The Labour Movement in the Global South

Trade unions in Sri Lanka

S. Janaka Biyanwila

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The Labour Movement in the Global South

Based on extensive original research, this book examines the challenges confronting trade unions in the global South, by focusing on trade union struggles in Sri Lanka under neo-liberal globalisation. It centres on movement politics of unions; explains union capacities to mobilise workers as part of a broad countermovement; and specifies worker struggles in Sri Lanka.

The author identifies key dimensions of variation in the approaches taken by oppositional groupings, in particular unions, other labour organisations and the labour movement, and locates those variations in a larger theoretical context. Three case studies on trade unions in tea plantations, garment factories and among the nurses show how these theoretical dimensions operate in practice, and the consequences for the sort of opposition that is (and is not) created. The book contributes to the ongoing debate on social movement unionism, and it also reveals the gaps in terms of addressing how class injustices are mediated through ethno-nationalist projects reproducing ethnic and gender hierarchies. It acknowledges the diversity of experiences and forms of resistance in the global South and critically engages with issues of gender, ethnicity and labour internationalism, providing a useful contribution to studies on South Asian politics as well as Labour and Development Studies.

S. Janaka Biyanwila is a part-time lecturer in Employment Relations at the Business School of the University of Western Australia. His work explores labour relations with particular interests in the global South intertwining issues of development, nationalism, social movements, gender and civil society.

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Preface

This study examines the challenges trade unions face in the global South under neo-liberal globalisation. Its focus is on the movement dimensions of unions, in particular trade union capacities to mobilise workers as part of a broad counter-movement. Worker struggles in Sri Lanka highlight the specificity of the context as well as its interdependence with the global capitalist economy. While Southern trade unions are heterogeneous in many ways, their overlapping experience of disempowerment within national and local contexts, along with their subordination with dominant Eurocentric trade union internationalism, implies an urgent need for renewing their identities as civil society actors committed to social justice. By integrating political economic perspectives with normative concerns, this study suggests that reasserting union identities as moral-economic actors is significant for empowering workers and regaining their movement dimension.

The unions in Sri Lanka illustrate a much broader phenomenon of the global South in general, where most workers operate outside the formal labour markets and the unions. The dominant unions, largely based on male workers in the public sector, are subordinated to political parties, the state or the authority in power. Under the post-1977 "liberalisation" process, or the emergence of neo-liberal market-driven politics, unions in Sri Lanka confronted a new set of conditions. The deregulation of labour markets or their re-regulation in favour of international capital and the privatisation of public goods and services have reconfigured the labour force and the function of labour markets. The promotion of flexible labour markets has expanded the casualisation of the labour force, along with its feminisation, reflecting a "competition to the bottom". More workers in precarious, temporary forms of labour and more women in waged employment are the main challenges for established institutionalised unions and their capacities to organise and mobilise workers.

The changes in labour markets are shaped by the alterations in the state formation. In Sri Lanka, as in most countries of the global South, the demise of the Left movement by the late 1970s also gave way to narrow ethno-nationalist tendencies reproducing patriarchal structures. In effect, the spread of markets fused with ethno-nationalist notions of "community" depended on strengthening authoritarian state strategies steeped in militarism. With the realm of citizenship and civil society suppressed by ongoing visible and often invisible everyday forms

of violence, the revitalisation of union movement is not only complex, but also vital for a range of democratic struggles.

This study approaches unions from a strategic-theoretical perspective, by posing some basic choices that trade unions face in Sri Lanka as well as across the global economy. These choices, central to what follows in the discussion and analysis of union strategies in Sri Lanka, may be described along three main normative and political dimensions : ethno-nationalist/internationalist; patriarchal/feminist; party subordination-representative politics/independent-movement politics. The choices which trade unions and workers make are not without compromises and contradictions. Moreover, these choices are grounded in real social relations and concrete social conditions. However, the aim of this study is to critically analyse and evaluate how unions build their capacities for collective action by articulating workers' interests and strategies in specific ways. An underlying central question of this inquiry considers why some unions encourage more internationalist and feminist tendencies and perspectives with a contentious collective action or a movement orientation when compared with others.

