrative approaches simply entrench the political dominance of the largest ethnic group whilst perpetuating the marginalisation of ethnic minority groups. These debates continue to be vital in relation to Sri Lanka's ongoing and seemingly intractable ethnic conflict. The analysis presented here suggests, however, that ethnically inclusive politics is not a matter of institutional reform but is rather an outcome of political mobilisation, particularly oppositional mobilisation.

The example of India suggests that accommodative politics produce accommodative institutions, rather than the other way around. Furthermore, and contrary to the claim that ethnic politics undermines national unity, the Indian example suggests that national unity is created by the recognition and accommodation of ethnic pluralism through temporally situated processes of political mobilisation, rather than by the transcending of ethnic difference. Opinion poll surveys in Tamil Nadu attest to this accommodation rather than transcendence of ethnic identity. The proportion of people in Tamil Nadu expressing a regional only identity (34 per cent) is higher than the average for the other Indian states (12 per cent), while at the same time, the proportion of people in Tamil Nadu expressing trust in central Indian institutions – such as the central government (58 per cent) and the army (82 per cent) – is higher than the average for the Indian states: 30 per cent and 64 per cent respectively (Stepan et al 2001:136-7). This outcome, the dissertation argues, is the result of the trajectory of national politics in India and its relationship to the emergence of a conceptually modern Tamil cultural identity. Indian nationalist mobilisation in the Tamil speaking areas did not override the emergence of a

distinct Tamil public culture, but rather incorporated it as both a vehicle and object of the Indian identity and interest; Indian nationalism in effect became Tamil in the Tamil speaking regions.

The implications for ethnic conflict resolution are clear; it is not a matter of institutions but of politics and more particularly the types of ethnic and national identity that have become politically dominant. In Sri Lanka this means that the prospects of peaceable ethnic accommodation will depend on the ongoing political salience of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist conception of ethnic hierarchy, on the one hand, and the Tamil nationalist conception of ethnic equality, on the other. If these identities remain politically salient, then the alternatives of either integrative or accommodative institutions will simply behave in ways predicted by their critics: integrative institutions will perpetuate Sinhala Buddhist dominance while accommodative institutions will entrench the separate spheres of Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil politics. The latter may however, be the least worst outcome and more in line with extant political realities.

10. Appendices

Appendix One: Population Statistics

Table One

India 1891	
Total Population	287, 223, 431
Madras Population	35, 630, 440
Tamil Speakers	15, 229, 759
Hindu	187, 937, 450
Muslim	50, 121, 585
Christian	1, 862, 634

- Figures taken from the Census of India 1891 (Government of India 1892)

Table Two

India 1921	
Total Population	318, 942, 480
Madras	42, 794, 155
Tamil Speakers	18, 780, 000
Hindu	216, 735, 000
Muslim	68, 735, 000
Christian	4, 754, 000

Indo European Language Speakers (Hindi, Hindustani, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Urdu, Maithili)	232, 846, 549
Dravidian Language Speakers (Tamil, Telugu, Kandadam, Malayalam)	64, 128, 052

- Figures taken from the Census of India 1921 (Government of India 1922)

Table Three

Distribution of Indian Muslim Population in 1921			
Province	Muslim Population	Muslim Population as per cent of total provincial population	Muslim Population as per cent of total Indian Muslim population
Bengal	25, 210, 810	54	43
United Provinces	6, 481, 032	14.25	11
Punjab	11, 444, 321	55.33	20

- Figures taken from Hasan (1991:10)
- While these three provinces contained 84 per cent of the population, the remaining 16 per cent were distributed across Madras, Bombay, Central Provinces and the Princely States.

Table Four

Sri Lanka 1891	
Total Population	3, 007, 789
Sinhalese	2, 041, 158
Tamil	723, 853
Muslims	197, 166
Malays	10, 133

- Figures taken from Census of Ceylon 1891 (Government of Ceylon 1892)

Table Five

Sri Lanka 1921	
Total Population	4, 498, 605
Sinhalese	3, 016, 154
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Country • Kandyan 	1, 927, 057 1, 089, 097
Sri Lankan Tamils	517, 623
Indian Tamils	602, 735
Others (mainly other Indians, Burghers & Europeans)	77, 426
Muslims	284, 964
Buddhists	2,743,702

Hindus	964,927
Christians	443, 043

- The religious composition of the Low Country Sinhalese was majority Buddhist (86.26 per cent) and minority Christian (13.69 per cent)
- The religious composition of the Kandyan Sinhalese was overwhelmingly Buddhist (99.26 per cent)
- The religious composition of the Sri Lankan Tamils was majority Hindu (83.01 per cent) and minority Christian (15.79 per cent)
- The religious composition of the Indian Tamils was majority Hindu (89.01 per cent) and minority Christian (8.21 per cent).
- The ethnic composition of the Christian population was as follows: Low Country Sinhalese (59.49 per cent), Sri Lankan Tamil (18.42 per cent), Indian Tamils (11.16 per cent) and others – mainly Burghers and Europeans (14.93 percent).
- Figures taken from Census of Ceylon 1921 (Government of Ceylon:1923)

Appendix Two: Sri Lanka Electoral Statistics

Northern & Eastern Province / FP (TULF in 1977) per cent share of the votes polled								
		1952	1956	Mar 1960	Jul 1960	1965	1970	1977

Eastern Province	Batticaloa	0	51.22	46.86	51.81	42.76	32.66	24.33
	Batticaloa 2			0	4.3	0	0	20.49
	Kalkudah	0	0	47.83	58.39	34.93	37.77	42.70
	Padiruppu	0	49.14	61.82	66.05	51.14	48.52	48.80
	Trincomalee	45.32	56.62	70.70	64.32	59.87	47.83	45.65
		1952	1956	Mar 1960	Jul 1960	1965	1970	1977
Northern Province	Chavakacheri	27.45	64.23	64.73	85.33	68.77	54.33	63.08
	Jaffna Town	39.36	32.34	29.19	31.26	30.71	35.48	56.43
	Kankesanthurai	42.44	53.75	66.79	87.98	57.62	44.09	84.90
	Kayts	6.42	70.61	56.07	81.11	69.37	53.14	63.83
	Kilinochchi			41.21	71.78	44.31	46.39	73.22
	Kopay	44.29	53.15	47.84	66.94	51.15	55.50	76.86
	Manipay							83.48
	Mannar	0	52.69	46.93	55.49	39.25	48.70	51.44
	Mullaitivu							52.16
	Nallur			48.95	64.92	44.88	44.47	89.05
	Point Pedro	0	20.47	39.91	66.75	45.98	48.28	55.59
	Udupiddy			18.02	37.91	32.67	46.24	63.18
		1952	1956	Mar 1960	Jul 1960	1965	1970	1977

N Province	Uduvil			43.62	62.45	48.04	49.07	
	Vavuniya	0	0	0	42.08	24.87	42.80	58.82
	Vaddukodai	18.96	57.12	52.81	71.05	60.09	50.17	71.21
	FP seats won out of Total Available	2 out of 13	8 out of 13	14 out of 18	14 out of 18	12 out of 18	12 out of 18	17 out of 19
	Average FP vote	15.79	43.03	43.52	59.44	44.89	43.63	59.22

- Figures collated from De Silva (1979)
- New constituencies were created through fresh boundary delimitations in 1960 and 1977. The 1977 changes eliminated the Uduvil Constituency. In the 1960 changes Batticaloa was made into a two member constituencies, each registered voter was given two votes and the two highest scoring candidates were elected.
- In 1977 the FP led a coalition of Tamil parties (that included the ACTC) – called the TULF.
- In the Northern Province Constituencies the bulk of the non FP vote went to the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC). In the Eastern Province it was won mainly by UNP candidates or independents. The percentage share of ‘non Tamil parties’ (ie other than the FP or ACTC) was a high of 25.1 per cent in 1952 and reached a low of 14 per cent in 1960. In the Northern Province the non Tamil vote went to Marxist parties while in the Eastern Province it went to the UNP or independents (Jupp 1978:139).

- Where a zero is shown the FP did not contest.

Appendix Three: List of Interviews

Indian Politicians, Journalists, Activists and Officials

Mr. Ramachandran	Congress party member. Father was Congress party member. Tinnellvely District party Secretary from 1957 to 1964
Mr. Nallakannu	Communist Party India (CPI) member from 1949. Previously member of Tamil Nadu Secretariat, currently secretary of the CPI Agricultural Workers Union
Mr. Thiagarajan	CPI member from 1962 member of the State Secretariat (Tamil Nadu) and National Council
Mr. K. Thirunavukarasu	Dravidian movement activist and writer, founder of the Nam Nadu Achagam (press) that now publishes amongst other things Nakeran, a Tamil Language weekly satirical magazine
Mr. Nedumaran	Tamil activist. Student member of the DMK during the early 1950's. Left to join Congress during the 1960's and became a frontline leader. Currently leader of the Tamil National Movement, a non party political organisation.
Mr. Era Sezhian	Founder member of the DMK. Member of Lok Sabha from 1962 – 1977 and member of Rajya Sabha from 1978 – 1984.

