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# Embedded Institutions, Embodied Conflicts

Public Universities and Post-War Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone  
and Sri Lanka

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## ***Abstract***

This thesis is a study of the interaction of public universities with peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, two countries marked by civil wars in recent decades. Utilising documentary evidence and qualitative interviews with staff, students, and other related actors conducted over a total of six months in the two contexts, it identifies and conceptualises key factors which can constrain the ability of public universities to contribute to peacebuilding. In doing so, the research departs from existing scholarship on the relationship between universities and peace. Much of this literature has focussed on describing particular mechanisms by which universities might act towards peace or drive conflict. To fully understand and explain the factors that can affect university contributions to post-war recovery, I argue that it is vital to consider universities both as social groups that are embedded in larger social, political, economic, and historical processes and as distinct spaces containing unique social formations. Examination of the two cases, which differ significantly in the nature of their wars and in their political and economic trajectories since decolonisation, serves to draw out the significance of these contingent features of university environments. The thesis explores the shaping of university faculties by wars and political and economic crises, the socialisation and connected mobilisation of student groups, the entanglement between universities and political forces, and the silencing of critical voices through social and political pressures. Through analysis of these phenomena, I show that narrow human capital and institutional capacity framings of universities fail to capture the full complexity of the evolving social and political relations that constitute university communities and that connect them to the societies in which they are embedded. Crucially, I contend that this social and political complexity is not incidental to university functioning. Instead, the ways in which universities as social groups embody social fracture lines, political connections, and experiences of conflict and crisis are powerfully consequential for how universities operate and for how they interact with post-war peacebuilding.

## ***Lay Summary***

This thesis explores the interaction of public universities with peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, two countries marked by civil wars in recent decades. Using data from documents and interviews conducted over the course of a total of six months in the two countries, I identify key factors which can constrain the ability of public universities to contribute to peacebuilding. In order to fully understand these factors, I argue that it is necessary to consider both the connections that universities have with their historical, political, and social contexts and the distinct sets of relations and practices that exist amongst the members of university communities. Examination of the two cases, which differ significantly in the nature of their wars and in their trajectories since decolonisation, helps to highlight the importance of these contingent features of university environments. The thesis explores the shaping of university faculties by wars and political and economic crises, the practices of student groups, the links between universities and political parties, and the silencing of critical voices through social and political pressures. By investigating these phenomena, I show that predominant framings of universities and their role in society fail to capture the full complexity of the social and political relationships that exist in university communities and that connect them to their surrounding societies. Crucially, I contend that this social and political complexity is not incidental to how universities function. Instead, the ways in which university communities embody social fracture lines, political connections, and experiences of conflict and crisis are powerfully consequential for how universities operate and for how they interact with post-war peacebuilding.

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### ***List of Acronyms and Abbreviations***

APC	All People's Congress
BADEA	Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
CMS	Church Missionary Society
DfID	Department for International Development
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
FUTA	Federation of University Teachers Association
HE	Higher Education
HETC	Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPKF	Indian Peacekeeping Force
IUSF	Inter-University Students' Federation
JUSTA	Jaffna University Science Teachers' Association
JVP	Janata Vimukthi Peramuna
LLRC	Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Sierra Leone
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNP	United National Party
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VC	Vice-Chancellor

# Chapter One

## Introduction

During their interviews with former child soldiers in Sierra Leone, Peters and Richards asked a young man what he would wish for if he were granted three wishes. He replied, “My first wish is to be educated. Because why? Because of the too much illiteracy, the way our brothers in Sierra Leone don’t know their rights. Because when you are educated you know your rights. This is my first wish in my life. I admire education above anything” (1998, p.201). The young man’s response exemplifies the faith that is often put in education, in its power to offer individual and social change and to bring better futures after war (Burde, 2014; Shah and Cardozo, 2014).

Education, however, is not a panacea. The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, the act that sparked the Arab Spring, resonated with so many young, educated Tunisians partly because they too found themselves in a situation where there was no hope of finding work that matched their qualifications and were frustrated by their inability to achieve a better life despite their education (Virkama, 2015). Furthermore, schooling itself has also been used to foster conflict as well as to build peace. This duality in purpose is strikingly apparent in the United States’ involvement in Afghanistan, where US-sponsored textbooks were used to foment insurgency during the Soviet occupation before education was made a key part of counterinsurgency strategies following the US-led invasion (Burde, 2014). Education and research institutions have also contributed to the production and dissemination of nationalist and exclusionary ideologies that have been used to justify discrimination, as was the case for the racist ideologies which played a central role in the spread of colonialism and imperialism (Arowosegbe, 2014; Said, 1978). Education can act, therefore, as a site of social and political violence and struggle as well as a pathway to realising individual and collective aspirations for better futures.

The connections between education, conflict generation, and social change are particularly significant for post-war contexts, where there is a role for social institutions in helping to construct peaceful futures and to avoid the resurgence of violence. Although an increasing number of studies are starting to examine these dynamics (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; McLean Hilker, 2011; Paulson, 2008; Pherali, 2016), until recently, the role of universities has been

largely unexplored. New works, however, have suggested that universities could act as catalysts for post-conflict development and peacebuilding (Milton, 2013; Milton and Barakat, 2016). For example, the training of highly skilled professionals, such as engineers, could support recovery programmes while research could be used to guide peacebuilding strategies. Other scholars, however, have noted ways in which universities have been involved in exacerbating conflict dynamics, for instance by acting to entrench existing social inequalities (Smith and Vaux, 2003) or lending academic legitimacy to discriminatory rhetoric (Chege, 1996). While the existing literature articulates the array of different roles that universities can play in post-war contexts and in relation to conflict (Lange, 2011; Milton, 2013; Pacheco, 2013), there is a dearth of analytical insight into when they take on these different roles. What impacts upon, for example, the ability of university staff to act as leaders in the creation of healing narratives of the past and transformative visions of the future? Similarly, what determines whether university students are able to collectively rise up to challenge for a more socially equitable, more sustainable peace?

Such questions are the animating force behind my research. I set out to build on the current field of work by investigating the underlying factors that shape the engagement of universities with post-war peacebuilding and development. In doing so, I sought to problematise depictions of education as an apolitical, technical process or as a necessarily progressive social force. My approach to the former framing is influenced by critical scholars of education, such as Freire (1970) and Giroux (2002), who articulate the inherent entanglement between education systems and political processes around, for example, class, as well as by researchers of development, such as Ferguson (1990), who bring to the fore the political underpinnings and consequences of putatively apolitical and technical processes. In particular, I contest the view of education found in human capital approaches (Brown, 2015; Couch, 2019), which focus on the accumulation of economically valuable skills and knowledge by aggregations of atomised individuals and thereby fail to account for the significance of the social collectivities to which those individuals belong. My orientation to the relationship between education and social progress draws significantly on Bourdieu's pioneering work on education and social stratification, which illustrates the potential for education systems to function in ways that preserve and reproduce existing structures of inequality (Bourdieu, 1974; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Grenfell, 2014). Taking Bourdieu's insights on education seriously has crucial implications for the nature of the relationship between education systems and conflict. Framings of education as an essentially progressive social force (Lerch and Buckner, 2018; UNESCO, 2018; World Bank, 2018) incorrectly locate the root of university contributions to conflict, social inequality, and political oppression in deviations from, or distortions of, an imagined 'true' form of education and scholarship rather than acknowledging the complex

potential of education that is suggested by Bourdieu's work (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Davies, 2004).

To work towards these goals, I conducted field research on university communities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka in their respective post-war periods. I carried out qualitative interviews with students, staff, and related professionals, spent time 'hanging around' campuses (Bryman, 2015) and attending university events, and analysed documents relating to the constitution and functioning of the two university sectors. The research proceeded in an exploratory mode, using the themes that emerged from the interview data and from document analysis to generate a picture of key elements of the different university environments that have impacted upon university engagement with post-war processes of peacebuilding and development. What ultimately emerged from these activities was a recognition of the constrained impact of public universities on processes of post-war recovery in both countries, in contrast to the role set out for universities in human capital literature and existing works focussing on mechanisms for university contributions (Milton and Barakat, 2016; Pacheco, 2013).

In order to explain these findings, I developed a set of factors and concepts – around resource availability, political connections, and university social structures – that can be used to better understand and explain key features of universities that can limit their ability to contribute to post-war processes. Over the course of the eight chapters of this thesis, I outline and situate these factors and concepts, grounding them in the particular empirical contexts from which they emerged while also pointing to their broader applicability and implications. Overall, I argue that the specific, contingent ways in which universities are embedded in their social contexts and in which universities embody social fracture lines, political connections, and experiences of conflict and crisis can shape their possibilities for contributing to post-war peacebuilding and development. In making such an argument, I hope to encourage a shift in current academic and policy approaches to the role of universities in conflict-affected contexts towards an understanding of universities that is grounded in their particular social formations and their specific historical, social, political, and economic environments. It is my belief that by occupying such a position we might then better step towards more meaningful university engagement with processes of post-war recovery as well as with processes of social, political, and economic change more broadly.

In this chapter, I start by briefly discussing existing approaches to understanding the position and role of universities in post-war contexts and in development at large. I then briefly elaborate upon the idea that a strong contribution to post-war recovery has generally been absent in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, setting up the main empirical problem which this

thesis seeks to explore. Next, I outline the key questions to which the thesis responds in seeking to explain this lack of contribution. These revolve around the critical dimensions of resource availability, the demographics and dynamics of staff communities, the forms and functions of student groups, and issues of critical voice. Following this, I lay out my research approach, which centres on exploratory case studies of the conditions in public universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka and engages with the social groups that constitute universities as the principal objects of study. Finally, I comment on the overall findings of the study and their positioning with respect to dominant ideas about how universities relate to post-war development and peacebuilding before then setting out the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

### ***Understanding the Role of Universities in Peacebuilding and Development***

In reflecting on Bush and Saltarelli's seminal report, *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict* (2000), Julia Paulson highlights that the report helped to spark a body of work that has "put the analysis of the relationships between education and conflict and its impacts for conflict prevention and peacebuilding on the agendas of development practitioners, policy makers and academics alike" (2008, p.3). Novelli (2010) notes that there are three main areas of research that have emerged in the field in recent decades: studies on the effect of conflict on education, studies on the ways in which education can foster or serve to prevent conflict, and studies on the governance of education in conflict-affected contexts. With regards to the first of these, Paulson and Shields (2015), for example, raise disruption in access to education, child wellbeing, damage to education infrastructure, and loss of human capital as some of the key impacts of conflict. Dana Burde's research on schooling in Afghanistan (2014) suggests that educational institutions like schools may, in fact, be specifically targeted by armed actors as they can be one of the clearest symbols of government presence.

Turning to the second area, Lynn Davies' work on education as a source of conflict articulates the complexity of the relationship between education and process of conflict of peace (2004; 2005). Like Bush and Saltarelli (2000), she emphasises that education systems can operate in ways that can deepen social divisions, for example through exclusionary access procedures, and inculcate cultures of violence, for instance through approaches to conflict resolution, as well as being sites that can foster peace by building social cohesion, through encouragement of contact and communication between different communities, and by facilitating development (Davies, 2004). The growth of research in the third area, gathered often under the heading of education in emergencies (Versmesse et al., 2017), speaks to the

increasing attention paid by humanitarian actors to the delivery and management of education in crises (Burde, 2014). Here, a major strand of the work is on policy solutions which work towards building 'resilience' in education systems, despite the ambiguities around what such a term might mean in practice (Lopes Cardoso, 2015). Novelli suggests that this "policy driven agenda" is part of the problem of the field, with literature tending to be "problem solving, policy oriented, westo-centric" and focussed on the "needs and demands of international donors and agencies" (2010, p.274). Given this tendency, there is a need to move away from research that simply serves to discursively legitimise the rationales advanced by the humanitarian community for interventions (Versmesse et al., 2017, p.539) and to move towards research that builds a stronger theoretical basis for understanding the actual experiences and practices of education institutions in conflict-affected contexts.

Another shortcoming of the extant literature is that much of the research emerging since Bush and Saltarelli has focussed on primary and secondary education, leaving university education somewhat neglected until the emergence of a new wave of studies in recent years (Millican, 2017b; Milton, 2017b; Milton and Barakat, 2016; Pacheco, 2013). Part of Millican's justification for the importance of such work is that "working with young people on the cusp of adulthood, may have a greater impact on their attitudes and values than... at any other point in their lives" (2017a, p.3). The significance of higher education in this area can also be seen through the fact that university students have been key actors in conflicts across the globe, with the universities in Sri Lanka, for instance, serving as one of the key sites for different forms of militancy in the country (Wickramasinghe, 2014). In terms of broader theorisations of the relationship between universities and conflict, Matthew Lange (2011) puts forward a number of significant mechanisms by which universities can contribute to or cause conflict, including socialisation towards division and violence and the frustration and aggression related to mismatches between aspirations, expectations, and the realities of education and its effects.

Addressing the lack of attention paid to the role of universities in post-war processes, Milton calls higher education the "neglected pillar of recovery" (2013). Relatedly, Milton and Barakat note that the research on the topic of universities in post-war contexts has been oriented towards how universities might be rebuilt rather than how they might positively participate in the rebuilding (2016). In Johnson's summary of the available literature for sub-Saharan Africa (2013), she notes that existing works offer insight into the effects of conflict on universities, such as through 'brain drain', and into the effects of formal peace programmes but that there is an absence of work on the wider role of universities in building peace. Attempting to tackle this gap, Milton articulates a broad range of ways in which universities can contribute to post-conflict recovery (2013), drawing primarily on case studies of Iraq and Libya. In providing a later review of these mechanisms, Milton and Barakat (2016) outline four main areas for

potential contributions, corresponding to four different aspects of post-war processes: stabilisation and securitisation, reconstruction, statebuilding, and peacebuilding. With regards to stabilisation, for example, they suggest that universities can play a role in demobilisation and reintegration processes through the provision of educational opportunities to ex-combatants. Going beyond teaching, Milton and Barakat argue that by producing research which legitimates or delegitimises particular narratives of reconciliation and cooperation universities can act to foster better community relations, aiding peacebuilding.

Taking a similar focus to Milton, Ivan Pacheco (2013) draws out a taxonomy of the different potential functions of universities in contexts of conflict and in post-war reconstruction. Pacheco notes the ways in which institutions in Colombia, for example, have been involved in practices of knowledge dissemination linked with memorialisation processes. The study utilises the traditional tripartite mission ascribed to universities – teaching, research, and service – but expands it to include considerations such as the function of universities with regards to broader social change, for instance through their operation as spaces of social criticism, and the protection of populations in fragile situations, for example through supporting the reintegration of displaced populations. Pacheco and Milton’s work, in particular, serves to draw together and delineate an expansive set of mechanisms by which universities might engage constructively in post-war processes (Milton, 2013; 2017; Pacheco, 2013). While acknowledging the limitations on these mechanisms for university engagement in post-war recovery, and thus giving some ideas of when they might be effective, these studies, nevertheless, do not offer a systematic approach to the conditions of possibility for such mechanisms to be realised.

The rapidly expanding body of work on the role of universities in development and economic growth offers another means of interrogating what universities might be able to contribute in post-war contexts. Predominant among the ways of framing this contribution in recent decades has been the idea of universities driving a ‘knowledge economy’ at both global and national scales (Gunawardena, 2013; Robertson, 2008; 2014). In 1999 the World Bank announced in its World Development Report that “Poor countries—and poor people—differ from rich ones not only because they have less capital but because they have less knowledge” (World Bank, 1999, p.1). Emerging from this framing, the solution for development, therefore, was to address the perceived knowledge and skills gaps and information problems faced by poor countries. In conflict-affected situations, such an approach might focus on the ability of local academics to provide vital expertise that can be used to guide the design and implementation of development and reconstruction programmes, thereby avoiding the challenges frequently associated with externally funded and directed projects (Milton and Barakat, 2016). These ideas can be seen as building on the established body of work on developmental universities

(McCowan, 2018), which were prevalent in post-independence Africa and saw the functions of the university tied tightly to the developmental agendas of states and nations. As I will show in this thesis, however, serious questions remain about the viability of such developmental approaches in conflict-affected contexts.

The current body of research on universities and post-war recovery identifies a broad array of ways in which universities can engage with conflict and post-conflict processes. What remains to be understood, however, are the conditions under which these positive or negative interactions between universities and post-war processes might be realised. Existing studies list, for example, the contributions that universities might make towards building state capacities after wars (Milton and Barakat, 2016) but do not sufficiently interrogate what might shape the ability of universities to engage with these projects in the first instance. How do the particular historical trajectories of universities, for instance, delimit their possibilities for post-war action? What do different social formations within university communities mean for their ability to engage with peacebuilding? This study set out to respond to these questions and to expand the literature on the role of universities in post-war contexts using case studies of universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

### ***Preliminary Responses***

As I began to explore the connections between universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka and processes of post-war recovery, I encountered a number of clear examples of efforts being made by university communities to contribute to peacebuilding and development. At the University of Sierra Leone, for example, I spoke to senior members of the political science and peace and conflict studies departments who had worked to train security services in the aftermath of the war and who had helped establish a student-led Peace Society that carried out sensitisation and peacebuilding activities on campuses and in schools. In each country, university staff had worked with government agencies in the formulation of national strategies in the wake of the respective wars, with some academics also then going on to form part of governments and utilise their expertise in those roles. A Northern Professor in Sri Lanka, for instance, described how he had lent his skills to the newly formed Office of National Unity and Reconciliation. At the University of Jaffna, the Dean of Management Studies and Commerce detailed a list of entrepreneurship activities that had taken place amongst the student community, with these aiming to help combat the widespread economic difficulties in the North of the country (JU13). Similarly, staff at Njala University in Sierra Leone and the University of

Jaffna spoke about how new programmes had been introduced in the post-war period in order to try to drive development and growth amid a changing economic landscape.

Despite these instances of active involvement in peacebuilding and development, however, the dominant view articulated by university staff was that their institutions had not substantially contributed to the post-war recoveries in both countries. There was a sense that the potential of the universities to be drivers of change had not been realised. Professor Alie at Fourah Bay College in Freetown, for example, remarked that, while individuals had made contributions, “as an institution, [the university] was not very heavily involved in the reconstruction process” (UoSL1). In Sri Lanka, a lecturer at the University of Jaffna commented that “In a nutshell, my view is that the role of the university has been really disappointing. They had a major role to play and they really did not rise up to the occasion...” (JU2). There was, amongst many, frustration about what appeared to be opportunities missed. Referring to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone, for instance, interviewees commented on the lack of progress in the country and how the conditions that led to the conflict were being reproduced. Related to these discussions, there was also a sense that universities had not sufficiently reflected upon their role in the conflict in Sierra Leone and upon the legacies of the conflict for the university system in Sri Lanka. These calls were encapsulated by the idea of the need to ‘turn the lens’ so that the analytical tools that are used to explore and explain the world around universities would be brought to bear on the universities themselves and to, thus, explain and act upon the factors that had inhibited their realising a contribution to post-war recovery and development. This idea of ‘turning the lens’ heavily influenced the course of the research, encouraging a focus on the social groups that constitute universities over time and how the structures and practices within and around them shape their possibilities for action.

### ***Research Question and Definitions of Key Concepts***

In order to respond to these preliminary findings, the research subsequently concentrated on understanding the reasons for the limited post-war contributions of universities in the two countries with respect to processes of peacebuilding and development. Correspondingly, the overarching research question that structures this thesis is:

*What factors explain the limited contributions to post-war peacebuilding and development of public universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka?*

The remainder of this section unpacks this question and clarifies its key terms before the next section introduces the subquestions that helped guide and further focus the research.

Taking first the primary object of the research, universities, the study focusses on public universities due to their historical prevalence and significance as well as their relationship with the state and wider society. While some private universities may operate with the expectation of creating benefits beyond their staff, students, and shareholders, public universities generally hold some form of explicit mandate for supporting the public good, as exemplified by the developmental university model (McCowan, 2018). Interviewees at the University of Jaffna, for example, spoke about the university's origins as a place to serve the local community, which meant both acting for the direct benefit of the society surrounding the university and operating in such a way that members of the community were engaged with the activities of the university.

Public universities, however, take a multiplicity of forms (Collini, 2017), particularly with regards to who is responsible for funding such institutions. For the purposes of this study, I choose to consider public, or state, universities as the social groups that are directly attached to institutions that have been granted university status by legal instrument in a way that recognises the institution's belonging, with varying degrees of separation, to the state apparatus. As social groups, universities are constituted by their particular collection of members, the practices and beliefs embodied by that membership, and the sets of relations between those members (Elder-Vass, 2010). Universities, or distinct groups within them, can use their granted institutional status to make claims – to resources, rights, and responsibilities – against the state and in society. For example, a university community may make claims against the legislation on academic freedom in a particular national context in order to justify certain freedoms of speech within campuses. University communities may also appeal to international or historical concepts of a university, drawing upon these as discursive resources as well as sources of legitimacy. In return, universities can be subject to claims from other parts of the state apparatus as well as from members of society and other organisations.

In my analysis of post-war recovery, I focus on two overlapping but distinct processes: peacebuilding and development. Reflecting Galtung's (1969) distinction between negative and positive peace, I consider peacebuilding to refer to more than the cessation of the direct violence associated with armed conflict and to encompass transformational agendas over longer time periods than those traditionally associated with relief or stabilisation operations. In conceptualising what it means for education to contribute to peacebuilding, I draw upon the 4Rs framework developed by Novelli et al. (2017). Following Fraser (2005), the framework takes a normative social justice approach to building positive peace, focussing on issues of resource redistribution, cultural recognition, political representation, and reconciliation. Contributing to peacebuilding, therefore, means conducting or facilitating processes that work towards contextually defined ends associated with these four "R"s. This approach is not

without its tensions. The transformational edge of such recent conceptualisations of peacebuilding (Richmond, 2014) must contend with the fact that transformation can be destabilising and can rely on bringing social conflicts to the fore rather than de-escalating them. Thus, peacebuilding has to navigate between being transformative enough to address the underlying drivers of conflict and yet not sufficiently destabilising that the processes of transformation are themselves generative of a return to, or fresh outbreaks of, violent conflict. Whether such a balance is possible in a given context at a particular moment is an empirical question. Turning to development, I concentrate primarily on economic processes of change that lead to improved material conditions of existence for a given population, rather than, say, a narrow conception of economic growth based solely on GDP or development as a linear progression through economic stages (Desai, 2012; Rostow, 1990). While I recognise development as also referring to social and political processes of change, the overlap here with transformative notions of peacebuilding is substantial so I choose to discuss development in predominantly economic terms.

With regards to factors, I refer to the range of considerations which influence the realisation of mechanisms for university contribution to peacebuilding and development. For example, the ability of universities to engage in research that supports peacebuilding may be shaped by the availability of facilities for that research, which in turn may have emerged from historical levels of funding. Alternatively, there may be restrictions related to the local political environment, which may work to constrain the scope of topics that are seen to be 'appropriate' for research. As suggested by these examples, factors may operate at multiple scales and result from dynamics that are both internal to and external to universities. Chapter Six, for instance, describes how student mobilisation is affected by socialisation practices within universities as well as by political dynamics that are largely external to them.

In alignment with an exploratory approach, I worked to avoid limiting at the outset of the research the features of universities and their environments that I would study and to, instead, be led by the data in terms of which factors emerged as the most relevant for the research question. In response to the data I generated, I began to focus on certain features of the universities and higher education systems under study and to exclude or background others. The exclusion of factors was performed on the basis of their perceived explanatory power, their dependence on other features, and the degree to which they had been studied elsewhere. For example, the relationship between the specifics of pedagogy and peacebuilding is not a major element of the research. This is partly due to the extensive, albeit inconclusive, literature on peace education (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Harris, 2010; Higgins and Novelli, 2018; Pherali, 2016) and partly because I chose to concentrate on anterior issues around the processes by which staff members, with their sets of beliefs, positions in power

structures, and levels of experience and education, came to be within the university and practising pedagogy in the first place. In a similar vein, the thesis is not a study of education policy, although it certainly engages with it. This decision responds to the lack of direct policy connecting universities and peacebuilding in the two contexts. It also emerges from the fact that the data I generated points to the importance of the particular dynamics of the university as a social group for understanding how policies become, or fail to become, actual practice.

### ***Further Questions***

In order to respond to my initial data and to better explain the apparent lack of substantial university contributions, I focussed on four interconnected areas which then became the basis for four research subquestions. The first concerns the availability of resources. The divergence in the levels of resources available to universities in the two countries was a striking feature of the data, with the struggles of Njala University to provide its own electricity, for example, bringing these differences into sharp focus. Variations in access to funding are significant for post-war universities not only for processes of reconstructing infrastructure but also for the feasibility of recruiting and training staff to replace those lost to conflict and migration. The second line of exploration concentrated on how university faculties are rebuilt and the corresponding effects on post-war university functioning. My research in Jaffna highlighted resistance to the post-war entry of academics that might oppose dominant ideological agendas or challenge existing power hierarchies within the university. Such findings encouraged investigation of who constitutes universities and the forms and distributions of power (Bourdieu, 1984; Fraser, 1989; Revel, 2014) within universities that are involved in controlling access and structure.

The third area of focus was student groups. Across the world, university students have been a prevalent source of conflict and social change. In both case countries, students have played a prominent role in the outbreak of violence as well as in movements for social and economic progress. To better understand post-war student mobilisation, I considered socialisation practices amongst student populations and the related formation and perpetuation of divisions and unities, concentrating, in particular, on how these features of universities influence the possibilities for collective action by student groups. Finally, conversations with participants around the part that universities have played in the construction and dissemination of narratives about the war and the post-war future led to a closer examination of the potential for universities to act as critical voices in society and for critical debates to occur within

universities themselves. The call to 'turn the lens' noted above encouraged contemplation of what has prevented such discussions from taking place.

In order to address the role of these factors in conditioning the possibilities for action by post-war public universities, I considered the following questions:

- SQ1: How does access to funding, or the absence of such funding, influence the functioning of post-war public universities?
- SQ2: What factors shape the post-war reconstitution of staff communities at public universities?
- SQ3: How do the practices and structures of unity and division amongst student groups influence their interaction with issues of conflict, peace, and development?
- SQ4: What factors influence the potential for critical voice by, and within, public universities in post-war contexts?