The contradictions of union compromises with institutions of representative politics, or party politics involving parliamentary and electoral processes, relate to distinct state strategies reorganising productive economic activity and labour markets. The consolidated segments of the labour movement, or the "old" labour movement, reproduce these contradictions by further embedding themselves within "social partnership" discourses, party politics and representative institutions, when the state is increasingly driven by market politics that undermine the realm of democracy and citizenship. Meanwhile, some unions are experimenting with new strategies aimed at building alliances with other democratic counter-movements elaborating a secular, democratic, equal, peaceful and just South Asia. These union tendencies are also articulating a new, bottom-up internationalism as opposed to the dominant Eurocentric masculine top-down internationalism. A key feature of these initiatives, mainly in the margins of the labour movement, is their relative autonomy or "independence" from party or state control and subordination. This independent positioning inherently involves a political orientation which can reproduce or transform the status quo. Although dominant unions in the global South are party-allied unions (e.g. India, China, Brazil, and South Africa), this study takes a closer look at independent unions and their engagement in movement politics or contentious collective action as civil society actors. In explaining union engagement in representative and movement politics, the main focus is on how this spectrum of party-independent unions in Sri Lanka articulates worker interests and how their modes of organisation reproduce or transform enduring forms of worker solidarity.

The study, which focuses on three unions, begins with an introduction that locates unions in Sri Lanka in the global economy. The Introduction describes the central themes for understanding collective worker struggles and their capacities to develop a counter-hegemonic orientation. Following this Introduction, Chapter 1 describes the emergence of unions under a colonial mercantilist state and their interdependence with other struggles for decolonisation. This chapter on the

history of unions also explains how post-independence assertions of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, particularly under a "closed economy" project (1956–75), undermined working-class parties as well as Tamil plantation workers' demands for citizenship. Chapter 2 examines the attack on unions under neo-liberal globalisation and the rise of patriarchal ethno-nationalisms in the post-1977 liberalisation period. This chapter explains how some unions were accommodated within hegemonic ethno-nationalist strategies and the impact this had on the labour movement. This is followed by three chapters that focus on three very different independent unions. The cases include unions located in public sector hospitals, the privatised tea plantations and garment factories in the free trade zones or export processing zones. In analysing their political orientation, each chapter describes the emergence of unions and their strategies in terms of representative and movement politics. Finally, the concluding chapter draws together how elements of internal democracy and structured alliances play a key role in encouraging organic as opposed to mechanical forms of worker solidarity, orientated towards transforming class relations which reproduce conditions of commodification, alienation and exploitation.

Unions in the global South played a historic role in anti-colonial struggles, pursuing and expanding the realm of "civil society", as the basis for demanding a secular, democratic and just state. These struggles, articulating either nationalist or national self-determination projects, transformed as well as reproduced social hierarchies of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, caste, region, sexuality and ability. The labour movement in the global South is interdependent with processes of industrialisation and their spatial relationships to core zones (the USA, EU and Japan) of capital accumulation. Simultaneously, there are regional, national and local articulations of resistance shaped by specific historical conditions. The labour movements in South Asia are embedded in tendencies that were influenced by the Soviet and Chinese revolutionary struggles as well as the non-aligned movement. An often ignored dimension of the labour movement in the global South is their interdependence with other counter-hegemonic movements within and beyond the nation-state. In effect, the labour movement in the global South emerges intertwined with a broad counter-movement asserting national self-determination based on expanding notions of democracy and citizenship as the basis for cultural and economic justice. While the incorporation of unions within post-colonial state formations expanded union membership and labour influence, this also disconnected the labour movement from other movements while domesticating and localising collective action. This positioning of unions more as state actors rather than actors in civil society is a key contradiction when market-driven politics promote non-unionised workplaces undermining not only workplace democracy but notions of social justice.