Mr. K. Subbu	Politician. Initially member member of CPI, crossed over to DMK and served as DMK State Assembly Member from 1971- 1975.
Dr. Malaiswamy	Retired IAS officer, currently serving as AIADMK member of Rajya Sabha.
Mr. K. Anandan	Sri Lankan Tamil poet and political activist. Political activist with the Federal Party during the 1960's. Author of nationalist songs and poems that were popular during the Federal Party period. Continues to write about the civil war in Sri Lanka. Currently living in exile in Chennai.
Mr. Aasan	Editor Viduthalai, a daily Tamil language newspaper produced by the DK
Mr. Poongondran	Organising Secretary, Dravida Kazhagam
Mr. Arivukarasu	Organising Secretary, DK
Mr. R Khan	DMK member and Labour minister in DMK Government between 1996 - 2001.
Mr. Kamaraj	Associate editor, Nakeran
Mr. Vaiko	Leader MDMK
Ms Arul Mozhli	Propaganda Secretary, DK
Ms. K. Vijayakumar	Women's Wing Secretary, MDMK

Sri Lankan Tamil Politicians

Mr. G. Ponnambalam	Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP for Jaffna electorate, (2001-10) leader of All Ceylon Tamil Congress, grandson of G. G Ponnambalam
Mr. S. Premachandran	Presently TNA MP for Jaffna electorate, leader of former Tamil militant group Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front
Mr. M Senathirajah	Presently TNA MP for Jaffna electorate, former member of FP youth wing
Mr. R Sampanthan	Presently TNA MP for Trincomalee, first elected to parliament from Trincomalee constituency in 1977 on TULF ticket

LTTE Officials

Mr. Anton Balasingham	Chief Negotiator and Political Strategist
Mr. S.P Tamilselvan	Negotiator, Head of Political Wing
Mr. B. Nadesan	Negotiator and head of Tamileelam Police Services
Mr. S. Puleedevan	Secretary General of Peace Secretariat

11. Endnotes

¹ Until 1972 Sri Lanka was known as Ceylon. For convenience the dissertation will use Sri Lanka throughout.

² The proximate ‘trigger’ for the anti-Tamil rioting of July 1983 is often attributed to the ambush by LTTE guerrillas on an army patrol that killed 13 soldiers – then the most serious attack by Tamil militants. This account, one routinely cited in media reports, holds that anger amongst the Sinhala majority erupted into communal rioting as emotions ran high during the state funerals held for the troopers. However, several scholarly accounts of the pogrom detail the organised targeting of Tamils and their homes and businesses, with the rioters going street by street using electoral lists. For example, Kenneth Bush details the role played by government actors in his discussion of the pogrom (2003: 128–34). Newton Gunasinghe, in his seminal discussion of the economic and social impact of the rapid liberalisation after 1977 under the government of President J.R. Jayawardene traces how this had resulted in a strengthening of trade-oriented activities (advantaging Tamil businesses) and weakening local manufacturing (dominated by Sinhala ownership) adding an ethnic logic to simmering economic resentments. Other scholars place the pogrom within a longer history of anti-Tamil violence in an increasingly Sinhala nationalist state. As Sankaran Krishna (1999:67) notes, the period since independence has been “punctuated by bouts of annihilatory violence, often called pogroms, directed against the Tamils in 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981 and 1983.” In his view, these “periodic explosions of violence against Tamils represent efforts to put them back in their places on grounds they have become too assertive and need to be taught a lesson” (1999:54). This “physical discrimination” against the Tamils, as Nithiyanandam puts it, stemmed not only from the use of state (military) violence against Tamils, but also that when anti-Tamil rioting took place, “governments in power, by and large, condoned these” (2000:300). For a detailed account of the July 1983 pogrom, see Thornton and Niththyananthan (1984).

³ For a critical discussion of this idea, see Yack (1996).

⁴ For a discussion of the lack of correlation between success in terms of robust political mobilisation and success in terms of realising political objectives see Chapter Four.

⁵ For a discussion of the historical sources of this distinction, as well as a critical reformulation, see Zimmer (2003).

⁶ See, for example, Kohn (1967) Greenfeld (1992) and Ignatieff (1993).

⁷ For criticisms of this approach, see Brubaker (2004), Calhoun (2007) and also Yack (1996).

⁸ For example, by the late 1970's the central pole of Sri Lankan Tamil politics had shifted from the demand for federal autonomy, first articulated shortly after independence, to the demand for independent statehood – Tamil Eelam – articulated most resoundingly by newly formed Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) sweeping the Northeast in 1977 elections, having campaigned on this single issue a platform. Meanwhile in India the ADMK, having recently adopted the All India prefix, resoundingly won the 1977 Tamil Nadu state assembly elections to become the governing party, reflecting the comprehensive integration of the state into the Indian union.

The rapid developments in Sri Lanka after 1977 also make the historic period since qualitatively different from preceding decades. Its dominant themes were the overt militarization of state response to Tamil demands, armed militancy replacing the ineffectual parliamentary politics as the dominant mode of Tamil mobilisation, and also the establishment of important and complex connections between south Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil politics, as well as covert, and later overt, involvement of the Indian central government in the armed conflict. As Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis intensified in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the Indian government began to fund and train Sri Lankan Tamil militants (O' Duffy 2007; Balasingham 2004; Bose 1994), primarily as a means of checking the increasingly pro-west orientation of the Colombo government (Krishna 1999). At the same time the anti-Tamil violence including the 1983 pogrom led to mass demonstrations of sympathy in Tamil Nadu for both the Sri Lankan Tamils' political grievances and for Tamil militant movements, many of whom established bases in Tamil Nadu and close links with the central government in Delhi. Widespread support for the militants in Tamil Nadu, including from the charismatic AIADMK Chief Minister Maruthur Gopalan Ramachandran (known by the initials MGR), who provided public endorsement and financial support for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in particular (Balasingham 2004:62). Indian involvement in Sri Lanka's armed conflict reached a zenith with the deployment from 1987 to 1991 of tens of thousands of Indian troops – the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) – to disarm Tamil militants and enforce an agreement – the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 – to effect a solution to the island's ethnic conflict. These developments have established a set of complex and contentious four way interactions between Sinhala dominated Colombo governments, Sri Lankan Tamil political actors (now including the west-based Diaspora), Tamil Nadu parties and the government in Delhi that remain central to the Tamil question in Sri Lanka today. However, this complex set of interactions have taken place against a backdrop of contrasting relations of peaceable accommodation between Tamil Nadu and Delhi on

the one hand, and ongoing violent confrontation between the Sri Lankan Tamil population and Colombo on the other, relations that had become crystallised by the late 1970's through the political processes that had begun in the late nineteenth century, and which are the focus of this dissertation.

⁹ For a discussion of the transformations associated with British rule in India, see Goswami (2004) and Washbrook (1988, 2004). For Sri Lanka see chapters 18-23 in De Silva (2005), Snodgrass (1966) and Mills (1964).

¹⁰ The discussion of the eighteenth century British transition from trade to empire in India draws on Bayly (1988) and Marshall (2005).

¹¹ In the last years of the eighteenth century at least 2 million men circulated in India's military market place looking for employment in the armies of competing regional states (Kolff 1990:110-16) quoted in (Washbrook 1999:4050].

¹² This account is taken from Mills (1964), Jeffries (1962) and de Silva (2005).

¹³ This reflected parliament's growing insistence on controlling distance territorial possessions (Marshall 2005).

¹⁴ For a history of the rise of low country Sinhalese commercial groups see Roberts (1982).

¹⁵ The 1891 census did not distinguish between the two. Indian Tamil labour migration at this time was to a substantial extent cyclical and also unregulated. As tea plantations replaced coffee plantations the demand for labour became less seasonal and the labourers became more settled on the island. The 1921 Census did distinguish between the two populations. It shows that the total Tamil population of 1, 120, 358 – consisted of 602, 735 Indian Tamils (54 per cent) and 517, 623 Sri Lankan Tamils (46 per cent). See Appendix Two, Table Five.

¹⁶ In this sense liberal imperialism is in Koselleck's sense an ideology, one of a series of "isms" that 'projected historical movement into the "future perspective" and thereby sought their vindication (2004:248).

¹⁷ For British official attitudes towards India from the mid nineteenth century see Gopal (1965) and Metcalfe (1965), for Sri Lanka see Mills (1964) and also Wickramasinghe (1995).

¹⁸ The failure of pan-ethnic national politics in Sri Lanka is discussed further in Chapter Six.

¹⁹ This account is taken from Gopal (1965), Sarkar (1989) and Metcalfe (1965).

²⁰ From the mid nineteenth century Indians were also nominated to participate in local government bodies. The elective principle, on a restricted franchise, was first introduced to local bodies in 1882 by the liberal Viceroy Lord Ripon who promoted elected Indian majorities on local bodies as a means of promoting 'self confidence among the educated masses of India and to train them for participation in government' (Gopal 1965:164).

²¹ As in India there was greater change at the level of local government, during the 1860's Municipal Councils were established for Galle, Colombo and Kandy with an electorate based on a restricted franchise that included Sri Lankans (Mills 1964)

²² See Chapter Five for further details.

²³ This account is taken from de Silva (2005), Wickramasinghe (2006) and Russell (1982)

²⁴ In India the franchise was extended to 6.5million people out of a total population of 306 million (Sarkar 1989:36, 337). In Sri Lanka the franchise was extended in 1921 to just over 53, 000 (de Silva 1979:79-82) out of a total population of just under 4.5million.

²⁵ For India see Washbrook (1976) and Baker (1976) and for Sri Lanka see Russell (1982).

²⁶ There is a large literature on the social classifications of colonial rule – particularly in relation to India. Examples include Cohn (1987, 1996), Dirks (2001), King, R (1999) and Pandey (1990). For Sri Lanka see Wickramasinghe (2006), Rogers (2004) and Scott (1999).

²⁷ For contrasting accounts of the impact of British colonialism on the caste system see Dirks (2001) and Bayly (1999). Similarly for contrasting accounts of British colonialism on religiously motivated collective violence see Bayly (1985) and Pandey (1990).

²⁸ For details see (Trautmann 2004: Chapter 5, 6).

²⁹ For accounts of the Aryan narrative of Indian history see Goswami (2004), Van der Veer (2001) and Trautmann (2004)

³⁰ This account of caste is taken from (Bayly 1999, 1-24)

³¹ For discussions of these competing approaches to caste see Dirks (2001), Bayly (1999) and Pandian (2007)

³² As Baker notes the '1891 Census in Madras set out to catalogue subcastes defined by interdining and intermarriage: it counted up to 25, 000 before giving up and admitting that the list was far from complete' (1976:4).

³³ For contrasting views on this issue see articles by Harriss (2002) and Rajadurai and Geetha (2002).