### ***Methodology***

One of the most striking contrasts between universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka is the way in which the university spaces are constructed. The campus of Fourah Bay College in Freetown, for example, sprawls over the top of Mount Aureol. The College looks down from a distance on the rest of the town, as one proud student put it, while, nevertheless, being closely connected to the rest of the capital by the major thoroughfare that runs through the heart of the campus. The University of Jaffna in the North of Sri Lanka, on the other hand, is located comfortably close to the centre of Jaffna town. Like much of post-war Jaffna, however, it is walled off from its surroundings, a status that is reinforced by the presence of an officious campus security department. The terrain of each campus tells its own unique story about the particular trajectories of their respective university communities, for example with regards to the nature of militarisation in Jaffna, while also speaking to the broader histories of conflict and social and economic change in each country, for instance in relation to the economic struggles that have exacerbated the dilapidation of campuses in Sierra Leone. While each of these stories is capable of yielding its own set of insights relevant to the research question, the power of placing these stories side by side is that what is distinctive about each context and what is common across contexts can be better delineated. The sense of a securitisation of Sri Lankan universities, for example, is heightened by contrast with the apparent openness of campuses in Sierra Leone. It is through this double process of contextual consideration and comparison that the underlying factors that have shaped the specific form of each university's

post-war functioning were made most readily available for analysis. The remainder of this section details the underlying principles and practices of this research strategy.

### *Approach to the Research*

A qualitative case study approach utilising two case countries was initially selected for three principal reasons. First, qualitative case study work is well suited for the theory-generation required in emerging fields (Eisenhardt, 1989). For example, the finding that elements of the post-war staff community in Jaffna were resisting the entry of qualified staff candidates cannot be effectively explained in terms of existing institutional capacity descriptions of post-war universities, encouraging the development of new theory around social group dynamics. Second, case study approaches facilitate the tracing of processes of interaction between different actors and institutions (George and Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2004), thereby helping to delineate how actors inside and outside the universities affect the functioning of institutions. Consideration of the relationship between student groups in Sierra Leone and political parties over time, for instance, shows how these interactions impact how, and for what, students collectively mobilise. Third, the fact that the process of theory development already involves moving between data from different contexts aids the application of the research findings to other cases. For example, despite the marked differences between the student groups studied in the two cases, their socialisation practices perform similar functions in terms of preparing students for political mobilisation, suggesting that the concept of political socialisation I put forward to describe these processes has utility beyond the boundaries of either case context.

Turning to the specifics of the case selection, the choice of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka as cases emerged from both practical and theoretical implications. I started with a comprehensive list of all countries that had experienced an official end to a war since 2000. This timeframe was chosen so as to ground the research in the contemporary peacebuilding environment, which was significantly altered post-9/11 (Barakat and Zyck, 2009), and to also increase the likelihood of being able to speak to participants who had experienced multiple phases of the post-conflict process. As fieldwork was considered vital for the research, a number of countries, such as Afghanistan and Libya, were then excluded on the basis of their security situations. While Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka ultimately serve as illustrative case studies, demonstrating how the factors identified through the research impact upon and constrain the ability of universities to contribute to post-war recovery processes in each case, their initial selection drew heavily upon comparative approaches (Bryman, 2015; Gerring, 2004). In particular, case selection was influenced by difference strategies, where the choice of cases is principally informed by variation between cases along key conceptual dimensions which

appear likely to be influential based on existing literature (George and Bennett, 2005). Such approaches enhance the generalisability of research by generating theory from commonalities and contrasts between cases whose characteristics may be expected to differ substantially (Ragin, 2014). Correspondingly, the primary logic for the selection of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka as cases related to the value of looking at two markedly different wartime and post-war environments for generating theory that can be usefully adapted to a range of post-war situations and for isolating factors that are more likely to be specifically related to universities themselves.

Three dimensions of difference were viewed to be particularly illustrative of the contrasts between the cases and their post-war environments. First was the relative strength of the post-war centralised Sri Lankan state (Bastian, 2013) compared with the lack of capacity in Sierra Leone's centralised apparatus (Tom, 2017). This difference was seen as important due to the likelihood of it affecting the space available for universities to engage with planning and implementation of development and peacebuilding programmes. Similarly, differing state capacity also impacts the material realities of universities and the degree of alignment of university policies and practices with broader government priorities (Molla and Gale, 2015). The second dimension of difference related to the ways in which the wars ended in the two countries and the manner in which social structures were aligned with the parties to the war. Sri Lanka's war was ended by the decisive military defeat of the Tamil insurgent group by the predominantly Sinhalese military, while the end of the conflict in Sierra Leone, where the rebel faction was not directly associated with one particular social group, resulted from negotiation supported by military intervention from third parties. Correspondingly, there is a much clearer sense of winning and losing populations emerging from the 'victor's peace' in Sri Lanka than there is in the Sierra Leonean context. A third point was that Sierra Leone experienced a substantially higher degree of international intervention in its post-war processes (Cubitt, 2012), partly due to its weakened governance structures, while Sri Lanka had a greater degree of domestic leadership in post-conflict processes (Bastian, 2013). This was thought to be significant partly because it influences the types of actors with which universities might compete or cooperate with in attempts to affect post-war processes. It can also shape the financial and policy landscapes in which universities operate, as seen through the impact of the World Bank on higher education in both countries.

While the selection of two case countries necessarily reduces the depth to which either can be explored independently, the compensatory value of the multiple case study approach was evident throughout the research. The insights gained from the work in Sierra Leone around, for example, the significance of student politics, and the issue of the politicisation of universities more broadly, encouraged much more explicit attention to these areas from the

outset in Sri Lanka. This enabled me to refine and reframe the idea of politicisation into what I call political entanglement so as to better explain the interactions between political forces and universities in both countries. Similarly, using the much more overt separation of different social groups at universities in Sri Lanka to reflect back upon the divisions in Sierra Leone's higher education sector led to a more nuanced understanding of how student groups in Sierra Leone could also be seen to contribute to the entrenchment of social divisions. The stark contrasts between the cases were also often clarifying. The sharp distinction between the financial situation of universities in the two countries served to problematise ahistorical assumptions about the likely resource environments of universities in conflict-affected contexts and to prompt further research on the particular economic trajectories of the two case countries. Finally, the very act of comparison, and the surprises comparison offered up, proved useful for thinking through the details of each case as it encouraged the unsettling of the common-sense logics that can be attached to particular phenomena in their given contexts. Explanations of the campus violence associated with student initiation processes in both countries, for instance, are often grounded in language relating to a student deviancy or abnormality that is peculiar to each country. The presence of underlying similarities between these student practices in two very different contexts, however, points to the need to probe the underpinning structures and functions of student groups in pursuit of a satisfactory explanation for either case.

### *Scope and Site Selection*

In keeping with the logics outlined above, I chose to focus on a small number of universities in each country where I could spend time 'hanging around' (Bryman, 2015) and conduct interviews with staff. In Sierra Leone, the small size of sector meant that I could conduct primary research at the two main public universities that are operating in the country, the University of Sierra Leone and Njala University. Both universities have existed since before the war, although for a large part of their history Njala had formed part of the University of Sierra Leone. A third public university, Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology, was created in 2015, well after the end of the war, and was not included in the study. With regards to Sri Lanka, the main focus of field research was the University of Jaffna, with further interviews conducted at the University of Colombo and the Open University of Sri Lanka. The University of Jaffna was selected due to its location in the north of the country, which, along with the eastern regions, had been the epicentre of the conflict. The University of Jaffna had links with the emergence of Tamil militancy around the beginning of the war and spent a number of years during the war operating under conditions that were closely controlled by the LTTE. Conversations at the University of Colombo, one of the most

prestigious in the country, and the Open University of Sri Lanka, with whom I was affiliated during my research, provided further contextual information about the state of the sector and also allowed for some in-country comparison with regards to the different conditions and dynamics at different universities. Interviews were also planned for Eastern and South Eastern Universities, but the Easter bombings and subsequent violence in the north and east in 2019 meant that further fieldwork was cancelled.

### *Data Collection Strategies and Experiences*

The primary data collection was carried out in Sierra Leone from September to December 2018 and in Sri Lanka from January to April 2019. The process of finding interviewees at the different sites proceeded through a combination of utilising existing academic networks and 'hanging around' in spaces such as libraries and archives in order to generate opening conversations that could lead to research participation. At the University of Sierra Leone, for instance, time spent in the archives researching the history of education policy led to conversations with staff in the area and eventually to my first interview at Fourah Bay College. Once started through these pathways in both cases most interviewees were then reached through referrals from existing participants in a process described as 'snowball' sampling (Yingling and Brunson McClain, 2015). This did not always lead, however, to connections with people who were on the same side of issues. An academic in Colombo, for example, introduced me to a colleague whom he described as deeply racist with regards to the position of Tamils in the country. In order to further address the potential biases that may have been introduced into the research by the use of selective sampling, I reached out to contacts outside those participant networks, primarily via email, and started new participant chains. Despite the limited pool of potential participants at the different sites, I also made efforts to try to speak to staff at a range of levels as well as current and former students and other professionals involved in the sector.

In total, I conducted 67 interviews – 36 in Sierra Leone and 31 in Sri Lanka. All except two of the interviews were recorded, with the unrecorded interviews both taking place in Jaffna. In Sierra Leone, all except two of the interviews were conducted with current or former university staff or students. Twenty-three of the interviewees were connected with the University of Sierra Leone and eleven were connected with Njala University. A number of former staff also held prominent government or business positions, such as a former Professor who was now Executive Director of the Standards Bureau. It was common for staff to hold multiple positions, with one interviewee serving as part of the senior management of a national TV channel. In Sri Lanka, all bar two of the interviews were conducted with existing or former university staff,

with those two consisting of a student leader at the University of Jaffna and an independent researcher who had conducted work relevant to the study. Of the staff interviews, sixteen were at the University of Jaffna, six at the University of Colombo, five at the Open University, and four had either retired or had multiple university affiliations. The length of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 150 minutes with the average length being just over one hour. The interviews are cited in the text using codes related to their university affiliations, such as JU1 for the first interview conducted at Jaffna University. These codes and further details on the interviewees can be found in the Appendix.

In addition to formal interviews, I also spoke to students and staff on campuses and professionals working in a range of related fields as part of spending time in the field. These conversations often informed questions that were then asked in the more formal interviews as well as providing new pieces of information about, for example, the student experience. Such conversations were much more common in Sierra Leone than Sri Lanka due to the language barriers involved in the latter context. Direct reference in the text to such experiences and observations uses the code FN, denoting field notes.

While the project operated principally in an exploratory mode, in order to guide the inquiry effectively I developed an initial set of probing questions and sensitising themes using key ideas from the existing literature. This approach allowed me to generate more concrete interview questions and to systematically interrogate secondary sources while enabling me to shift between areas of focus as the data was collected and analysed. The initial sensitising themes I used can be gathered together into four categories derived from the literature. Recognising the authority universities can wield as sources of expert knowledge, the first dealt with the interaction between the creation, dissemination, and contestation of discourses around their country's conflict and its legacies. The second focussed on the examination of policies and practices within universities that intersected with processes of peacebuilding and development. Drawing on the work of Robertson (2008; 2014) and Novelli et al.'s 4Rs framework (2017), the third related to the respective influence of knowledge economy and social justice ideas in how universities interacted with post-war processes. Finally, connected with the acknowledgement of the embeddedness of universities in larger structures (Duncan and Lopes Cardozo, 2017), I considered the interactions between universities and international actors, such as the World Bank.

These four areas were adapted through the research process to produce the research sub-questions that I introduced earlier in this chapter. Interview questions were initially designed in response to these sensitising themes but evolved over time in line with my exploratory approach. In both countries, the first set of interviews dealt with the major features of the higher

education landscape following the respective wars, with later interviews following up on these themes. Partly due to the elite nature of the majority of the interviewees, I was frequently able to generate customised lists of questions for each participant, responding to the initial sensitising themes as well as to the topics emerging from the data. For some academics, for example, it was possible to review their CVs and academic histories and to ask tailored questions about their particular experiences.

The research also draws on a broad range of secondary data. Time spent in the archives at Fourah Bay College and the library at the University of Jaffna provided access to documents which gave information about the history of the institutions and the wider education system. Furthermore, documents from particular higher education institutions and from government ministries were used to shed light on the conditions and priorities in the respective university sectors. Similarly, I made use of accessible datasets from national statistical bureaus, ministries, and international organisations, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and UNESCO. These sources provided wider context for interview data and enabled interrogation of issues around funding, for example, from a different perspective, complementing the insights drawn from the personal or academic experiences of interviewees.

It should be noted that the availability of documents and datasets was considerably more restricted for the case of Sierra Leone. This is partly due to the lower capacity for data collection and dissemination of the relevant government and institutional bodies (World Bank, 2013), with a comparative lack of publicly available data on the education sector in Sierra Leone. Similarly, it is also important to highlight that the nature of some of the topics covered in the thesis means that there are limited documentary sources available that speak directly to their particular dynamics. The politics of post-war faculty recruitment, for example, does not tend to be well recorded. It is partly for this reason that the thesis draws significantly on the data provided through semi-structured interviews with those connected to, and with inside knowledge of, such phenomena. It is also for this reason that some of the findings in the thesis are tentative, in keeping with the exploratory nature of the research.

### *Research Ethics*

In addition to following standard recommended procedures around informed consent and anonymization (Bryman, 2015), research on sensitive topics requires further ethical consideration. Recognising that many participants had experienced traumas in relation to war, as well as Ebola in Sierra Leone and the 2005 tsunami in Sri Lanka, I did not initiate conversations about personal experiences of war. I did, however, speak about, for example, the experience of being a student during the war in general terms, and where participants

themselves raised the topic of their own personal wartime experiences I asked clarifying questions. While the research had not intended to focus on issues of criminality, the nature of student politics as well as restrictions on free speech meant that I had to navigate these issues in the data collection and analysis processes. For example, the advocacy of Tamil separatism and self-determination is outlawed by the Sri Lankan Constitution, yet some interviewees brought up their support for and involvement in such activities. The risks involved in such a situation became particularly visible when two student union members at the University of Jaffna were arrested for keeping a picture of the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, in their student offices. On the other side of these considerations is the desire for those who support, for example, a separate Tamil state to have their voice heard in the public sphere, even with the risk that entails. In response to these issues, I chose, in order to protect participants, to anonymize the presentation of data that specifically and clearly indicates the interviewee's engagement in illegal activities.

### *Limitations*

The project developed by making decisions regarding which aspects of university life to expand upon, introducing limitations with regards to the scope of the work. Working in a new field with a constrained body of literature, this choice was made in order to facilitate the generation of concepts that can be used as the basis for future work while still offering substantial explanatory power for the particular features of the two cases. The particularities of the methods and the fieldwork also impacted the scope and reach of the research. The language barrier encountered in Sri Lanka diminished the pool of participants, particularly in relation to students. This was partially offset by the fact that data collection focussed on academics who were often experts in their fields and contexts, meaning that interviewees could provide both their own personal experiences and insightful expert commentary on the topics of the research. In analysing the data, I remained cognisant that participant selection based on language proficiency could impact the course of the study, especially given the class associations of English proficiency in both countries, and endeavoured to account for that when, for example, developing themes. Finally, the use of two case studies placed limitations on the depth to which each individual case could be explored. Given the theory-building focus of the research, I believe that this trade-off is justified by the benefits of moving between the cases for generating novel theory with a higher likelihood of validity and utility beyond a singular context as well as by the power of contrast to better delineate the distinctive features of each case.

### ***Findings: Embedded Institutions, Embodied Conflicts***

The main argument of this thesis is that in order to fully understand and explain the constraints on the ability of universities to contribute to post-war processes, it is necessary to consider universities both as embedded in larger social, political, economic, and historical structures and as distinct social groups containing unique social formations. Through taking such an approach, I argue that narrow human capital and institutional capacity framings of universities fail to capture the full complexity of the evolving social and political relations that constitute university communities and that connect them to the societies in which they are embedded. Crucially, I contend that this social and political complexity is not incidental to university functioning. Instead, the ways in which universities as social groups embody social fracture lines, political connections, and experiences of conflict and crisis are powerfully consequential for how universities operate and for how they interact with post-war peacebuilding. By conceptualising university communities as atemporal aggregations of atomised individuals, human capital approaches and technocratic institutional capacity approaches to the role of the university in society obscure these functionally significant elements of universities and, thereby, misapprehend the constraints on university contributions to post-war recovery. Ultimately, it is precisely this lacuna that helps explain the distance between articulated mechanisms for constructive university contributions to processes of peacebuilding and post-war development and the limited significant contributions to such processes realised by public universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

These arguments rest on the findings of the study across the two contexts in the four areas outlined in connection with the research subquestions, which range from the ways in which problematic practices engendered by war are reproduced in post-war periods to mechanisms by which political ties can stifle critical voices. On one level, the findings represent specific, significant instances of factors that condition post-war university contributions. On another, they provide the basis for the generation of analytical concepts, such as that of a university *substrate*, which, together with the analytical framework, constitute a form of conceptual toolkit for 'turning the lens' on universities and, correspondingly, for conceptualising why universities in post-war contexts are often unlikely to make significant contributions to post-war peacebuilding and development. While these concepts and frameworks were created to better capture and comprehend the particular complexities of universities in conflict-affected contexts, such as those associated with the legacies of wartime violence, their analytical utility extends beyond these spaces, speaking to dynamics around, for example, student political socialisation and staff critical voice that are relevant for education institutions at large.

## ***Structure of the Thesis***

The thesis proceeds, in Chapter Two, to provide a detailed overview of existing understandings of the relationships between universities and issues of peace, conflict, and development. Through this exploration, I develop an analytical framework that places the notion of the university as a social group at the centre of my analysis, thereby laying the foundations for grappling with both the embeddedness of universities in their contexts and the distinct social features found among university communities. Chapter Three introduces the two cases, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, in more detail. By considering the evolution of both higher education and conflict dynamics in each case, I illustrate how education, and universities in particular, can be intertwined with processes of conflict escalation, arguing that universities in the two countries should be understood as integral rather than tangential to these processes. In Chapter Four, I explore issues of funding and the availability of resources in the two countries. While the potential for contribution by post-war universities in Sierra Leone has been severely dampened by histories of underfunding, connected with pre-war decline and wartime stagnation, I contend that the stronger financial situation of universities in Sri Lanka suggests a need to look further than funding in order to understand the range of factors that can constrain the ability of universities to make a meaningful contribution to post-war processes.

Chapter Five begins this task by developing the concept of the substrate in order to better analyse the ways in which the historical processes that create university communities, particularly with regards to war, can ultimately shape their post-war possibilities for action. I do this through an examination of how departures and deaths during war impact the constitution of universities as social groups and, subsequently, how wartime experiences can shape who is likely to be included or excluded in the processes of rebuilding faculties. In Chapter Six, I consider the dynamics of student populations in both countries. I illustrate how the diverse practices of socialisation in student groups complicate ideas about universities as spaces of socialisation for economic labour. Furthermore, I highlight how these features of student groups can affect the likelihood that student communities have a problematic relationship to conflict generation and social change. The following chapter examines the possibilities for critical voice in universities. Building upon consideration of university substrates and of the entanglement of universities with political forces, it shows how, beyond legal instruments, there are powerful social mechanisms that can silence critical voices, outlining also how these mechanisms can be intimately tied to histories of conflict. Finally, Chapter Eight draws the preceding discussions together in order to reflect upon what the accumulated insights mean for the ability of post-war universities to engage constructively with

post-war processes and for the study of universities, conflict and peace, and youth more broadly.

## Chapter Two

### Universities, Conflict, and Recovery

The pivotal role of education in transforming and improving societies has become an almost unquestionable feature of development discourse in recent years. The 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, for instance, announces that “education is the most vital input for every dimension of sustainable development” (UNESCO, 2016, ii). The faith in the power of education expressed in such statements, however, appears to be faith in an immutable object. Correspondingly, it fails to acknowledge the contextually shaped processes and practices that constitute our experiences of education as well as the ways in which education can function as a tool of oppression and a source of conflict. In this chapter, I lay out the case for understanding post-war universities, and hence their ability to contribute to processes of post-war recovery, in relation to their social, historical, and political embeddedness and the unique social practices and structures that exist in their social groups. The first section responds to the question of why we might have expected that universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka could have contributed significantly to post-war recovery, drawing on existing evidence and literature from other contexts. I discuss four areas of proposed contribution, cutting across both considerations of economic, social, and political change and the common tripartite – research, teaching, outreach – mission of universities. The next section deepens the analysis by explicating the logics underlying these proposed contributions. It concentrates on three distinct areas related to liberal peacebuilding, knowledge economy discourses and human capital theory, and the links between education and social and political change.

In the third section, I delineate and elaborate upon the core sets of contradictory forces that emerge from the preceding discussion of the logics of university contribution to post-war processes. I describe how education can be a significant source of conflict, as well as a cornerstone of peaceful communities, and how education can be a force for the maintenance of division and exclusion in society, as well as a force for social change. By doing so, I begin to point to a picture of what universities are and how they interact with their surrounding societies that is more complex than the articulated logics of contribution might suggest. As I will show throughout the rest of the thesis, this complexity has significant implications for the ability of universities to realise constructive contributions to processes of post-war recovery.

Finally, the fourth section offers a way of conceptualising the university that captures this complexity and that, thus, provides a means of understanding the factors that can constrain the ability of universities to substantially impact upon post-war peacebuilding and development. In contrast to depictions of universities as either disconnected ‘towers’ or mimicking ‘microcosms’, I advocate for viewing the university as a distinct social group, with its own set of embodied social practices and structures, that is, nonetheless, fundamentally embedded in a wider social, political, and historical context. It is with this conception of the university in mind that the rest of the thesis then moves to analyse the functioning of public universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka and their interactions with post-war recovery.

### ***Mechanisms of Contribution: The Role of Universities in Post-War Processes***

Despite the emancipatory and transformative associations with which it is often endowed, education had received little attention in the contexts of conflict and emergencies until recent years (Burde, 2014). Higher education, specifically, was largely ignored by major actors involved in responding to crises (Milton, 2017a), with limited research on how the broader social and economic functions of universities can be understood in post-war contexts. Drawing on evidence from a range of contexts, emergent works, nevertheless, provide an indication of the variety of mechanisms by which university functions might interact with post-conflict reconstruction and development. This section uses this literature to outline the case that universities in post-war contexts can have a significant positive impact upon processes of post-war recovery, identifying four interlinked areas of proposed contribution.

#### ***Governance Support and Capacity Building***

The first area relates to the ways in which universities can rebuild the capacity of states for effective service provision and offer ongoing support for the practice of governance. Milton and Barakat argue that “gaps in state capacity are at the centre of the complex challenges faced by fragile and post-war states” (2016, p.411). Conflict can lead to deep disruption and dysfunction in governing structures through trained staff departing, vital infrastructure being damaged, and the logics of political administration becoming intertwined with wartime logics (Rugumamu and Gbla, 2003). Furthermore, the effects of conflict can interact with longer-term features of state and political systems. In Sierra Leone, wartime issues, including periods of extractive rebel rule, built on and exacerbated pre-existing issues with governance that had resulted from political mismanagement under the one-party state, itself a significant driver of the conflict, and the legacies of colonial rule (Harris, 2013; Novelli, 2011). Dealing with this

lack of capacity in state institutions at national, regional, and local levels is crucial for organising effective post-war recovery.

Given their responsibility for the training of skilled professionals, universities appear ideally placed to address such absences in governance capacity (Milton and Barakat, 2016). The ranks of the civil service in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka have historically been filled by university graduates, with the Institute of Public Administration and Management in Sierra Leone, for instance, playing a dedicated role since its inception in the provision of trained administrators. Academics can also directly become involved in governance by stepping into roles in government. In Sierra Leone, interviewees commented on the prevalence of senior academics moving into political positions in the post-war period. In addition to the provision of skilled workers, knowledge production activities in higher education can be an important part of rebuilding state capacity due to their role in supplying expertise to aid the selection and refinement of policy approaches (Milton, 2013). The use of locally trained staff for legal and policy work is likely to have the additional benefit of reducing the funds spent on expensive international consultants (Milton and Barakat, 2016). Furthermore, universities can be involved in direct service provision, supporting beleaguered health and legal systems as they rebuild after war. Pacheco and Johnson (2014) note, for instance, that universities in Kenya and Colombia have offered legal clinics and psychological guidance during and after conflict, while interviewees in Jaffna spoke about how members of the university's medical school were involved in caring for the war wounded.

### *Economic Recovery*

As with governance structures, conflict can severely impact economic functioning through damage to key infrastructure, such as transport and energy networks, and through the loss of skilled workers due to wartime fatalities and the 'brain drain' that occurs as educated members of populations migrate to more secure and economically rewarding environments (Milton and Barakat, 2016; Rugumamu and Gbla, 2003). Again, the teaching function of universities can be well suited to supporting the required processes of economic reconstruction. As Lebeau (2008) highlights, the most frequently emphasised function of universities today relates to their role in training a skilled labour force. Further to this, local academics can also provide vital expertise which can be used to guide development projects and enable them to avoid some of the pitfalls that often cause externally imposed and guided projects to fail. In addition, innovation through research, particularly in STEM subjects, is often portrayed as a key motor for economic growth, with collaboration with the private sector then allowing innovation's potential to be unleashed and an economy to be revived (Millican, 2017b). In summarising the

economic return on investment in higher education, Bloom et al. comment that the economic benefits of higher education include mechanisms of contribution associated with “entrepreneurship, job creation, good economic and political governance, and the effect of a highly educated cadre of workers on a nation’s health and social fabric” (2006, p.17).