Regaining union identities as civil society actors involves thinking differently about mobilising workers while recognising their commitments to families and communities. As this study demonstrates, the development of a movement orientation emerges from a self-transformation of unions, with a global sense of local places. This involves reinforcing internationalist and feminist tendencies

which are continually belittled, trivialised and dismissed by ethno-nationalist and patriarchal ideologies of community and belonging. Regaining workers' capabilities to collectively mobilise relates to revealing, confronting and transforming militarised "security" state forms in the global South that are maintained by hyper-masculine nationalisms and patriotisms preserving a capitalist economic system. The strengthening of the movement dimension of unions in the South demands new forms of politics that can strengthen worker solidarity, where democratic movement politics against class injustice is fundamental for deepening and elaborating notions of community, citizenship and civil society.

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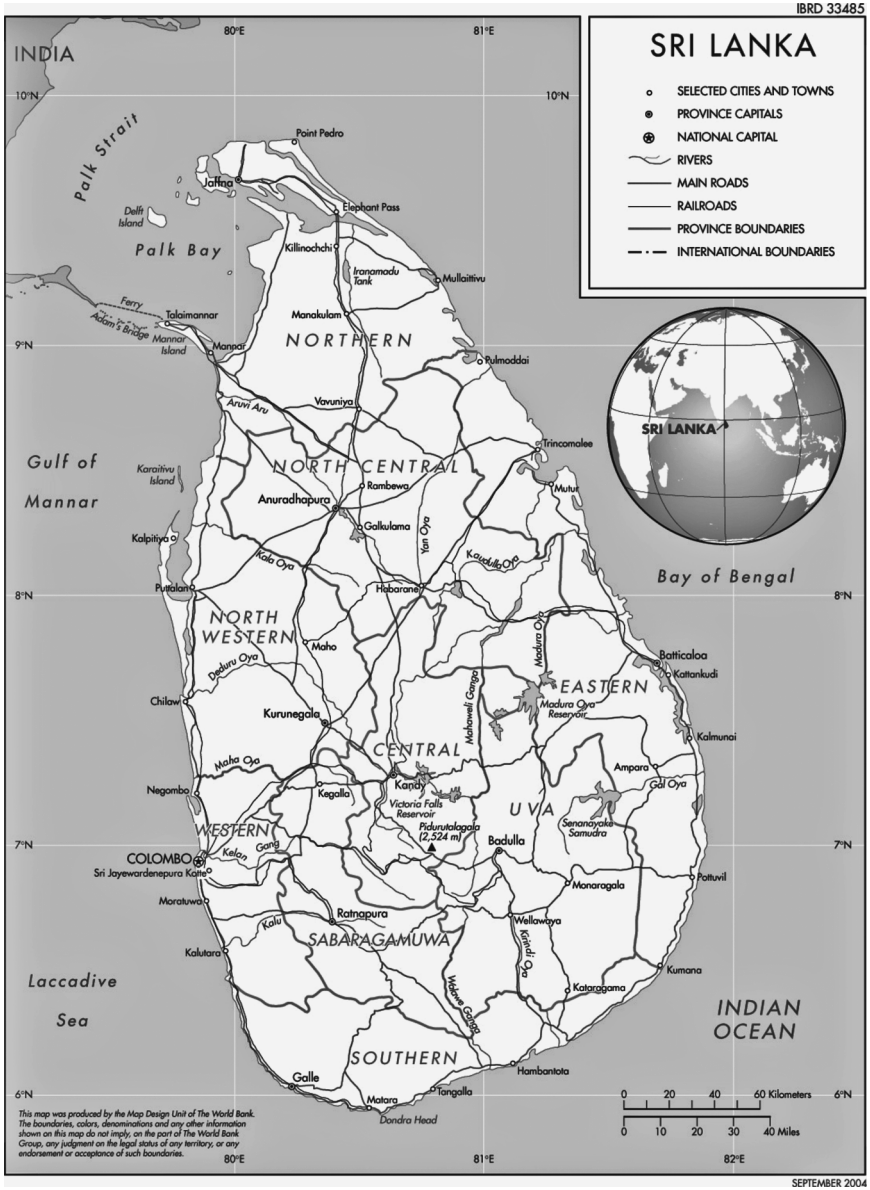
Abbreviations