³⁴ For the commercial rise of the Karava see Roberts (1982), see also de Silva (2005:428)

³⁵ Tamil Saivism is a set of religious practices and beliefs that evolved in the Tamil speaking regions from the 10th Century. It is organised around the principle of Bhakthi – namely the idea that devotional love for the figure of Sivan can bring salvation. The tradition is expounded through a set of Sanskrit and Tamil texts that set out the Savite philosophy or Saiva Siddhanta (Hudson 1992, 1995).

³⁶ For a broad history of the Congress see Sarkar (1989), for a survey of anti colonial politics in Sri Lanka see de Silva (1997) and Roberts (1997b).

³⁷ For Congress revivalism in south India see Arnold (1977), Baskaran (1981), Ramaswamy (1997) and Subramanian, L (1999)

³⁸ For a useful overview see Ozkirimli (2000).

³⁹ See for example Fearon and Laitin (2003)

⁴⁰ For example Brubaker (1996)

⁴¹ Varshney (2003)

⁴² This is the approach of the modernist accounts of nationalism – Gellner (1983), Anderson (1991) and Brueilly (1993).

⁴³ Smith (1986), Hutchinson (2005).

⁴⁴ See (Horowitz:143-5) for a summarised version of this. Interestingly the argument is set out using a Sinhalese folk story about the relative characteristics and merits of the Tamils and Sinhalese from Sri Lanka.

⁴⁵ 'The cutting edge of comparison and conflict is the juxtaposition of backward and advanced groups. For certain groups, the discovery that ethnic strangers had mastered skills associated with the colonial rulers more completely than they themselves had, compounded and perpetuated the humiliation of the colonial experience.' (166)

⁴⁶ See chapter five

⁴⁷ For an analysis of Congress attempts to incorporate Tamil cultural revivalism and Muslim politics see chapter five. For an extended discussion of the relationship between Congress and Muslim nationalism see Hasan (1988:1991).

The careers of the anti-caste leaders EV Ramaswamy Naicker (1879-1973) and B.R Ambedkar (1891-1956) provides an insight into the complex relationship between caste, anti caste mobilisation and Congress' attempt to form a pan Indian nation. Both Ambedkar and Naicker were at times fierce critics of Congress, viewing it as a vehicle for continued upper caste social and political domination. Naicker had been a member of the Congress party, but left in 1925 over a dispute over caste exclusive dining arrangements at a Congress run educational facility. Upon leaving Naicker famously declared that his creed was: 'no god; no religion; no Gandhi; no Congress; and no brahmins' [(Kudi Arasu, 1925) quoted in Dirks (2001:259)]. Similarly Ambedkar famously wrote a polemic entitled 'What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables' (1945) and had a high profile dispute with Gandhi on the question of separate electoral representation for Dalits. However, the two figures later also co-operated with Congress politicians. During the 1950's Naicker supported the Tamil Nad Congress government, led by K. Kamraj, a politician from low caste origins (Kumaradoss:2004). Similarly Ambedkar worked with Nehru and other leading Congress figures and played a critical role in the drafting of the Indian constitution (Corbridge and Harriss 2000:21)(Austin 1972:19). See also Dirks for an analysis of ways in which the anti caste politics of Naicker and Ambedkar, differently, challenged Gandhi's own attempts to reform caste practice (2001:255-275).

⁴⁸ See Chapter Seven

⁴⁹ See Chapter Five

⁵⁰ See Chapter Six

⁵¹ See Goswami (2004), Gould (2004) and Gordon (1974) for a discussion of the complex overlapping and competitive relations between Congress and Hindu nationalisms. For Hindu nationalists attempt to incorporate and co-opt lower caste groups in the post independence period see Hansen and Jaffrelot (2001).

⁵² For Hindu nationalists attempt to incorporate and co-opt lower caste groups in the post independence period see Hansen and Jaffrelot (2001).

It is also important to note that Hindu nationalist themes were apparent in the Tamil speaking areas of south India during the nineteenth century (Pandian 2007) (Suntharalingam 1974). However Hindu nationalist parties have had very little electoral success in Tamil Nadu. There are divergent views on whether Hindu nationalist mobilisation is beginning to undermine the previous predominance of

south Indian Tamil cultural nationalism and its anti Hindu basis; for contrasting views on these issues see articles by Harriss (2000) and Rajadurai and Geetha (2000).

The absence of a clear Hindu-Muslim divide, including in the Tamil speaking areas, is therefore a contingent matter, determined by political process rather than the pre-given structure of ethnic demography.

⁵³ See Chapter Six

⁵⁴ James Jupp describes the internal pluralism of the Sinhala category in the following way: 'Thus a Low Country Sinhala Karawa Christian University educated, professional, Colombo dwelling politician may be totally Westernised in all significant respects, yet be willing to accept astrology, Buddhist dominance, Sinhala communalism and the intervention of the *devales* in order to appeal to his electorate' (50).

⁵⁵ He states:

'This, then, is the irony of the dialectical relationship of the Sinhalese-Buddhist state and Tamil civil society: the state elite's strenuous efforts to homogenise the population within its domains led, ultimately, only to division, discord and confrontation. The process of "nation building", as attempted by those at the apex of the Sri Lankan state, actually facilitated the emergence of a Tamil national consciousness, and eventually precipitated a crisis of the state defined in terms of solidary, exclusivist Sinhalese-Buddhist interest and identity.' (80)

⁵⁶ Manu Goswami quotes the following address by a Congress politician, M. V Bhide, in 1890 to demonstrate Congress' attempts to demonstrate unity out of diversity:

'I know that there are among our critics ... who proclaim with an air of superior wisdom that India is but a geographical expression and that there is no Indian nation as such, but only a congerie of races and creeds, who have no cohesion in them... here in this gathering we have representatives from the most distant provinces, Bengal, Assam, Punjab, North Western Provinces, Rajaputana, Sind, Gujarat, Maharashtra .. but the watchword of these congressman is India, Indians first, Hindus, Muhummadans, Parsees, Christian, Punjabee, Bengali ... afterwards .. the aggregate of those that are resident of one territory...urged by the like impulses to secure like rights and to be relieved of burdens' (quoted in 2004:234).

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the relations between officials and the Congress see Gopal (1965), McLane (1977) and Seal (1968). See also the discussion in Chapter Five.

⁵⁸ During the 1890's in particular Indian nationalist efforts were focussed on Britain, and two leading Congressmen (Dadabhai Naroji and W. C Bonnerjea) were elected to

Parliament in 1892. In this period the activities of the British Committee of the Congress – lecture tours, pamphlets and breakfast meetings – cost more than the annual sessions of the Congress in India. However, enthusiasm began to wane after Bonnerjea and Naroji both lost their seats in the 1895 elections and subsequently parliament passed legislation imposing excise taxes on Indian cotton – to the benefit of the Lancashire mills and the expense of the nascent Indian textile industry. From 1905 the annual Congress sessions simply voted thanks rather than money to the British committee. (McLane 1977:132-140)

⁵⁹ Particularly important were the views of the Muslim political leader and prominent educationalist Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) who stated of the Congress in 1888:

‘I do not understand what the words ‘National Congress’ mean. Is it supposed to mean that the different castes and creeds living in India belong to one nation, or can become (one) nation, and their aims and aspirations be one and the same? I think it is quite impossible... You regard the doings of the misnamed National Congress as beneficial to India, but I am sorry to say that I regard them as not only injurious to our own community but also to India at large.’ (quoted in Gopal 1965:159) See also McLane (1977:105-7).

⁶⁰ Compare James Jupp’s description of Sri Lankan Tamil politics (136-151) in the post independence phase with that of the Sri Lankan Muslims (151-157). For the FP’s early difficulties and subsequent sustained efforts to expand its base see Chapter Eight.

⁶¹ As Jupp notes:

‘While the Tamils have naturally taken up a militant role in defence of their position... [what] distinguishes the Muslims is their almost entirely instrumentalist approach to politics, their repeated party changing, support for independents and refusal, in the main, to be the captive of either of the major parties’ (1978:151-2).

He also notes that one of the two main Sinhala parties the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and its Marxist allies had different types of relationship with the Tamils and the Muslims:

‘The tactic of the SLFP and its Marxist allies was to isolate the Federalists and to show that their methods had worked against the interests of the Tamil majority who still persisted in voting for them. At the same time the SLFP began to make inroads among the Muslims, who also spoke Tamil but were very uncertain allies of the Federal Party’ (1978:140).

⁶² For specific details of the 1956 and 1965 agreements see Wilson (1994) and Navaratnam (1991), for details of the 1981 negotiations see Wilson (1988).

⁶³ For details see Tamil Nation (2007)

[<http://tamilnation.co/conferences/cnfMA66/index.htm>] and Tamil Nation (2007a) [<http://tamilnation.co/conferences/cnfTN68/index.htm>]

⁶⁴ Washbrook (1976) and Baker (1975) provide instrumentalist accounts of south Indian ethnic politics, Brass does the same for north Indian Hindu- Muslim politics (1974).

⁶⁵ Ramaswamy provides a constructivist account of the creation of south Indian Tamil linguistic nationalism (1997) and Wickramasinghe draws on post structuralist approaches to discuss ethnic identities in Sri Lanka (2006).

⁶⁶ Tambiah for example suggests that an important aspect of resolving Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict will involve resolving misperceptions of the island's history (1986:6)

⁶⁷ For example Brass (1974), Stokke (1998) and Bush (2003)

⁶⁸ For example Washbrook (1976) and Baker (1975)

⁶⁹ See note 20 above

⁷⁰ For the politics of caste in colonial Sri Lanka see Russell (1982) and Rogers (2004). For the ongoing role of caste and caste conflict in post independence Sri Lanka see Jupp (1978), Kearney (1973) and Wilson (1979).

