

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Securitisation of Sri Lankan Tourism in the Absence of Peace

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The military conflict in Sri Lanka may be over officially, but conflict continues as a 'war without sound' (community informant, Mullaitivu 2013), or as war by other means (Dahlman 2011). In the absence of peace and reconciliation, but the presence of economic growth, development by stealth proceeds. Much has been written about the militarisation of civilian life in Sri Lanka (Kadirgamar 2013; David 2013), but this paper focuses specifically on how militarisation has proceeded with little public protest or pushback. The political work accomplished by 'securitisation' is used to gain consent and create new space and capacity for state security measures and militarisation.

This paper recasts the connections between security, peace, and development in post-war Sri Lanka, drawing on fieldwork in one area that connects all of these projects: tourism. An analysis of 'war tourism' in Sri Lanka shows how it reproduces threats to Sri Lanka's security at the same time that it celebrates military victory and might. Tourism encapsulates economic, security, and development agendas in very specific ways. Tourist sites mobilise fear of potential terrorism and return to the rule of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), if vigilance and militarisation are not maintained. In such a context of risk, development is best done by the military. Within this logic of securitisation, militarisation becomes a common sense approach. How is this common sense produced? The securitisation of development is vivid in the post-war context of Sri Lanka, inextricably tied to neoliberal imperatives to convey a democratic, stable country that is open to and good for business.

Introduction

Security, development, and its financing, have all become inseparable in post-war Sri Lanka. Despite the absence of peace and reconciliation, certain kinds of development proceed apace, buttressed by the promise of economic growth. Tourism is one vivid expression of development where security issues play out

alongside the neoliberal norms of international financial institutions (IFIs). Both the government and lenders want to forge the impression of a democratic, stable country that is open for business. And yet the recent government of Mahinda Rajapakse has a highly questionable human rights record, and made little if any progress in addressing longstanding ethnonational divides that were part and parcel of the military conflict that ended in 2009, after more than 26 years of violence. Sri Lanka also has low foreign

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direct investment, high levels of debt, and is in a poor state of public finances.¹

The United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government, led by former President Mahinda Rajapakse, was defeated in a dramatic upset in January 2015, but until that time enjoyed widespread popularity and public support, especially among the Sinhala majority in Sri Lanka. In November 2014, President Rajapakse called an election two years early, betting – wrongly – on a renewal of his mandate after his resounding election victory in 2010. He lost to the current president, Maithripala Sirisena, a former loyalist and minister in Rajapaksa's government until 2014, who campaigned on a platform of rooting out corruption and nepotism, and undoing constitutional reforms that concentrated more power in the presidency (Burke 2015a).

Former President Rajapakse did more than favour family members in key cabinet positions (his two brothers) and remove term limits on the presidency so that he could maintain power. He also forged new economic allies, particularly China, which became Sri Lanka's biggest lender under Rajapakse's reign (Einhorn 2015). The Rajapakse regime looked to China in part because of 'its fear of being taken to task internationally on the issue of war crimes.... They saw China as a guarantor that they would not be taken before any UN type of trials,' explained Jehan Perera, executive director of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (cited in Einhorn 2015). Under Rajapakse, Sri Lanka spent far more money than it generated, but was able to generate annual economic growth of more than 7 per cent. According to Bloomberg Business, the country's benchmark stock index jumped 23 per cent last year (Einhorn 2015). And yet Sri Lanka has a 'junk rating' and major budget deficit, such that Moody's rates the economy as one notch below investment grade (Einhorn 2015).

Loans from the international financial institutions (IFIs) have hinged upon Sri Lanka's recent post-war rapid economic growth, without much regard for debt levels

and large annual deficits. Demonstrating this growth through infrastructure projects and then casting this prosperity as under threat (i.e. securitised) has been an effective tactic mobilised by the Rajapakse regime to create consent to increase public spending on the military. Likewise, political receptivity to strict authoritarian measures across the country was made possible by the constantly rehearsed threat that LTTE 'terrorists' could return. This latter project was executed, in part, through 'war tourism' opportunities that emerged in and around the conflict zone where the final battles of the war played out in 2009. That Mahinda Rajapakse, as former president, held both the defense and finance portfolios was no accident.

Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary and the President's younger brother, Gotabaya Rajapakse, frequently espoused the '5Rs' of post-war development: Reconstruction, Resettlement, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration will bring about Reconciliation (de Alwis 2014). While this may be true, only the first and possibly the second of these processes were achieved in Sri Lanka during the five years of post-war of Rajapakse rule. During fieldwork and through 15 interviews in northern and eastern Sri Lanka in February 2013, I found that rehabilitation was no longer discussed, and that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the Northern Province had been told to avoid using the term 'psychosocial' in any of their programming (NGO personnel, Mullaitivu 2013). Reconstruction projects were, until recently, most often overseen by the Minister of Economic Development, another brother, Basil Rajapakse.