AAFLI	Asian American Free Labour Institute
ACFOD	Asian Cultural Forum of Development
ACILS	American Centre for International Labour Solidarity (renamed Solidarity Centre)
AMRC	Asia Monitor Resource Centre
APWSL	Asia Pacific Workers' Solidarity Links
BOI	Board of Investments
BPLI	Bolshevik Leninist Party of India
CEF	Ceylon Employers' Federation
CESU	Ceylon Estate Staff Union
CFL	Ceylon Federation of Labour
CFTU	Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions
CFTU	Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions (CP-Moscow)
CIC	Ceylon Indian Congress
CICLU	Ceylon Indian Congress labour Union
CMU	Ceylon Mercantile Union
CP Red Flag	Communist Party
CPA	Ceylon Planters' Association
CPS	Ceylon Planters' Society
CPW	Communist Plantation Workers
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
CSPA	Coordinating Secretariat of the Plantation Areas
CSR	Centre for Society and Religion
CTUF	Ceylon Trade Union Federation (CP-Chinese)
CWC	Ceylon Workers' Congress
CWGW	Centre for the Welfare of Garment Workers
DWC	Democratic Workers' Congress
EFC	Employers' Federation of Ceylon
EOI	Export-Oriented Industrialisation
EWU	Estate Workers' Union (LSSP)
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
FMM	Free Media Movement
FTZ	Free trade zone

GMOA	Government Medical Officers' Association
GNOA	Government Nursing Officers' Association
GTOTUF	Government Technical Officers' Trade Union Federation
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFTZWU	Free Trade Zone Workers' Union
ITGLWF	International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation
ITGWU	Industrial Transport and General Workers' Union
JPTUC	Joint Plantation Trade Unions Centre
JCTU	Joint Committee of Trade Unions
JCTUO	Joint Committee of Trade Union Organisation
JHU	Janthika Hela Urumaya (National Heritage)
JSS	Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya
JVP	*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna*
LPWU	Lanka Plantation Workers Union (LSSP)
LSSP	Lanka Sama Samaja Party
LTTE	Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam
MEP	*Mahajana Eksath Peramuna*
MIRJE	Movement for Inter-racial Justice and Equality
NSSP	*Nava Sama Samaja* Party
NUW	National Union of Workers
PSUNU	Public Service United Nurses' Union
PSTUF	Public Service Trade Union Federation
RCL	Revolutionary Communist League
RMP	Revolutionary Marxist Party
SIGTUR	Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights
SLFI	Sri Lanka Foundation Institution
SLMP	Sri Lanka *Mahajana* Party
SLNSS	Sri Lanka *Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya* (SLFP)
TIE	Transnational Information Exchange
UNP	United National Party
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPTO	Union of Postal and Telecommunications Officers
UPWU	Up Country Workers' Union
USP	United Socialist Party
WC	Women's Centre
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWW	Women Working Worldwide



Map of Sri Lanka

Source: World Bank

Introduction

Sri Lanka, the global South and worker struggles

In January 2009, in a major military campaign to end "terrorism", the Sri Lankan government captured Kilinochchi, one of the key LTTE (Liberation Tamil Tiger of Eelam) towns in the Northern province. In this town, the "terrorists" had established their own judiciary, police, customs and other administrative offices. A few months later, in May 2009, the LTTE was militarily defeated in a bloodbath with around 300,000 Tamil people made refugees. During January and April 2009, nearly 7000 were people killed and more than 15,000 injured (US State Department 2009). The ethnic war has claimed more than 100,000 lives since 1983 and turned over a million people into refugees, mostly displaced within Sri Lanka and in Southern India (Parker 2009). Despite the official cessation of war, the following month (June 2009) the Sri Lankan state, with the approval of the Parliament, renewed Emergency Regulations, which suspends rudimentary civil and political rights while reinforcing an authoritarian militarised state. The rise of a militarised "security" state and the permeation of violence and insecurity in Sri Lanka characterises the context in which most workers are struggling to make a living and survive in the global South, the majority world. For the small nucleus of the labour force that is organised into unions, there are internal battles as well as external threats. This study focuses on the choices unions face to revitalise their potential as civil society actors, or as part of a broad counter-movement capable of mobilising a range of workers.