### *Facilitating Transitions and Building Peace*

A third area of contribution relates to the role of education in peacebuilding and facilitating the transition from war to peace. This includes mechanisms that are seen as inherent to the functioning of educational institutions as well as active steps that universities can take to support these processes. A key facet of many university systems is that they bring together individuals from different social groups into common spaces, where, in conflict-affected contexts, they can engage with the ‘others’ against whom they, or members of their networks, may have fought (Davies, 2004). These processes can take place as result of planned interventions, as has been the case in Israel and Palestine (Davies, 2004), but can also happen simply as a result of the nature of universities, which bring together individuals from across regions and countries who may not have otherwise met. Similarly, education is a means by which values and ideas of citizenship can be developed and imparted. As Milton and Barakat contend, “Campuses offer unique arenas that can act as incubators of civil society in which young people participate in student unions, groups, and societies and learn skills vital to citizenship including democratic governance, independent organisation, debating and dialogue” (2016, p.412).

Turning towards more active pathways for contribution, universities can also offer various forms of peace and conflict education, which aim to provide students with the skills needed to manage conflict and build sustainable peace in their communities and countries. With regards to research, universities can act to foster better community relations by producing research which legitimates narratives of reconciliation and cooperation (Milton and Barakat, 2016). Research can also contest dominant narratives and provide critical insight into the social and political dynamics underlying the conflict, allowing for the roots of the conflict to be exposed and tackled. In a similar fashion, universities in post-war contexts have been involved in transitional justice projects (Paulson and Bellino, 2017); academics have taken part in the formation of history curricula and textbooks for use in primary and secondary schools; and students and staff have been involved in memory projects to aid collective healing (Pacheco and Johnson, 2014). Further to this, given the increasingly prevalent use of transitional justice mechanisms after conflicts and the calls for such processes to be locally based (Barakat and Zyck, 2009),

the legal training function of universities can be a significant part of higher education's contribution to peacebuilding.

Another branch of universities' contributions in this broad area concerns their engagement with issues of security and stabilisation in the wake of conflict. Colombian universities, for example, have been directly involved in security activities by admitting groups of demobilising combatants as students and by providing non-formal education programming to help ex-combatants find work (Pacheco and Johnson, 2014). The support that universities can provide in this area could be particularly valuable in countries such as Libya, where a large number of university students have taken part in fighting and so the option of undergoing demobilisation and reintegration through higher education may be appealing (Milton and Barakat, 2016). Given the low employment rates of most conflict-affected countries, it has also been suggested that the ability of higher education institutions to absorb unemployed youth is a key way that universities can contribute to stabilisation efforts (Milton and Barakat, 2016; Pacheco and Johnson, 2014). However, some research implies that the expansion of higher education without appropriate graduate employment opportunities may have a destabilising effect in the long term (Østby and Urdal, 2011; Pherali, 2016; Virkama, 2015). In a different vein, universities are also able to impact upon security sector reform by providing training to security sector personnel (Macphee and Fitz-Gerald, 2014), something which has been a significant feature of the work done by the peace and conflict studies department at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone.

### *Critical Leadership and Political and Social Change*

The final major area of contribution revolves around the notion of education as a transformative force in society. With regards to instrumental contributions to social welfare indicators, a Department for International Development review of evidence about the impact of tertiary education on development notes that completing tertiary education "is associated with better health and well-being outcomes" and later highlights that tertiary education "is found to have a significant reductive effect on the rate of infant mortality, to increase life expectancy, to lower fertility rates and to improve a country's position on human development and gender-based development indexes" (Oketch et al., 2014, pp.37-38). A prominent strand of recent research and development practice has been in the area of gender and education, with the proliferation of claims about how educating girls and women can contribute to improved health, social, and political outcomes. As Ruth Levine puts it, "Compelling evidence... has led to an almost universal recognition of the importance of focussing on girl's education as part of broader development policy" (2006, p.128).

As well as acting towards these more tangible metrics of change, university students and staff have long been important participants in activism and the creation and mobilisation of movements for change. Campuses can be grounds of student activism, which can act as a way to contest ideologies and narratives of the past, and future, by competing for a form of control over the space of knowledge production itself. In Iraq and Morocco, for example, clashes between leftist and Islamist groups have long been observed (Latif, 2006; Virkama, 2015). Protest movements across the world in recent years, including the massive mobilisations in Chile, Lebanon, and India, have had students playing a key role in instigating and organising action. There is also a rich history to draw upon of university student leaders taking leading positions in independence struggles, with African anti-colonial groups frequently having origins in student organisations that had formed in the continent's emergent universities or in the higher education systems of the colonisers (Luescher et al., 2016). Despite decades of neglect for many African universities, Lebeau argues that "higher education institutions (HEIs), and especially the major public universities, have often remained key sites for debate, critique and mobilisation on behalf of political change, especially but not exclusively in the direction of democratisation and the resolution of conflicts" (2008, p.139).

Education can also be seen as a means of transforming individuals and societies at a fundamental level. As Neil Postman highlights, "...public education does not serve a public. It creates a public. The question is, what kind of public does it create?" (Postman, 1996 in Bush and Saltarelli, 2000, x). Universities have the potential to be not just conduits for information and ideologies but to also generate and contest narratives of the way the world is, was, will be, and should be (Arnove, 1995; Feuer et al., 2013; Smith, 2005). Paolo Freire's work (1970), for example, posits that education can act as a way of transforming the social order, as opposed to augmenting the existing status quo. Freire puts forward an approach to education in which students and teachers engage in a collaborative naming and knowing of the world around them, thereby reshaping it. Crucial to this work is the participation of students in their own emancipation from, and restructuring of, oppressive social structures (Pherali, 2016). This approach contests the technical and objective nature of knowledge and recognises instead the social construction of knowledge and understanding (Davies, 2004; Freire, 1970). In doing so, it suggests a pathway by which the very foundations of a post-war society might be profoundly changed through education.

## ***Logics of Contribution: Peacebuilding, Development, Social Change, and the University***

While the scope and diversity of means by which universities might positively interact with post-war recovery is evident in the above summary, when such acts might be meaningfully accomplished by post-war universities is not. To begin to unpack this issue, it is first necessary to interrogate more closely the issue of how, precisely, universities are understood to be contributing through these mechanisms. This section, therefore, poses two questions about the proposed mechanisms for university contribution to post-war recovery processes discussed above. First, I ask what are the main logics of contribution that underlie these mechanisms, thereby giving rise to the three parts, matching with three unpinning logics, into which this section is split. Second, and cutting across these three parts, I probe what is absent or underproblematised in these logics of contribution. I query, in particular, the decontextualized form of such accounts of university engagement with development, peacebuilding, and social change. Exploration along these two lines prepares the grounds for the discussion of core tensions in the role of university in post-war contexts in the following section by making explicit the foundations upon which arguments for contribution are built. Through the consideration of what is absent or underproblematised in these approaches, I also begin to draw out key features of universities that are important to capture when seeking to develop an understanding of the factors that impact upon university interactions with post-war processes.

### ***Liberal Peace and Governance***

The first main underpinning logic concerns liberal peace theory and the related role of good governance (Doornbos, 2001) in the transition from war to sustainable peace. The liberal peace approach maintains that establishing basic security and democracy in post-conflict countries will lead to economic growth, which will then in turn lead to a sustainable peace (Novelli and Higgins, 2017; Paris, 2004). In practice, this has led to peacebuilding strategies which first aim for stabilisation of the security situation, often through the presence of peacekeeping forces, and then act to form liberal economic and political institutions in the country, with a view to expanding free trade and holding elections. Evidence of this underlying logic in action can be seen in the strategies of the US-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as British involvement in the reconstruction efforts in Sierra Leone (Barakat and Zyck, 2009; Cubitt, 2013). Sierra Leone, in particular, is often touted as a success of liberal peacebuilding due to the absence of a return to conflict since the cessation of the war in 2002 (Smith Ellison, 2014). Despite this optimism, the root causes of conflict in Sierra Leone remain

and the institutions that have been developed are often too far removed from the daily lives of Sierra Leoneans to be meaningful (Cubitt, 2013). The 'security first' framing of liberal peacebuilding has also been critiqued for failing to deliver economic development following stabilisation, with increasing recognition that development cannot necessarily wait for security (Novelli et al., 2017).

The workings of the liberal peacebuilding approach pay little specific attention to the role of education following conflict, with education traditionally being seen as a consideration for the long term (Milton, 2013). Nevertheless, the pursuit of a liberal peace, as broadly defined by the approach, can be seen to underlie many of the means by which universities are proposed to contribute to post-war processes. The way in which universities might be tasked with simply absorbing youth in order to facilitate the stabilisation of post-war security situations, for example, speaks to the prioritisation of short-term security gains in liberal peace approaches, as well as the problematic way in which youth can be summarily painted as threats to peace (Enria, 2018). Moreover, the manner in which the practices of governance and democratic consolidation are frequently treated as matters of technical capacity, which can thus be imagined to be delivered by universities through correspondingly technical processes of training and research application, fails to sufficiently acknowledge that both governance and education are complex political acts. Similarly absent from proposed university contributions that are in alignment with liberal peace approaches are considerations of which social groups will be able to access the training that will produce the skilled workers for the governing apparatus and how this process of selection will interact with the existing inequalities and tensions in society. This recognition of the absence of context in the proposed mechanisms of contribution parallels existing criticism of the liberal peace model at large regarding its 'blank slate' approach and the related blindness to local conditions (Cubitt, 2013). Furthermore, it points to the approach's underlying conceptualisation of society in which the social world is composed of an aggregation of rational individuals. At a fundamental level, therefore, the existence of social collectivities, their emergent properties (Elder-Vass, 2010), and their consequences in the world are obscured or misrecognised in the liberal peace approach.

### *The Knowledge Economy, Human Capital, and the Skilled Worker*

Turning now to the dominant logics underlying the proposed mechanisms for universities to contribute to post-war economic recovery, there are two interrelated, yet distinct, areas that are valuable to interrogate: knowledge economy discourses and human capital theories. In 1999 the World Bank announced in its World Development Report that "Poor countries—and poor people—differ from rich ones not only because they have less capital but because they

have less knowledge” (World Bank, 1999, p.1). The solution for development, therefore, was to address the knowledge and skills gaps and information problems faced by poor countries. In later terminology, this became described as the pursuit of the ‘knowledge economy’ (Godin, 2006). The idea of an intimate connection between knowledge and economic growth is not, however, new. Schumpeter’s work in the 1940s, for example, positioned innovation, in the sense of new methods of production or new markets and goods, as a key driver of economic growth (Kenway et al., 2004). A wave of works in the 1960s and 1970s by economists such as Peter Drucker and Daniel Bell began to posit that a number of industrial economies were on the verge of transitioning to ‘knowledge-based economies’ (Peters, 2010; Robertson, 2008). A key aspect of this framing was that knowledge was intellectual property which could be owned by an individual or group and which possessed commercial value (Robertson, 2008). As scholarship in the area continued and diversified, it became possible to see that, by the end of the 1990s, ideas of a knowledge economy or knowledge-based economy were fast becoming a mainstream part of political and policy discourse (Godin, 2006).

Human capital theories are frequently intertwined with, yet nevertheless distinct from, such knowledge economy discourses, with both broadly tied to forms of neoliberal economic rationality (Brown, 2015). Under the logic of human capital, education becomes an investment, one which leads to increased worker productivity, and the means, therefore, by which individuals, companies, and countries compete and succeed within the global economy (Bonal, 2016). A crucial part of economic strategy then becomes the consideration of the interaction between sources of knowledge and learning and other parts of the economic system, a sentiment that is central to discussions of relevance in learning as well as of the impact of academic research in the UK and elsewhere. Universities are frequently positioned within this framework as key engines of development by academics and policymakers alike, due to their established role as producers of knowledge and institutions of higher learning. This is evident in the various proposed mechanisms for contribution (Milton, 2013; Pacheco, 2013) that concentrate on the role of universities in providing skilled workers for the economy as well as in the focus upon research as a tool for economic innovation and, correspondingly, economic growth. In both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, the language of human capital, and of knowledge economies, has been embedded at the core of policy plans for post-war higher education recovery and reform as well as for economic reconstruction.

The prominence of knowledge economy discourses and human capital theories in education have led to a diverse range of critiques (Bonal, 2016; Brown, 2015; 2016; Lotier, 2017). Three areas of critique are particularly relevant for the arguments of this thesis. First, even taking somewhat for granted the internal logic of economic prosperity through the pursuit of knowledge economies and the building of human capital, the feasibility of such strategies for

contexts that have just emerged from war is doubtful. When one then incorporates the likely positioning of conflict-affected countries in the competitive jostling of the global economy, with most recent wars occurring in low- and middle-income countries, and the associated issues with the migration of skilled professionals from such countries (Milton, 2013), the successful realisation of such a strategy appears even more unlikely. Second, and akin to the critique of the de-contextualised nature of the liberal peace approach, there are important questions that need to be asked about who is invested in through education and how this fits with issues around, for example, the representation of different social groups in positions of high socio-economic status. Finally, as is made clear in the work of Brown (2015; 2016), portraying graduates and academics as human capital obscures, and at times limits, the political practices of individuals and groups within universities, thereby missing a key aspect of how universities function and how they have historically been engaged with processes of social and political change.

### *Education, Social Change, and Democratic Citizens*

The final area of underlying logic focusses precisely on this association between education and social and political change. The core assumptions here relate to the question of what it means to be educated, both for people as individuals and as members of a society. In essence, the notion that education will lead to constructive social and political change frequently rests on the idea that the experience of education, in itself, will instil the necessary skills, attitudes, and associations to bring about constructive change. An established branch of policy and academic literature on education works to disseminate this logic. A World Bank report on the promotion of social cohesion in Sri Lanka, for example, states that “Education is responsible for the cultivation of a civilized society and helps to inculcate moral and ethical values in individuals which help in the creation of a healthy society that has a deep commitment to the principles of human rights” (Aturupane and Wikramanayake, 2011, p.E2). Peace education, in particular, frequently relies on such assumptions about the functioning of education. In pushing for a more critical approach, Novelli and Higgins highlight the critique that there exists an “overly idealistic commitment to peace education as a benign panacea for conflict affected communities” (2017, p.31). A more nuanced version of the underlying logic can be found in the work of Milton and Barakat (2016) who contend that higher education can develop the critical thinking skills that students need to bring about conflict transformation, while acknowledging, however, that the scope for such critical thinking may be limited in post-war contexts. The presumption of an inherent character to education can also be observed in claims about the role of schools and universities in relation to democratisation, with academics

and policymakers suggesting that education fosters the “skills of freedom” that are necessary for an effective democratic citizenry (Milton, 2017a, p.168).

At the core of the underlying logic here is the reliance on a notion of education in the abstract, which obscures the complexity of how education is experienced as well as the variation that occurs in that experience between contexts and between different individuals in the same contexts. As Bush and Saltarelli (2000) and Davies (2004) persuasively demonstrate, the resulting common-sense assumptions about a positive relationship between education and social and political change speak to only one possible aspect of that relationship. Unpacking the black box of education in the context of Soviet-occupied Afghanistan (Burde, 2014) or with a focus on gendered or racialized dynamics in Sri Lankan universities reveals how education can also contribute to fundamentally anti-democratic practices and can work to maintain oppressive social orders. My point here is not to dismiss the power of education to facilitate social and political transformations but, instead, to recognise such transformations as the result of specific dynamics and struggles in particular education communities rather than supposing them to be inherent to every process of formal education.

### ***Tensions: Contesting the Role of Universities in Post-War Contexts***

The above section has pointed to key absences and issues within the logics underlying proposed mechanisms for university contributions to post-war recovery. Rather than discarding these mechanisms in a wholesale fashion, however, I proceed, instead, to make use of the productive tensions generated by setting these logics against alternative conceptions of the role and functioning of universities. This serves to highlight some of the complexity that is obscured or marginalised by the accounts of universities that are embedded in the logics of contribution above and also begins to draw out the core features of an analysis that will meaningfully speak to the factors that might constrain the realisation of these mechanisms for contribution. In this section, I consider three particular lines of tension. First, I explore the ways in which universities can be understood to be sources or facilitators of conflict as opposed to bringers of peace. Second, I contrast the notion of education as individual and collective emancipation with the idea of education as a conservative or oppressive force in society. Finally, I use a brief discussion of the effects of conflict on schools and universities to begin to think through the tension between conceiving of education as a universal practice and seeing practices within educational institutions and systems as constituted through path-dependent processes. From this base, the next section then moves to outline my analytical approach to the research.

### *Education as the Bringer of Peace versus Education as a Cause of Conflict*

Since the publication of Bush and Saltarelli's *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict* in 2000, there have been an increasing number of works which challenge a one-sided view of how education might impact conflict dynamics (McLean Hilker, 2011; Paulson, 2008; Pherali, 2016). Focussing on the case of ethnic violence, Matthew Lange (2011) provides four main mechanisms by which education can cause or drive conflict. First, there is the competition that can occur between groups when education is seen as a scarce resource. The restrictive nature of higher education in Sri Lanka, for example, exacerbated tensions in the country when language-based changes were made to the procedures for access in the 1970s (McLoughlin, 2018). A sheer lack of educational opportunities can form part of motivations to fight in civil wars, especially when actors hold the government responsible for failing to provide education, as was the case for fighters from Sierra Leone (Peters and Richards, 1998). With regards to government-funded schools and universities, the distribution of academic and teaching positions can also be a source of grievances which can contribute to the likelihood of conflict. As well as the potential financial benefits of public employment, skewed control of academic positions in universities, which can allow the holders some power over what is seen as authoritative knowledge, can enable groups to legitimise or delegitimise certain views of history and society.

Second, there is the frustration that can be associated with the disparity between the expectations and aspirations for education, and what it might bring in terms of social and economic rewards, and the realities that are faced in underfunded university systems and stagnant labour markets. One of the underlying tensions that sparked the Arab Spring was the discontent that educated youth felt with their inability to access jobs that matched their qualifications (Virkama, 2015). The third mechanism that Lange articulates relates to the role of education in socialisation, including socialisation towards violence. In a more immediate capacity, the content and delivery of the curriculum can act to normalise and even encourage violence. The US-supported textbooks developed during the Soviet occupation, and utilised long after, provide a striking example of this, with children being taught to count using bullets and to read using images of guns and wars (Burde, 2014). This type of militarised education can take even more direct forms, for example through military training constituting a part of schooling, or can occur in a more indirect manner, through the general legitimisation and encouragement of violent action (Davies, 2004).

Student and academic movements can also be drivers of conflict. As noted by Burde (2014), the roots of the Taliban, both linguistically and practically, were planted in the academic

community, with the word *talib* itself meaning student and the group originally forming from students who had left madrassas to take part in the civil conflict in the 1990s. Lange (2011) captures such a dimension of conflict contribution through a fourth mechanism associated with mobilisation resources. While not a direct reason for or cause of conflict itself, the mobilisation capacity of university communities, where large numbers of young people are brought together in the same spaces frequently with hierarchical social structures in place, can facilitate coordinated action for protest as well as conflict. As Zeleza notes, from the late 1980s “universities became hotbeds of the struggles for democracy that began to rock one African country after another” (2003, p.159). This mobilisation capacity acts as an amplifier, forming part of the power of universities to mobilise for constructive social change as well as constituting a means by which the seeds of conflict sown on campuses can grow into armed action. This latter point can be seen in the case of Sri Lanka where the University of Jaffna served as one of the main sites for the mobilisation of Tamil militancy and universities in other parts of the country were significant sources of leftist insurgents.

The identification of such mechanisms for conflict causation or exacerbation unsettles notions of education as necessarily peace-tended or as a salve that can be easily applied to aid post-war recovery. This unsettling is productive, however, as it opens an analytical route forward for understanding better when universities and schools will effectively contribute to post-war recovery. Contrasting the two ‘faces’ of university relationships with peace and conflict yields questions that are central to the work of this thesis. The acknowledgement that student capacities for mobilisation can be used to spark violent conflict as well as to bring about constructive political change, for example, encourages interrogating not only whether or not students and academics collectively mobilise but also for what ends mobilisation is achieved and by what means. Similarly, the divergent roles for the academic legitimisation of narratives that is made visible through the contrasting of the two ‘faces’ prompts us to think about how research fits with the emerging depictions of war and its causes in the post-war space. In Sri Lanka, the Rajapaksa government’s portrayal of the LTTE as the defeated terrorists, the associated dehumanising of the group’s members, and the designation of the anniversary of the official cessation of fighting as Humanitarian Victory Day exemplifies the propagation of politically expedient narratives by the victors of war (Hyndman and Amarasingam, 2014) that can then either be legitimised or contested at universities. Furthermore, the disparity between the idea of pedagogy bridging social divides and instilling democratic values and the recognition that curricula can sow seeds of animosity and can be used as a tool for division highlights the need to examine with a critical lens who ends up in teaching roles, who is being taught, and what ideologies and power structures shape the teaching environment.

### *Universities as Conservative Forces versus Education as Emancipation*

This last contrast points to another key tension evident in the role of universities in post-war contexts, and in general, related to the degree to which education acts as a conservative or emancipatory force in societies. Access to education is frequently presented as an engine of social mobility (Cole, 2015), which opens up opportunities for individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to reach higher paying jobs and, thus, to move up the socioeconomic ladder. These ideas about education's social function, however, clash with the role that education systems, and universities in particular, have been observed to play in the training of elite classes and the reproduction of the social status quo (Longstreet, 2011; Milton, 2017a). Castells (2001; Lebeau, 2008) even argues that the selection and socialisation of elites constitutes one of the core functions of universities. Providing a potent conceptual framework for such conceptions of the university, Bourdieu's work on different forms of capital and on the reproduction of social structures shows how elites are able to utilise their greater volumes of social and cultural capital to gain access to universities and the opportunities they provide. Bourdieu also illustrates how the growth or creation of social and cultural capital through higher education can then contribute to the entrenchment of the dominance of elite groups (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Longstreet, 2011). One facet of these processes is that the very selection of what is to be taught can constitute a political choice made by members of a governing elite and, therefore, can reflect the values and norms of that group (Glassman and Patton, 2014). As a result, those who have already been socialised in similar elite environments become those most likely to also achieve institutionally recognised success in their education and to access the opportunities that follow from that recognition. In Sri Lanka, exposure to English in the home or living environment, generally a feature of wealthier families and areas, can facilitate the acquisition of language skills that are then considered a marker of success in the higher education system and in the labour market.

Education institutions can also reinforce the perceived legitimacy of structural inequalities. This can cause extant social structures and points of tension surrounding the outbreak of conflict to be problematically normalised as being part of the 'natural' order of things (Davies, 2005; Freire, 1970). Freire, for example, articulates the workings of a banking concept of education, where the student is a receptacle to be filled by the more knowledgeable teacher, which resonates with the logic of universities bestowing their students with an apolitical and ahistorical unit of human capital. However, similar to Bourdieu's work on social capital and education, part of what Freire develops is how systems of education can act when in banking mode to reinforce and maintain existing social structures by, for example, normalising and promoting the internalisation of the situations of inequality present in society (Bourdieu, 1986; Freire, 1970). This is evident, for instance, with regards to gender, where textbooks, classroom

interactions, and admissions procedures can all act to reinforce gender stereotypes and to thereby constrain students' freedoms (Davies, 2004). Similar points can be made with regards to research, where ideologies around race, for example, have long worked through different scientific fields to support incorrect assessments of social and biological differences in ways that obscure the workings of power structures (Fields and Fields, 2014; Saini, 2019).

The fundamentally different understandings of the relationship between education and social change noted here result in profoundly different expected outcomes from the same mechanisms of university contribution to post-war processes. For example, one of the principal roles of universities in the wake of conflict comes in responding to the brain drain and disruption of education, with the provision of skills in technical areas, such as ICT, being an integral part of creating an economy which can function in the modern global environment (Peters, 2010). If conflicts are built across existing lines of inequality in terms of wealth and education, however, then it seems likely that the established elites will be most able to mobilise the resources necessary to access these educational opportunities, thus further entrenching inequalities and risking future conflict. These issues extend beyond access to higher education institutions to also include dimensions of distinction and difference within and between universities, with the social structures within university communities, such as those of student societies, at times working to transmit and entrench the existing social order. Ultimately, the tension between the role of universities as conservative forces and the idea of education as an emancipatory process underscores the necessity of closely examining the mechanisms by which university staff and student communities are socially reproduced. For the case of post-war universities, this points to the significance of the degree to which the end of a war and the corresponding practices of recovery continue or disrupt the pre-existing power structures in an institution.

#### *Path-Dependent Institutions versus Education as a Universal Good*

The above recognition of the importance of the particulars of social reproduction for post-war universities leads the way to a further dimension of tension between the notion of education as a universal practice and the idea of educational practices as grounded in the path-dependent processes that have formed the educational institutions that perform them. I illustrate this point here through consideration of how the ability of universities to contribute positively to post-war processes of recovery is affected by the impacts that conflicts have on universities. The effects of conflict on education systems are pervasive and long-lasting (Davies, 2004; UNESCO, 2011). The prevalence and visibility of schools and universities, sometimes the only government buildings present in communities, can make them prominent

targets, with the damaging of a school being seen by some armed groups as a way to reduce state legitimacy in the eyes of a population by undermining a government's ability to provide a valued public service (Burde, 2014; Pedersen, 2002). Estimates for Sierra Leone suggest that following the war 87% of schools had been rendered unusable (World Bank, 2007). University campuses and schools can also be repurposed, with educational facilities being turned into military installations, sometimes in alignment with students and teachers forming a key recruitment group for rebelling forces (Milton, 2013; Novelli and Higgins, 2017). The dilapidation of education infrastructure during and after war comes not only from direct violence, looting, or repurposing but also from the financial consequences of war, with education expenditures commonly shrinking substantially during civil wars (Lai and Thyne, 2007). The destruction caused by fighting frequently builds on a deeper neglect of educational facilities which preceded the conflict, as was the case in Kosovo and Iraq (Buckland, 2005). The combination of these factors can mean that in the wake of conflict education systems are left with barely functional infrastructure and limited resources with which to rectify the situation, especially given the low priority generally afforded to education aid in the early stages of reconstruction (Burde, 2014).