With a view of bringing development, security, and the neoliberal economy in Sri Lanka into focus, I begin this paper by creating a backdrop of the macro-economic landscape in Sri Lanka as a context within which this analysis of development, security, and militarisation takes place. I then move on to explore some of the links among these various activities and the Sri Lankan

government's agendas. Finally, I probe tourism as a site of perceived economic recovery and securitisation by the state in a precarious post-war context.

Sri Lanka, Debt, and Loans

Reading current documents on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) websites regarding Sri Lanka, one would scarcely know that a) Sri Lanka is recovering from decades of military conflict and violent politics; or b) that the Sri Lankan military (the public sector) is a major actor in post-war reconstruction and development. The World Bank (2014) reports that Sri Lankan economy has seen robust annual growth at an average 6.4 per cent over the course of 2003 to 2012, with a high of 8 per cent in 2009. The IMF (2014a) sends a similar message:

Sri Lanka's macroeconomic performance in 2013 largely exceeded expectations. Real GDP growth reached 7.3 per cent, inflation declined to below 5 per cent.... Steady progress on fiscal consolidation and reduction of public debt is a linchpin of macroeconomic stability in Sri Lanka, and a critical factor in maintaining policy credibility and confidence. Containing the deficit to 5.9 per cent of GDP in 2013 was welcome, as is the commitment to further reduce the deficit to 5.2 per cent of GDP in 2014.... The current supportive monetary policy stance appears appropriate given low inflation and moderate private sector credit growth.

From the lender's perspective, the text conveys a confidence that Sri Lanka's economic performance is acceptable. And yet, looking beyond significant annual deficits, the Government's accumulated debt (domestic plus external) has grown or remained steady from 2011–2013 at almost 80 per cent of GDP, not an insignificant financial burden. The IMF report does point to the need for

greater revenues to be raised through the elimination of tax breaks and loopholes.

Without the promise of relatively high growth rates, which are projected to continue, and increasing exports, Sri Lanka would be in an even more vulnerable economic situation. In the eyes of these IFIs, high growth rates and rising exports appear to offset Sri Lanka's sizeable debt and World Bank loans. In fact, World Bank lending to Sri Lanka in 2014 was forecast to be more than 2.5 times greater than in 2013 (i.e. US\$564m in 2014 versus US\$200m in 2013) (*Sunday Times* 2013a). In 2013, the IMF lent Sri Lanka US\$2.6b, with a minimum repayment of US\$500m in interest and capital for the year (*Sunday Times* 2013a).² Sri Lanka's financial status is precarious, even if its ability to repay loans appears possible in the short-term.

On 23 July 2014, the Executive Board of the IMF concluded its consultation with, and monitoring of, Sri Lanka, and endorsed the staff appraisal (2014a) written earlier that year without a meeting. Yet, a close reading of this Executive Board document (2014b) captures a tension and is revealing:

Capacity in expenditure and commitment control has increased, enhancing the government's ability to curtail spending to meet fiscal objectives. *However, given sizeable investment needs, the staff was of the view that spending cuts may have reached their effective limit, and that the burden of adjustment needed to fall more squarely on increasing revenue. Particularly if Sri Lanka is to maintain current growth momentum and foster economic development and diversification, high and sustained levels of public spending on infrastructure and human capital will be essential* (author's emphasis added).

This excerpt tacitly endorses Sri Lanka's high levels of public spending on infrastructure and human capital, which includes sizeable

Public Finances (as per cent of GDP)	Preliminary			Projected
	2011	2012	2013	2014
Revenue	14.3	13.0	12.2	13.1
Grants	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
Expenditure	21.4	19.7	18.3	18.7
Central Government Balance	- 6.9	- 6.5	- 5.9	- 5.2
Central Government Domestic Financing	3.5	2.7	4.6	1.8
Government Debt (domestic and external)	78.5	79.2	78.3	76.8

Table 1: Sri Lanka's Public Finances (2011–2014). *Source:* IMF 2014b.

military expenditures, an unusual allowance for any recipient of IMF loans. This is all the more mysterious when the country's debt load is high and public spending exceeds revenues by almost 50 per cent in all years for which data are provided (see **Table 1** above). The discrepancy between public spending and government revenues remains relatively constant over the 4-year period.