⁷¹ For example Romila Tharpar (1989) and Robert Frykenberg (1989) have argued that the notion of a unified Hindu religion emerged during the nineteenth century through the efforts of British officials, missionaries and Hindu revivalists – furthermore that this idea was radically discontinuous with previous theologies. This argument has also informed the view that the notion of a Hindu – Muslim divide is an entirely colonial creation (Pandey 1990). This view of the disjuncture between modern notions of Hinduism and previous has been challenged by amongst others Van der Veer (2001) and Trautmann (1997:64-80) as well as the notion that Hindu-Muslim conflict is a purely nineteenth century phenomenon (Bayly:1985). Likewise while Dirks (2001) emphasises the role of colonial rule in establishing India as a caste society, Bayly (1999) points to the role of caste norms in the pre colonial dynamics of state building as well as the agency of the colonial subjects themselves. There is a similar disjuncture in the literature on Sri Lanka. For example Seneviratne (1999) discusses the role of nineteenth century scholars, officials and religious revivalists in establishing Buddhism as a confessional category. In contrast Malagoda (1976) points to continuities.

⁷² For the imprecise and shifting use of categories in Sri Lanka see Wicramasinghe (1995: Chapter One). For the use of the term nation by Utilitarians and Orientalists in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century India see Trautmann (2004:123, 154-5).

⁷³ This led to British officials claiming that India could not be a nation, i.e. it was not able to exercise self government Sarkar (1989:2). Likewise for Indian nationalists the claim to be a nation was coeval with the demand for self government: see for example Mehrotra (1971:575-60) and discussion in Chapter Five.

⁷⁴ In Sri Lanka the term communal to describe pre political affiliations until the mid 1980's: see for example Colonial Office (1928, 1945), Kearney (1973), Jupp (1978) and Russell (1982). However, from the mid 1980's the term ethnic has become dominant – as for example in Tambiah 'Sri Lanka – ethnic fratricide and the dismantling of democracy' (1985), Wickramasinghe 'Ethnic politics in colonial Sri Lanka' (1995) and Bush 'The intra-group dimensions of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka' (2003).

In India however, the term communal continues to be used alongside the term ethnic. So for example a study by Ornit Shani (2007) on the recent anti Muslim violence in Gujarat is titled 'Communalism, caste and Hindu nationalism: the violence in Gujarat'. However, the term ethnic is used in studies that are more self consciously situated in the political science literature, as in for example Chandra's equation of caste with ethnicity in 'Why ethnic parties succeed' (2004), Varshney (2003) 'Ethnic conflict and civic life' and Wilkinsion (2004) 'Votes and violence: electoral competition and ethnic riots in India'.

⁷⁵ Mill states for example that:

'We have recognised in representative government the ideal type of the most perfect polity, for which, in consequence, any portion of mankind are better adapted in proportion to their degree of general improvement. As they range lower and lower in development, that form of government will be generally speaking, less suitable to them;' (1991:257).

For those 'lower in development' the only hope of betterment, was a government of despotism and one that was potentially foreign.

'Accordingly the civilization of such tribes, when not the result of juxtaposition with others already civilized, is almost always the work of an absolute ruler' (232).

However, the purpose of such despotic government was always that of improvement or progress:

‘We must not, however, forget the reservation necessary in all things which have for their object improvement, or Progress: namely, that in seeking the good which is needed, no damage, or as little as possible, be done to that already possessed. A people of savages should be taught obedience, but not in such a manner as to convert them to a people of slaves. And (to give the observation a higher generality) the form of government which is most effectual for carrying a people through the next stage of progress, will still be very improper for them if it does this in such a manner as to obstruct, or positively unfit them for, the step beyond.’ (234).

⁷⁶ As discussed previously, for a discussion of the sources of national differences and nationhood in Rousseau’s work see Marc F. Plattner, *Rousseau and the Origins of Nationalism* in Orwin and Tarcov 1997.

⁷⁷ A clear statement of this distinction between good ‘civic’ nationalism and bad ‘ethno-nationalism’ can be found in Ignatief (1993).

⁷⁸ As Conolly explains, ‘People do, after all, draw subtle distinctions between concepts of guilt and shame, conflict and competition, manipulation and persuasion, inadvertent and negligent acts, without being able to formulate upon request the complex rules governing these distinctions’ (1993:37).

⁷⁹ For example the Indian Census used the category Hindu whilst noting that the label itself might not be meaningful to many of the individuals categorised as Hindu (Government of India 1891).

⁸⁰ Magnates in Madras were rural notables with substantial landholdings or wealthy urban merchants with income from trade, finance and property who entered politics to protect their economic interests and could also mobilise their networks of economic clients and dependents for political activity. (Washbrook 1976) As a consequence electoral allegiance was a matter of personal connection, than conviction. C. R Reddy a Madras politician noted in 1929 that the ‘general politics of press and platform hardly affect the voting. The landlord, the merchant, and the lawyer have their clientele, and every man his tribe, clan or creed behind him who follow him with sheepish fidelity. In this medievalism, political conviction counts for little.’ (Baker 1976:35) For the importance of patronage networks and local, factional calculations in Muslim politics see Jalal (1994:138-173).

⁸¹ See Appendix One, Table Three

⁸² For the Hindu nationalist orientation of the Bengal Congress see Joya Chatterjii (1994), for the Congress in Punjab see Norman G. Barrier (1967) and for UP see Gordon (1975)

⁸³ Baker suggests that about two thirds of the newly elected Congress candidates in the 1937 Madras provincial legislature were local power holders who had no previous affiliation to the Congress (1976:313). Some established magnates withdrew from the electoral contest when confronted by the prospect of a well organised electoral campaign (267, 303) whilst others simply switched their allegiance to the Congress (268, 313). In UP Jalal argues Congress 'rural activism' during the Civil Disobedience movement persuaded Hindu landlords to accept the Congress ticket. (1994:31)

⁸⁴ In the 1937 elections the league secured only 4.4 per cent of the total Muslim votes cast (7, 319, 445). (Jalal 1994 32, 171) In the 1946 elections, however, it won 75 per cent of the total Muslim votes cast (6, 099, 573). (171). In the 1937 elections most Muslim votes went to large landlords or other candidates able to command the allegiance of significant vote banks. In Punjab independents subsequently joined the Unionist Party – a coalition of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim landlords. Similarly in UP Muslim votes mainly went to landlords. Bengal's Muslim politics was split between east and west. Whereas in the east Muslims were in a majority (and were mostly tenants of Hindu landlords) in the west Muslims were in a minority and included landlords as well as business groups. There were thus two Muslim parties – the Praja Party (or Peasant party) representing Muslim interests in the east and the United Muslim Party formed mainly by Muslim landlord and business interests in the west. Jinnah eventually agreed to the United Muslim Party taking on the name of the Muslim League in Bengal. However, the parties were not cohesive organisations, easily fragmented by factional disputes and defections prompted by the lure of ministerial office. By 1943 Jinnah wanted to distance the League from the deeply unpopular Bengal Ministry which was then presiding over famine conditions. He therefore ordered that League members could not be in government; most of the Bengali Muslim ministers resigned their League membership and stayed in government (Jalal 1994: Chapter One).

⁸⁵ The Landholders Society formed in Calcutta in 1838 asserted an ambition of establishing branches across the British Indian Empire. (Mehrotra 1971:12) In 1851 the Calcutta based British Indian Association communicated with political associations in Madras and Bombay in an effort to present a unified petition to the British parliament as it debated the renewal of the East India Company's charter. (Seal 1968:245)

⁸⁶ See Seal (1968: Chapter 4), Gopal (1965: Chapter 2, 3) and Mehrotra (1971: Chapter 5 and 6).

⁸⁷ The drain of wealth argument was in circulation in upper Indian cities between 1806 and 1818. (Bayly 1988:196)

⁸⁸ See for examples Sarkar (1989:22), Seal (1968:165), Gopal (1965:36–38) and Mehrotra (1971:494–7).

⁸⁹ See Chapter Seven

⁹⁰ See Chapter Seven for discussion

⁹¹ Chapter Two and Trautmann (1997)

⁹² Trautmann (1997:67) and Metcalf (1994:6–15)

⁹³ Peter Van Der Veer characterises Theosophy, and the broader Spiritualist movement of which it was a part, as oppositional movements that contested the late nineteenth century hegemonic alliance of Evangelical Christianity and Imperialism (2001:58–66). He situates Annie Besant's biography within the sociological dynamics and intellectual currents of this movement (63).

⁹⁴ See Pandian (2007:22) for the extent of the Tamil texts in circulation.

⁹⁵ There were multiple and often conflicting uses of the Dravidian idea. While some used it to revive and reform Saivism, the south Indian tradition of worship and theology (Ramaswamy 1997:24–34), others used it to attack religion as a whole and sought to reform south Indian society by appealing to universally applicable humanist principles (Pandian 1999).

⁹⁶ E. V Ramaswamy, the founder of the Self Respect Movement, described his political creed as 'no god, no religion, no Gandhi, no Congress, and no Brahmins.' (Pandian 1999:289)

⁹⁷ Not all Tamil Congress activists were committed to social reform see Pandian (2007:93).

⁹⁸ For example the poet C. Subramania Bharathi (1882–1921) condemned the practise of untouchability but worked very much within a Hindu or Saivite devotional idiom to promote Indian nationalism (Nambi Aroonan 1980:60–62). In the late nineteenth century debates on the issue of child marriage and widow remarriage, both south Indian conservatives and social reformers appealed to the authority of the Sanskrit texts; in other words reform was justified as a return to textual orthodoxy rather than a departure from it (Suntharalingam 1974:83, 311–337) For discussions of the sociological assumptions driving social reform efforts within the Indian nationalist movement see Bayly (1999: Chapter 5, 6) and Dirks (2001: Chapter 11).

⁹⁹ By 1902 only 40 of the 1067 officers of the elite Indian Civil Service were Indians. (McLane 1977:24) A 1924 Royal Commission envisaged a 50 per cent Indianization of the civil service after 15 years. (Sarkar 1989:237)

¹⁰⁰ Direct elections to the provincial legislatures were only introduced with the 1919 Montague Chelmsford Reforms and for the Central Legislature only with the 1935 reforms.

¹⁰¹ In 1896 the Indian Government, under pressure from London, imposed excise taxes on Indian textiles that were beginning to compete with Lancashire cotton. (McLane 1977:134) Indian business interests continued to express frustration at government policy and alleged discrimination in favour of European firms in the 1920's (Sarkar 1989:238) and up to the 1940's (23).