In addition to damaging physical infrastructure, conflict disrupts education by displacing both teachers and students and limiting access to facilities. With regards to teachers and universities, the former issue is frequently discussed in terms of a 'brain drain' or the destruction and loss of human capital, where highly skilled workers, such as academics, will be killed or will leave the country during conflict and then will often be slow to return, if they do at all (Buckland 2005; Milton and Barakat, 2016). While there are numerous examples of resilient schools which have continued to function during wars, and even of a parallel university system emerging in the case of Kosovo (Bache and Taylor, 2003), these tend to be insufficient for meeting the education needs of the population at large (Davies, 2004). The dearth of qualified teachers can be compounded by issues of access, where students may not be able to reach their schools or universities due to a lack of security (Burde, 2014). The effects of forced displacement are significant in this respect as students that are forced to flee may face limited access to schooling and appropriate educational resources (Buckland, 2005). Higher education systems experience direct disruption along these lines as well as knock-on effects from the disruption of primary and secondary schooling, which can further inhibit the ability of students to progress to and complete higher education.

Education during and after conflict can also be strongly affected by the psychological trauma experienced by both teachers and students. Evidence from Rwanda and Sri Lanka shows the prevalence of stress-related diseases among young people after conflict, and there is acknowledgement that teachers need to be specially trained to help with this, while also

requiring support themselves to deal with their own trauma (Davies, 2004; Johnson, 2013). Experiences of war can predispose students towards violence as a mechanism for solving social problems, which can make integration of students from different sides of a conflict particularly difficult (Davies, 2004). Life in conflict-affected contexts can also act to change social practices in communities, including university communities, with these new social features then living on into the post-war period. For example, the polarising effects of living with the ongoing threat of violence are well documented by Kalyvas (2006). As will be shown for the case of Jaffna in Sri Lanka, the targeted nature of forced migration can lead to dramatic changes in the social constitution of universities as certain groups, in this case Sinhalese and Muslim staff and students, are made to leave institutions.

In a review of World Bank intervention in Cambodian higher education, Rapple and Un highlighted that the Bank's approach held that "no matter where a country was located globally, what natural resources it had, or what macroeconomic policies might be in place, wealth could be generated by investing in universities to make them 'more innovative' and thus able to 'capitalize on the creation and use of knowledge'" (2018, p.251). The application of such a homogenising lens to the functioning of universities is, however, deeply flawed. The broad range of effects of conflict discussed above points to the variability in the circumstances in which post-war universities can find themselves. The effects of conflict differ significantly across, and within, conflict-affected countries in connection with variation in the geography, the logics of violence, and the social dynamics associated with different wars. Contrary to contextually blind approaches that assume a high degree of universality in education institutions and their practices, these variations highlight the need to account for the very different contexts and constitutions of universities when considering their relationship to issues of development and post-war recovery. In the case of Sierra Leone, this means asking how the country's turbulent history of economic marginalisation, stagnation, and decline impacted upon the ability of the country's universities to contribute to economic recovery through teaching and research. For the University of Jaffna, it means questioning how the university's experiences as a mono-ethnic institution during much of the war influenced the performance of social cohesion and reconciliation processes within the university in the post-war period. As the next section articulates, this attention to the particular environment in which universities operate and the specific path-dependent processes by which universities are formed is fundamental for understanding the factors that limit the ability of universities to contribute to post-war recovery.

## ***Framing University Communities as Embedded Social Groups***

Existing works give some indications of where to look for such factors. Milton (2013), for example, notes that ongoing instability and insecurity are major factors in hampering the ability of post-war higher education sectors to function. While this is certainly the situation for the cases upon which he draws, Iraq and Libya, there are questions over how much this is valid for other contexts, such as Sri Lanka, which did not have to deal with significant ongoing armed group activity after the end of their wars. Milton also highlights the idea of the path-dependency of higher education institutions influencing their possibilities for action, yet this is not fully developed and is generally restricted to consideration of the culture of the Arab world due to concerns over generalising from the “idiosyncratic character of issues related to culture and history” (2013, p.425). Pacheco (2013) similarly identifies that the impacts of conflict on universities are important to consider when evaluating their means for post-war or wartime contributions but does not draw out an analytical means of understanding the mechanisms by which such impacts might influence the pathways for contribution. Johnson and Hoba’s (2015) study of the rebuilding of a university in Côte d’Ivoire delivers a valuable description of the challenges faced in relation to the networks of competing actors involved in the process, suggesting that further understanding of the constraints on post-war universities can be gained from analysis of their social and political entwinement with different communities. In this direction, Milton (2013) also briefly comments upon the role of international actors in shaping university trajectories, tapping into a broad literature on the effects of international interventions on post-war processes (Autesserre, 2014; Barakat and Zyck, 2009; Cubitt, 2013; Hughes and Pupavac, 2005). Novelli et al.’s 4Rs framework, which advocates for the redistribution of resources in education, the representation and recognition of different groups and their experiences, and the carrying out of substantive processes of reconciliation highlights the importance of engaging with social justice and encourages recognition of contextual and structural factors (2017).

This thesis develops these insights further by articulating a core set of analytical concepts – related to historical pathways, political networks, socialisation, and social silencing – that help to explain the limited post-war contributions to peacebuilding and development of public universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka and that likely condition the possibilities for action of universities in other post-war contexts. The basis of these concepts is formed by joining together the idea, present in, for example, cultural political economy literature (Robertson, 2014), of universities as socially, politically, and historically embedded with the recognition that universities are spaces of distinct social practice. This approach to the analysis of factors limiting contributions allows me to capture the features of universities missed or

underproblematised in the logics of contribution highlighted in the second section and to constructively engage with the lines of tension raised in the previous section. The rest of the chapter outlines the key points that underlie this analysis and illustrates its utility for the problem under study.

### *Towers and Microcosms*

In reviewing the literature on the social position of universities, two particular depictions of the university emerge repeatedly as a means of framing the relationship between universities and their surrounding societies. Both capture something essential about the university while missing or distorting other elements. The first presents the university as an ivory tower (Cross and Ndofirepi, 2016; Docherty, 2014), which is cut off from the needs and dynamics of those not within its, metaphorical and often literal, high walls. This “pervasive notion that the university somehow exists separately from the community within which it is located” (Johnson, 2017, p.4) fails to acknowledge, however, that the university is an inherently porous institution. Universities, particularly public universities, are constantly interacting with their surrounding societies through flows of people, ideas, and resources, even where the functions of universities are not explicitly geared towards, for example, the national interest. The tower imagery, nevertheless, offers an important recognition of the way in which universities can be unique social spaces, containing structures and practices that are distinct from the rest of their social contexts.

A second prevalent idea is that universities and classrooms are microcosms of the broader societies in which they sit (Pacheco, 2013; Pherali, 2016). This depiction facilitates reflection on how the study of educational spaces can offer broader insights into dynamics of the surrounding society. By the same logic, it also indicates that the study of education institutions themselves need to recognise that their internal dynamics are connected to the wider social, political, and historical environment in which they are embedded. This framing, however, lacks sensitivity to the university as a site of social and political innovation as it presents the connection as one where the university merely mirrors the characteristics and dynamics of the wider society, thereby obscuring the potential for distinctiveness within universities.

Throughout this work, I utilise a framing of the university as a social group that encapsulates the two key features of universities that emerge from the consideration of the tower and microcosm models. The first of these features is the potential for distinctive practices and structures within the groups of students, academics, and other staff who constitute universities, incorporating, for instance, the ideas of universities as having distinct sub-cultures. The second is the way in which universities are necessarily entangled with broader

social, political, and historical structures. This can be seen through, for instance, the non-exclusivity of university membership. Students and staff may simultaneously be members of a university, a religious community, an ethnic group and so on and, thus, engage with practices and structures in relation to the university that originate with the other social groups of which they are a part. Below, I expand on these two features in order to begin to illustrate the analytical utility of my framing of universities before then offering further clarifying comments on the status of the university in my analytical framework.

### *Distinct Social Practice*

In what ways might universities operate as spaces of distinct social practice, and how might this affect their functioning? Studies of student movements, as I discuss in Chapter Six, show that the gathering together and organisation of the large numbers of young people has been conducive to producing new social phenomena. In Sri Lanka, interviewees spoke to me about new students being brought into the 'sub-culture' of the university, with its norms around dress, interaction with members of the opposite sex, and frequently strict hierarchies between new entrants and seniors (Ruwanpura, 2011). Suykens's work on student unions in Bangladesh (2018) shows that these social and political cultures can have powerful implications in relation to, for example, who is allowed on campus, with some students who have lost union elections facing effective eviction. As one lecturer in Jaffna noted, the behaviour of students around ragging, involving violence, humiliation, and sexual harassment, is not something that would be allowed in the course of normal life outside of campuses but, because it was a traditional student activity, it was given a veneer of acceptability (JU8). The way in which access to university communities is controlled, through often lengthy and complex admissions procedures, also indicates the production of universities as spaces that are somewhat apart from the rest of society.

Furthermore, distinctive social practices are not restricted to students, with academic hierarchies representing an important way in which the staff cohort of university communities are structured and stratified. As I explore in Chapters Five and Seven, these practices and hierarchies can serve to condition staff populations into certain modes of behaviour with regards to, for instance, who can join their ranks and how one should act in order to conform with the particular ideals and norms of the academy. Pressures to avoid unsettling hierarchies by not 'rocking the boat', for instance, can impact the potential for universities to operate as critical spaces. Subsequently, the ideal of academic freedom itself, which is generally tied to but, nevertheless, distinct from freedom of expression more broadly (Altbach, 2001; Karran, 2009), provides another example of universities being treated as spaces of exception. Related

to this, academics, and sometimes students, can wield different forms of social power in wider discussions and debates, with the intellectual serving to provide a sense of legitimacy to projects with which they are associated. This form of power in society also constitutes part of the manner in which university communities can make unique claims to resources and responsibilities in their relationships with different actors, including the state.

### *Universities as Embedded*

At the same time as being sites of distinctive social practice, universities can be seen as deeply embedded in social, political, and historical contexts. Part of the struggle for decolonised universities across the world, for instance, has been tied to the desire to have institutions of higher learning that reflect the knowledge claims, values, and cultures of the societies in which they are situated. With regards to historical embeddedness, university communities can be seen as carrying their historical origins in ways which shape their current functioning. The impact of segregation in schools in the United States or in universities in post-Apartheid South Africa, for example, can still be observed today in terms of how those communities are constituted. These social histories of universities are intimately linked to the broader historical trajectories of the societies in which they sit. Similarly, wider historical events that were not directly tied to universities, such as 9/11, also act to shape the functioning of universities, in this case through the expansion of institutional and state surveillance apparatuses. Furthermore, academics, and their work, can also be heavily influenced by the major events of their time. Continuing with the example of 9/11, this can be seen in the subsequent changes in the forms of research in areas such as terrorism and peacebuilding (Barakat and Zyck, 2009).

University functions can also be fundamentally intertwined with the social and political aspirations of different actors. Molla and Gale (2015) highlight how the funding of universities in Ethiopia with regards to teaching and research is coordinated in alignment with the government's five-year plans for national development. As I discuss in Chapter Seven, Njala University in Sierra Leone adopted an explicit political stance in the run up to elections in 2018, supporting the candidacy of Julius Maada Bio in the presidential race. University links with major actors also extend beyond the explicitly political. With the changing dynamics of higher education in relation to the knowledge economy, universities across the world are increasingly engaging with corporate partners and industrial projects. Throughout their collective existence, universities have also had frequently close relationships with religious institutions. As with many colonial universities, Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone was established in partnership with Christian missionaries, who played an influential role in its development. Relationships

with religious actors continue to shape both the goals of universities and their means for action. Research from Pakistan, for instance, highlights the ways in which powerful religious organisations have impacted upon the space for discussion and action on a range of issues, including around the place of women on campuses (Muborakshoeva, 2013).

### *Universities, Groups, and Society*

In contrast to human capital approaches, which analyse universities and societies as aggregations of rational individuals, what the above points suggest, and what this thesis aims to show, is that the social features and collective histories of the social groups that constitute universities matter for their functioning. While Chapter Five will speak more concretely to these features and histories in connection with the concept of the *substrate*, it is useful to briefly describe here how I understand universities, as social groups, to exist in the social world in a way that incorporates the two key features discussed in this section. This understanding forms the common basis of the analyses of the different elements of the two cases that are discussed in the remainder of the thesis. Rather than attempting to articulate a comprehensive theory of the social world, which is beyond the scope of the study, I organise the discussion in terms of responses to three questions that are integral to the arguments in my thesis. First, in what way is the university socially and politically embedded? Second, what are social structures in the context of the university? Third, how does power operate in relation to the university?

With regards to the first question, I conceive of the social world as composed of overlapping social groups (Elder-Vass, 2010). These social groups may themselves be composed of sub-groups, which are social groups in their own right, down to the level of the individual. Examples of sub-groups in the context of a university are the group of staff and the group of students, which can both be further subdivided into, for instance, those staff and students belonging to different faculties. Social groups may intersect, in terms of having shared members, and interact, through the practices of their members. By describing the university as socially and politically embedded, therefore, I mean that the university is connected to other social groups that make up society through their common intersections and interactions. A portion of a university faculty may, for example, also be members of a political party such that the university and the political party are intersecting groups, with changes in one of the groups potentially leading to changes in the other due to their common members. On the other hand, a group that is distinct from a given university in terms of membership, such as a Ministry of Higher Education, may work to alter the membership of a university, for instance by changing admission or hiring procedures, or to affect the structures and practices within a university, for example by introducing and enforcing new policies about management hierarchies or dress

codes. I consider the set of interactions and intersections between groups, and indeed the existence of particular groups, to be primarily an empirical question. Nevertheless, as part of conceptualising the structuring forces that exist in the broader social world, I make use of the work of theorists such as Bourdieu (1984; 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), with regards to social reproduction and the distribution of different forms of capital between classes and class fractions, and Fraser (Fraser and Jaeggi, 2018), in terms of her depiction of capitalism as an institutionalised social order.

Turning to the question of what should be understood by structures in the context of the university, the starting point here is that social groups are not simply aggregations of individuals but exist in their particular forms, and with their particular features and causal powers (Elder-Vass, 2010), due to the ways in which their members are organised, i.e., the set of relations that exist between members. It is this system of relations between the specific members of a social group that I refer to as its structure. Structure is, thus, embodied in specific social collectivities rather than being an abstract system of relations that exists outside of those groups (Elder-Vass, 2010). Structure changes, therefore, when the members of a social group change, with change understood both in the sense of members departing or joining and in terms of members transforming their practices, beliefs etc. For the purposes of analysis, however, it is useful to focus on particular features of structures rather than every aspect of systems of relations. Structures persist beyond changes in membership, and alterations in some relations between ongoing members, in the sense that the features we are interested in as researchers can persist. For example, features of initiations in student clubs in Sierra Leone, which are of interest for this study partly because of their role in mobilising students for collective action, continue even though the members of those clubs change on a regular basis as new students join the university and older students graduate or drop out.

A further significant consideration is that structures are productive of and substantiated and maintained by practices, norms and other institutions, ideologies, and beliefs (Elder-Vass, 2010). The particular form that the relationship between a student and a lecturer takes might depend, for instance, on beliefs on behalf of the student about the potential of the lecturer to provide them with valuable knowledge and on practices performed by the lecturer around marking work or preparing lessons, with these practices then reinforcing, or perhaps undermining, the student's beliefs. When I describe the university as a distinct space containing unique social formations, I am referring, therefore, to the way in which universities are constituted by distinct social structures that are associated with distinct sets of practices, institutions, ideologies, and beliefs.

Power is broadly understood to be a core part of any social system. It is also, however, a complex and highly contested concept. Rather than engaging with the intricacies of these debates, I focus on how I operationalise power for use in this thesis. I primarily consider power in a relational sense, meaning that I am concerned with the balances of power between individuals and groups. Balances of power represent the relative ability different individuals and groups have to maintain or affect changes in social structures and material conditions in ways that they perceive to be aligned with their goals. For example, a junior researcher working on a project may be considerably less able to influence the distribution of resources for that project than its lead researcher. Somewhat akin to Bourdieu's characterisation of fields (1984), I understand balances of power to be tied to the contexts in which actors are operating. While being at a disadvantage in terms of affecting budgets, the same junior researcher could, for instance, be much better able to organise a student protest than their more senior colleague, perhaps due to the junior researcher's closer links with students. In terms of sources of power, I concentrate on the different forms and amounts of capital to which individuals and groups have access (Bourdieu, 1986), including economic and cultural capital, as well as the position that those individuals and groups occupy within social structures. Balances of power change as the result of struggles and acts of cooperation that reallocate and generate capitals as well as through the transformation of structures and, correspondingly, the positions within them.

## ***Conclusion***

By blending aspects of the tower and the microcosm models, my analytical framework engages with literature on the social role of universities in three important ways. First, as noted above, my framework challenges conceptualisations of the university, such as those found in human capital theories, that model society, and thus universities, as being composed of simple aggregations of rational individuals. It does this by concentrating on the significance of social collectivities and the connections between individuals and groups for understanding how universities operate. Second, the framing responds to the criticisms that have been made of extant work on higher education and peace, which "tend to focus on curricular mechanisms to build peace, such as peace education" (Johnson, 2013, p.330). It does this by concentrating on the broader social world of the university as opposed to the 'closed' spaces of classrooms. This is not to argue against interrogating classroom practice but, instead, to acknowledge that it has been the focus of much existing work and to contend that university community dynamics are central to understanding how education functions rather than being ancillary to pedagogy. As I consider in Chapter Five, for example, the histories of university communities

can play a significant role in shaping who ends up teaching in classrooms, which can directly impact pedagogical practice. Third, a focus on universities as social groups allows for a deeper comprehension of the functioning of universities than is provided by isolated examinations of policy or institutional structures. Both these elements are present in my work, but they are shown to be the product of negotiation between university communities, the state, and other interest groups in society as well as being subject to navigation by groups within university communities, for example through the subversion or non-implementation of policy directives.

This chapter began by highlighting a range of ways in which universities have been proposed to be able to contribute to peacebuilding and development. By interrogating the underlying logics of contribution and bringing these ideas into contact with recognised pathways by which education can drive conflict and stifle social change, I have begun to delineate some of the social complexity that is central to understanding the constraints on universities with regards to their ability to contribute to processes of post-war recovery. Using the analytical framework developed above, the following chapters take up this task by examining the cases of post-war universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Before engaging with the prominent issue of the funding available for higher education, the next chapter introduces the two cases, illustrating how the universities in both countries have been intimately involved with the generation of both conflict and social change throughout their histories while also fulfilling the function of elite maintenance and reproduction.

## Chapter Three

### Histories of Education and Conflict

When asking students and staff about Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, the College's old nickname quickly appeared in the conversations. The idea of 'The Athens of West Africa', as it was once described, is still tied to how the university community at Fourah Bay College reflects upon itself, even if the usage is now often a form of lament for a lost golden past. These reflections on the changing status of the College and the legacies of decline brought to the fore the centrality of the past for understandings of the present university, making clear that a focus on the embeddedness of universities requires situating them in their particular historical contexts. This chapter begins this work by drawing out features of the historical trajectories of the two countries that speak to contemporary dynamics within their universities, focussing particularly on political structures and struggles, periods of violent conflict, and the evolution of their education systems. Through this historical review, I also work towards two further goals. First, I demonstrate the intertwinement of universities and organised violence in both countries, underlining higher education institutions' integral role in conflict generation and illustrating the need to question the presumption of their necessarily constructive post-war role. Second, I clarify key distinctions between the cases that are relevant for understanding the particular interactions that universities in each country have with processes of post-war peacebuilding and development.

The chapter is split into four main parts. The first part addresses the historical context of higher education development in Sierra Leone, starting with the colonial roots of Fourah Bay College in Freetown. From there, it progresses to consider the emergence of a one-party state in the post-independence era and the implications this had for the relationship between the universities and the government, before then discussing the outbreak of the 11-year civil war and its consequences for the education sector. The second part turns to Sri Lanka and traces the involvement of the universities in both the leftist insurrections of the JVP and the rise of Tamil nationalist militancy. I begin with the strong foundations for social welfarism in education, which has lasted into the 21<sup>st</sup> century despite a turn towards liberalisation and privatisation in the 1970s. I note that education in its role as a marker of the social contract in Sri Lanka generated frustrations amongst young people whose expectations were not met and built

tensions between ethnic groups. The third section provides a review of key features of the post-war higher education environments in both countries, setting the stage for further analysis in subsequent chapters. In the concluding section, I highlight important contrasts and commonalities between the cases, emphasising the divergent wartime experiences and the corresponding differences in the environments in which processes of post-war development and peacebuilding have taken place.

### ***Higher Education and Conflict in Sierra Leone***

#### *Colonialism and Education*

As with many former colonies, tracing the history of Sierra Leone requires acknowledging the meeting and interaction of pre-existing dynamics, such as the presence of 17 ethnic groups that spread beyond the present state's borders, chieftancy systems, and powerful kin societies like the Poro (Alie, 1990), with the complex and often contradictory forces wrought through colonisation. Sierra Leone's position on the West Coast Africa made it an important site for the Atlantic slave trade (Kaifala, 2016). The history of the colony itself, however, began closer to the moment of abolition when British abolitionists decided to resettle freed slaves in the region, with the first arrivals landing in 1787 and forming the new capital of Freetown. The multiple waves of arrivals from across the world eventually came to constitute a distinct ethnic group, now named the Krios, concentrated in the Freetown peninsula (Cubitt, 2012). The extension of formal British control outside of the Colony that had been established in the peninsula occurred in 1896 (Tom, 2017), when the administration declared the surrounding lands a Protectorate. The two regions – Colony and Protectorate – operated under significantly different administrative systems up until their unification at independence, with traditional authorities maintaining a powerful role in the Protectorate and only those in the Colony counting as British citizens (Alie, 1990; Bangura, 2009). The rural-urban divide that was set up with this bifurcated system, alongside the uneven economic development of the two regions, has remained a significant feature of Sierra Leonean politics up until the present, with Freetown retaining a substantially higher density of key infrastructure (Cubitt, 2012). Competition between groups for resources under the system of indirect rule, particularly between the wealthier but numerically weaker Krios and the emergent political forces in the Protectorate, also contributed to the fractured polity that emerged in the post-independence era (Tom, 2017).

The dynamics of division and the push for elite distinction by the Krios and, later, other groups were also reflected in the education system that was constructed. The majority of the schooling

was conducted in the Western area of the country, with Christian missionaries often playing a key role in the establishment of institutions. The first mission schools were created in 1787 with the founding of Freetown, and the Krio moulded from their educational accomplishments “an elite culture, differentiating themselves from “natives” through their professions, European clothing, and Christianity” (Bolten, 2015, p.27). The education system, therefore, was not grounded in the history and culture of the surrounding area but on the emulation of the structures of the colonisers. As with other colonies, education was also a means of accessing higher status employment that might allow someone to avoid hard manual labour. As well as the rural-urban and class divides, ethnic division also formed a part of the educational approaches in the Protectorate. As Cubitt notes, “Within the education system itself, where Temne and Mende pupils attended the same school, children were segregated and taught either by Temne or Mende teachers, and sporting events were divided along ethnic lines. This had the effect of creating enmity and friction and the consolidation of ethnic identity among different groups of young people” (2012, p.11).

As well as possessing a colonial school system earlier than many other colonies, Sierra Leone also became the site of the first colonial higher education institution in sub-Saharan Africa with the founding of Fourah Bay College in 1827 (Paracka, 2001). While originally founded to train clergy to service the evangelising mission of the colonisers, over time the college expanded to provide training for teachers and the local administrators who would facilitate indirect governance over the British protectorate in the hinterlands surrounding Freetown (Tom, 2017). During the colonial period, higher education was established, therefore, as means of elite entry into governance. Towards independence the government took increasing control over the institution, and the university began to receive greater government financial support (Paracka, 2001). Despite the corresponding improvements in facilities, many of the Sierra Leonean elite still preferred to gain their higher education in the UK. In 1958, for example, there were 421 students at Fourah Bay College and 1010 Sierra Leoneans studying in the UK (Paracka, 2011, p.309). Nevertheless, the College during the colonial period was a meeting point for many of those who would go on to take up political and cultural leadership in Sierra Leone as well as in the wider West Africa.

### *Independence, Post-Independence Politics, and the One-Party State*

The lead up to independence saw various shifts in the administrative structure of Sierra Leone, with the Colony and the Protectorate being united under the same system in 1951 and Krio political influence declining as independence neared (Harris, 2013). The major political figures who were to dominate the post-independence era, including the first Prime Ministers, largely

emerged from the nascent protectorate intelligentsia at this point, with their party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), winning two sets of elections in the 1950s. Fractures within this group around the issue of whether elections or independence should come first led to the formation of the All People's Congress (APC), which would come to be the second of the two political parties that have dominated Sierra Leonean politics into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Alie, 1990; Harris, 2013). A key dimension of the split was also the perception of the dominance of the largest ethnic group, the Mende, in the SLPP, with the APC setting itself up as representing the interests of the second largest group, the Temne (Cubitt, 2012). Elite competition for control over the state, therefore, took place through the use of ethnic mobilisation, although, as Cubitt emphasises in relation to the later outbreak of war, the main political fault line was the division between the elite class and the rest of the population. While Harris (2013) describes the process of becoming independent as a 'deceptively quiet decolonisation' in light of these contentious but peaceful political events, there were also, nevertheless, episodes of rioting against the Sierra Leonean leadership and of youth rising against exploitation by chiefs, many of whom had, during indirect rule, been able to utilise the system for their own empowerment (Alie, 1990). At independence in 1961, therefore, it is possible to see evidence of some of the key features of the political landscape – namely elite competition through ethno-regionalism in politics, generational contestation, and rural-urban divides – that have continued to play an important role in the country's trajectory up until the present.