In October 2013, more than four years after the end of the military conflict with the LTTE, the Sri Lankan Government raised military spending to a record US\$ 1.95 billion, with the expense of both military and police budgets combined accounting for almost 12 per cent of government spending (*Agence France Presse* 2013). Goodhand (2012) reports that high levels of military spending have continued after the end of military conflict, with an increase of 6.3 per cent in 2011 alone. According to the World Bank, however, military spending as a percentage of GDP has declined slightly, from 3.6 per cent in 2009 to 2.6 per cent in 2012. While the figures vary somewhat, it is clear that military spending is increasing despite the end of the war. Such military spending appears to be tolerated as long as economic growth increases more quickly than the rate of military expenditures. Is this an allowance for post-war countries who manage to secure economic growth if not balanced books? More research on this economic front is needed, and I return to this question below.

The Sri Lankan Government uses soldiers to do much of its development work on reconstruction and infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka's North and East, where the war has been waged since 1983. From running hotels and resorts in the former battlefield (see **Figure 1**) to reinventing old colonial buildings as shopping arcades in the capital city, soldiers are the new development workers: trusted as both economic engines and political protection (see **Figure 2**; Sri Lanka's Urban Development Authority is under the auspices of the Defense Ministry). The new high-end shopping arcade at Independence Square features over 90,000 square feet of floor space of which 40,000 square feet holds 40 shops. Both this elite retail space and the old park adjacent to it have been renovated and lit. The park's design and surrounding boulevards are reminiscent of the sightlines in Haussmann's Paris during Napoleon III's rule. Why military personnel were needed for this renovation remains a puzzle. The creation and renovation of resorts in the North and shopping arcades in the country's capital are enigmatic as development priorities in post-war Sri Lanka.

None of the IFI documents mentioned above broaches the subject of using military personnel for economic and other development projects, begging the question; do they countenance an expansion of the military as long as the Government's broader goal is economic expansion? And if so, how could such an argument be persuasively made to



Figure 1: Lagoon's Edge Resort near Wadduwakal Causeway. Source: Author photo (2013).

a neoliberal financial institution that would insist on the efficiency of the market and competitive bids for such projects? This area is ripe for research.

Below, I explore the work that 'securitisation' can do in galvanizing business (including lending) but also in producing citizens' consent and capitulation to authoritative government that militarises civilian institutions.

Securitisation: Producing Risk to Militarise Development in Post-War Sri Lanka

Fear is both a legitimate emotion and a powerful political resource. It is at once an expression of vulnerability to political threats (real and perceived), as well as a rationale for security measures against them. It is produced in myriad ways, through narratives of nationalism rooted in economic marginalization, loss of territory, and anxieties

about invasions of home. The production of such anxieties gives rise to the *securitisation of fear* used to underwrite the allocation of resources to fortify particular regions and manage risk (Hyndman 2007). The securitisation of fear and its geopolitical uses and abuses in the context of post-war Sri Lanka are probed below.

Securitisation is a concept with many progenitors and critics (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; Hansen 2000; Bigo 2002; Williams 2003; Ciuta 2009). It was introduced by the Copenhagen School of Critical Security Studies, and analyses how a political or social problem becomes read through a 'security prism' (Campesi 2011: 2). It is a process of social construction that moves an area of regular politics into the area of security by employing a discursive rhetoric of emergency, threat, and danger aimed at justifying the adoption of extraordinary measures (Campesi 2011: 2). Three main elements



Figure 2: Arcade at Independence Square in Colombo. Source: Colombo Gazette (2014).

are associated with 'securitisation' (Buzan et al. 1998): an entity, such as a government or sovereign, makes the securitizing statement or assertion of threat; a referent object, normally the people or place being threatened and needing protection; and an audience, who are the target of securitisation act who must be persuaded to accept the issue or security threat as genuine.

Analysing securitisation in the context of immigration and asylum, Huysmans argues that:

...the pursuit of freedom from existential threats institutes political communities of insecurity.... It is a peculiar process of constituting a political community of the established that seeks to secure unity and identity by instituting existential insecurity (2006: 47).

Huysmans is concerned with the 'audience' identified by Buzan et al. (1998), and the political process of how insecurity is produced and then defended against, even if the

threat is only a potential one. This politics of potentiality is of interest in the Sri Lankan context: the risk of rebel return and 'terrorist' Tigers.