The "liberation" of territory from LTTE control has promised little in terms of a political solution to the grievances of the Tamil community. In asserting a Sinhala Buddhist nationalist project in this multi-ethnic, multi-religious South Asian island community, the post-independence state formation increasingly subordinated Tamil as well as Muslim cultural identities in terms of territory, language and access to education and employment. Nevertheless, the 2009 May military victory was officially portrayed as a "humanitarian mission" fought in order to "liberate" citizens "held hostage by a terrorist organisation". This "just war", which involved the deployment of large numbers of troops and aerial bombardment into designated "no-fire zones", coincided with censorship on war-related news, attacks on journalists, disappearances and a general restriction on any forms of dissent. The cessation of the armed conflict and the strengthening of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism under an authoritarian state have resurfaced the

contradictions of socio-economic development of the "motherland" as a peripheral capitalist economy in the global South.

An often ignored significant structural effect of neo-liberal globalisation, particularly in the South, is the spread of violence and insecurity. The generative mechanism of this violence and insecurity are structures of power that reproduce conditions of exploitation, oppression and subjugation (Galtung 1996, 2004). Various manifestations of violence that permeate multiple scales and temporalities are generated by the structural coupling of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and imperialism (Panitch 2002; Ali and Ercelan 2004). While structural violence is often debilitating, undermining individual and collective agency, it is also at the root of social protest and mobilisation.

Sri Lanka, previously known as Ceylon under British colonialism, is a small tropical island at the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent, with a population of around 20 million people in 2008. Nearly 80 per cent of the population live in rural areas, mostly engaged in subsistence agriculture. Meanwhile most of the economic activities are concentrated in and around the main district of Colombo in the southwest with a population of around 2.3 million in 2004. The island is 268 miles (432 km) long and 169 miles (272 km) wide, with the southwestern region of the island wet and humid, the central hill country wet and cooler, and the rest of the island mostly dry. The island has a rich biodiversity, although it is increasingly under threat due to a range of human activity: new settlements, new economic activities and infrastructure. However, it is the island's vibrant history of diverse cultural interactions, with records going back 2200 years, that is a central terrain of struggle over nationhood and national identity (Gunawardena 1996; Seneviratne 1999).

The often simplistic media representation of the ethnic conflict as one between the Sinhala Buddhist majority and a Tamil ethnic minority hides the complexity of these ethnic identities as well as tensions. Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious cultural space with a Sinhala Buddhist hegemonic notion of nationhood. The main ethnic groups include Sinhala (74%), Tamil (13%), Hill Country Tamil (6%), Muslim (7%) Burghers and Eurasians (.3%) and Malays (.3%) (DC&S 2004; and see Table AI.2d). While Buddhism (69%) is the dominant religion, it has historically coexisted with Hinduism (16%), Islam (8%) and Christianity (8%) (DC&S 2004, see Table AI.2c). Sri Lanka also consists of a small number of indigenous people known as "Veddahs", mostly hunter-gatherers who have lived in a tropical forest environment for the past 18,000 years. The diverse communities that construct this multi-ethnic nation are embedded in a hybridity of hierarchical ethnic, religious, caste and regional identities (Jeganathan and Ismail 1994). Importantly, the dominant numerical approach to ethnic categories is invariably limited not only by static definitions but by the processes of collecting population census data. With the outbreak of the ethnic war in 1983, the North and East provinces have been excluded from Census figures. After the 1981 Census, the next Census in 2001 covered only 18 out of 25 districts. These statistical limitations, which are often unnoticed or ignored, also reveal the contradictions of "majoritarian" politics.