After the unexpected death of the country's first Prime Minister, Milton Margai, in 1964, Sierra Leone entered a period of political turbulence, ultimately resulting in Siaka Stevens taking up the position of Prime Minister in 1968. During his extended rule, which lasted until 1985, Sierra Leone was first transformed into a republic in 1971, with Stevens as President, and then a one-party state in 1978 (Tom, 2017). Under Stevens, the centralisation of state power, already a feature due to the extractive colonial approach, came to be increasingly fused with networks of personal patronage, which allowed Stevens to maintain his grip on power (Kaifala, 2016). Stevens' background as a trade union activist arguably provided him with the knowledge necessary to effectively stifle dissent, and a number of interviewees who had lived through the Stevens' era commented on his ability to co-opt those who opposed him, bringing them into his networks and then exposing their participation in these webs of corruption in order to discredit them. Repression of dissent was widespread and prominent figures, such as former APC ministers Ibrahim Taqi and Mohammed Forna, who could not be co-opted were often intimidated or imprisoned (Forna, 2002; Wai, 2014). The political changes associated with the one-party state took place in the context of economic decline and crisis, with the 1970s oil shocks, for example, leading to increasing involvement of the IMF and the World Bank in the economy (Cubitt, 2012). The related decline of the economy and the inability of Stevens'

chosen successor, Joseph Momoh, to navigate the structural adjustment conditionalities of the IMF as successfully as Stevens meant that the shadow state that had been created by Stevens was no longer able to distribute patronage, setting the stage for a weakening grip on power and the outbreak of the war (Cubitt, 2012).

The period between independence and the beginning of the war was also a period of change for the higher education system, although colonial legacies around the curriculum at Fourah Bay College, for example, remained influential (Paracka, 2001). Shortly after independence, in 1966, Fourah Bay College was joined together with Njala University College and Milton Margai Teaching College to create the University of Sierra Leone, and the institution cut its formal affiliation with Durham University (Paracka, 2001). While Fourah Bay College is located in the centre of Freetown atop Mount Aureol, Njala is based around a rural village close to the city of Bo. Njala's movement towards the status of University College was significantly supported by the courting of US funds and resources, which drew on shared motivations to move higher education beyond the confines of British colonial traditions as well as the American expertise in land grant universities that Njala, with its agricultural base and desire for local orientation, might seek to emulate (Oketch et al., 2014; Poppel, 2015). The investment of US funds was relatively short lived, however, and much of the expansion proved to be unsustainable without comparable levels of ongoing funding (Poppel, 2015). Nevertheless, Njala offered a different approach to higher education than Fourah Bay College, providing also a much needed site of higher education outside the capital.

Three further features of the dynamics of higher education are particularly relevant for understanding how the system evolved into the wartime period and, subsequently, the state of the university sector in the post-war period. First, the sector underwent a process of Africanisation, where the staffing of departments shifted, at first rapidly and then more gradually, towards being constituted primarily by Africans and Sierra Leoneans. The initial rapidity of the changes created issues with finding sufficient numbers of qualified staff to lead departments and train graduate students while, at the same time, making space to end unequal practices (Paracka, 2001). Second, despite the efforts towards Africanisation, access to higher education generally remained limited, and Fourah Bay College retained a set of curricula, albeit with some substantial changes, that spoke to the elitist British roots. In short, education, particularly at this higher level, continued to be largely the domain of a privileged few. Rashid (1997) suggests that this group, nevertheless, contained substantial ethnic and social diversity. Rashid highlights, for example, the plethora of social clubs forming at the universities in the 1970s, each with their own politics and sub-cultures. Similarly, Paracka (2001) notes that students from outside Sierra Leone continued to constitute up to 10% of the student population in the late 1980s.

Finally, student activism played an important role in the political ecosystem, with students often constituting the unofficial opposition following Stevens' rise to power. In 1977, for instance, university students at Fourah Bay College protested during a degree ceremony involving Stevens by throwing black powder and waving anti-government placards. This built into a broader set of protests, partly due to the state violence in response to the Fourah Bay demonstration, that drew in school students and unemployed youth from across the country, forcing the regime into making conciliatory gestures which included a general election (Kaifala, 2016; Rashid, 1997). The mounting student frustrations with corruption and deteriorating conditions associated with the worsening economic situation in the 1980s, as well as reductions in public spending connected with structural adjustment (Abdullah, 1998), could not find a suitable political outlet in the tightly controlled political environment, which was to then have important ramifications in the country as Sierra Leone moved into the 1990s (Cubitt, 2012). Furthermore, Stevens' attempts to control dissent at the universities by instituting himself as Chancellor and trying to infiltrate student political groups meant that universities became entangled with national politics in a manner that continues to be important in the post-war period.

### *War and Adaptation*

Locating the driving factors behind Sierra Leone's civil war has been the subject of an extensive body of literature (Abdullah, 1998; Cubitt, 2012; Mitton, 2013; Richards, 1998), which highlights a crisis of youth – amongst economic decline, political repression, conflict in neighbouring Liberia, and mineral resources – as a key factor behind the spread of violence. While Kieran Mitton (2013) has concisely argued against simplistic narratives of youth grievances 'spilling over' into conflict, the exclusion of youth from opportunities to pursue better futures amid the collapse of the economy and, correspondingly, patronage networks, was, nevertheless, one of the important drivers behind the onset and continuation of the war (Bolten, 2012; Cubitt, 2012). University students, while not central to the fighting, had a significant role to play in shaping the dynamics that led to the war. As Rashid (1997) describes, Fourah Bay College was a site of political radicalism, with student clubs serving as the principal organising body for this political action. Student radicals mixed in the pre-war years with marginalised urban youth in Freetown. This pool of "lumpen" youth had been a source of political intimidators for the APC during elections in the 1960s and 1970s, but their character and composition changed in the 1970s and 1980s (Abdullah, 1998). More educated youth, frustrated by the lack of opportunities for advancement, became part of this disaffected group, and there was a growth in anti-establishment discourse (Rashid, 1997). The struggles of students in Apartheid South Africa and Gaddafi's Green Book were popular inspirations for

students in their push for a revolutionary ideology (Abdullah, 1998; Rashid, 1997). The calls for revolution that spread through the interaction of radical students with lumpen youth also resonated with disillusioned youth in rural areas, creating increasingly fertile ground for rebellion (Abdullah, 1998; Cubitt, 2012). Student groups consistently challenged first the Stevens regime and the Momoh government to make changes, successfully pushing for multi-party elections in 1991 (Kaifala, 2016). When it became clear that the 1991 elections would be rigged by the government, however, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) took the path of armed struggle, invading the East of the country from Liberia and beginning the war (Rashid, 1997).

The origins of the RUF are most clearly outlined by Ibrahim Abdullah (1998). He notes that while exiled students took part in and recruited for military training camps in Libya in the late 1980s, it was the lumpen element that took charge of the revolution. The RUF was led by Foday Sankoh, who had previously been imprisoned under Stevens for involvement in an alleged coup and who had been recruited by the early radicals to train in Libya. Some graduates and students did join the RUF in prominent positions, such as Philip Palmer, a frontline commander, and Fayia Musa, a spokesperson, but university students and intellectuals did not form a strong group within the organisation. Instead, the RUF came to be dominated by Sankoh himself as he strategically removed those who were potentially popular enough to oppose him. Students, nevertheless, had laid the ground for action through their sowing of revolutionary discourses, albeit without a coherent ideology behind them, and their organisation of anti-government activities, which had demonstrated the fragility of both the Stevens and Momoh regimes.

University students were also linked to the coup that took place after the war had begun in 1992, with their support helping to legitimise the emerging regime of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) led by 25-year-old Captain Valentine Strasser. The supportive relationship between the NPRC and students did not last, however, as conditions at the universities remained poor and campuses were closed in response to student protests (Rashid, 1997). Another coup in 1996, led by the current President Julius Maada Bio, preceded elections which brought Tejan Kabbah and the SLPP to power (Kaifala, 2016). Despite attempts at ceasefires and negotiations, however, Sankoh continued to order the RUF to attack and violence remained widespread. As well as the Sierra Leone Armed Forces, who had been in a weakened state at the beginning of the war, there were also an array of civil organisations, such as the Kamajors, and private actors, such as a mercenary firm from South Africa, involved in the fighting (Cubitt, 2012). The lines between different actors also blurred due to the “sobel” phenomenon, where a fighter might be a soldier in the day and a rebel at

night, which was indicative of the potential for the army and rebels to cooperate in order to secure resources (Abraham, 2001).

A further coup in 1997 removed Kabbah from power and saw the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council take over and invite the RUF to form part of the government, bringing the war, which had previously been mainly waged in the provinces, into Freetown (Tom, 2017). This group was then expelled from Freetown by a combination of civil groups and the Nigeria-dominated ECOMOG forces, and Kabbah was restored to power in 1998. In January 1999 Freetown experienced its highest level of violence during the war when the RUF and the ousted military junta returned to the capital and conducted Operation No Living Thing (Harris, 2013). The atrocities involved brought international actors, who had been involved in the previous stop-start processes of negotiation, to focus their attention back on Sierra Leone. Following renewed peace negotiations, British military intervention, and Sankoh's detainment, the war was brought to an end and peace was declared in 2002 (Tom, 2017).

The war took a massive toll on Sierra Leone, which had already been in a position of economic decline with weakened social services. Over the course of the eleven years, there were around 70,000 fatalities and large numbers of people were subjected to amputations and mutilations as part of strategies of instilling fear and consolidating power (Cubitt, 2012; Kaldor and Vincent, 2006). The use of child soldiers was also prevalent, leaving complex legacies of trauma and disrupted development (Novelli, 2011). While a number of those whom I spoke to about their experiences of university during the war focussed on the apparent normality of being a student at that time, education institutions were, nevertheless, deeply affected by the conflict. Njala was the site of a number of battles, which caused considerable damage to the facilities and forced the staff to relocate to Freetown (Poppel, 2015). Both violence and student-regime confrontations also meant that even those who were able to continue their education faced delay and disruption, with displaced timetables for years afterwards. School buildings were also the target of attacks, with only around 13% of schools usable by 2001 (Novelli, 2011). UNDP estimates suggest that there was also a halving of incomes in the country over the wartime period (UNDP, 2010), giving an indication of the economic costs of the war on an already poor nation. The way in which state power had been shattered and shared during the war meant that the already hollowed state apparatus was fundamentally weak by the end of the war, which was then to have negative implications for the ability of the state to engage in reconstruction activities in the post-war period. This also created space for international actors to take a directing role in the recovery following on from the military interventions that helped bring the war to a close.

## ***Higher Education and Conflict in Sri Lanka***

### *Colonialism and Education*

Experiences of colonisation in Sri Lanka, or Ceylon as it was known during the colonial period and up until constitutional change in 1972, were multiple and varied. The longest period was that of British rule which lasted from 1796 until independence in 1948 (Wickramasinghe, 2014). One of the most impactful features of British rule was the way in which social categories were constructed and transformed, with previously permeable boundaries between groups, that were predominantly separated by language or religion, being solidified around ideas of race. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, political representation on the island came to be significantly based on the categories created through the formalisation of cultural differences that had taken place through, for example, census practices (Nissan and Stirrat, 2004). The push for independence in Sri Lanka in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the emergence and deepening of significant fractures among the elite alliances between ethnic groups, due largely to disputes over what the allocation of power and resources would be after independence. A shift in 1921 from communal representation towards electoral representation resulted in a significantly larger share of Sinhalese representatives compared to the prior arrangement, and representatives of minority groups on the island, including Tamils and Muslims, raised concerns over the prospect of a future of majoritarian rule by the Sinhalese population (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Education during the colonial period interacted heavily with issues of language and religion, which were also bundled up with considerations of ethnicity. Similar to Sierra Leone, the growth in schools in Sri Lanka was predominantly driven by Christian missionaries. The colonial policy on education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had a split system with Christian missions running private, fee-levying, English-medium schools, while the state provided Sinhala- and Tamil-medium education (Little and Hettige, 2013). As in other British territories, education was used as a means to turn local elites into staff for the colonial administration, with those gaining such employment then often using it to profit from the extractive colonial economy and achieve a significant level of stability and security (Golding, 2018; Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). Access to education in English in the colonial period, therefore, served as a significant potential route to social and economic advancement, and the association that was built during the colonial period between education, government employment, and a form of security and status remains potent for many on the island today.

The economic and social importance of schooling meant that the distribution of English-medium schools became a substantial field of inequality in the country. The different missionary groups that operated schools on the island, such as the American Mission in the

North, took different approaches to education and to the question of language of instruction, and over time this contributed to a proportional overrepresentation of Tamils, particularly from Jaffna, in the colonial administration (Coperehewa, 2011). There was also a broad rural-urban divide in access to English-medium schools, with rural children unlikely to have the opportunity to attend these schools and, therefore, to secure the government jobs that were available for the educated (Little and Hettige, 2013). The fee-levying nature of these schools also helped ensure that high-quality educational provision remained the preserve of the elite (Wickramasinghe, 2014). In the latter part of the British colonial period, the monopoly of Christian schools over private education changed. Religious revivals in response to the spread of Christianity entrenched connections between ethnicity and a particular religious identity and led to further contestation in education, with the Buddhism revival in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, for example, corresponding with a proliferation of Buddhist schools in the South (Little and Hettige, 2013). The solidification of these social divisions in the colonial period – along interrelated lines of ethnicity, language, class, and religion – generated fractured lines in the education system that have consistently formed part of the politics of education until the present day.

In the period approaching independence, higher education opportunities remained small, although it formed an area of contestation between elite groups in society and the administration. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a concerted push for the establishment of a university on home soil, developing into the university movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (De Silva, 1978). The Ceylon University College was founded in 1921, with the establishment of a full university in 1942 (De Silva, 1978). The university was a restricted, Anglicised institution, which served to produce the educated professional class that would eventually spearhead moves towards independence (Jayasuriya, 2010) and which remained far from the localised higher education institution envisioned by early nationalists. Such an exclusionary operating model also clashed with other changes in the education system and broader pushes towards social welfarism. The social value attached to education, intertwined with its connections to economic aspirations, has been a recurrent theme throughout the history of the education system, with the provision of education seen as a matter of social justice and access to university education, in particular, as a means of social mobility (Jayawardena, 2017; Little, 1997). This is evidenced most strongly by the education reforms in the 1940s which introduced free education through to the tertiary level (Jayawardena, 2017). The gains in literacy and general educational access that followed these reforms were frequently referenced in my conversations as a point of pride for many Sri Lankans. Despite this, an enduring tension has remained between elite protection of their educational privileges and the pursuit of wider social change through education.

### *Welfarism and the Post-Independence Politics of Education*

The advent of independence in 1948 brought a constitution that was open for majoritarian rule, reflecting the strengthening Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism of the time. Sinhalese politicians made “opportunistic use of the perception by the majority community that those minority groups perceived as having had undue influence under the British—Tamils, Muslims, and Christians—must be “kept in their place”” (Thiranagama, 2013, p.96). Education formed one of the main areas of contestation and again the question of the medium of instruction was key. In 1956, the newly formed Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) – which alongside the United National Party (UNP) would go on to be one of the two main ruling parties of the post-independence era – campaigned and won elections as part of a coalition on the basis of a Sinhala Only policy, foregrounding the potential for electoral success to be based on divisive nationalist politics. The Sinhala Only Act was passed three months later, placing Sinhala as the only official language of the country, reducing the status of English, and “subordinating the Tamil language and people” (Little and Hettige, 2013, p.188). The resulting institutional changes in education, and public sector employment, led to discrimination against Tamils (Seoighe, 2017) and marked the dismantling of the existing protections for minorities. At the same time, however, the equalising promise of the Act for the majority of the Sinhalese population went unrealised as elite social connections and proficiency in English continued to be the key to accessing employment and associated opportunities. In short, the legislation succeeded in excluding those who did not speak Sinhala but failed to serve as a tool of inclusion for the Sinhalese majority. While the 1956 Act was amended in 1958 to allow for Tamil-medium schooling and government, Tamil remained in many ways in a subordinate position compared to Sinhala (Thiranagama, 2013).

The decades following independence saw significant changes in the university system. The need to provide university education for school-leavers who had passed through the Sinhala and Tamil language school systems meant that pressure was put on the University of Ceylon to shift from its English-medium instruction. In response to the university’s resistance, the government transformed two Buddhist monastic colleges, called *pirivenas*, into universities in 1958, while also cutting the budget for the University of Ceylon. One effect of the addition of the two *pirivenas* to the higher education system was that the curriculum came to be further dominated by traditional subjects in the social sciences and humanities, which continues to be the case today.

In the 1970s, a number of crucial events occurred with important ramifications for the education sector as well as the broader relationships between Sinhalese and Tamil

populations and the state. While the 1960s had seen the introduction of external degrees and the formation of the University of Colombo, the demand for university education still far outstripped its availability and the question of which groups were able to access university remained a pressing political issue (Little and Hettige, 2013). The economic stagnation of the 1960s also meant that educated youth were unable to fulfil their employment ambitions, leading to a general environment of unrest (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). Out of this environment the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) emerged. The JVP was formed by a splinter group from the Communist Party (Peking) in the late 1960s, with a charismatic leader named Rohana Wijeweera serving as a central focus for the group (Kearney and Jiggins, 1975). After Wijeweera was arrested in March 1971, a group of JVP leaders met at Vidyodaya University to push forward a plan for anti-government revolt, which was then launched on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1971 (Wickramasinghe, 2014). The timing of the insurrection was also partly triggered by the accidental detonation of bomb-making units, one of which was based at a university (Weiss, 2011). Ultimately, while efforts by the insurgents to capture police stations were somewhat successful, partly due to the armed forces being completely unprepared for such attacks, the movement failed to achieve most of its key objectives and was brutally brought to an end (Wickramasinghe, 2014). The heavy-handedness of the state response combined with a lack of accountability for actions of the security personnel was to set a dangerous precedent for future approaches to dissent and militancy, evident in the absence of redress for victims of state violence after the later civil war (De Silva, 2017; Wickramasinghe, 2014).

Following the end of the uprising, there were rapid alterations to the political environment. Among the most striking of these was the new 1972 Constitution, which renamed the country Sri Lanka, the traditional Sinhala name; concentrated power in the Legislature; reduced minority protections afforded by the Soulbury Constitution; and gave special status to Buddhism in the country (Wickramasinghe, 2012). The moves increased the sense of alienation amongst much of the Tamil population and contributed to the growth in Tamil militant and activist groups in the 1970s. The shock of the 1971 insurgency also spurred on a number of substantial reforms in an education sector that had previously been resistant to change (Little and Hettige, 2013). Two of the most significant changes were the creation of the University of Sri Lanka and the standardisation policies that were introduced for university admissions (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). The former involved the consolidation of the existing universities under the umbrella of the University of Ceylon, prior to the country's renaming, with the existing universities becoming campuses which were subordinate to a central controlling authority in Colombo (De Silva, 1978). This served as a means to tighten government over universities, reducing the university autonomy that had been closely

protected at the beginning of the sector on the island. This change was eventually reversed in 1978, although centralised control of the sector remained relatively strong.

The second major area of reform concerns the introduction of policies of medium-wise standardisation that were used to alter the social constitution of those who accessed the university system. This initially entailed both subject-based and language-based elements where students' marks in the end of school examinations would be subjected to a statistical process of standardisation, with the result that different levels of marks were required for entry in different subject areas and for the different languages. For instance, admission to Medical Faculties could require an entry mark of 229 for Sinhala-medium students and 250 for Tamil-medium students (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). This system was later replaced by a district quota system designed to alleviate the rural inequalities in access to universities, which were partly due to the disparity in the facilities available in rural and urban schools (Wickramasinghe, 2012). These changes were responses to a number of aspects of the social and political situation of the time, including the need to appease Sinhalese youths following the uprising, growing claims of medium-related biases in the system, and clear disparities in the proportion of Tamil students at universities, particularly in the sciences. Despite the centrality of anti-Tamil discrimination to later interpretation of the policies, the reforms can also be viewed as a social justice project that aimed to draw in the Sinhalese peasantry and to weaken the hold of Anglicised elites, of all ethnicities, over the education system (Wickramasinghe, 2012). Nevertheless, the changes to the education system were highly symbolic as measures of denying the future aspirations of young, middle-class Tamils, especially as they took place amid a broader environment of increases in anti-Tamil discrimination by the state and of escalating violence, with a number of pogroms occurring in the 70s and 80s (Colenso, 2005; Fernando, 2017). Although the system was moved back to a pure merit-based process in 1978, following a change in government, the damage was largely already done with regards to the relationship between Tamil youths and the state.

### *Liberalisation and the Beginning of the War*

The close of the 1970s saw the election of J.R. Jayewardene and a raft of economic and political changes in the country, with analysts frequently demarcating 1977/78 as a turning point in the island's history (Little and Hettige, 2013; Stokke and Uyangoda, 2012). A presidential system was introduced which concentrated power in the executive, and Jayewardene became Sri Lanka's first president. Alongside this, he introduced a Bill of Rights which focussed on the fundamental rights of individuals. The political liberalism in the Bill of Rights was matched by an economic liberalism, with characteristic pushes for the opening up

of the economy and for privatisation (Stokke and Uyangoda, 2012). These economic and political changes set up an interesting tension, which has persisted until the present, between pushes for a liberal economy and the established structures of social welfarism, evident, for example, in the policies around free education (Golding, 2018). This tension became quickly visible in the higher education sector with attempts at creating a private medical college in 1980, which was eventually absorbed into the state system after prolonged public protests (Jayawardena, 2017).

Despite resistance to privatisation, the late 1970s and 1980s saw significant changes in the higher education system. The Universities Act of 1978 established the University Grants Commission (UGC) to oversee the sector and several new universities were created across Sri Lanka, following from the founding of Jaffna university campus in the North of the country in 1974 (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). In spite of this growth, however, the university sector remained restricted to an elite few, although the expansion of the sector into the provinces away from the capital can be seen as move to address this. Admissions remained a contentious topic. When the new government restored a purely merit-based system in 1978 and Tamil admissions to science subjects rose again, there were protests and eventually the government introduced a system where admissions were split between all-island merit scores, district quotas, and a further share for areas which were designated as educationally 'backward' (Hoole, 2001). With minor adjustments to the formula, this system has stayed in place until the present day.

As with later leaders, Jayewardene used ethno-nationalist tactics as part of his election and governing strategies (Stokke and Uyangoda, 2012). Shortly after the elections in 1977, there were violent riots which predominantly targeted Tamils in the South, potentially sparked by rumours of violence against Sinhalese in Jaffna (Hoole, 2001). Again, the state failed to offer any significant response to this violence. Jayewardene's government also introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act in response to the escalation of the conflict in the North and East, which granted broad powers to the armed forces and would remain a powerful piece of legislation throughout the war and into the post-war period (Nissan and Stirrat, 2004). The period under the UNP following the 1977 elections was also marked by high levels of violence on campuses. As Weeramunda notes, "Attempts by the post 1977 government to counter the influence of leftist parties in student politics, particularly the JVP, by setting up a pro-government student organization only contributed to intensifying inter-student conflicts" (2008, p.29).

In 1987, Rohan Wijeweera and the JVP launched a second insurrection which almost brought the government down, partly as it took place in the midst of the escalating civil war. Similar to

the first insurgency, it has been argued that the frustrations of unemployed, educated youth played a significant role in the outbreak of conflict (Moore, 1993). This time, however, the group was significantly more organised and effective, pushing the already weakened state to its limits. The fighting lasted for two years, much longer than the 1971 uprising, ending in 1989 after Wijeweera was captured and killed (Weiss, 2011). Again, university students constituted an important part of the organisation with the JVP mostly in control of the student body by the mid-1980s (Moore, 1993). The violence used in the ascendancy of the JVP on campuses, which largely removed the student wings of other political parties (Moore, 1993), alongside the warfare of the insurgency and the brutal crackdown by the police and army led to the deaths of tens of thousands of young people (Weiss, 2011). In our interview, Dr Nirmal Dewasiri, an academic and activist, highlighted that the violence decimated the student leadership of the time, suggesting that, because the political class had previously drawn heavily on student leaders, there was a corresponding damaging effect on the current political elite (UC2).

### *War and Control*

While the exact beginning of the war in Sri Lanka has been given different dates by different scholars (Spencer, 2004; 2016; Thiranagama, 2011; Weiss, 2011), there were two events in the early 1980s, following on from anti-Tamil pogroms in the late 1970s (Fernando, 2017), that were to escalate the simmering conflict into a larger-scale war. The first was the burning down of Jaffna public library in 1981. Large numbers of police had been moved into Jaffna to supervise the local elections. Following a shooting incident, the police committed acts of violence and vandalism in Jaffna, with the burning of the public library having particular symbolic resonance as it was seen as an attack on Tamil language and culture (Nissan and Stirrat, 2004). The second major event which served to build tensions was the riots of July 1983, known as Black July. There were a number of events leading up to these riots, including attacks on Tamil students at the University of Peradeniya which began an exodus of Tamil students and staff from the university (Hoole, 2001). Part of what made these incidents so potent was the apparent involvement of government officials in the organisation or encouragement of violence and the near apathy in response to Tamil deaths (Nissan and Stirrat, 2004). When President Jayewardene finally appeared on television days after the 1983 riots had started, he offered no apology for the violence and instead focussed on the appeasement of the Sinhalese population, saying, "The time has come to accede to the clamour and the national respect of the Sinhalese people" (quoted in Weiss, 2011, p.54).

By the mid-1970s, Tamil political parties had been demanding a separate state on the island for Tamils, although this proved largely ineffective as a means of gaining political leverage and encouraged calls for more direct and radical means from frustrated Tamil youth (Stokke, 2012). As Stokke notes, “Consequently, Tamil separatism was gaining momentum while the hegemony of the Tamil elite was being challenged by radicalised youth, thus paving the way for militant separatism by youth groups” (2012, p.12). The violence of the 1980s, particularly the 1983 riots, then poured fuel on the fire. As Sharika Thiranagama explains, “The riots were the cataclysmic event of the ethnic conflict. The riots comprehensively transformed public support for newly emergent Tamil militancy” (2011, p.81). There were broadly two main sites for the emerging militancy in the North. First, there was the newly formed University of Jaffna. The LTTE itself emerged from a group that was originally called the Tamil Students’ Federation, founded in 1970, and which renamed itself the Tamil New Tigers in 1972 before becoming the LTTE in 1975 (Wickramasinghe, 2014). Interviewees who had been at the university at the time noted that students would go out to ‘preach’ to communities in rural areas as a means of spreading the fervour for secession. The second site was the fishing villages around the Jaffna peninsula, and it is from here that the mainstay of the LTTE came, including its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the LTTE had largely prevailed in a series of internal struggles that had fractured the alliances between the different militant groups, leaving it in a dominant position and able to claim to be the lone representative of the Tamil people (Stokke, 2012). An important part of the LTTE’s rise to power was the way in which it came to operate surveillance networks, including in the university, in order to stamp out dissent and collaboration with the Sri Lanka government, which largely led to a silencing of the debates that had been present on campus during the 1970s. Families were expected to contribute one child to the Tigers to support the war effort, although this number increased when the fighting escalated, and the LTTE also utilised forced recruitment (Weiss, 2011). The LTTE worked to build a culture that celebrated martyrdom in the name of their cause, with festivals, for example, to celebrate the elite squad that frequently took on suicide missions (Wickramasinghe, 2014). The LTTE’s homogenising nationalism, its use of spies in Tamil communities, and its brutal treatment of those deemed to be traitors profoundly affected the social fabric in the North and East (Satkunanathan, 2016; Thiranagama, 2010).