Aradau and Van Munster (2008: 23) examine how decision-makers and those who govern try to 'tame the future' in a post-9/11 context of extreme uncertainty: 'catastrophe has become once more the dominant political imaginary of the future.' September 11, 2001 is a highly Amero-centric marker of such potential catastrophe, but the authors' point is an important one: how does one govern through risk? Their Foucauldian approach:

... focuses on how presumably incalculable catastrophic risks such as terrorism are governed. Rather than ideological attempts to "feign control," as intimated by [Ulrich] Beck, ... different policies such as war, surveillance, injunctions to integration and drastic policies against antisocial behavior in fact function with a *dispositif* of precautionary risk (24).

It is the *precautionary* part that has given rise to new rationalities of government that 'require that the catastrophic prospects of the future be tamed and managed' (Aradau and Van Munster 2008: 24). The authors consider this a neoliberal rationality that at once depoliticises policies and interventions and de-democratises them.

The securitisation of prosperity and of civilian life in post-war Sri Lanka affects development in myriad ways. Just as humanitarian aid can be diverted for conflict-related purposes during war (Culbert 2005), so too is there a risk that resources for social and economic development can be used in ways that control and offer no benefit to citizens.

The international financial institutions wield more power than the Government of Sri Lanka would like to admit, and yet the Rajapakse regime performed a 'strong state' persona in relation to its citizenry. The Rajapakse government was politically popular and autocratic, but economically precarious. As outlined above, evidence of economic growth, a curb on spending, and new revenue generation was key to keeping a line of credit open with the IFIs. Sri Lanka had to have robust growth, even if its fiscal house was not in order, in order to appear open for business.

Securitisation plays into this goal by creating *consent* in civil society to this more centralised, consolidated state (Uyangoda 2010) and a militarised form of economic development that prioritises infrastructure at the expense of reconciliation with minority groups. A salient focus of critical Sri Lankan scholarship is this emphasis and priority given to economic development and reconstruction in the North and East at the expense of political change, 'reconciliation' – however fraught – and community consultation (Thaheer, Peiris, and Pahiraja 2013):

... de facto military rule and various forms of government-sponsored 'Sinhalisation' of the Tamil-majority region are impeding international humanitarian efforts, reigniting a

sense of grievance among Tamils, and weakening changes for a real political settlement.... (ICG 2012).

International Crisis Group's Senior Analyst and Sri Lanka Project Director, Alan Keenan, stated that '[i]nstead of giving way to a process of inclusive, accountable development, the military is increasing its economic role, controlling land and seemingly establishing itself as a permanent presence' (ICG 2012).

Goodhand (2012) too observes the slow pace of progress around political development (there may be no war, but there is no peace either) in contrast to the rapid response and pattern of new infrastructural development projects:

... reconstruction comes with a number of political strings attached. The rapid integration of the north and east is seen as a means of consolidating the unitary state and preventing the reemergence of Tamil militancy. In essence, it is viewed as a shortcut to security or as a means of obviating the need for a political settlement (133).

Infrastructural development, such as 'carpet roads' along the A9 and include the super-highways to Galle and Katunayake, occurs arguably at the expense of political solutions when only certain classes of Sri Lankans, from certain regions of the country, can partake in these luxuries. Like the shopping arcades in Colombo, one has to separate out pure capitalist development from contemporary understandings based on *human* development, and measured by the indicators that suggest a higher quality of life for all members of a society.

Wijedasa (2012) quotes a young social worker living in Sri Lanka's Northern Province on the topic of road development: 'Carpet roads is [sic] not development for us.' Road infrastructure is welcomed by most people, and can be flagged as evidence of development in one sense, but such infrastructure is not neutral.

Smooth 'carpet roads' have replaced the impassable potholes of the past, and such infrastructure has become a development priority for the Rajapaksa government.... Infrastructure, like these roads, is the kind of 'development' that can be used to reinforce and reproduce a powerful Sinhala nationalism: look at the new houses built; look at the new roads that make travel easier; look at the new electrical grid. And yet, the carpet roads have a double meaning: many injustices such as lost land, lost family members, and other disappearances have been swept under these roads that are meant to demonstrate modernity and prosperity (Hyndman and Amarasingam 2014: 564).

For people still displaced by the war, or worse, by the new military camps that have sprung up since the war in the Vanni or Jaffna areas of Northern Sri Lanka, the development that new roads represent is overshadowed by a landscape of widespread displacement, loss, impoverishment, and in some cases, trauma. These roads are part of a quotidian geopolitics of development, targeted not at the residents of the North and East but at the potential investors and skeptics – both local and foreign - who might need to see to believe just how much has changed. They serve to consolidate a unitary state that has yet to show any plans to reconcile with alienated Tamils and Muslims. And as one respondent to a research project on reconciliation noted, roads allow passage out, but they also allow the military access to otherwise remote communities (Thakeer et al. 2013).