The ethnic categories are internally differentiated along regional, religious, caste and linguistic identities (Manor 1984; Spencer 1990; Uyangoda 2000). The Sinhala

identity is internally differentiated by region (low-country and up-country Sinhalese), religion (Buddhist, Christians and spirit religions) and caste. The Buddhist identity also includes caste-specific institutional hierarchies (Tambiah 1992; Gunasinghe 1996). An integral aspect of colonialism (Portuguese, Dutch and British) is the introduction of Christianity. The Sinhala and Tamil Christian communities remain subordinated within dominant cultural claims. Similarly, the Burgher (Euro-asian) community is often erased from the historical narrative of "nation" (Jayawardena 2007). The main groups asserting cultural recognition include the Tamils in the North and East, as well as the hill country (plantations), and the Muslim communities, particularly in the East. An often hidden dimension of dominant identity politics is the languishing of nearly 90,000 Muslim refugees in the Northwest (Puttalam), who were forcibly evicted by the LTTE from the North in 1990, immediately after the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (Reddy 2009).

The Tamil and Muslim community share Tamil as a common language and are spread throughout the island's towns, but are mostly concentrated in the North and East provinces. Meanwhile, the hill country Tamil identity or the "Indian Tamils" is an intra-ethnic identity highlighting the subordination of workers relocated from Tamil Nadu (South India) as indentured labour for the colonial plantation economy. Different regional movements in South India, particularly Tamil Nadu linguistic nationalist movements which encompassed a state with a population of over 62 million, has also shaped the cultural and linguistic identities of the Sri Lankan Tamils (Kailasapathy 1987). These historical and territorial interconnections, along with ongoing mutual interactions in multiple geographic scales, are powerful factors shaping ethno-nationalist identity projects.

The dominant national identity in Sri Lanka, a Sinhala Buddhist identity, was initiated mainly after 1956, as a specific post-colonial nation-building project. Although the Sinhala-Buddhist myth of origin dates back 2500 years, the Sinhala ethnic construct consolidated only towards the thirteenth century (Gunewardena 1996). Moreover, the feudal court culture of the last pre-colonial "Sinhala-Buddhist" Kandyan kingdom was mostly Hindu and Tamil (Moore 1990; Sivanandan 1984). Nevertheless, the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist project, a malleable construct needing regular authentication, is based on evading internal contradictions as well as a history of cultural fissures and fusions. The urge to territorialise religious and ethnic identities and to overcome territorial ambiguities consists of negotiation as well as varying degrees of state violence (Van Schendal 2007: 44).

In the post-1977 period, following the demise of the "closed economy" experiment (1956–74), the re-regulation of labour markets complemented a 'national security" discourse which enforced Emergency laws and anti-terrorism legislation to ban unions and repress worker protests (; FES 2004; ITUC 2008). This authoritarian "nation-building" project entered recurrent intensive phases of militarisation. First, with the out break of the anti-Tamil war in 1983, then with the Sinhala youth insurrection of 1988–91, led by the JVP (*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* – People's Liberation Front). Since 2005, this hegemonic nation-building project relaunched a military offensive against the LTTE, with a new-found alliance with the JVP, extremist Buddhist monks and segments of the labour movement.

Sri Lanka is a relatively poor country with an economy of around $27 billion and a per capita GDP of around US$1617 in 2007 (Central Bank 2008). In 2009, the Human Development Index (UNDP) ranked Sri Lanka 102 out of 182 countries, just above Gabon and below Paraguay. Sri Lanka's more populous neighbouring countries were worse off, with India ranked 134, Pakistan 141 and Bangladesh 146. This relatively better developmental positioning of Sri Lanka is reflective of the role played by the labour movement and working-class parties, mainly under the "closed economy" period, 1956–74. The extension of state social provisioning and popular participation during this period, somewhat similar to Kerala and West Bengal states in India, made critical inroads towards social development. A key indicator of social development is the status of women. Women in Sri Lanka have improved literacy, nutrition, low fertility rates and greater access to the public realm than in other South Asian countries. Although Sri Lanka has had female presidents, prime ministers and ministers, women's representation in the national legislature has remained below 5 per cent, and in provincial councils and local government even less (UNIFEM 2005). The absence of women in decision-making positions within state institutions, political parties, trade unions and the private sector reveals the reproduction of patriarchal cultural practice, particularly within the nationalist discourse.