The end of the 1980s also saw the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord to try to end the war and the direct involvement of the Indian army by way of the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) in the North and East. Prior to this, India’s involvement had been to engage in diplomatic measures while also providing training camps for militants in Tamil Nadu (Fernando, 2017), where many saw the LTTE as freedom fighters (Hellmann-Rajanayagam, 1988). While the

signing of the peace accord and arrival of the IPKF was initially treated as a cause for hope by many Tamils in Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe, 2014), the situation soon soured, and interviewees frequently referred to both the violence and the sense of bitter disappointment around this period. After the withdrawal of the IPKF in 1990, the war with the Sri Lankan government was fully rekindled, and the Tigers' assassination in 1991 of the Indian Prime Minister who had brought about the IPKF involvement, Rajiv Gandhi, showed the LTTE's willingness to strike against those who were seen to have stood in its way.

The 1990s opened with the LTTE increasing control over both territory and people to the extent that it operated as de facto government in a substantial portion of the North and East, running, for example, its own judiciary, police force, and schools (Little and Hettige, 2013; Parasram, 2012). One key manifestation of this control was the eviction of Muslims from the Northern territories controlled by the Tigers in 1990. Accounts of the war have often failed to recognise the scale of violence that was inflicted on Muslims in the country, with anti-Muslim violence being committed by both of the main parties to the war (Thiranagama, 2011). The 1990 Eviction was one of the most striking population movements among the many relocations and migrations that formed part of experiences of the war, but it was not the only one. Tamils who were able to frequently migrated abroad, including a significant number of academics. These migrations built upon significant population centres of Sri Lankan Tamils in countries such as India, Canada, the UK, and Australia (David, 2012). Contributions from the diaspora played a significant role in funding the war effort and publicising the conflict outside of Sri Lanka, with remittances continuing to constitute a vital source of revenue for the North in the post-war years (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

While most of the fighting was in the North and East of the country, the South and West did not remain untouched by the violence. The LTTE's use of suicide attacks and their ability to strike at high-level targets, demonstrated, for instance, in their assassination of President Premadasa, created an atmosphere of fear, interacting also with the legacies of the JVP insurrections. Nevertheless, the ability to live a life relatively unimpeded by the war was much greater in the South. Academics, for example, were able to continue engaging in collaborative projects with international partners in a way that was not possible for those in the North and East. The war did, however, shape the political and social environment of the South, with the securitisation of public spaces and the reinforcement of nationalist discourses that emphasised the threat faced by the Sinhalese people and resisted attempts at, for example, the devolution of power (Wickramasinghe, 2014). Immense resources were also spent on recruiting, training, and equipping the previously ill-prepared armed forces (Spencer, 2016), resulting in funds being diverted away from spending in other areas of social welfare. Interacting with this environment, the events of September 11th and the corresponding pivot

towards the language of terrorism was important in shifting the dynamics of international support in the conflict and providing the rhetoric that would facilitate the government to eventually pursue a ruthless strategy for eliminating the LTTE (Wickramasinghe, 2014).

The war was punctuated by a number of peace talks, with the last of these being internationally orchestrated discussions in the early 2000s (Stokke, 2012). Following the failure of these final talks, an end to the war was pursued through purely military means and the Sri Lankan government eventually achieved military victory in the East in 2007, where there had earlier been a split in the LTTE, and in the North in 2009, when the remaining LTTE leadership was gunned down on a strip of coastal land after a brutal period of fighting with large numbers of civilian casualties (Parasram, 2012). This final stretch of the war was conducted under the command of Mahinda Rajapaksa, elected President in 2005, and his brother Gotabaya, who was placed in charge of the Ministry of Defence. The bitter end of the war occurred around Mullivaikkal village, where the Tigers, intermingled with a substantial civilian population they had forced to move with them, were forced into a small area surrounded by the sea and were largely slaughtered by the armed forces. The period leading up to this denouement was littered with apparent human rights abuses and war crimes, with the LTTE using civilians as human shields and forcibly recruiting large numbers of children and the armed forces shelling designated no-fire zones and killing non-combatants (Weiss, 2011).

During the war, the university system continued to operate and expand. While being forced to close for a months-long period due to the forced displacement of the population from the Jaffna peninsula, the University of Jaffna kept functioning through the majority of the war, albeit facing shortages due to embargoes and restrictions. Universities were founded in provinces across the country, and overall admissions increased from around 5,000 in the early 1980s to closer to 25,000 by the end of the war. South Eastern University was created in 1996 to accommodate the Muslim students and staff who had been displaced from Eastern University due to escalating violence against Muslims in the surrounding area (JU3; Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). In the context of the number of students who were eligible for university entry, however, the expanded number of university places continued to be severely insufficient (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). Although there were no further insurgencies in the South in the 1990s or 2000s, student activism continued to be a potent force in the country. The JVP transformed itself from an armed group into a relatively successful political force, one which still has a strong influence over a number of university student bodies today.

## ***Post-War Universities***

Building on the preceding discussions of the intertwined trajectories of higher education and conflict in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, this section moves into the post-war period of both countries. The first part gives a brief outline of the broader post-war political context in Sierra Leone, before I then concentrate on the state of the university system. I provide an indication of the demographic features of the university student population, including the massive expansion in enrolments. The second part does the same for Sri Lanka, noting the victor's peace dynamic in the early post-war years and the potential for ethnic segregation between and within universities. Following on from this section, the final part of this chapter addresses the contrasts and commonalities between the two cases in more detail, emphasising the divergent state capacities and the differing scales of the education sectors as well as common issues, for example, around what was described as the 'politicisation' of university spaces and communities.

### *Higher Education, Peace, and Development in Post-War Sierra Leone*

Emerging from the war, Sierra Leone was in a position of deep financial difficulty, having experienced significant damage to its economic infrastructure and its social services. As Tom describes, "the end of the civil war gave international actors an opportunity to transform the Sierra Leonean state on liberal lines, economically and politically" (2017, p.143). External debt was many times the revenue the government was able to raise, which played a role in facilitating the involvement of international actors in deciding the course of the recovery project (Cubitt, 2012). The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) that the World Bank and other creditors required from the government in return for support with debt relief constituted a significant instrument by which external actors could influence policy and priorities. As Bloom et al. (2006) note, at that time tertiary level education was generally absent from PRSP, and where it did appear, it took on a minor role. The chosen course broadly corresponded to the liberal peace model. In practice, this consisted of a heavy emphasis on the initial realisation of security and stabilisation followed by elections and the pursuit of economic growth (Cubitt, 2012). Castañeda (2009) describes this as a "trickle-down peace" approach, where macro-economic stability and growth are expected to slowly construct sustainable peace and development. Aside from interventions in the economic sphere and the holding of elections, one of the major developments in terms of dealing with the legacies of war was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose final reports offered a plethora of insights about the causes of the conflict and recommendations around what could be done to prevent future conflict (Cubitt, 2012).

As was repeatedly articulated by interviewees during my visit nearly two decades after the end of the war, however, one could turn to almost any page of recommendations of the TRC and see that they had not been achieved, despite the proclamations of peacebuilding success related to the lack of direct violence and the successful conduct of elections. Substantial economic transformation has not followed from stabilisation, with the ongoing fragility of the state infrastructure and the economy being exposed by the Ebola crisis during the mid-2010s (Enria, 2018). Disappointment with the lack of progress was reflected in the drastic drop in popularity of Kabbah's SLPP government between the 2002 and 2007 polls (Wai, 2014). The elections have also revealed a return to a form of ethno-regional political polarisation that had been somewhat suppressed, or at least managed, during the one-party state (Tom, 2017). The same two main parties, the APC and SLPP, have continued to take centre stage, with power swapping between them over the course of the post-war period. The APC strongholds have been in the North and West of the country, while the SLPP have drawn significantly from Mende groups in the South and East, although the realities of electoral politics have required complex processes of coalition building (Wai, 2014). While elections have remained predominantly peaceful, there have, nevertheless, been clashes between supporters of the two parties, with the continuation of the strategy of political parties recruiting urban youths for intimidation in order to influence elections (Enria, 2018; Harris, 2013). One particularly relevant feature of the political landscape is the fact that while the APC has positioned itself as the party of business, the SLPP has focussed on education, with the SLPP government of Julius Maada Bio placing its free school education programme at the centre of its policies following his 2018 election victory.

At the onset of the post-war period, the education sector in the country had to cope with the compounding legacies of historical underfunding and the damage wrought by the war. The destroyed infrastructure had to be rebuilt and the consequences of years of disrupted schooling and trauma had to be dealt with (Novelli, 2011). Given that a lack of access to education opportunities had been identified by the TRC as one of the factors underlying the conflict, there was a surge in support for education expansion, although this appears to have been concentrated around primary level education. The higher education sector, nevertheless, underwent a period of reform and some expansion. The introduction of the Universities Act in 2005 split the Njala campus off from the University of Sierra Leone in order to form a second public university (Government of Sierra Leone, 2005b). The Universities Act was also amended in 2014 to create a public science and technology university, named after the President at the time, Ernest Bai Koroma, through the joining together of a number of northern and western colleges (Government of Sierra Leone, 2014). Public universities also shifted to adopt US style grading systems in the early 2000s, creating further challenges for the already

stretched administrations to deal with. Private institutions, of different forms, have also started to take root. The University of Makeni was the first private university to be established in Sierra Leone, meeting the need for a higher education institution in the north of the country (O'Kane, 2018), and others, such as a branch of a Malaysian University, later followed as private institutions proliferated.

In addition to the modest increase in the number of officially recognised universities in the post-war period, the number of students enrolled in universities increased significantly. Njala University, for example, went from having just under 4,000 students enrolled for 2007/08 to having more than 6,000 just five years later, with the University of Sierra Leone also seeing substantial increases in the same period (World Bank, 2013). Despite these expansions, interrelated class and geographical inequalities in access to university education remain. Rural-urban divides continue to be pronounced (Novelli, 2011), and University of Sierra Leone students experience challenges related to the financial costs of migrating to the city for education, especially given the much higher cost of living in the capital. Class stratification also appears to be marked, with those who can afford it often going to university abroad, for example in the UK or the US. The differences in perceived prestige of such institutions were apparent in conversations with members of university communities, highlighting the persistence of colonial and post-independence patterns with regards to elite emigration for education.

Ethno-regional dynamics were also discussed as a factor in the division of the post-war university system. Although data was not available in relation to ethnicity and university enrolment, a number of interviewees and other interlocutors raised concerns about a shift towards the three main universities – University of Sierra Leone, Njala University, and the University of Makeni – becoming 'for' the Krios in the West, the Mende in the South, and the Temne in the North respectively. A significant shift in the demographics of university education in the country has occurred with regards to the enrolment of women, who have joined tertiary education institutions in increasing numbers in the post-war years (World Bank, 2013). There remain, however, substantial issues around discrimination and harassment, with the practice of 'sex for grades' being brought up by a number of interviewees as a serious problem on campuses. A final key characteristic of the university population in Sierra Leone is the way in which it is skewed towards students of the humanities and social sciences, despite attempts by local and international actors to encourage the uptake of STEM subjects. As will be discussed in later chapters, the significance of this distribution is often considered in terms of the greater employment opportunities for STEM graduates (Lahai, 2015), although the lack of technical industries in Sierra Leone highlights the need to critically question such assertions.

### *Higher Education, Peace, and Development in Post-War Sri Lanka*

The period after the official end of the war in Sri Lanka continued to be characterised by securitisation of the North and East (Ruwanpura, 2017), leaving some commentators to note that while the country may be post-war, it is not yet post-conflict (Bastian, 2013). The government rode the wave of the military defeat of the LTTE, holding Humanitarian Victory Day celebrations in subsequent years as commemoration of the end of the war (Spencer, 2016) and using the political capital garnered as insurance in the face of other economic and political challenges (Keerawella, 2013). Former LTTE hideouts and training camps were turned into tourist sites and victory memorials built, while sites that could have humanised the Tamil fighters or suggested the legitimacy of Tamil grievances were often removed, with the government seeking to entrench discourses of the war that were in line with a simplified narrative of terrorist threat (Hyndman and Amarasingam, 2014). In a 2012 speech, then President Mahinda Rajapaksa appeared to simply paint over the idea of relevant minority group concerns by suggesting that there were no longer minorities and that “There are only two peoples in this country. One is the peoples who love this country. The other comprises the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth” (quoted in Wickramasinghe, 2009, p.1046).

A key feature of the post-war recovery processes has been the concentration on large-scale infrastructure projects as the core of recovery (Sarvanathan, 2016). In practice, reconciliation has been largely sidelined by the state or performed in terms of reconciliation through economic development (Walton, 2016). The processes of reconstruction have been predominantly state-led and foreign NGOs have frequently been blocked from acting, although there have been substantial infrastructure investment loans from China and India as well as World Bank involvement (Sarvanathan, 2016; Walton, 2016). Two strategies were unveiled for recovery in the regions most affected by the war, named the Northern Spring and the Eastern Awakening (Ruwanpura, 2017). These centred on infrastructure development and included a focus on rail and road construction as well as hotel development and irrigation works (Walton, 2016).

Outside of the particular programmes organised for the North and East, the focus of Mahinda Rajapaksa’s government remained on the pursuit of economic development. The use of short-term international debt, for example through loans to the IMF, has bound the country’s economic policies to the neoliberal principles of such organisations, which Kadirgamar labels a second wave of neoliberalism in the country (2013). Unemployment levels among young people, including graduates, remain high and the search for public-sector jobs continues to be

important. The focus on economic development as post-war recovery left little room for dealing with issues of reconciliation, a term which itself has generally been disfavoured by the government with social cohesion being used often in its place (Hayward and Raheem, 2017). While international pressure led to the formation of a Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in 2010, which submitted its report in 2011, its focus was narrow and the recommendations it offered were either implemented slowly, such as the Office for Missing Persons being fully established only in 2017, or not at all (Hayward and Raheem, 2017; Subedi and Bulathsinghala, 2018).

The Mahinda Rajapaksa government also oversaw a period of centralisation of power and a lack of political reform of the state, which still did not occur following the surprise defeat of Rajapaksa by Maithripala Sirisena in the 2015 elections (Fernando, 2017; Walton, 2016). The Ministry of Defence and Urban Planning under the leadership of the Rajapaksa brothers took on an expanded role and defence spending continued to grow (Spencer, 2016). Three years after the end of the war, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who went on to win the Presidency in the 2019 elections, was still justifying the need for a strong military by reference to the grave threat still posed by the Tigers (Boronow, 2013). As well as the creeping physical occupation of land in the North and East for military facilities, undergraduate university entrants were required to attend boot camps run by the military, school principals were sent for military training (Spencer, 2016), and universities were pushed to hire private security firms associated with the Ministry of Defence (Perera, 2015). The spread of military activity and the authoritarian bent of the government under Rajapaksa led to a constriction of the space for free speech in the public sphere. Some of those in the media even began to commemorate “Black January” as a way to highlight the suppression and violence they faced under the regime (Deshapriya, 2013). Despite the end of the war, the Prevention of Terrorism Act remained in place and arrests and disappearances continued, with relative impunity for those involved on the part of the state (Subedi and Bulathsinghala, 2018). Within such an environment, organised political opposition was significantly muted, with a 100-day university strike in 2012 standing out as a relatively rare event during which different groups in society vocally opposed the regime.

While the number of public universities has continued to increase, with 15 coming under the jurisdiction of the University Grants Commission, the proportion of eligible students able to attain a public university place remains relatively low, at around 20% for 2017/18 (UGC, 2019b). There has been a proliferation of internationally affiliated universities (Golding, 2018; Jayawardena, 2017), meeting some of the demand for higher education that remains unmet by the public sector. Despite the apparent government resistance to international interventions, the World Bank has played a substantial financial and policy role in Sri Lanka over recent years. One of the areas targeted by World Bank loans has been the higher

education sector, which has seen significant moves towards privatisation in line with the increased liberalisation of the post-war period in general (Jayawardena, 2017). The government's actions around higher education, including facilitating the creation of private institutions, have often been framed in terms of knowledge economy discourses, featuring ideas of turning the island into a knowledge hub as part of the broader development strategy going forward (Little and Hettige, 2013). The creeping privatisation of education in the country has continued to be resisted, however, as exemplified by the strikes around the establishment of a private medical college, which echoed the contestation around the creation of the North Colombo Medical College in the 1980s (Jayawardena, 2017).

The university system remains affected by significant social divisions. Conversations with academics in Colombo frequently highlighted an interrelated set of class and rural-urban divides in the education system as a major issue. As with Sierra Leone, a number of my interviewees highlighted the ongoing preference for studying at universities abroad among the more privileged sections of society (Jayawardena, 2020), reflecting an element of the class stratification in university access in the country. There is also a distinction between the prestigious older universities, such as the University of Colombo and University of Peradeniya, and those newer universities that were established largely in the post-1977 period, marking a further element of class differentiation. Existing inequalities in the quality of schooling, with a tiered public-school sector, and the prevalence of private tutoring as a supplementary aid (Cole, 2015) means that there is already a divide in who is likely to be able to access university in the first place. This is particularly the case, as my interviewees explained, with science courses at universities, where the availability of science facilities in schools in rural areas tends to be much lower and, thus, the need for additional funds for tutoring much higher (Cole, 2015). Access to English-medium education, and exposure to English more broadly, is also seen as important, particularly for courses such as medicine where teaching is predominantly in English, and, again, this access tends to be much more limited in rural areas (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017).

Ethnicity constitutes an important fracture line both between and within universities. South Eastern University, which was formed after wartime violence against Muslims around Eastern University, is now seen by many as a Muslim university, while Jaffna University was described by my interviewees as a Tamil university and others in the South and West, for example Sri Jayewardenepura, which was originally a *pirivena*, are labelled as Sinhalese universities. These notions are somewhat borne out in university admissions figures. For 2016/2017, for instance, Sinhalese students made up 88% of University of Colombo and 38% of Jaffna University undergraduate admissions, while the same figures for Tamil students were 6% and 49% respectively (UGC, 2018). These associations are further reinforced by the issue of

language of instruction in the Arts where, for example, faculties in the South may not have the option for Tamil-medium courses. Other features of the university environment may simply not appear welcoming to students from different backgrounds. One lecturer in the West of the country told me that during the creation of a webpage the Sri Lanka flag was used as the icon for the Sinhala-language option (UC3), suggesting an exclusionary equation for who was to be considered truly Sri Lankan at the university. Ethnic separation also occurs within universities due to the ways in which group socialisation happens along ethnic lines. These dynamics have not been static in the post-war period, however, with university demographics changing due to the opening up of the conflict zones and the government encouraging Sinhalese students to attend universities in the North and East.

A significant change in the university population has been the increasing 'feminisation' of higher education. In 2018, 63% of the undergraduate enrolment was female, up from 45.7% of the university population in 1997/98 (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). There is a particularly high proportion of women in Arts faculties, around 80%, which also have the highest number of students overall (UGC, 2019b). Subjects such as medicine, law, and engineering, which are considered as significantly more employable, see a different ratio, with higher proportions of males and engineering in particular remaining male dominated. Interviews suggested that the change in proportions, however, has not altered gender hierarchies on campuses, with men still occupying the majority of student leadership roles. There are also high levels of gender-related violence on campuses, with ragging practices among student groups sometimes containing elements of sexual humiliation (CARE, 2015).

While there have not been any large-scale incidents on campuses, it is important to note that religious divisions have continued to spark conflict and outbreaks of violence in Sri Lanka. Tensions were particularly pronounced in the wake of the Easter bombings in April 2019, which were conducted by a group of Muslims from the East of the country. Following the 2019 bombings, there was a flood of inflammatory anti-Muslim rhetoric from politicians and Buddhist clergy, with one prominent monk calling for the boycott of Muslim businesses (Slater and Farisz, 2019). These latest attacks build on pre-existing patterns of escalating violence against Muslims and Christians (Gunatillake, 2018; Hayward and Raheem, 2017). In 2014, for example, anti-Muslim violence broke out in four towns in the south of Sri Lanka, with the involvement of a group of Buddhist monks called the Bodu Bala Sena likely a significant factor (Haniffa et al., 2014). Reminiscent of the anti-Tamil pogroms of the 1970s and 1980s, the violence unfolding in the aftermath of the bombings, as well as earlier anti-Muslims attacks in 2014 and 2018, highlights that the state can still be reluctant to intervene to protect minority groups and, thus, underlines the significant potential for future conflict.

### ***Conclusion: Commonalities and Contrasts***

As well as providing key contextualising information on the two case contexts, this chapter has served three main functions that are central to my analysis of post-war universities in the two countries. First, this chapter's discussions illustrate how the trajectories of the two countries produced markedly different wartime and post-war experiences and environments. One key dimension of difference between the two cases, for example, was the ability of the respective states to respond to and recover from an armed challenge. While the Sri Lankan state came close to collapse in the early stages of the war when it was forced to deal with both Tamil militant groups and the JVP uprising, it strengthened its military capacity considerably throughout the war and was able to use this to win a decisive military victory. Military development was supported by the territorial nature of the war, fought predominantly in the North and East, and the state's ability to draw upon military employment as a resource for reinforcing the army and counteracting dissent amongst the Sinhalese population. Sierra Leone's armed forces were poorly paid, equipped, and trained at the beginning of the war and, while they were hardened through experience, there were not the same opportunities for expansion and professionalisation. This meant that the sort of absolute military victory obtained in Sri Lanka was out of reach for the forces in Sierra Leone, impacting upon the form of both the war and the post-war in Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, although politics in Sri Lanka was certainly turbulent during the war, there were not the same stark shifts as occurred in Sierra Leone in relation to the series of coups and elections. The processes of confrontation around control of the state apparatus in Sierra Leone served to weaken its overall capacity, as different controlling actors sought to ensure their own financial security in the time before they were kicked out. The government also had to contend with a weaker economic environment, with a much heavier reliance on international actors for support. These points of contrast factor significantly into the differences in how the wars in the two countries ended and how the states began their respective post-war periods. The Rajapaksa regime in Sri Lanka managed to orchestrate a definitive military end to the war, with the victory also granting sufficient political capital that substantial centralising changes could be made to the state apparatus. The Kabbah administration on the other hand had been propped up by international actors during the war, whose involvement was crucial in the ending of the conflict, and it emerged into the post-war period with a state that had experienced both war and prolonged economic decline. This difference in resources and capacity is reflected in the contrasting sizes of the public university sectors, with the Sri Lankan system containing a higher number of public universities relative to its population size. It is also a

fundamental point of contrast in terms of interrogating the constraints on the ability of the respective higher education systems to contribute to post-war recovery.

The politics and pressures around higher education are also different in the two contexts, although it is a much sought-after resource in both. While the higher education sector is much larger in Sri Lanka, the high ratio of eligible students to available university places in Sri Lanka means that admissions processes are fiercely competitive, which is not the case in Sierra Leone where the earlier levels of education do not produce the same scale of eligible secondary school graduates. Furthermore, in Sierra Leone, partly tied to the power of student disruption in the capital, there has been much more political willingness to expand higher education in the existing institutions, even where the infrastructure was insufficient to support a higher number of students. In Sri Lanka, despite growth in the number of universities, public pressure to significantly increase the proportion of eligible students accessing the free public universities has been effectively resisted by subsequent governments, with private or fee-levying institutions being offered as an alternative. Another important contrast here is that the idea of certain universities as being 'for' different communities is relatively established in Sri Lanka, while in Sierra Leone this appears to be an emerging phenomenon. Consideration of admissions data in Sri Lanka and the practices of student groups in the two countries suggests that the separation of ethnic groups both between and within universities is much starker in Sri Lanka than in Sierra Leone, reflecting the ways in which such divisions played a much more overtly significant role in the Sri Lankan conflict. These divergent features of the two higher education environments are connected to significantly different outcomes, with regards to, for example, the form of student groups, that are relevant for understanding the particular ways in which universities in the two cases interact with processes of post-war peacebuilding and development.

Second, the discussions in this chapter illustrate that education is not necessarily a driver of peace and that education can, in fact, be a source of conflict. The university systems in both countries emerged from colonial roots, albeit on different timescales, gearing them towards similar disconnections between teaching and the local environment and instilling in each a form of elite socialisation that meant higher education was seen to promise both social status and material gain. The failure of education, and the state supporting it, to live up to these promises of social and economic advancement was a key part of the outbreak of conflict in both cases. In Sierra Leone, the frustrations of an educated elite, amidst deteriorating conditions in higher education and shrinking economic opportunities under the one-party state, and the resultant empty revolutionary ideologies, resonated more broadly with a youth who felt cut off from better futures. The university was, therefore, a space of initial mobilisation for the conflict, though those who carried the war forward were from the more marginalised parts

of Sierra Leonean society. In Sri Lanka, the two JVP insurgencies and the militancy of Tamil students need to be understood in connection with the failure of the state to deliver youth the social and economic benefits that education was seen to promise, with the restrictions in access to university education and the limited employment opportunities for graduates forming an important underlying driver of conflict on the island.