So much has been said about the Sri Lanka's state's 'politics of patriotism' (Wickramasinge 2009), patrimonial politics (Goodhand 2012), and neo-patrimonial oligarchy (Gunasekera 2013) under the Rajapakse regime that these arguments need not be rehearsed at length. The *links* between development, security, and militarisation are,

however, worth exploring in more detail as a precursor to understanding how 'securitisation' can be both a powerful political tactic as well as conceptual rubric for understanding power in the context of post-war reconstruction and development. In Sri Lanka, where violence has not ceased despite the end of military conflict and where any sense of political inclusion for minority Tamils and Muslims seems elusive (Thiranagama 2011), precautionary measures are still taken in the name of national security.

The Sri Lankan state is performative in two ways: it performs prosperity through its carpet roads, new shopping arcades, and other visible markers of newfound prosperity apparent to many if not available to all, but it also *produces threats of terrorism and a possible return to war*, employing such risk to militarise formerly civilian spaces, like universities (Kadigamar 2013), as preventative measures to push back against such risks. Militarised development in this economy of power is the best option for the Sri Lankan Government because (tacitly) it employs unemployed Sri Lankans, winning political popularity, and (explicitly) because it is constantly vigilant against the potential resurgence of the LTTE. This constant rehearsal of vigilance and concomitant rise of militarisation against a non-existent enemy is politically popular and proven as a 'constitutive outside' (Mouffe 1993: 2), a way of defending the homeland against enemy forces, whether the LTTE or the Tamil diaspora. Securitisation logic in this context suggests that a robust and ready military will guard newfound, if elusive, prosperity.

Tourism in Sri Lanka and Colombia: Open for Business

I remember hearing about my brother and his wife taking an all-inclusive vacation in El Salvador in the mid-2000s. The first evening they were treated to an unexpected reception to celebrate their arrival as the first batch of foreign tourists to stay at their hotel on the Pacific Coast. Human rights abuses and documented violence persisted, but this did not

stop tourism (or my brother). My sister-in-law chose the village tour as their 'field trip' on New Year's Eve, and at the first stop she and my brother noticed a man and woman carrying guns as they got out of their vehicle to watch local Salvadoreans decorate their town for the celebrations. At the second stop, they noticed that the same armed man and woman appeared. It dawned on them that these two were the security detail for the field trip, *their* security detail. War has rarely stopped tourism; tourists and businesses adapt.

In Sri Lanka, tourism is also a site of securitisation. The end of military conflict with Tamil Tiger 'terrorists,' as the Government is fond of calling the rebels, has required militarisation of the industry to protect both tourists and business from a possible resurgence. Tourist sites based at the bunkers of the former LTTE leaders and around the final battlegrounds of the conflict in Northern Sri Lanka have featured the inferior technologies the defeated rebels used to advance their cause. I visited many of these sites in 2013, concerned that I was a voyeur of tragedy, but found that most of the sites on display featured military hardware, installations, and strategy maps complemented by new victory monuments. A postdoctoral researcher with whom I was working also made two separate visits in 2012 and 2013, and we analyzed our findings in a short illustrated paper (Hyndman and Amarasingam 2014).

Yet, we also disagreed on the function that these war artefacts play: were they reminders of the Rajapakse government's strength and victory over the rebels? Or did they rehearse the ever-present threat that a resurgence of Tiger 'terrorism' warranted extraordinary measures, such as an expanded military despite the end of the war? One of the former LTTE leader's bunkers had a sign for tourists posted outside under the header, **TERRORIST UNDER GROUND HIDEOUT:**

Under ground hide [sic] of the terrorist leader was constructed in the guise of an ordinary house. This well fortified hide [out] was obscured from

air observation by the thick jungle canopy, and it has 4 stories beneath with a well designed exit. Hide [out] was well protected within six close security fences with security and surveillance elements and prudent employment of well trained sniffer dogs to discern any infiltration and to monitor the movement within....

The ingenuity of the rebels was very clear to me after a visit to the underground bunkers, and even the signage indicates a degree of respect for the construction and security of the hideout. My reading of this government-ordered text is that just as the rebels were 'prudent' and well-prepared, the government must arm and ready its military to prevent any resurgence of these rebels.