Sri Lanka is mostly a rice-based agrarian economy interconnected with the global economy through exports of agricultural crops, light manufacturing and migrant labour. While subsistence farming remains the main agrarian base, the service sector has expanded in the past three decades with enclaves of manufacturing activity (Table AI.2e). Most of the industrial development has taken place in the Western province with a population of around 5.4 million in 2004. Besides garments, the main exports are agricultural crops, such as tea, rubber and coconut, and minerals, such as gemstones. Dominated by light manufacturing such as garments, the manufacturing sector depends on imported machinery and equipment. Other main imports include petroleum, textiles and consumer goods, which originate from India, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. The US is Sri Lanka's largest market for garments. The interdependence of peripheral capitalist economies in the global South with core economies of the North relates to the character and the degree of economic integration with global trade. Although trade is seen as synonymous with development, it is also a mechanism of debt dependence. In 2007, the Sri Lankan government's debt amounted to 86 per cent of gross domestic product. In 2007, the trade deficit was around $3.6 billion, compared to $290 million in 1979–81 and $703 million in 1990 (Central Bank 2008; see also Table AI.2a). This ongoing trade and debt dependence reflects not only the relationship between the metropole and the periphery, but how state strategies of "development" maintain Sri Lanka as a site for cheap docile labour.

The expanding services sector consists of two key subsectors that illustrate the contradictions of ethno-nationalist politics in a global capitalist economy. Migrant workers and tourism have become important sources of foreign exchange for the national economy. In 2004, the second largest foreign exchange source was the export of labour in the form of migrant workers. During the past 25 years

(1980–2005), worker remittances as a percentage of GDP increased from 3.8 per cent to 8.1 per cent (Central Bank 2005). The promotion of tourism for social development, the fourth largest foreign exchange earner in 2004, while commodifying ecological and cultural resources, tourism mostly reproduces a low wage, temporary jobs with minimum security and worker rights. A notorious tendency of the expanding tourism, which overlaps with migrant workers, is the integration of women and children within national and international sex trade and trafficking networks (Goonesekere 1993). Most migrant workers are women, working in the informal sector in the Middle-East countries, engaged in dirty, demeaning and dangerous jobs. The migrant women workers who leave behind their families to care for other families in the North and affluent South not only lack most basic workers' rights but face numerous instances of violence. In 2007, the Saudi Arabian legal system imposed a death sentence on Nafeek, a Sri Lankan maid who was 17 years old when a baby in her care died. She was denied legal counsel until after the court sentenced her to death in 2007 (Human Rights Watch 2007). This "remittance economy" which has expanded since the early 1980s depicts the impoverishment of local economies and the lack of sustainable livelihood options in a context of deregulated labour markets and privatised public goods and services.

Sri Lanka was considered a model democracy with regular elections and high levels of voter participation since independence in 1948 (Jayasekara and Amerasinghe 1987). The multi-party elections often consist of coalition politics dominated on one side by the UNP (United National Party) committed to a market economy, and on the other side by the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) which express a social economy. The UNP and the SLFP are both populist mass parties. The UNP, which was formed in the first ten years of post-independence government, ruled for 17 years between 1977 and 1994, implementing neo-liberal policies while asserting a Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist project. The new ethos of markets which aimed at fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, individualism and competition was mediated by a Sinhala-Buddhist notion of a "righteous society" (*Dharmishta Samajaya*). Although the UNP was directly involved in anti-Tamil riots in 1983, which sparked the war, it is often represented as more sympathetic towards minorities (Obeyesekere 1984). The Tamil minority parties have been weakened since the early 1980s due to political violence, war, assassinations, internal rivalries and legal bans. Meanwhile a Muslim party, which emerged in the early 1980s, consolidated towards the late 1980s with the ethnic conflict redrawing territorial boundaries and the introduction of the provincial council system in 1987 (see Tables AI.1 and AI.3).

The working-class parties and the labour movement have historically allied with the SLFP, which implemented Sinhala as the official state language in 1956, to encourage a "national" bourgeoisie and make public sector employment accessible to the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie. After 17 years in the political wilderness the SLFP regained power in 1994, under a broad coalition called the People's Alliance (PA) projecting a social-democratic orientation. While there were some gains for the working classes, the PA coalition was soon defeated in 2000 by a UNP-led