¹⁰² See Chapter Four.

¹⁰³ For a list of the different cities see: <http://www.congress.org.in/new/congress-sessions.php>

¹⁰⁴ The number of Muslim delegates at the Congress sessions grew during its early years; 2 in 1885, 33 in 1886, 79 in 1887 and 222 in 1888. (Seal 1968:329).

¹⁰⁵ See above for dates

¹⁰⁶ In April 1919, police firing into an unarmed peaceful crowd at Jallainwallahbagh (Punjab), under the orders of General Dyer, killed 379 people, according to official estimates but unofficial figures were higher. (Sarkar 1989:191) The incident produced outrage across India and the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore resigned his knighthood in protest (194). The report of the official commission appointed to investigate the incident was published in May 1920 and condemned by Gandhi as a 'whitewash' (196). In the same month as the report the terms of the peace treaty with Turkey were also published and condemned by Indian pan-Islamists (1989).

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the diverse and autonomous (of Congress) movements that propelled these campaigns – often exceeding the limits of Congress' official programme – see Sarkar (1989)

¹⁰⁸ 'The Non – co-operation campaign was initiated by Gandhi and by politicians who had been disappointed by the reforms; the agitations which contributed to the campaign in the southern province, however, were scattered and sporadic and had little to do with the politicians' stated aim of driving the British into the Indian Ocean. Many of them displayed an angry reaction to the recent changes in administration – in particular to new taxes and administrative incursions. Liquor manufacturers

registered a protest against the new excise rules and taxes and helped to give weight to the temperance campaign. Cattle graziers and forest tribesmen, objecting to new regulation of the forests and to new taxes on forest produce, raised an agitation which temporarily undercut the tenuous hold of law and order in the forest tracts.' (Baker 1976:21)

¹⁰⁹ By giving concrete expression to the discontents created by the Depression, the Congress claimed for itself the role of representing popular grievance against government policy and repression. In 1934 Tamil Nadu Congressmen argued that other parties should withdraw from the elections so that 'Congress could demonstrate the strength of public opposition to Government repression' (Arnold 2004:278).

¹¹⁰ The initial phase of the Civil Disobedience movement led to the famous face to face talks between Gandhi and the Viceroy Lord Irwin between in early 1931. Although the talks were largely unproductive in moving the Congress agenda forward (Arnold 2001:152), they were nevertheless symbolically important. 'Gandhi met the Viceroy, face-to-face, as the sole representative of the Congress, and carried on discussions as if they were the commanders of two opposing but unbeaten armies' (152).

¹¹¹ For south India see Baker (1976:37, 72)

¹¹² It was disbanded in early 1920, once the final forms of the Montague Chelmsford reforms had been settled - its members either joined Justice or the Congress (Irschick 1969:166).

¹¹³ For details of the Non Cooperation movement in the Tamil speaking areas see Baker (1976:21), Arnold (1977:46 – 77) and Irschick (1969:193 – 201).

¹¹⁴ For details of Civil Disobedience in the Tamil speaking areas see Arnold (1977:118 – 140), Arnold (2004), and Baker (1976:211-224).

¹¹⁵ Although the Dravidian category in theory applied to all four south Indian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Kannadam and Malayalam) the Self Respect Movement's activities were confined to the Tamil speaking districts as its founder E. V Ramaswami worked in Tamil and English. (Irschick 1969:334)

¹¹⁶ For E. V Ramaswami Naicker's (1879 – 1973) political biography see Irschick (1969:330-350) and Nambi Aroonan (1980:152 -185) and Pandian (1999)

¹¹⁷ In many ways Ramaswami shared his indifference to political power with Gandhi. As Nick Dirks notes:

'Except for a brief moment in his early career, his interest was far less in the representation of non – Brahmins in numerical terms than in the representation of

non Brahmins in symbolic terms; non Brahmins were to be seen both as the majority and as the principal modality of social value. Indeed E.V.R shared a great deal with Gandhi – in his reliance, for example, on the symbolic character of politics, on the necessity of social reform, and in his overriding interest in ideology rather than political process’ (2001:263-4).

Ramaswami’s hostility to the political process, including his refusal to participate in electoral contestation, eventually led to a split with his principal lieutenant C. N Annadurai, who subsequently went onto form the Dravida Munnetra Kalzaham, the party that displaced the Congress from power in Tamil Nadu in 1969. (Ross –Barnett 1976; Chapter 7).

¹¹⁸ For a description of the Congress campaign tactics see Arnold (1977:160 – 174) and Baker (1976:263, 278, 279, 283, 299, 302).

¹¹⁹ ‘The conditions for being accepted as a Congress candidate were simple: one had to sign the Congress pledge, a formula in which the signatory promised allegiance to the Congress programme and goals. There was rarely any close scrutiny of the political antecedents of candidates. It was evident that the Congress was primarily interested in winning and the door to the organisation had been opened as wide as possible to ensure victory.’ (Baker 1976:276) See also (297, 301).

¹²⁰ For the calculations in Punjab see Jalal (1994:143, 144) and for Bengal (151-163).

¹²¹ Ayesha Jalal argues that while Jinnah took a public position on maximum provincial autonomy he always intended to use this as a bargaining chip. The provincial autonomy position was moreover important to Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces, particularly Punjab. What Jinnah actually hoped to secure was adequate Muslim representation at a strong centre for which he would concede provincial autonomy. Jinnah himself had no base in provincial politics and always operated at the national level (1994:10, 57-60).

¹²² In 1933 the Hindu Mahasabha called for the defence of Hindus as well as the capitalists and landlords as a class (Sarkar 1989:332). Similarly inter ethnic parties representing landlord interests dominated electoral politics in the Punjab till the elections of 1945 (Jalal 1994:21, 22) and in the United Provinces until 1937 (29, 30). See also Hasan (1988:210). Finally there was also from the late 1920’s onwards an emergent Communist movement which from the late 1930’s was contained (covertly) as the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) (Sarkar 1989:247-251).

The impact of the 1930’s depression led to widespread peasant or Kisan movements in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Bengal. These movements cut across the Hindu – Muslim barrier. The Kisan movements also led often violent demonstrations and protests

against Congress led ministries. However, neither the Congress nor the League, including Congress Socialists like Nehru and Bose, were willing to make peasant mobilisation a core component of their programme or structure. This is primarily because in the late 1930's the Congress in particular was building a base amongst richer or dominant peasant groups, whose interests were very different from marginal peasants and landless labourers (Sarkar 1989:363-365).

¹²³ While Muslims constituted almost 22 per cent of the total Indian population in 1921, Tamil speakers constituted just under 6 per cent. See Appendix One, Table Two

¹²⁴ (Government of India 1924:109)

¹²⁵ See Chapters Six and Eight

¹²⁶ According to Nira Wickramasinghe Senanayake was the 'prime initiator' of moves which led to the formation of a United National Party in April 1946. The party was nicknamed the 'Until New Parliament' party (1995:223).

¹²⁷ For Senanayake's increasingly prominent role from 1942 onwards see Russell (1982:302-4) and De Silva (2005:554). For Senanayake's close links to Sinhala Buddhist revivalism see De Silva (2005:464) and also Dharmadasa (1992:230, 332-3). In 1931 Senanayake became Minister for Agriculture and was crucial to the adoption of the policy of state subsidised peasant colonisation in the sparsely populated dry zones of the island (Farmer 1957:143-144). Within the Sinhala Buddhist framework the policy of peasant colonisation was seen as a means of re-capturing the 'lost' and 'glorious' Sinhala kingdoms destroyed by south Indian invasions of the dry zone areas – see (Dharmadasa 1992:13, 47, 55, 78) and for Senanayake's role (1992:332-3; Wickramasinghe 1995 124). The distribution of crown lands to peasant proprietors was regulated through the 1935 Land Development Ordinance which explicitly excluded Indians settled on the island from the benefits of the scheme and peasant colonisation effectively became the preserve of the Sinhalese peasant (De Silva 2005:578).

¹²⁸ V. Nalliah, a Tamil representative from the Eastern Province stated during a debate on constitutional reform in November 1945: 'I am not going to differ from the majority of the Sinhalese. I am prepared to accept what today seems to be the majority decision of the majority community, because on them rests the responsibility for taking a correct decision.' (State Council Debates, 8 November 1945; Col 6995)

The following day, Mr. A R A Razik a Muslim representative, referred to the forthcoming constitutional reforms as an 'hour of triumph' for 'the Sinhalese Community' (State Council Debates, 9 November 1945: Col 7064)

As early as 1928, T. B Jayah, a Muslim politician stated: 'I am not afraid of domination by the Sinhalese people. We have no objection to the majority community ruling this country. Let them govern. We will help them.' (Russell 1982:244).

¹²⁹ For the social and intellectual context in which the term 'religion' was used to categorise, administer and then reform south Asian systems of practices and beliefs see Chapter Four. For a discussion of this process in relationship to Buddhism in Sri Lanka see Seneviratne (1999). For a discussion of the role of Tamils in Buddhist revivalist narratives see Dharmadasa (1992:7-14, 120, 138)

¹³⁰ For a brief discussion of colonial archaeology see Dharmadasa (1992:112), for a discussion of British and Sinhala Buddhist approaches to the sites see Rogers (1990:100) and for examples of official patronage and support for Sinhala Buddhist revival activities, specifically in relation to historical sites and relics in the late nineteenth century see De Silva (2005:432) and in the early twentieth century see Wickramasinghe (1995:120).