As Ojeda (2013) in the context of Colombia has shown, tourism is an everyday geopolitical project. The Colombian context is, of course, vastly different, but some critical lessons can be learned. Ojeda (2013) traces the project of *Seguridad Democratica* (Democratic Security) and analyses how 'touristification,' or the discursive production of tourist sites as safe, was central to the conjuring of a pacified country that is open for business. State-led investments in tourism and its militarisation played a constitutive role in recasting the sociospatial order in Colombia. While tourism may seem a banal sideshow to the geopolitics of mass displacement, paramilitaries, and drug production, Ojeda contends that it is an expression of everyday geopolitics. Using a feminist geopolitics framework, she shows how these quotidian leisure practices are inseparable from national and international politics: all involve 'national security' and require suitably militarised 'protection' against possible threats: 'tourism and militarisation have been enabled and maintained by shared routes, itineraries, landscapes and spaces, such as those of *Vive Colombia*' (765).

In the Colombian context, Ramirez refers to the emergence and consolidation of the 'counterinsurgency narrative,' and shows how *security has become the dominant paradigm*

of democratic rule. The long-term coexistence between democracy and violence must be scrutinised to show how 'militarism and clandestine repression constitute the hidden face of Colombia' formal democracy' (cited in Ojeda 2013: 762; emphasis added). In the same context, Roldan comments that 'the existence or threat of violence [has been used] to justify the expansion of executive powers, the restriction of civil rights, and the suppression or demonization of dissent, while appearing to do so in defense of democracy and political stability' (cited in Ojeda 2013: 762).

Tourism may seem like a banal application of securitisation as an exercise of political power, but it represents an important sector for several reasons. The 'optic' that Colombia is safe enough for tourism is key to investors looking for new footholds in multinational business, and to governments that need to increase exports or at least export-orientated economic activities to pay back IMF loans and/or improve their balance of payments.

The parallels with Sri Lanka are quite striking. 'Narratives of peace and security in Colombia become saturated with the language of terrorism, subsequently framing guerrilla groups as the main obstacle to attaining peace in the country' (Ojeda 2013: 762). In Colombia the securitisation project has translated into the militarisation of different regions and the surveillance of citizens. Many activists, including peasants and university professors, have been framed as actual or potential terrorists, or their collaborators (Ojeda 2013: 762). The end of the war in Colombia is still in process, so the politics of securitisation are also at a different stage. Yet the parallels are notable.

One might ask, can all people travel to the former war zones of Colombia and Sri Lanka? Hardly. Many people affected by war and the insecurities of its aftermath face 'involuntary immobility' (Lubkemann 2008). They lack the resources or social capital to move. The dark irony that that a model camp for internally displaced persons, near Mullaitivu, houses Tamil people displaced by loss of land incurred through the construction of a new

military camp nearby is evidence of how war continues today by other means.

In the context of Colombia, Ojeda (2013: 766) adds a comment relevant to Sri Lanka:

That those places that tourists can finally visit again are those to which millions of displaced people cannot return to speaks to the multiple violences that, through the discursive and material production of tourist destinations – an intensive process of touristification – are supposed to have made Colombia safer.

Tourism remains an exclusive activity for those whose socioeconomic class status affords them a particular kind of mobility and protection (Massey 1993; Van Hear 2014), whose birth place and hometown within Sri Lanka shape their feelings of safety and proclivity to move (Hyndman and de Alwis 2004), and whose language abilities allow them to negotiate army checkpoints, train stations in the capital, and questions posed by inquiring officials with ease (or not) (Jeganathan 2003).

Touring Terrorism

A few years after the end of military conflict in 2009, tours of the defeated Tamil Tigers' war legacy, including infrastructure, equipment and facilities – became possible in Sri Lanka's Northern Province, not far from Mullikaival, where the final standoff and 'killing fields' are located. Busloads of Sinhala tourists from the South of Sri Lanka were visiting the poorly signed 'terrorist' sites, but so too were Tamil diaspora members returning to Sri Lanka to see relatives, check on property, and see what there was left of the LTTE and after the tragic loss of civilian life who died in battle in the first half of 2009. 'War tourism' in Sri Lanka serves to (re)produce the latent threat of rebel resurgence, and create political consent to high levels of militarisation that include the securitisation of development.

Whether the Sri Lankan Government meant to 'show off' the LTTE's wares and



Figure 3: 'Terrorist Swimming Pool'. Source: Author photo (2013).

ingenuity, such as the former leader, Prabhakaran's, bunkers and swimming pool (see **Figure 3**) or was securitising tourist sites by demonstrating the potential threats posed by real LTTE weaponry and an imagined LTTE resurgence remains an open question. Nonetheless, the text for tourists that accompanies the swimming pool (see **Figure 4**) is at once fear-mongering and critical of the LTTE's top leadership, despite their widely publicized deaths in 2009. The sheer resources and resourcefulness that it took to build this pool so far from a paved road is rather remarkable from an engineering perspective. Touring 'terrorism' is about much more than just seeing the sights.