The final purpose of the chapter was to begin to explain how universities are embedded in broader historical trajectories which shape their experiences and the environments they operate it in. For example, a clear point of similarity between the two cases relates to the common experiences of British colonial practices. At one level, these practices led, in both countries, to the creation of centralised state structures designed to extract resources for the metropole, with comparable associations also being built around the importance of government jobs and connections for social and economic opportunities. In both cases, this dynamic interacted with the treatment of ethnicity by the colonisers, which acted to solidify boundaries that were previously much more fluid through, for instance, census categorisations and divisions in the education systems. As the countries moved towards independence, the balances of power between the different coalescing groups were then a significant factor in the production of each country's political trajectory. The ossifying power of British colonial practices around ethnicity alongside the centralised control over state resources helped bring about a form of ethno-religious majoritarianism in Sri Lanka, while in Sierra Leone, it led to a fragile politics of patronage and coalition building. These features of the two cases are then reflected in the ways that ethnicity factored into the two wars, and thus the wartime experiences of universities, as well as the dynamics of segregation within the university systems, emphasising the manner in which historical legacies can be relevant for understanding the functioning of post-war universities.

## Chapter Four

### Funding, Conflict, and Global Agendas

In the 1960s, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka had comparable GDP per capita figures. By the end of the Sri Lankan war in 2009, however, the island's economy was significantly stronger, with a GDP per capita figure that was five times larger than that of Sierra Leone (World Bank, 2020). The West African state then also suffered from the shock of Ebola, while the Sri Lankan economy continued to receive economic dividends from the end of the war. Following on from the historical outlines in Chapter Three, this chapter moves to consider the impact of these contrasting trajectories on the funding of public universities and their corresponding abilities to function in the post-war period. In doing so, I argue that while the financial resources available to Sierra Leone's universities at the onset of the post-conflict period severely limited their potential for engaging with the nation's post-war recovery needs, the same cannot be said for Sri Lankan institutions. This highlights the potential importance of historical material considerations as factors that can limit universities' post-war contributions, as evidenced by the Sierra Leone case, as well as the need to also look at factors beyond funding when explaining the constraints on significant university contributions to post-war processes.

While this central argument is taken forward mainly through accounts of economic trajectories and historical university funding in the first two sections of the chapter, the third and fourth sections expand and nuance the discussion. The third section addresses the practice of donor funding in post-war contexts. In line with previous studies (Milton, 2013; Pacheco, 2013), I argue that higher education has previously not been a significant priority for major donors in post-war contexts, meaning that shortfalls in domestic funding have not been met through expansive donor funding in the sector. Furthermore, I contend that, where donor funding is directed towards universities, there exists the potential for problematic consequences through the interaction of donor agendas with local realities, such as can be seen in the disparity between the provision of peace and conflict education in Sierra Leone and the availability of sustainable employment in that field. The final section shifts the focus towards the politics of funding in the two countries and the agency which university communities can wield when negotiating funding. I suggest that even where funding is a limiting condition on the potential for universities to act constructively in relation to recovery processes, the nature or degree of

that limitation can be influenced by a university's ability to negotiate effectively with the state. Relatedly, the chapter as a whole prepares the ground for the introduction of the concept of a university *substrate* in Chapter Five by giving indications of how historical and contemporary processes and struggles around the material situation of universities might influence structures and practices within university communities.

Throughout the chapter, I draw upon on a range of documents, existing academic literature, and statistics to build my arguments and to outline a picture of higher education funding in the two countries. The impetus for exploring these issues, however, comes from my experiences during fieldwork in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka and the personal and professional observations of my interviewees. The contrast between the near omnipresence of funding and infrastructural concerns in conversations with academics, students, and others in Sierra Leone and the comparatively minor presence of such concerns in discussions with academics in Sri Lanka – alongside the striking visible differences in the levels of infrastructure on campuses in the two countries – underscored to me the importance of exploring the funding histories of higher education institutions in each case. Academics like Professor Bah at Njala who had experienced first-hand decades of changes in the university system in Sierra Leone explained to me the sense of loss they felt connected with the decline in conditions within the universities. Both newer and more established Sierra Leonean academics spoke with me about the struggles of getting by given the precarity of funding, with one established Njala lecturer, for example, articulating his frustration with having to borrow money from neighbours despite the superior social status associated with his occupation. In Sri Lanka, conversations with academic activists like Dr Nirmal Dewasiri and Dr Dileepa Witharana, who were at the heart of union battles to enhance public funding of universities and to protect university autonomy, brought into the focus the complex politics of higher education funding and the agency that academics as individuals and collectivities can wield in such struggles. Personal and professional observations by scholars like Professor Siri Hettige pointed to the importance of the role of international actors, particularly the World Bank, in the power dynamics around funding for higher education in both countries. Such observations and conversations provide the foundational insights upon which this chapter builds while also constituting, in their own right, valuable data about the politics, practices, and lived experiences of higher education funding in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

### ***The History of Domestic Funding in Sierra Leone***

When I asked about the capacity of institutions to contribute to rebuilding and recovery during

my visits to universities in Sierra Leone in 2018, frustration with funding became rapidly apparent. Staff and students spoke, for example, about the overcrowding in classrooms, with queues of students waiting in the corridors outside lecture halls, and the need for much greater resources for laboratory work, with practical science classes often proving challenging. Students vented about the disparity between their expectations of education and the resource-scarce reality they faced. Staff expressed concerns about their ability to train the next generation of scientists and academics without the infrastructure or capital necessary to show students the latest techniques and to access the latest publications. While the damage of the war certainly forms part of the story, explaining this situation, and the corresponding consequences for the university system's lack of capacity to act as a 'catalyst' for post-war processes (Milton and Barakat, 2016), requires engaging with the cumulative effects of a longer history of underfunding and broader economic struggles. This section, therefore, illustrates how, by the end of the war in 2002, the public university sector in Sierra Leone had experienced a prolonged period of financial difficulty, exacerbated by conflict-related costs and wartime stagnation, that made a substantial contribution to national recovery and development unlikely.

#### *Colonial Funding and the Transition to Independence*

Precarious funding has long been a feature of the university sector in Sierra Leone. The colonial beginnings of the system and the dynamics around the transition to independence each instilled a form of instability in the financing of higher education that continued to have effects long after independence. The origins of university funding in Sierra Leone lie with the Church Missionary Society (CMS), based in England, which provided the initial institutional infrastructure in 1815 for what would become Fourah Bay College in 1827 (Alie, 1990). Despite advocacy from both inside and outside the College, the colonial government remained largely reluctant to support the institution with funding and the College faced periods of near closure due to the lack of students and resources. Through the initial decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the College was funded, albeit poorly, through a mixture of student fees, donor endowments, church funds, and limited government support (Paracka, 2001). Leading staff and supporters engaged in fundraising activities, seeking out funds in Sierra Leone, England, and other West African colonies. Higher education, therefore, was not grounded in the expectation of adequate government support, although the hope may certainly have been there. Instead, there were practices of fund-seeking that relied on a diverse range of sources, including student fees.

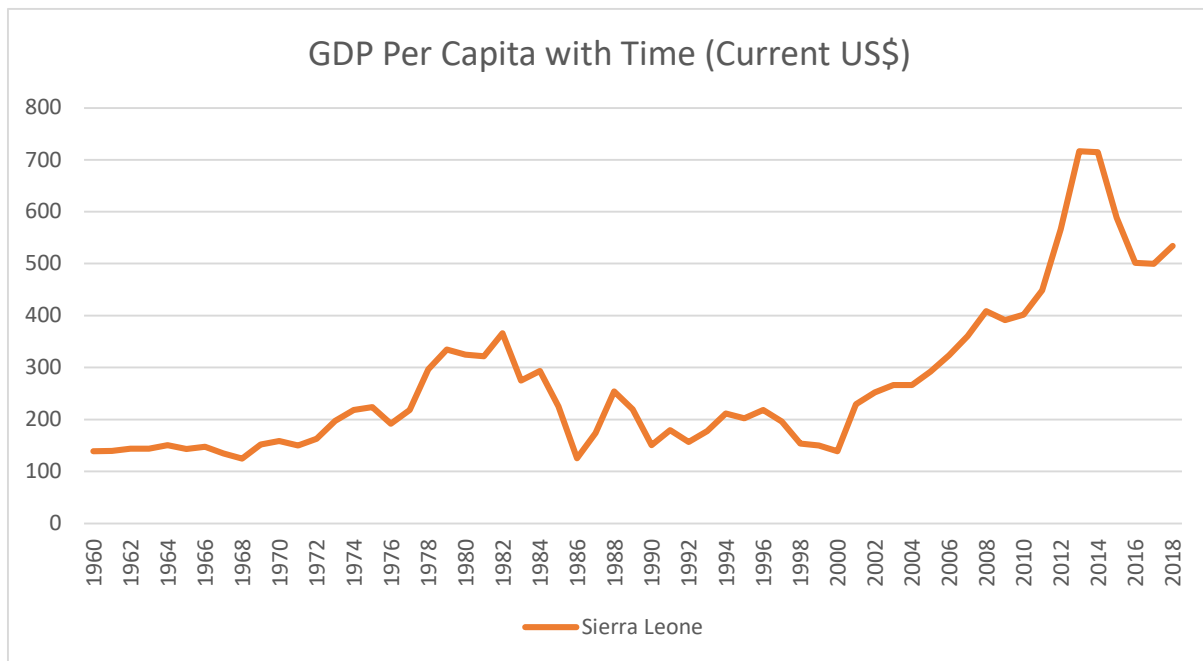
The funding situation began to shift from the 1920s in response to changing approaches to governing the colonies and organised nationalist demands in the wake of World War I. From 1950, full financial control of the College was transferred to the colonial government, coming with a significant increase in government funding for the institution and a substantial increase in the number of students. This relative boom in the resources available for higher education was, however, short-lived. With the coming of independence in 1961, the newly established Sierra Leonean government was unable to foot the extensive bill for Fourah Bay College and the other emerging higher education institutions. Support came in the form of USAID grants, which financed Njala's transition from a training college to a university college in 1964 (Poppel, 2015) and contributed to the infrastructural development of Fourah Bay College (Paracka, 2001). Similar to the late colonial expansion, the recurrent expenditures created by these investments relied on a logic of either continuing high levels of external support or significantly greater domestic expenditure. The former faltered with changed education priorities and the move towards funding a select group of countries in the Cold War, which did not include Sierra Leone, while the latter ran into the harsh economic and political realities of the 1970s and 1980s.

#### *The One-Party State and Economic Decline*

To explain the underfunding of higher education in Sierra Leone in the decades preceding the war, it is necessary to understand both the politics of the one-party state led by Siaka Stevens and the broader context of economic turbulence and structural adjustment. Stevens became Prime Minister in 1967/68, transformed himself into a powerful President in 1971, and established a one-party state in 1978 (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, 1999). As Bolten argues, "It was under Stevens that politics became personal relationships writ large, with every Sierra Leonean either involved or excluded from his personal/political circle" (2012, p.12). Members of the university community were not immune to the networks of patronage, with some senior figures from the universities being brought into the core of Stevens' government as part of strategies of co-option (Bolten, 2009). Revenues for major commodities were directed towards Stevens' allies, and bribes and smuggling were prevalent at a number of levels. For example, with regards to diamonds, a significant part of the Sierra Leonean economy, an estimated 95% of production was being smuggled out of the country by the late 1980s (Keen, 2005). The 'shadow state' (Cubitt, 2012) that was set up under Stevens acted, therefore, to both limit the availability of resources for public services, such as higher education, and to direct funds on the basis of securing of Stevens' position rather than on the basis of policy priorities or sectoral need.

The economic mismanagement under the one-party state took place amid a changing economic environment at both local and global levels. After experiencing an average growth rate of 7% between 1950 and 1972, Sierra Leone came to be hit hard by the global economic turbulence related to the 1970s oil shocks and by the deterioration in the prices of major export commodities, with the price for cocoa on the international market, for example, decreasing from \$3000 per ton in 1977 to \$600 per ton in 1986 (Zack-Williams, 1990). Figure 6.1 depicts the changes in Sierra Leone's GDP per capita with time, illustrating the sharp decline that occurred in the 1980s. The reliance of the economy on the export of minerals, a legacy of colonial extraction, meant that the economy was sensitive to sharp changes in commodity prices, being hit hard when iron ore production declined significantly in the late 1970s at the same time as the cost fuel and other imported items were going up (Rashid, 1997). The outcome of the combination of economic mismanagement and global turbulence was that by 1986 Sierra Leone was one of the poorest countries in the world, with the social costs reflected in an average life expectancy of 41 years and high infant mortality rates (Luke and Riley, 1989).

Economic decline came to be fundamentally intertwined with increased involvement from international funding organisations like the World Bank and the IMF. Both institutions had been involved in providing loans to the Sierra Leonean government since independence, with the provision of funds forming part of the post-independence external funding boom (Paracka, 2001). The balance of payment issues that the government faced led to demands from the IMF, for example, for the country to undertake austerity measures, which included balancing the budget, privatisation, and cuts to public spending (Harris, 2013). While Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle (1999) contend that, due to their likely deleterious effects on patron-client relations and regime stability, Stevens had somewhat ignored the conditionalities put forward as part of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), Stevens' successor, Joseph Momoh, arguably lacked the same political clout and faced a much harsher economic situation, resulting in his being forced to take on strict economic adjustments (Paracka, 2001). Ultimately, as David Harris (2013) notes, the collapse of the Soviet Union as a dispenser of aid, which countries had also been able to play off against the West; the tightening of Western aid conditions; and the imposition of SAPs; combined with a challenging domestic economy to weaken the Sierra Leone state, as it had many African states in the late 1980s and early 1990s.



**Figure 6.1** GDP per capita with time in Sierra Leone. Source: World Bank Data, 2020

The impact of the changing political and economic climate was strongly felt by the universities. The centralisation of power under Stevens, who became the Chancellor of the University in 1973 (Paracka, 2001), came alongside the university's increasing financial dependence on the government as alternative sources of funding became scarcer. Pointing to this decline, Zack-Williams (1990) notes that real expenditure on education dropped from 34 million Leones in 1974 to 6 million Leones in 1989. The 1977 and 1984 student protests at Fourah Bay College and beyond were a response to the deteriorating conditions in higher education as well as the increasingly authoritarian political environment (Rashid, 1997). Data compiled by a Njala graduate student from the 1980s, for instance, suggest substantial shortfalls in the financing of the University towards the end of Stevens' rule and during the beginning of the Presidency of Joseph Momoh. In 1982/83, for example, the government grant for the University of Sierra Leone fell nearly 40% short of the estimated recurrent expenditure, with this figure reaching a high of around 54% in 1984/85 (Saffa, 1994). While not all years are estimated to have such a substantial deficit, the figures, nevertheless, illustrate the extent of persistent underfunding of the universities in the decades under the one-party state. The decline in the quality of university education was visible across the sector. As Banyana notes, the "views of employers, results of research done and assessment of teachers, as well as students, all seem to support this decline in quality" (1993, p.162). The Professor Kwami Committee investigating the state of the University of Sierra Leone in the early 1990s found "financial mismanagement, a crumbling infrastructure, lack of qualified academic teaching staff, poor conditions of service", and other serious issues with the institution (Paracka, 2001).

The deteriorating conditions stoked anti-government sentiments amongst students, leading to increasingly radical calls for change that would help spark the beginning of the war.

### *War and Stagnation*

The conflict further damaged the already fragile economy, as Figure 6.1 highlights, with GDP per capita falling by approximately 40% across the 1990s (Government of Sierra Leone, 2001). In the initial phases of the war, government revenues fell as rebels contested control over key areas for agricultural and mineral production, and estimates indicate that around 10% of the population had already been displaced in the eighteen months after the first incursions into the East of the country (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, 1999). At the same time as state income fell, the government had to spend additional funds to deal with the escalating conflict and the predicament of the large numbers of displaced persons, with the resultant crisis contributing to the overthrow of the APC regime. The violence of the war saw infrastructure damaged and the state's capacity fundamentally weakened, with successive coups followed, sooner or later, by self-enrichment by the ruling groups while 'sobels' looted resources in the war-torn countryside. As a 2005 government poverty reduction plan describes, "There was a mass exodus of skilled professionals, to Freetown and out of the country, leaving most of the country drained from any skilled manpower. The damage extended to significant loss of property and the abduction of women and children for sex, labour and combat. Most of the country's social, economic and physical infrastructure was destroyed. Local community social and productive infrastructure such as markets, stores, rice mills, and community service buildings were completely vandalised" (Government of Sierra Leone, 2005a, p.2).

In this context, the education sector suffered underfunding at the same time as it was forced to deal with the direct damage and disruption caused by the war. The availability of funds for public services such as education was limited by the beginning of the war, and the effects of the war itself only exacerbated this lack of funding. Furthermore, damage to the education infrastructure was widespread. Estimates suggest, for example, that around 70% of schools in Freetown were destroyed during the course of the war (Novelli, 2011). The university sector also experienced direct damage. As Poppel (2015) highlights, fifteen separate armed group incursions took place in and around the Njala University campus, and the university was forced to relocate to Freetown, with the legacies of the wartime destruction still evident on the campus today in the form of burned-out buildings and incomplete roads. As discussed further in Chapter Five, substantial numbers of staff also either departed the country or were killed by the fighting, leading to a dearth of qualified lecturers and researchers. With up to 70% of the

school-aged population lacking access to education during the war (Novelli, 2011), the supply of suitable replacements for those who left or were killed was also disrupted.

By the end of the war, therefore, the education sector had experienced decades of underfunding as well as substantial damage to its infrastructure and the death and departure of staff and students alike. Speaking to the impact of pre-war economic decline and poor governance, a Ministry of Education submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission highlighted that, “Education, like other sectors, was not spared the general malaise, as the education budget shrank from an average 21% to 12% to 8% in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s respectively” (TRC V3BC4, 2004, p.241). These issues were then only deepened by the destruction and disruption of the war. Taken together, these points suggest that the university sector entered into the post-war period in dire need of substantial financial assistance if it was to recover enough to play a substantial role in reconstruction and peacebuilding processes. As Banya and Elu put it in a 2001 article, “partially because of the war, the University of Sierra Leone is almost in total collapse. The living conditions of the students and faculty salaries are deplorable. The average faculty salary is less than \$50.00 (fifty dollars) a month” (p.14). At the same time, the trajectory of economic decline shown above indicates that the overall economic situation meant that such help was extremely unlikely to be forthcoming from a government which was saddled with debt and which had exited the war with limited governance capacity. Building on this argument, the final part of this section turns to the available data on university funding and the post-war economic situation in Sierra Leone in order to argue that a lack of funding continued to inhibit the ability of the university sector to contribute to post-war processes of recovery.

### *Post-War Domestic Funding*

As Figure 6.1 highlights, significant economic growth has taken place in post-war Sierra Leone, with GDP per capita increasing nearly fourfold between 2000 and 2018 (World Bank, 2020). Domestic revenues for the government in the initial post-war period, however, have remained low. After reaching 13% of GDP in 2001, domestic revenues fell to 10.8% of GDP in 2007, with the shortfall leading to severe cuts in government expenditure on poverty-reduction programmes (Cubitt, 2012, p.84). While occurring beyond the initial decade of the post-war period, the outbreak of Ebola also had a significant impact on Sierra Leone’s broader recovery. The outbreak did substantial damage to society and the economy, with GDP per capita dropping by around 30% between 2014 and 2016 (World Bank, 2020). As a result, spending on the 2014-2016 education sector plan fell short by nearly 190m USD (Government of Sierra Leone, 2018). Despite its distance from the end of the war, the damage wrought by

Ebola can be seen as intimately connected to the conflict and its legacies. As Luisa Enria observes, “The conflict, its causes and consequences, have been highlighted as a key source of fragility contributing to the fact that Sierra Leone’s institutions and services were unprepared to deal with a shock of Ebola’s magnitude” (2018, p.233). As well as impacting the broader economic environment, and thus the domestic resources available to the government, the epidemic had direct consequences for the universities, with the closure of institutions for months and restrictions around gathering large numbers of people together affecting classes. As a consequence of these issues and the weak financial base from which it started, the Sierra Leonean government has remained heavily dependent on external funding (Novelli, 2011), particularly in the initial years after the end of the war due its colossal external debt burden. The unpredictability of budget support disbursements from creditors and donors, however, has then weakened the ability of the government to create economic stability and provide services effectively (IMF, 2008). The capacity of the government to effectively fund and reconstruct the education sector has, therefore, seemingly remained limited.

Despite this situation, universities remain predominantly reliant on government funds as the main means of survival, with tuition fees also constituting a major source of income (World Bank, 2013). One striking feature of this funding in the post-war period is the large shift in the percentage of government education expenditure that tertiary education has received, with the sector’s share jumping from around a fifth between 2007 and 2011 to over half in 2016 and 2017 (World Bank, 2020). However, such changes need to be understood in the context of evolving donor and government agendas in relation to promoting other forms of tertiary education as well as the higher costs associated with university education. Further to this, as shall be discussed in the final section, revenue from student fees can also be unpredictable and can fall short of promised amounts due to students simply being unable to pay. Additionally, there are also important questions that can be asked about the distribution of funds between universities. As a 2013 World Bank report notes, the government funding of the universities in the post-2005 period had relied on historical allocation, meaning that amount of funds granted to an institution is based on previous allocations (World Bank, 2013). The lack of transparency in such a system leaves it open to allegations around favouritism and political machinations, forming part of the post-war politics of university funding and suggesting that allocations may not necessarily correspond to needs.

The challenge of funding the universities in the post-war period should also be viewed in light of the expansion of student numbers in the university sector, which has placed additional strain on the system. Speaking about the contrast between the pre-war and post-war periods, a lecturer at Njala emphasised that “The university population is increasing in terms of student numbers, but the facilities remain the same” (NJ2) with the university departing for Freetown

during the war with hundreds of students and returning to the Njala campus with thousands. World Bank data highlights that the annual growth rate in public higher education enrolment in the five years up to 2013 was 11 percent (World Bank, 2013, p.56). In absolute terms, this constituted a change from a total of 6822 students enrolled at the University of Sierra Leone in 2007/08 to 9408 students in 2011/12, while Njala's enrolment grew from 3929 students to 6154 students in the same period. A former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sierra Leone, Professor Redwood-Sawyer, noted the "explosion" in student numbers during his time at the head of the institution (UoSL3). He highlighted that while he would have liked to, for example, increase the share of students studying science, technology, and engineering, the facilities would need to match the intake, raising also the issue of the lack of availability of tutors for such an endeavour. In order to match needs, therefore, university funding needed to provide for a vastly expanded student population while also aiding the sector to recover from its history of underfunding and wartime damage.

While efforts have been ongoing by staff and supporters to secure funds for the public university system, it is clear that the decades of economic difficulties and the damage of war have yet to be recovered from. In 2012, the average public expenditure per student in tertiary education was around 800 USD (World Bank, 2013), and estimates from 2004 suggest a figure closer to 600 USD (World Bank, 2007). Although perfectly comparable figures are hard to find, this appears to be considerably smaller than the thousands spent in other West African contexts, such as Ghana and Burkina Faso (UNESCO, 2020). World Bank (2007) estimates for 2004 also suggest that the vast majority of funds in the early post-war period went to salaries and scholarships, with negligible amounts going to materials and textbooks.

The deep sense of a dearth of financial and infrastructural resources was one of the strongest themes emerging from my interviewees' responses about post-war conditions and was evident in the dilapidated state of much of the infrastructure. While Fourah Bay College had substantial building works ongoing during my visits, assisted by donor funds, evidence of the lack of resources was, nevertheless, apparent around the university campuses, with damaged roads and dilapidated buildings. At Njala, a frequently repeated way of capturing the desire for better facilities was the comparison between the old blackboards staff were forced to use now and the whiteboards and ICT equipment that they wanted to build their teaching. Another common example of the difficulties faced at both universities was the fact there were simply not enough seats for students in lectures, with some forced to wait in corridors and the potential for occasional fights to break out as students jostled for position. A lecturer in science at Njala also spoke about difficulty of teaching students applied skills and research, commenting that "We don't have a laboratory. We only have a building.... there's nothing in there" (NJ10). The absence of financial and institutional resources has also engendered further particular costs

and constraints, with Njala campus, for instance, having to supply its own electricity due to it not being connected to the national grid. While conditions have improved from the initial post-war circumstances, it is very likely that the lack of resources available to the university has, nevertheless, acted as a fundamental impediment to a post-war contribution by inhibiting the quality of teaching and training and by restricting research possibilities.

### ***The History of Domestic Funding in Sri Lanka***

Arriving for my first visit to the Open University of Sri Lanka, I was struck by the contrast between the facilities available there and what I had experienced on campuses in Sierra Leone, especially given the fact that the island's war ended almost a decade later than the conflict in Sierra Leone. Explaining this contrast requires understanding the divergent trajectories of university funding in the two countries, which are also intertwined with their contrasting economic fortunes. This section, therefore, focusses on key features of the history of university funding in Sri Lanka. While Sierra Leone's institutions faced decades of underfunding and considerable wartime damage, those in Sri Lanka have seen more consistent incomes, tied with the established commitment to the provision of free public education up to university level and the stronger economy. Acknowledging this allows for two further points to be made clear. First, it emphasises that the occurrence of a sustained armed conflict does not, by itself, preclude universities from being in a sufficiently well-resourced position to potentially contribute to recovery. Nevertheless, the Sri Lankan case points to the fact that, even with larger overall sums available for higher education, the financial position of specific universities depends on the politics of funding prioritisation between education levels and between universities as well as upon the politics of university access. Second, and relatedly, it suggests that understanding the potential for university contributions to post-war processes requires going beyond questions of funding availability and material infrastructure, thus underscoring the necessity of engaging with the issues around embeddedness and social group dynamics that are at the core of my analysis of post-war universities.