¹³¹ Peter van der Veer suggests that the Theosophists had a much more important role in the Buddhist revival than the Hindu movement in India. 'The role of Olcott and the Theosophical society in the creation of a particular anti-colonial Hindu nationalism was minor compared to their role in creating Buddhist nationalism.' (Van der Veer 2001:75)

¹³² The central Kandyan kingdom located in the hilly interior of the island was largely outside of European influence until 1815. In contrast the coastal regions, including the Tamil speaking northern regions, had been under Portuguese and then Dutch control from 1505 and also had a far more commercialised society as a consequence of involvement in regional and global trade networks (see Chapter Two). This different historical trajectory produced economic and social differences between the low country and Kandyan Sinhalese. From 1901 the two groups were differently enumerated in the census returns. Sinhalese speakers from the Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa and North Central Provinces were counted as Kandyans. The low country Sinhalese were those within the Western, Southern and North-western province (Wickramasinghe 1995:41). The Kandyans 'were less literate and having held out for two centuries longer against Western penetration than the Low Country Sinhalese, led lives based mainly on the village and ownership of land largely untouched by the commercial developments which had followed the exploitation of tea and rubber estates' (1995). The 1921 Census showed that the Low Country and Kandyan Sinhalese constituted 64 per cent and 36 per cent respectively of the total Sinhalese population.

¹³³ Dagmar Hellmann – Rajanayagam suggests that amongst the recurring themes of Tamil uses of history is the ‘assumed linguistic, cultural, religious and ‘racial’ difference between the Sinhala and the Tamils’ that is always made the ‘basis of the argument, whether for an autonomous Jaffna or for a united, multi-ethnic Sri Lanka’ (1990:118).

¹³⁴ The Dravidian idea was often invoked, particularly during the 1930’s (Russell 1982:148-9). However, it did not have the same anti-Hindi anti Indian meanings associated with the Dravidian idea in south India. Instead in Sri Lankan Tamil politics the Dravidian idea was often invoked alongside the idea of India as the Tamils’ spiritual and cultural home. The Tamil politician R. Sri Pathmanathan stated for example that all ‘of us Tamils owe allegiance to India and are thankful to her for her spiritual gifts and privileges which she gave us.’ He went onto identify the Tamils as Dravidians stating ‘we, Dravidians, have a pre-Aryan culture extending to the time of Mohenjodaro.’ (1982:149) Similarly the 1926 history ‘Ancient Tamils’ written by C. Rasanayagam describes the history of the island as a whole as linked to ‘Tamil – Hindu or Dravidian history’ (Hellman – Rajanayagam 1990:111). As discussed in Chapter Five, in south Indian Tamil politics, history was a narrative of perpetual conflict between Dravidians and Hindus – of Aryan invasion and Dravidian destruction. The Dravidian idea in Sri Lankan Tamil politics was also not tied to the need for radical social reform – including the rejection of Hinduism – as it was with the Self Respect movement in south India. Instead social reform in Sri Lankan Tamil politics was closer to the Gandhian and Congress conception of reform that worked within rather than against the framework of Hindu norms. Finally the Dravidian idea in Ceylon Tamil politics did not become associated with sustained social or political activity.

¹³⁵ Discussions of Navalar’s religious and educational activities as well as contributions to Tamil literary developments can be found in Hellmann-Rajanayagam (1989), Hudson (1992), Bate (2005) and Gunasingham (1999:113-158).

¹³⁶ Peter van der Veer argues that a modern public sphere or public culture emerged in early nineteenth century south India through the three tiered contests between missionaries, the East India Company and the south Indian associations that emerged to meet the missionary challenge to existing beliefs and practices (2001:20-1). See also Pandian (2007:22-3). For the expansion of education and print culture in the Tamil speaking areas of Sri Lanka see Gunasingham (1999:103-8, 121, 124-136).

¹³⁷ Navalar promoted Saivism primarily as a means of salvation: ‘Human birth is rare to obtain, even more so birth in this meritorious land of Bharatha (South Asia) where the Vedas and Agamas, the true books are esteemed. Birth among those who perform

asceticism is even rarer. And most rare of all is birth amongst the lineage of Shaivas' (quoted in Hudson 1992:42). In Navalar's thinking, it is not that Tamils 'owned' Saivism or had a special 'national' obligation to protect Saivism, rather for those born as Tamils, Saivism was the ideal means of salvation.

Similarly one of Navalar's disciples Kopay Sapapathy Navalar (1844-1903) differentiated religious 'consciousness' from other types of affiliation: '... there are several types of consciousness such as caste consciousness and patriotism that are valued by human beings... Caste consciousness, patriotism and language consciousness are aspects of knowledge that one displays in relation to the world outside oneself. (But religious consciousness is not like this). Therefore, human beings should show the greatest regard for religious consciousness above all other types of consciousness.' (quoted in Gunasingham 1999:130-1)

¹³⁸ The study of Tamil literary and religious texts and the production of reliable printed editions of these works became an important locus of concern for Christians and Saivites (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1989:243-5; Hudson 1992, 1995; Gunasingham 1999:103, 143). This eventually led to the promotion and cultivation of Tamil language and literature being a shared concern between Hindus and Christians – for examples (Russell 1982:122; Saveri 1993:152, 331; Gunasingham 1999:152). Christians and Hindus were also jointly involved in the promotion of Carnatic music and Bharathanatyam (Russell 1982:69, 121). However, theological disputes between Christians and Hindus continued and there was ongoing, often violent, conflict between the two over funding for schools and the social status and rights of low caste Christians (Kadirgamar 1980:14, 35-8, 43, 62-3; Saveri 1993). For the ongoing importance of religious and caste affiliations in Tamil politics see Russell (1982:41, 76, 81, 101)

¹³⁹ The total size of the electorate for the 'educated' Ceylonese seat and the conditions for the franchise are given in de Silva (1979:3, 4, 79). The population figure for 1912 is given in Colonial Office (1928, 13).

¹⁴⁰ See de Silva (1979:5) for franchise conditions and Colonial Office (1928:82) for electorate and voting figures.

¹⁴¹ See Appendix One.

¹⁴² P. Ramanathan also had a career in the public service and served as Solicitor General (1892-4; 1894-6) and once as Acting Attorney General (1896-1907) (Wilson 2000:45).

¹⁴³ Don Spater Senanayake (1848-1907) was father of Don Stephen Senanayake (1884-1951) and grandfather of Dudley Shelton Senanayake (1911-1973). Don Stephen Senanayake entered the legislative council in 1924 and became the first Prime

minister of independent Sri Lanka. Dudley Shelton entered the State Council (as it was known in the period of the Donoughmore Constitution) in 1936 and was appointed Prime Minister after his father's death in 1953. He resigned in 1953 following food riots and served again as Prime Minister between 1965 and 1970.

¹⁴⁴ The CNA submitted a memorandum, drafted by Ramanathan, calling for very moderate constitutional reforms in 1890 (Vythilingam 1971:586) and was briefly active again in 1915 following the ethnic violence between Sinhalese and Muslims (Gunasingham 1999:211).

¹⁴⁵ The brother of P. Ramanathan, P. Arunachalam entered the civil service in 1875 and retired in 1913 as Registrar General. He like his brother had wanted to become a Supreme Court judge. (Wilson 2000:49)

¹⁴⁶ The 1921 Census shows that the majority (88 per cent) of the total population of Sri Lankan Tamils (just over half a million) lived in the Tamil speaking northern and eastern provinces. Of the population that lived outside of these provinces just under 40 per cent lived in the Western Province: figures taken from Colonial Office (1928:63, 122, 165). Many of the Sri Lankan Tamils living outside the north-east had white collar employment either in the administrative services or in the private sector (Roberts 1997a:229-230).

¹⁴⁷ Wickramasinghe notes that although 'Tamils were the largest non – Sinhala community living in Anuradhapura, the campaign led by Buddhist leaders in the early twentieth century against the modern town that had emerged next to the ruins was not directed against them. The targets were the colonial administration, the Christians and later the moors.' (2006:118).

¹⁴⁸ The Tamil Mahajana Sabhai (founded 1921) and the All Ceylon Tamil League (founded 1923) (Gunasingham 1999:216-7) did not establish themselves as important political associations – which is why new organisations were formed in the 1920's and 1930's. Also see Russell (1982:219-221) for the fissiparous and fleeting nature of many associations.

¹⁴⁹ The report notes that hopes for 'political programmes that would turn attention from communal to party politics.... have not yet been realised' (33).

¹⁵⁰ See Colonial Office (1945:7-32) for a summary of constitutional developments from the onset of British rule to 1945.

¹⁵¹ For a discussion of the influence of the Indian National Congress on Ceylon politics see Russell (1982:42-3, 157) and Roberts (1997b:284-5). The organisation with the strongest links was the Jaffna Youth Congress. It was at the initiative of the JYC that

Gandhi visited the island in 1927 (Kadirgamar 1980:27) and the JYC's sessions were attended by a host of leading Indian politicians including Nehru (19); the meeting addressed by Nehru was attended by over 10, 000 people (Russell 1982:28).

¹⁵² In 1927 a Special Commission was appointed by the Secretary of State to make recommendations for further constitutional reform on the island. The Commission's report – known after its chair Lord Donoughmore – recommended universal manhood suffrage and the replacement of communal with territorial constituencies. The legislative council would also be transformed into a State Council that would function both as a legislature and executive – members of the State Council would form themselves through election into executive committees with real power and responsibility (De Silva 2005:521). The Commission's recommendation for universal franchise was not supported by most of the associations and politicians it met – even those who advocated self government (Colonial Office 1928:82-3). For a discussion of the wide array of demands and proposals put before the Commission see Wicramasinghe (1995:60-77).

¹⁵³ 'D. S Senanayake emerged as the self – proclaimed representative of a moderate strand of Ceylonese nationalism and it was not long before he was eagerly appointed as a privileged *compagnon de route* by the Governor and the Colonial Office on the road leading to independence. The complex nature of the Ceylonese polity seems to have been deliberately overlooked by the colonial rulers and faith was placed in the vision of unity and reason projected by a man who, after all, was hardly representative of anyone besides himself' (Wicramasinghe 1995:184).