The victory monuments erected by the Rajapakse Government are a more predictable expression of war tourism; they express the triumphalist Sinhala nationalism of the war's victor. The main victory monument on the A9 at Elephant Pass is meant to symbolise a united Sri Lanka, but it is surrounded by

four lions – a symbol associated with the Sinhala ethnic majority (75 per cent).

The text accompanying the victory monument is more telling: the barely comprehensible inscription on the monument begins by stating that this was the spot on which 'enormous strength, force, power, and determination concentrated from four directions.' Various army divisions are to have 'converged on this historical place of Elephant Pass and liberated this long-path of brotherhood with a magnitude of force annihilating terrorism and eliminating social disparities.' These claims can be seen as nationalist propaganda, and they probably are, but they are also a reminder of 'terrorism' that once lurked here, and must be guarded against. Who such tourism is 'for' and why some of the LTTE bunkers I visited in 2013 have allegedly been destroyed remain unanswered questions.

Meanwhile, what used to be a war without reliable road access has been replaced by new train service to Jaffna and over-night

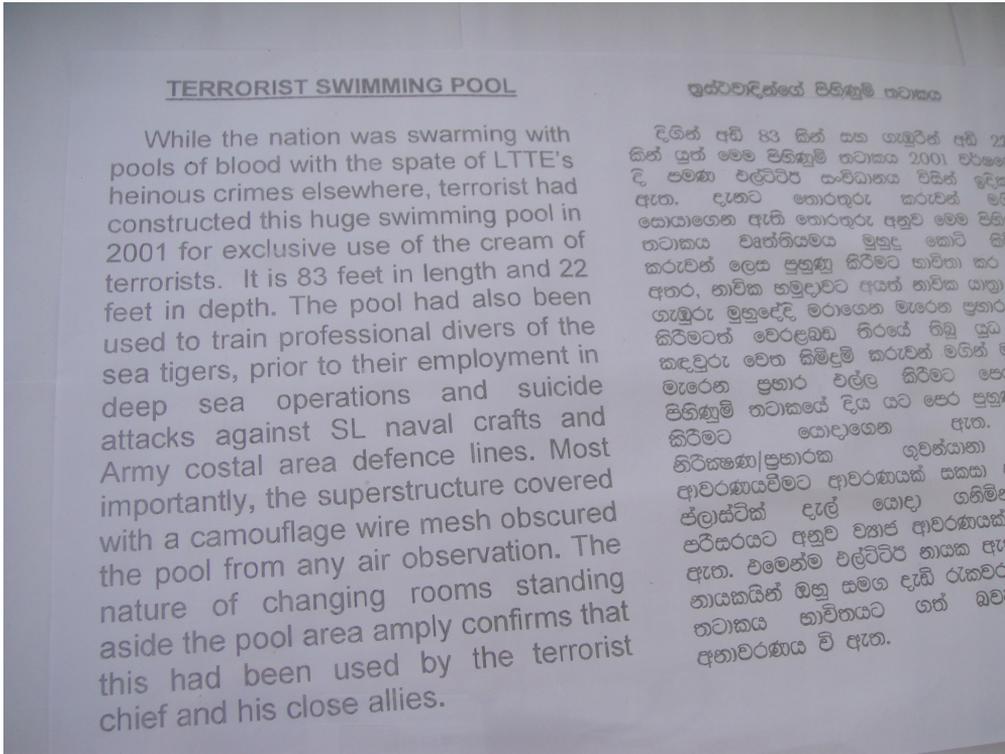


Figure 4: Text accompanying the swimming pool. Source: Author photo (2013).

buses plying the Colombo-Jaffna A9 route on the smooth ‘carpet roads,’ courtesy of the Asian Development Bank, and the new trains that test the new rails that runs parallel to it, thanks to the Indian Government (de Alwis 2014). Next to both stand two electrical grids running side by side on the same north-south axis. During the war there was only one, and it operated infrequently. Infrastructural development abounds, and even consumers have more options than before.