¹⁵⁴ From the late nineteenth century British officials' increasingly saw the island as essentially Sinhala Buddhist in history and character (Rogers 1990), (Wicramasinghe 2006:103-109) (Jeffries 1962:3). Furthermore the Donoughmore report reproduced the modern 'Mahavamsa' narrative of Sinhalese Buddhist colonisation, flourishing and Tamil invasion precipitating decline in the introductory pages of its report (1928:5-6). While the Donoughmore commissioners derided the 'communalism' they found rampant in the island's politics (31, 41), they nevertheless implicitly adopted the notion of ethnic balances noting for example that the Ceylon Tamils for 'various reasons, wholly admirable' have 'obtained political influence somewhat disproportionate to their numerical strength.' (92). The Commissioners also noted that the advocates for full self government were always from 'the larger communities' who if freed 'from external control would be able to impose their will on all who dissented from them' (31). Meanwhile the minorities 'though united in no other respect, are solid in their opposition to the proposal' (31). The Commissioners set as their objective the development of a 'free, united and democratic nation' (91) and argued

that only the abolition of communal representation would foster the 'various communities to develop together to a true national identity' (99).

Similarly the Soulbury Commission report, spoke of the majority as being 'entitled' to a 'proportionate share in all aspects of Government activity' (1945:53). The Commission characterised ethnic harmony as one of good behaviour by the majority. On the one hand it warned sternly that it 'will behove the Sinhalese majority to take the utmost care to avoid giving cause for any suspicion of unfairness or partiality' (50). On the other hand the Commission also expressed confidence that 'the Government of Ceylon (presumably a Sinhalese government) is fully aware that the contentment of the minorities is essential not only to their own well being but to the well being of the Island as a whole' (50; comments added).

¹⁵⁵ The debate on the Donoughmore constitution revealed a divide between the Sinhalese members and the minorities on this issue. A representative sample of the Sinhalese politicians include the following:

A. C. G. Wijeyekoon: 'Now the question with which we are very much concerned about is the extension of the franchise to the immigrant labourer. ... What we fear is – to put it plainly – their numbers will increase beyond all proportion and swamp the country.' (Legislative Council Debates: Nov 1, 1928, Col 1694).

P. B. Rambukwelle: 'We who fought to preserve the independence of this country for the last two thousand years ... we sincerely feel that if the proposed recommendations are carried into effect, the result will be not only the transference of the administration of the country from British and Ceylonese hands to the Indians, but Ceylon becoming eventually a part and parcel of India, which we certainly do not want it to be.' (1928; Col 1669)

¹⁵⁶ G. G. Ponnambalam was a barrister who entered the State Council in 1934. By the late 1930s he had established a position as the unofficial spokesperson of the Northern Province Sri Lankan Tamils (Russell 1982:297), although his position was heavily criticised by the Jaffna press (1982:291-3). In 1944 he, along with others, founded the All Ceylon Tamil Congress that was the largest Tamil political party until it was eclipsed by the Federal Party in 1956.

¹⁵⁷ The Jaffna newspaper the Morning Star summed up the differences between the two groups as a question of 'whether the Tamil community is to assume an attitude of defence towards the majority community in the Island, and preventing it encroaching on our rights or misappropriating any share in the number of places we are entitled to in government service, or whether the attitude of the Tamil community should be

one of unsuspecting and trustful co-operation' [July 6, 1934 quoted in Russell (1982:74)]. The two groups came to blows throughout 1933 (1982:39).

¹⁵⁸ Many well known Sinhala politicians attended the JYC's annual sessions in Jaffna (Kadirgamar 1980:20, 39, 47; Russell 1982:292). However, some of the politicians who attended the sessions, such as A. E Goonesinha often later adopted openly anti Sri Lankan Tamil and anti Indian Tamil stands (Russell 1982:31; Wickramasinghe 1995:135).

¹⁵⁹ R. Sri Pathmanathan (son in law of P. Ramanathan) sought an alliance with the Kandyans, but this was undermined by the issue of the Indian franchise and the quite deliberate manipulation by low country politicians, including D. S Senanayake, of conflict between the Kandyans and Sri Lankan Tamils (Russell 1982:235-242). By the early 1940's G. G Ponnambalam had forged an alliance with the Indian Tamils (1982:243-248)

¹⁶⁰ Jane Russell says of the JYC's 1933 conference, the last large gathering of its kind; 'Leading south Indian politicians came to speak at the conference and several portraits of Indian National Congress leaders were unveiled. Except for a homage to the Bo Tree, and a plea for colonisation of the Wannai by Ceylon Tamils, the conference might just as well have been conducted in South India, as there were almost no references at all to the current political situation in Ceylon' (1982:50).

¹⁶¹ The JYC was clearly rooted in Jaffna society and politics, although it forged links with Sinhalese and Indian politicians. All of the sessions, for example, were held in Jaffna.

¹⁶² The JYC gained this influence partly because links with Indian politicians, who were popular and well known on the island, particularly the Jaffna peninsula. In particular the JYC was central to organising Gandhi's 1927 visit to the island, including his highly popular visit to Jaffna (Kadirgamar 1980:27-38). The JYC also engaged successfully in direct political mobilization, giving the impression that it could mobilise popular opinion – as the Indian Congress did during the 1920's. As Jane Russell notes, 'The Jaffna Congress held its meetings in the villages, in the vernacular. The leaders who dressed in the *verti* and *banian*, talked freely with all, regardless of cast or social status, and were willing to enrol any person who wished to join' (1982:28).

¹⁶³ H. A .P Sandarasagara, a Sinhalese politician interpreted the move as a form of Ulster Unionism, rather than pan Island nationalism stating 'I'll make Jaffna an Ulster and I'll be its Lord Carson' (De Silva 2005:528), the Governor also misinterpreted the boycott as stemming from the fact that the Tamils were unhappy with the level of

representation they would obtain in the State Council (528). However, other Sinhalese politicians sent messages of support (Kadirgamar 1980:80-81). The Soulbury Commission report similarly explained the boycott as a 'protest against the abolition of communal representation' (Colonial Office 1945:14).

¹⁶⁴ The demand for balanced representation began to be consolidated from 1933 (Russell 1982:67, 187, 250-2)

¹⁶⁵ Ponnambalam gained over 70 per cent of the votes polled (de Silva 1979:186). Mahadeva had won in that constituency in the previous elections held in 1934 and 1936 (1979:98).

¹⁶⁶ D. S. Senanayake retained this post from 1931 until 1947 when he became Prime Minister. Following this his son, Dudley Senanayake took over the post of Agriculture and Lands Minister until he in turn became Prime Minister in 1953 (Farmer 1957:144-4).

¹⁶⁷ The Dry Zone comprises around 70 per cent of the land area of the island (Farmer 1957:3) and is relatively under populated; at the census of 1921 the four provinces (Northern, Eastern, North Central, North Western) that lie completely within the Dry Zone contained only 25 per cent of the population (Colonial Office 1928:165). Land development policy until the 1920's had primarily relied on private enterprise (Farmer 1957:103-115), although between 1870 and 1890 there had been a vigorous policy of the government sponsored restoration of irrigation tanks, including man in the Eastern Province (1957:106). During the 1920s there was a noticeable shift in the emphasis of land policy from improving food production and generating government revenue to preserving the peasantry as an institution and relieving congestion in the over-crowded Wet Zone areas of the island (1957:116-123). This was laid out explicitly report of the Land Commission that was published in 1929 (1957:126) which called for government support for colonists; the Commission included a number of Sinhalese as well as Tamil politicians (1957:121). The Commission's recommendations were finally incorporated into a Land Development Ordinance that was passed by the State Council in 1935 (1957:127).

¹⁶⁸ In the Land Development Ordinance the definition of Ceylonese was framed in such a way as to exclude Indian Tamils (Wickramasinghe 1995:191-192). Whereas the Indian Tamils were excluded by definition, Sri Lankan Tamils complained that they were discriminated against through executive and administrative acts (Russell 1982:168). From 1900 – 1931, the Northern and Eastern provinces received almost 50 per cent of total expenditure on irrigation, but after 1931 the share fell to 19 per cent (1982:170).

For example A. Canagaratnam, a Tamil representative from the Northern Province complained of discrimination in relation to colonization schemes during a debate on Donoughmore Report in 1928:

‘It was a small administrative problem, the Nachchadua Colonization Scheme. There was a Committee sitting on this question – a Committee on which the Tamils were a in ... a very small minority. but the members of that Committee thought that the scheme could not be worked except by a ‘homogenous’ community and in that scheme they would not include members of any community other than one – the majority community’ (Council Debates; Nov 20, 1928).

Similarly in 1939 G. G Ponnambalam complained of:

‘the scant attention paid to colonization and to the production of paddy and to food production both in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, the recent rejection of the scheme of the Director of Irrigation to spend Rs. 3, 000, 000 for food production in Kalmunai in the South of Batticaloa, the finest paddy – production district in Ceylon – these things alone, if any proof is needed will justify the demands of the minorities’ (Ponnambalam 2001:187).

Meanwhile as a result of the expenditure on irrigation works in Batticaloa during the nineteenth century, this province was able to export rice to Jaffna and other parts of the island (De Silva 2005:385). Similarly the system of agriculture on the overcrowded Jaffna peninsula was – compared to other regions on the island – intensive and efficient (2005:387)(Farmer 1957:50).

¹⁶⁹ G. G Ponnambalam asked for a colonisation scheme for the Jaffna peninsula in 1939 because of the rising levels of unemployment (Russell 1982:24). The percentage of landless families in Jaffna (31.7 per cent) and Batticaloa (57.8 per cent) (Farmer 1957:66) was also comparable to the range of landlessness in the districts of the Wet Zone (from a low of 14.2 per cent in Colombo to a high of 41.8 per cent in Nuwara Eliya) (1957:89). (NB much of the landless population in Nuwara Eliya may well have been the Tamil labourers in the plantation districts).

¹⁷⁰ ‘After the Commission had finished its work in Ceylon, D.S Senanayake was invited to England by the Secretary of State for discussions Interestingly, Senanayake had made it plain to the Governor that he was not prepared to sit around a table with G. G Ponnambalam. Colonel Stanley decided not to provide representatives of any particular group with passage facilities and all delegations were received separately. ... G.G Ponnambalam saw the Secretary of State for half an hour..’ (Wickramasinghe 1995:202-3).

¹⁷¹ For the centrality of economic development to Congress conceptions of national interest see Austin (1972: Chapter 2), Goswami (2004: Chapter 7) and Chatterjee (1986, Chapter 5.) and Corbridge and Harriss (2000, Chapter 2).

¹⁷² The Congress' retained its dominance from independence to 1967. During this period it won majorities in all of the elections to the national (or Union) legislature and all – but one (Kerala in 1957) of the elections in the sub-national (or state) level legislatures. This period was described as the 'dominant party system' in which competitive party politics existed without a change in government at the Union level and in most states (Kothari 1970).

¹⁷³ In fact the DK leader E V Ramaswamy had declared the day of Indian independence (August 15 1947) a day of national mourning. C N Annaduria, Ramaswamy's principal lieutenant publicly disagreed with the DK leader on this point and went onto form the DMK (Ross-Barnett 1976).

¹⁷⁴ The Constituent Assembly was elected indirectly in July 1946 from the legislatures of the provincial councils (fresh provincial council elections had been held in the winter of 1945). Following independence and partition the Constituent Assembly also functioned as the Union parliament; Congress held 82 per cent of the seats in the assembly (Austin 1972:10-11).

¹⁷⁵ For brief biographies of these figures see Austin (1972:337-346)

¹⁷⁶ For a discussion of the differences between Vallabhbhai Patel and the others on land reform and the inviolability of private property see Austin (1972:87-101) and Corbridge and Harriss (2000:45-49)

¹⁷⁷ This was particularly so as the debates took place in the context of independence and partition, and the large scale ethnic violence that ensued (Austin 1972:43-4). For further examples see 1972 (29, 140, 150, 189, 239, 273, 283) and King (1999:63).

¹⁷⁸ For a discussion of the politics of language and the historical relations between Urdu (linked to Persian and Arabic), Hindi (linked to Sanskrit) and Hindustani (the lingua franca across much of north India) see King (1999:74-81). For the Hindu nationalist promotion of Sanskritised Hindi see Kumar (1990) and Singh (2005).

¹⁷⁹ For a discussion of the battles between Hindu nationalists and 'unity in diversity' advocates on the national language and linguistic provinces issue see Austin (1972:236-243, Chapter 12) and King (1999: Chapter 3).

¹⁸⁰ For a discussion of the Telugu movement and its importance in triggering the process of linguistic reorganisation see Mitchell (2009).

¹⁸¹ As Ayesha Jalal notes the Congress was eventually happy to cede Pakistan in exchange for a strong centre and an early transition of power, something that Jinnah did not expect (1994).

¹⁸² For a discussion of the ideological content of the DMK see Hardgrave (1965) as well as Ross Barnett (1976: Chapter 5, 9 & 10).

¹⁸³ For a discussion of Congress government's responses to Sikh and Kashmiri movements see Brass (1994).

¹⁸⁴ For a discussion of the differences between the DK and the DMK and the events leading to the eventual split see Hardgrave (1965), Spratt (1970), Ross-Barnett (1976) and Subramanian (1999).

¹⁸⁵ Disputes between Tamils and Telugus over the status of Madras city became significant in the months leading up to independence. Congress had included the linguistic reorganisation of provinces in its manifesto for the elections in late 1945/6 and most Tamil and Telugu Congress politicians expected that a new Congress government would work quickly to implement this promise (Mitchell 2009)(Rengaswamy 2006).

¹⁸⁶ The TAK's eventual ejection from Congress is due to the factional differences between Rajagopalachariar and Kamraj (Rengaswamy 2006).

¹⁸⁷ 'Nehru ... knew, however, that the Tamils and Rajagopalachari would themselves fast to death rather than relinquish Madras City as their capital, now would they ever agree to a shared capital. That part of Sriramulu's demands Nehru could never have granted; it would have cost him far too dearly in Tamil support and made of Rajagopalachari an implacable enemy instead of an occasional headache' (King, R.D 1999:114).

¹⁸⁸ Non Congress coalition governments – often fractious and unstable – were formed in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Kerala (Chatterjee 1997:15).

¹⁸⁹ These included for example the alliances that were formed by Ramaswamy with Kamraj and then Rajagopalachariar against the DMK. The DMK then formed an alliance with Indira Gandhi's Congress (R) against the Tamil Nadu Congress led by Kamraj.

¹⁹⁰ Karunanidhi assumed the leadership of the DMK after CN Annadurai's death in 1969, he continues to retain that post.

¹⁹¹ By February 1956 the UNP had adopted the policy that Sinhala 'Only' should be the official language (Wilson 1994:59). The 1965-1970 UNP led national government replaced Sundays as public holidays with Poya days (that coincided with the waxing and waning of the moon) that were of significance to Buddhists (Wilson 1979:18). Following its 1977 landslide electoral victory (see table below) the UNP introduced a new constitution that gave to Buddhism the 'foremost place' and entrusted the state with the duty to 'protect and foster the Buddha Sasana' whilst also affirming that the 'Official Language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala' (Ponnambalam 1983:197-8).

¹⁹² Figures collected from de Silva (1979). See also Appendix Two

¹⁹³ Tamil nationalism as a political movement had its base mainly amongst the Sri Lankan Tamils concentrated in the Northern and Eastern provinces (see map). There were also other Tamil speaking minorities –the Muslims and the Indian Tamils, primarily plantation workers who were mainly in the Central Province. However, these populations have not become part of the Tamil nationalist project. The Muslims speak Tamil but in politics tend to 'identify themselves with the Sinhalese leadership in national politics' (Wilson 1979:48) and have not made demands for territorial autonomy or equality in terms of official recognition of Tamil. The Indian Tamils meanwhile have tended to be represented Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and the Democratic Workers Congress (DWC). These parties have generally worked with which-ever party is in government (155-6). Tamil nationalism as a political project has therefore been a Sri Lankan Tamil phenomenon. The term Tamil is used here therefore to refer to the Sri Lankan Tamils.

¹⁹⁴ As Mick Moore states, the 'use of state power for the benefit of the ordinary Sinhalese has been, and remains, the primary legitimation, implicit or explicit, of all governments elected since 1956 at least, and arguably, since 1931' (1985:29).

¹⁹⁵ The following figures are taken from Wilson (1979:156-9).

¹⁹⁶ The schemes did not increase overall food production or returns on the capital investment – and mainly functioned to establish beneficiaries with the status of 'landowners' (Farmer 1957).

¹⁹⁷ From the July 1960 elections, the 'proportion of votes won by each of the two major contenders has remained remarkably stable. The UNP proportion has held between 37 and 40 per cent, while the SLFP proportion has varied by only a slightly wider margin, from 30 to 37 per cent' (Kearney 1973:95). Furthermore from 1956, the pattern of electoral support in most constituencies in the Sinhala electorates was aligned with nationwide swings rather than dependent upon local peculiarities (Jupp 1978:210-5). Political parties have thus come to dominate electoral politics and in the

1970 general election, 'all but two of the 151 parliamentary seats and 94 per cent of the popular votes were captured by parties that had been in existence for at least 19 years' (Kearney 1973:100).

¹⁹⁸ In 1970, before these measures were introduced, 48 per cent of students in the Engineering and the Medicine and Dental faculties were Tamil. By 1983 this had fallen to 28 per cent for the Engineering faculty and 22 per cent for the Medicine and Dental faculty (Manogaran 1987:125).

¹⁹⁹ For details see Bose (1994) or Wilson (1979).

²⁰⁰ Between 1956 and 1970, the proportion of Tamils employed in the elite Administrative Services fell from 30 per cent to 5 per cent, in the Professional and Technical services from 60 per cent to 10 per cent and in the Clerical Services from 50 per cent to 5 per cent.

²⁰¹ See for example note 136 above and also Wilson (1979:48).

²⁰² One FP MP defected in 1960 (Ponnambalam 1983:155) and two in 1977 (Jupp 1978:139).

²⁰³ See Hellman-Rajanayagam (1990).

²⁰⁴ It contested 7 seats and won only 2 – See Appendix 3.

²⁰⁵ Following D. S. Senanayake's death in March 1952, his son Dudley Senanayake had succeeded him as Prime Minister. The younger Senanayake resigned in October 1953 due to illness, brought on by the stress of dealing with a budgetary crisis, that prompted the government to cut rice subsidies, a hugely unpopular measure. He was succeeded by his first cousin Sir John Kotelawala (Manor 1989:209-223).

²⁰⁶ For accounts of the violence see Manor (1989:287-294), Tambiah (1992:51-57) and Vittachi (1958).

²⁰⁷ For details see (Wilson 1994:94-96) and also Navaratnam (1991).

²⁰⁸ Figures collated from De Silva (1979). See also Appendix Two

²⁰⁹ The SLFP won 90 out of the 150 seats and 60 per cent of the vote (Wilson 1979:159).

²¹⁰ In Batticaloa R.B. Kadramer stood as an independent in 1952 but then in 1956 (when the FP competed successfully for the first time in the constituency) adopted the label of the Batticaloa Tamil Speakers Front (De Silva 1979:133-4). In Kalkudah, V. Nalliah, the successful candidate for the UNP in 1952, competed unsuccessfully

against the FP in March 1960 under the banner of the Tamil Speakers Front (TSF)(1979:191). Finally in Padiruppu, the candidate U.S Ethirmanasingham, who stood unsuccessfully as an independent in 1952, stood successfully in 1956 under the Batticaloa Tamil Speakers Front (when the FP entered the contest for the first time) and polled 49.1 per cent of the vote (1979:250)

²¹¹ Appendix Two

²¹² For details of the agreements see Navaratnam (1991).

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Interviews:

INT 01, Interview with south Indian party activist, 25, 27, July 2007

INT 02, Interview with south Indian party activist, 1, 2, August 2007

INT 06, Interview with south Indian politician, 14, August, 2007

INT 19, Interview with Sri Lankan Tamil politician, 6, July, 2007

INT 20, Interview with Sri Lankan Tamil politician, 6, July, 2007

INT 21 Interview with Sri Lankan Tamil politician, 6 July 2007

INT 23, Interview with LTTE official, 28 Oct, 2006

INT 24, Interview with LTTE official, 28 Oct 2006