According to the Rajapakse government, terrorism has been defeated; progress has come to the Vanni. It is open to tourism and business. President Rajapakse’s edict that skeptics should ‘come see for themselves’ is fascinating in this respect: come and see the reconstruction and new infrastructure, new homes, and roads. This echoes the Colombia case where Uribe’s campaign of silence and impunity promulgated the idea that ‘it is time to look to the future, not the past’ (cited in Ojeda 2013: 767). Like Rajapakse, former President

Uribe ‘gave [some] Colombians their roads back.’ The massive internal displacement of upwards of 5 million people within Colombia is not mentioned; it is tangential to tourism. As Ojeda echoes, politics is ultimately about *whose* life to protect. In Sri Lanka, ongoing displacement among Muslims and Tamils in the North, East, and West, as well as expanding militarisation – especially in the former conflict zones – are harder to spot.

As scholars like Huysmans (2006) and Mountz (2010) have concluded, crises – such as invasions and terrorism – create new political space for exceptional measures by ‘us’ against ‘them’ on the part of the sovereign. Such measures may not always be lawful, but they are authorised in response to the threat of ‘terrorism’s’ return, as ways of managing ‘precautionary risk’ (Aradau and Van Munster 2008). Despite the end of military conflict in 2009, the installation of new military camps in Northern Sri Lanka and the increase in troop numbers is deemed a necessary precaution.

The Rajapakse government was highly performative in these post-war moments, constantly reproducing fear through representations of future risk. Just as '[n]umbers and facts are less important than the force of images of suffering and fear that have been brought to us' (Wickramasinghe 2009: 1052), numbers and facts are less important than the constant production and re-production of this fear, through threats of a return to 'terrorism,' insecurity, and uncertainty. All this takes place through a discourse of securitisation laced through development, security, and infrastructure projects:

We have removed the word minorities from our vocabulary three years ago. No longer are the[re] Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any other minorities. There are only two peoples in the country. One is the people who love this country. The other comprise the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth (President Rajapakse cited in Wickremasinghe 2009: 1046).

You are 'either with us or against us,' a dictum made notorious by George W. Bush on the even of the invasion of Iraq. A more constructive patriotism and critical loyalty were not options under the reign of the Rajapakse regime. Social and political inclusive of ethnonational minorities, specifically Tamils and Muslims, remained elusive. The military conflict may have ended, but there was, and is, no peace or reconciliation on which to build trust across the fissures of Sri Lankan society.

In an effort to instill fear and legitimise its discipline of the 'population,' and to reduce political space for civil society, it militarised universities when a) the war is technically over; and b) there is an impetus to reduce public spending by the financial patron saints, the IFIs.

Without Conclusion

Does the strategy of securitisation buy favour, or at least patience, with Sri Lankans? Does it buy the Government time with the IMF in

terms of reducing public spending because it must secure the country against threats of LTTE resurgence at the same time as it reconstructs infrastructure? These are questions that remain unanswered and will have to be addressed in future research. The election of a new president, Maithripala Sirisena, and the interim reappointment of a former prime minister, Ranil Wickremasinghe, create grounds to open up new political spaces and economic practices for development. Said President Sirisena of his recent election, 'I felt sorry for [Rajapaksa] but could not stay anymore with a leader who had plundered the country, government and national wealth' (Burke 2015b).

Rajasingham-Senanayake (2010: 19–20) has argued that reconstruction and development in Sri Lanka must be demilitarised, and lists how this could happen. Yet five years after her paper came out, none of these actions has yet to take place. As long as the Sri Lankan government pits some segments of society against others, as patriots and non-patriots, and promotes sites of 'war tourism' that at once celebrate their [Sinhala] victory of war and rehearse the threat of [Tamil Tiger] 'terrorism,' it also makes demilitarisation and peace impossible.

The performed 'vulnerability' of the albeit strong state and its proclaimed need for precautionary security measures to manage rebel risk plays nicely into a rationale for public sector military spending, funded by the IFIs.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Vijay Nagaraj, Johanna Reynolds, Vagisha Gunasekera, and Malathi de Alwis for their helpful comments on earlier drafts. Any errors or omissions are mine alone.

Notes

- ¹ Reuters (2015) reported that Sri Lanka has low governance standards, as measured by the World Bank (the BB rating): The country ranks far below its 'BB'-range peers on political stability in the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators,

placing it in the 26th percentile versus a 'BB' median of 41st; on accountability, Sri Lanka is in the 29th percentile versus the peer median of 45th.

² The United States hold 75 per cent of Sri Lanka's rupee denominated debt and 40 per cent of its foreign currency denominated debt, making the US one of the single largest investors in the government securities market. Of US\$3.5b foreign currency debt, US holds US\$1.4b (*Sunday Times* 2013b).

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How to cite this article: Hyndman, J 2015 The Securitisation of Sri Lankan Tourism in the Absence of Peace. *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 4(1): 14, pp. 1–16, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.fa>

Published: 17 March 2015

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