### ***Welfarism and the Commitment to Free Education***

Akin to the situation in Sierra Leone, the founding ordinance of the University of Ceylon indicated that the institution was to be funded primarily through a mixture of student fees, endowments, and government grants (State Council of Ceylon, 1942). Unlike Sierra Leone, however, this funding structure was rapidly changed due to the Free Education Scheme that was introduced in 1945, which removed fees from primary, secondary, and tertiary education

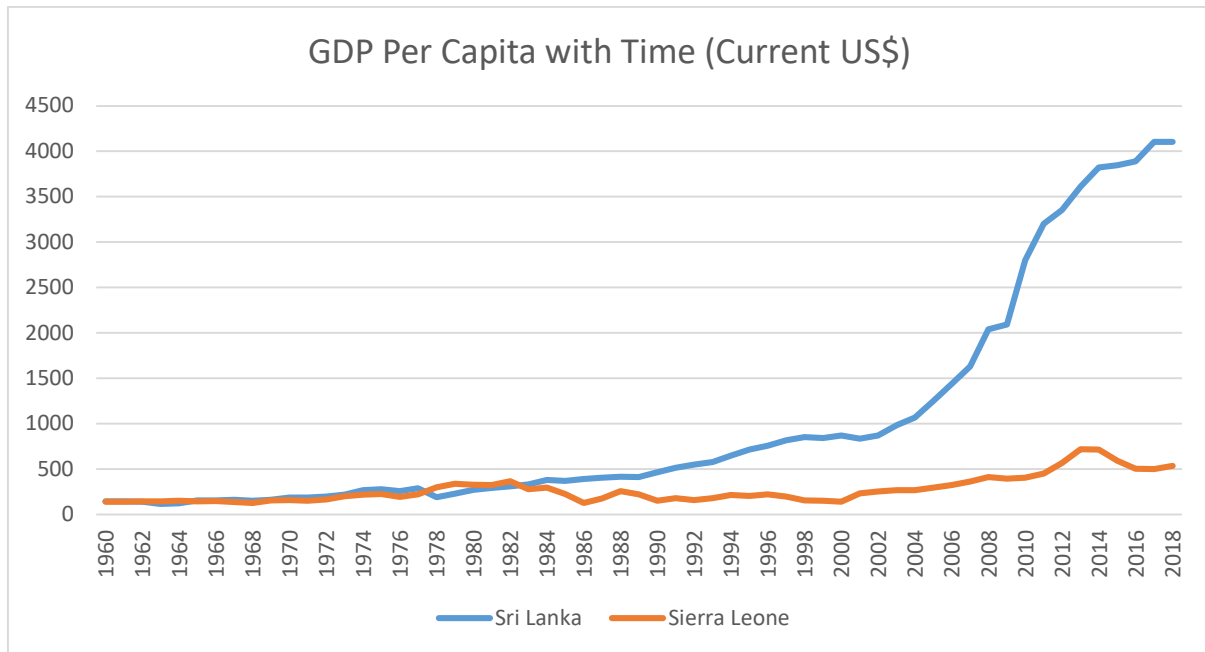
(Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). One of the key factors behind this move was the ethnic and religious inequalities in the school system, which were perceived to be working against the majority Sinhala-Buddhist population and which were then feeding through to inequalities in access to education at the university level (McLoughlin, 2017). A significant aspect of the tensions that the reforms sought to overcome were between “an egalitarian unified education system versus a hierarchical education system that differentially serves the elites and the masses” (Cole, 2015, p.99). Part of the foundation of the funding regime at independence, therefore, was an idea of education as serving “principles of social justice, equity, and universalism” (McLoughlin, 2017, p.97), which came with potent expectations around state responsibility for the effective provision of higher education. While hierarchies in education provision have certainly remained (Little and Hettige, 2013), the discourse and collective pride around free education has continued to be a powerful means by which changes to the funding system could be resisted or encouraged.

Contrasting with the expansive ideals associated with the Free Education Act, however, are the realities of restricted access to higher education. While primary and secondary enrolment rates were already comparatively high by independence and were further expanded by the reforms (Cole, 2015), tertiary enrolment rates remained low. Where secondary enrolment, for example, increased from 20% in 1950 to 27% in 1960 and then to 80% in 1980, the corresponding change in tertiary rates was from 1% in 1950 to just 3% in 1980 (Little and Hettige, 2013). Although the tertiary enrolment figures are similar to those of neighbouring countries during this period, with India and Malaysia, for example, at gross rates of 5% and 4% respectively in 1980 (World Bank, 2020), Sri Lanka’s much higher secondary enrolment rates meant that the proportion of eligible students able to take up a university place was proportionally much lower, with university enrolment, specifically, sitting at just 1.2% in 1980 (UGC, 2011). The dynamics around these two features of the system – a social expectation of substantial government support for higher education and a restricted reality in terms of actual access to universities – have been pivotal in the development of the country and the education system. This is because they have been at the heart of youth agitation against the state, most notably forming part of the background of the JVP uprisings, as well as the ability of the universities to continue to be relatively well funded, even when government expenditures on education dropped below the high levels seen under the welfare state of the 1950s and 1960s (Jayasuriya, 2010).

### *Liberalisation and the Protection of Education*

Following the election of J.R. Jayewardene in 1977, Sri Lanka underwent a process of significant economic liberalisation, with the privatisation of state enterprises, promotion of foreign investment, and attempts to reduce public sector employment (Gamage, 2009). While public education and healthcare were broadly protected in the early reforms, social welfare provisions came to be reduced and more selectively applied and market influence grew in most sectors (Little and Hettige, 2014; Wickramasinghe, 2014). Wickramasinghe notes, for example, that while welfare spending constituted 10% of GDP between 1970 and 1977, it had fallen to just 4% in 1981 (2014, p.323). Little and Hettige (2013) highlight that the liberalisation reforms also came with an increase in the inflows of bilateral and multilateral aid. While the IMF and World Bank had been involved in Sri Lanka since the 1950s, the period following 1977 saw an intensification of their involvement in the country (Lakshman, 1985). After also being affected by the oil shocks in the 1970s, the government accepted a loan from the IMF in 1980, which came with structural adjustment conditionalities (Golding, 2018). These programmes pushed for a general reduction in the size of the state, which was to have implications for the ongoing performance of the functions which much of the population had come to expect from the state.

Crucially, however, the economy did not see anything like the same level of economic collapse as observed in Sierra Leone during the 1980s, as can be seen from the contrast in trajectories shown in Figure 6.2. Following the relative stagnation of the economy in the 1960s, the opening up of the economy in the 1970s saw increases in exports and foreign investment, while unemployment fell from 24% of the labour force in 1973 to 11.7% in 1981/82 (Little and Hettige, 2013). In the wake of the JVP uprising in 1971 and the change of government, there was also a programme of expansion in the university sector which included the establishment of the Open University (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). This took place at the same time as the demands for cutting public sector employment, with Eastern University, for example, being opened in 1986. That the expansion was coming at a time when cuts were being enforced elsewhere, and when the opening of private universities was still being resisted, illustrates the potency of social expectations around state provision of education (McLoughlin, 2017). Even with the growth in institutions, however, the number of available places at universities still could not match with the demand from eligible students (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017), with gross university enrolment rates staying below 2% through most of the 1990s. One indication of the resulting high level of resources available to the universities at the time is given by the low student-teacher ratios, which were at 11.8 in 1980 and 8.9 in 1985 (UGC, 2011).



**Figure 6.2** GDP per capita with time in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Source: World Bank, 2020

### *War and Growth*

Compounding the divergence in economic fortunes during the 1980s, the impact of war on the two economies was markedly different. In contrast to the economic stagnation during Sierra Leone’s war, as shown in Figure 6.2, Sri Lanka experienced substantial growth during its war years (Venugopal, 2011), particularly during the war’s latter stages. As Bastian notes, “Although the war had an impact on the economy, it did not collapse in the manner usually depicted in the conflict literature. On the contrary, Sri Lanka managed to show an average of 5.1 percent growth from 1978 to 2009” (2013, p.7). In fact, while Sierra Leone is estimated to have had a higher GDP per capita than Sri Lanka in 1980, just before the beginning of the war in Sri Lanka, this position is drastically reversed by the time of the LTTE’s defeat in 2009, with Sri Lankan GDP per capita being five times that in Sierra Leone (World Bank, 2020). Part of the explanation for these differences can be found in the problems of the Sierra Leonean state under one-party rule, with another aspect being the contrasting natures of the conflicts themselves. In Sierra Leone, key industries around mineral exports were disrupted by the war, and there was little effort by the RUF to offer effective economic management and the maintenance of services. By contrast, in Sri Lanka, the LTTE’s more coherent aspirations for secession and state-building meant that there were attempts to ensure that service provision remained at least somewhat intact. The government also continued investing in the LTTE-controlled areas by, for example, paying the salaries of civil servants, including university staff. Furthermore, the majority of the armed activity did not directly affect the core of the Sri Lankan

economy, which has its epicentre in the West of the island (Bastian, 2013). Estimates for 2005, for example, show that the Western province, containing Colombo, accounted for over 50% of the country's GDP, while the Northern and Eastern provinces combined accounted for less than 10% (Sarvananthan, 2007).

This depiction of relative economic prosperity, however, needs several caveats. As McLoughlin (2017) notes, increases in defence spending, particularly towards the end of the war in 2009, corresponded with decreasing government expenditure in other areas, such as education. Public expense, defined by the World Bank in relation to employee compensation, grants, social benefits, and other expenses, declined from 24.6% of GDP in 1990 to 21.0% of GDP in 2009 (World Bank, 2020), with substantial debts meaning that significant proportions of government expenditure have gone towards paying off debt and interest payments (Athukorala et al., 2017). Embargoes put in place by the Sri Lankan government created economic difficulties for the populations in LTTE-controlled territories (O'Donnell et al., 2018). This made it challenging for universities in those areas to obtain the materials necessary to keep functioning, with items such as petrol and batteries falling under the embargoes (Sarvananthan, 2007). In 2001, a combination of the effects of the global recession and a drought significantly affected the economy, causing the economy to contract for the first time since independence (Bastian, 2013). The 2005 tsunami also heavily damaged coastal areas, including the Jaffna peninsula and the Eastern coastline (O'Donnell et al., 2018). Nevertheless, as can be seen from Figure 6.2, the final period of the war was one of substantial economic growth, with GDP doubling between 2004 and 2009 (World Bank, 2020).

Based on 2010 data from the UGC, shown in Table 6.1, it is possible to see a significant absolute increase in university spending over the course of the war, even though the share of GDP it received had declined by the end of the conflict. The growth in university spending, therefore, likely came from the economic growth the country experienced, rather than any particular dedication of funds to the sector. This stands in stark contrast to the case of Sierra Leone, where GDP per capita suffered stagnation and decline over the course of its war. The trajectory of education spending over the course of the war in Sri Lanka does, however, suggest some notable issues. A 2009 World Bank report on the higher education sector highlighted that the proportion of Sri Lanka's government expenditure going to public education was consistently less than for neighbouring countries and was significantly lower than the average for the South Asia region (World Bank, 2009). As a percentage of GDP, expenditure on university education also dropped from a high of 0.5% in 2005 to 0.29% in 2009 (UGC, 2011). Pointing to this period in particular, McLoughlin highlights that "Academic salaries had declined, infrastructure had been poorly maintained, unions were inactive, and

many academics had migrated abroad along with the broader flight of human capital” (2017, p.142).

**Table 6.1** GDP and spending on universities in Sri Lanka during the war

<b>Year</b>	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2009
<b>GDP (Rs/million)</b>	162,375	321,784	667,772	1,257,636	2,452,782	4,835,293
<b>Gov. expenditure on university education (Rs/million)</b>	589	1,061	2,839	5,111	10,502	14,208
<b>Expenditure on university education as % of GDP</b>	0.40	0.37	0.47	0.45	0.50	0.29
<b>New university admissions</b>	5,630	7,152	9,245	11,805	14,520	20,846

Source: UGC Statistics, 2011, Chapter Five

Crucially, however, the university system continued to be restricted in its access practices. In 2009, only 16% of eligible students, numbering just under 21,000, were admitted to university (UGC, 2011). The expansion in student numbers slightly outpaced real GDP growth (World Bank, 2020), but the student to teacher ratios remained relatively low, in spite of a rise from 8.9 students per teacher in 1985 to 16.2 students per teacher in 2009 (UGC, 2011). A sense of comparison for this is given by the fact that the average staff to student ratio for UK higher education institutions was 16.3 for 2008/09 (UCU, 2010). Unlike Sierra Leone, there were also substantial funds going to capital expenditures, with around a quarter of university education costs going to capital expenditure in the 1990s and 2000s (UGC, 2011). Therefore, despite challenges with decreasing proportions of government spending being allocated to education, the restricted nature of university entry in Sri Lanka, with the country relatively unaffected by the ‘massification’ seen elsewhere, in combination with the comparatively strong economic

growth during the war meant that the funds available to universities were enough to mostly avoid substantial dilapidation during the war and into the beginning of the post-war period.

### *Sri Lankan Post-War Domestic Funding in Comparison*

With the end of the war, Sri Lanka also experienced an initial period of rapid economic growth, although this then began to slow down towards the middle of the 2010s. GDP per capita grew by around 50% between 2009 and 2018 (World Bank, 2020), with Sri Lanka being reclassified as an upper middle-income country in 2019 according to World Bank indicators (Wijewardena, 2019). The picture for post-war university funding remains similar to that seen during the war, with economic growth and restricted access making up for the lack of emphasis on education in government budgets. New university admissions have kept pace with GDP per capita growth, rising by 51% between 2009 and 2018 (UGC, 2011; 2019b), rather than overtaking it as has been the case elsewhere. The proportion of government expenditure going to university education has also increased slightly, up to 2.21% in 2018 from 1.23% in 2009. According to UNESCO data, public expenditure per student in tertiary education increased in the post-war period, from around 1750 USD in 2010 to around 2190 in 2012 before reaching around 3730 USD per student in 2017 (UNESCO, 2020). Although direct comparison between the two countries is difficult, the magnitudes here do suggest a significantly larger amount of funds per student than the 800 USD noted earlier for Sierra Leone in 2012, matching with differences in the state of infrastructure observed during fieldwork in the two countries as well as with comments made by interviewees.

There are, however, caveats to the relatively positive funding picture in Sri Lanka. For example, after 2009, the proportion of government expenditure on education has remained low by comparison with neighbouring countries, sitting below 2% of GDP for all but one of the years between 2010 and 2018 (UGC, 2019b). Table 6.2 illustrates this through consideration of the proportion of overall government expenditure that education receives in different contexts. Furthermore, the restricted access to higher education should also be seen as a significant issue with the university system, particularly given the centrality of university access to conflict dynamics in the country. As Wickramasinghe notes, “In contrast to very high levels of general education enrolment in Sri Lanka... the full-time enrolment in higher education in state universities [was] less than 2 per cent of the age group” in 2013 (2017, p.468). Wickramasinghe also later highlights that this is far below the South Asian average, which sits at around 8%.

**Table 6.2** Government spending on education as a percentage of total government spending in 2013

Country	Sri Lanka	India	Pakistan	Thailand	Malaysia
<b>Spending on education as % of total government spending</b>	9.4	14.1	13.2	19.1	19.5

Source: UNESCO, 2020

Despite these final caveats, what this section suggests is that the economic and education funding trajectories since independence in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka have taken their economies and university sectors to very different places. Sri Lanka has transitioned through to upper middle-income status, a change postponed but not halted by the effects of the war, while Sierra Leone remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The stark contrast can be seen in their respective rankings in the Human Development Index, with Sri Lanka sitting at 71<sup>st</sup> while Sierra Leone occupies the 181<sup>st</sup> place in 2020 (UNDP, 2020). Although comparable figures are scarce, 2010 data from the World Bank (2013; Xe.com, 2020) and the UGC (2011) and IMF (2019; 2020) indicate that spending on the broader category of tertiary education in Sierra Leone was just over 10 million USD while the figure for university education in Sri Lanka is closer to 135 million USD, with 2010 being well into Sierra Leone's post-war recovery and just at the beginning of Sri Lanka's.

Even accounting for the differences in the scale of the sector, funding disparities are apparent in the available resources and infrastructures. The largest institution in Sierra Leone, the University of Sierra Leone, received approximately 9.4 million USD for its 9408 students in 2011, with nearly two-thirds of that coming from tuition and other fees (World Bank, 2013). Staff at the institution also pointed out that both fees and subventions often arrived late and in amounts smaller than the official allocation. For the University of Jaffna, UGC (2011) figures suggest that in the same year the institution received approximately 10.2 million USD for its 5721 students – not counting students on external degree programmes, who tend to receive little in the way of academic support and resources (Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017). These differences in funding levels are not just one-time occurrences but, instead, appear to be long-term trends. They bring with them, therefore, divergences in the ability of institutions to, for example, train new staff and purchase new equipment, which over time can have further

implications for resources as doctoral supervisors and examiners have to be sourced from abroad and faulty infrastructure engenders further costs.

### ***Post-War Donor Funding: Global Agendas and Local Realities***

The discussion above points to the differences between Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka in terms of public funding for university education, which has constituted the main source of income for institutions in both countries. This is not, however, the complete picture for university funding. In this section, therefore, I turn to the effects of external sources of funding. In the wake of conflict, and in its midst, a powerful machinery of intervention can come into action, providing funds and shaping agendas. The stark power imbalances that ordinarily mark the international funding landscape around development often become even more acute in post-war situations. For example, Hughes and Pupavac (2005) have argued that the explanations espoused for the onset of conflicts, for instance in the form of ethnic groups trapped in cycles of violence, can be utilised as justifications for international actors to step in and attempt to take control, citing the presumed incapacity of the state and the population. Governments have been differently able, and differently willing, to resist these pressures. Sierra Leone, for instance, became inundated with international donors and NGOs, while Sri Lanka had close interactions with the World Bank but much more restricted involvement from NGOs.

In relation to these two cases, I make two arguments in this section about the role of donor funding in post-war public universities. First, in line with Milton (2013), I suggest that higher education was not a priority for reconstruction in Sierra Leone and, therefore, universities likely did not receive sufficient donor funds to make up for the lack of domestic funding. Second, I contend that the practices of donor funding are, nonetheless, significant due to the influence donors can have over funding agendas and the problematic consequences that can result from funded programmes that are not sustainable and that do not respond to local dynamics. Both these points serve to illustrate how universities are embedded in political dynamics – specifically, the politics of donor priorities in post-war reconstruction and education – at global and transnational scales. The ability of universities to contribute to post-war processes, therefore, needs to be understood as being conditioned by the dominant discourses and practices of higher education and post-conflict aid amongst powerful donors and institutions of global governance, such as World Bank and the United Nations. Nevertheless, as the differing experiences of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka with respect to international intervention suggest, the degree and form of this conditioning depends on the particular power relations between these international actors, universities, and the states of which they are a part.

### *Donor Funding and Higher Education in Sierra Leone*

As Tom notes, Sierra Leone is “today considered a ‘success story’ of international peacebuilding” (2017, p.3). In the years after the war’s end, the country became the site of an intense amount of activity on the part of major bilateral and multilateral donors as well as by a proliferation of NGOs. However, high levels of international financial involvement in the country, as noted above, are not unique to the wartime and post-war eras, with a history of loans leaving the country with a daunting degree of external debt at the end of the war (Kanyako, 2016). An estimate included in a 2001 government report suggested that external debt was close to 1100% of domestic budget revenue (Government of Sierra Leone, 2001). Similarly, the size of the involvement of international actors, and of government financial dependence, is shown by the fact that the total of grants and loans averaged 15% of GDP between 2001 and 2006, exceeding domestic revenues by a significant degree (AfDB, 2011).

With donor dependence came donor influence. Chege suggests that the approach to aid espoused by major donors was that “aid works best when the borrowing governments abjure corruption and faithfully implement institutional reforms” (2002, p.156). He further contends that lessons had been learnt from donors’ experiences of dealing with dodged conditionalities in the Siaka Stevens’ era. In particular, World Bank funds were predicated on the production of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), which had to be approved by the World Bank Board. These papers focussed on areas known to appeal to the major IFIs, such as around good governance and democratisation (Cubitt, 2012; Doornbos, 2001; Tom, 2017). Similarly, the IMF laid down conditionalities around its provision of loans, with other donors, such as the UK, often giving in accordance with the same IMF conditionalities (Cubitt, 2012). This imposition of agendas by external actors was succinctly encapsulated in the words of a senior member of an international agency: “In early 2003, that was when we launched the government’s agenda” (Esser, 2012, p.405). Recovery planning and prioritisation, therefore, was considerably affected by the actions and agendas of international actors.

Reflecting donor orientations and priorities, major external funding for education largely lagged behind those in other areas. As Novelli (2011) highlights, DfID, for example, only began a significant focus on education in the country from 2010. Where present in plans for the country’s recovery, the consideration of education was also concentrated on the re-establishment of primary education, and later secondary education, following the broader trends in education ideology at the time (Government of Sierra Leone, 2003). These trends themselves were partly due to the consequences of a return of investment calculation for different levels of education, later shown to be flawed, that suggested higher education offered

less value for the same degree of investment (Sifuna, 2014). References to the university sector in early documents, such as the Interim-PRSP in 2001, the National Recovery Strategy in 2002, and the PRSP in 2005, are correspondingly limited to vague commitments about developing the university sector in the medium-term and acknowledgement of the damage done at Njala (Government of Sierra Leone, 2001; 2002; 2005a). Furthermore, attempts were made, albeit generally unsuccessfully, to reduce government spending on universities on the basis that the public wage bill was inflated and that government funding should be re-distributed between the different levels of education (Cubitt, 2012; Novelli, 2011). A push for decreased public funding can also be seen in the advocacy for the increased role of private institutions and the use of alternative funding streams (World Bank, 2013). There were some shifts in these funding priorities, towards greater attention to higher education, as the knowledge economy discourse took a stronger hold of how funding around education is constructed (McCowan, 2016). Nevertheless, these changes in perspective came too late for universities to receive sufficient external support in their recovery processes to overcome the challenges they faced.

Despite the relatively limited nature of the finances provided, donor funding, nonetheless, has had important effects on Sierra Leonean institutions. Funds from the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), for example, have supported much needed infrastructure development and repair (Tarawallie, 2014), while United Nations involvement has helped build IT capacity (Awoko, 2010). As suggested above, however, such interventions can come with ideological baggage that can work to push the development of the university sector in problematic directions. The language and goals related to a DfID funded project around quality assurance, for instance, mimic those associated with the changes in the UK higher education environment in recent decades, pointing to the processes of increasing commercialisation in connection with a political agenda of unfettered marketization (Collini, 2017). Writing on similar changes in the UK and South Africa (Collini, 2017; Cross and Ndofirepi, 2016), resulting from the same driving forces around, for example, the relevance of education for employers, has highlighted the de-emphasising of the public good aspect of university education in favour of private interest, suggesting that such changes in alignment may result in a decreased social role for universities.

Further to this broader point, the very pursuit of such funding also has consequences for the functioning of universities, particularly with regards to the investment of time from university staff in often lengthy application processes. Badamasi Savage, a retired engineer and university administrator who had been heavily involved in the BADEA application, spoke to me about the trials of such an application. He highlighted the lack of funding available to hire the necessary consultants and architects and the resulting devotion of his time to the

application process over a period of two months (UoSL8). Particularly in the initial post-war period, the lack of physical infrastructure, such as consistent access to the internet at high speeds, and a limited capacity to conduct literature work in preparation for proposals, due to damaged library infrastructure as well as the costs involved in accessing materials online, posed barriers to applications which then required the further investment of time to overcome. A related point is that funding applications often necessitate working with external partners due to restrictions imposed by, for example, the expensive auditing procedures that are required for handling grants. One result of this is that funds often flow first through the partner university, for instance in the UK or US, who have control over the finances, leaving a reduced sum for the Sierra Leonean institution due to the administrative and other costs claimed by the external institution.

Another significant issue with external funds to universities in post-war contexts can be seen in the example of peace and conflict studies at Fourah Bay College. The development of programming in this area emerged and grew through a linkage with the University of Bradford, where the Sierra Leonean academic, Professor David Francis, had been based. The success of the centre in attracting funding and students, however, was not unproblematic, with the shifting employment landscape after the war meaning that graduates in these fields have limited options especially as the NGO jobs dried up. Discussing the progression of peace and conflict studies following the war Professor Redwood-Sawyer, a former Vice-Chancellor, commented that, “At the time, it was very, very relevant and it became very popular. But then the number of students they were having, many years after the war, were such that we started getting a bit nervous because where then do all those students graduating with peace and conflict studies, where would they feed into?” (UoSL3). The issue even gained significant political attention after Kandeh Yumkella, who came third in the Presidential race in the 2018 elections, commented that “...60-70% of our young people are unemployed. People graduating from the university – three years later – no jobs.... You have so many of our youths graduating in the peace and conflict studies. What’s that going to do for you in life? We need them in other professions that can make them employable” (Awoko, 2017). Remarking on this phenomenon more generally, Milton notes that the “over-provision of HE courses in security reform, peace studies, governance, and counselling in post-conflict African states led to short-term employment of graduates in aid-agencies while leading to unemployment and irrelevant skills once international agencies move to the next hotspot several years later” (2013, p.91). What this example highlights is the potential for the availability of international funding, and not just its absence, to impact upon the functioning of universities, as students and research projects respond to the presence of resources poured in by international actors rather than responding to local realities and needs.

### *Donor Funding and Higher Education in Sri Lanka*

While Sri Lanka has been painted at times as a country that has resisted significant international involvement in its post-war reconstruction (Piccolino, 2015), and it certainly had a state structure that was more capable of doing so at the end of its war than in Sierra Leone, the realities of donor engagement are more complicated. Advocating against falling into a 'liberal' versus 'authoritarian' binary in descriptions of peacebuilding, Harrowell and Özerdem (2020) highlight the hybrid nature of post-war recovery processes in Sri Lanka. As noted previously, there has been a long history of involvement from major donor and lenders, such as the IMF. This involvement did not cease during or after the war, with Kadirgamar (2013) noting that loans and grants totalling billions of US dollars were granted to Sri Lanka in the wake of the war. While education received a relatively small proportion of the available funds, with the focus instead on large infrastructure projects (Walton, 2016), it has been an area in which international interventions have arguably made a considerable impact on the direction of the sector. The World Bank, in particular, has played a substantial role in shaping the higher education landscape in the country (Fernando, 2015; Little and Hettige, 2014; UC5). In addition to its encouragement of privatisation in the sector, with its negative implications for public funding of universities and their place in society, I contend that the World Bank programming has largely failed to engage effectively with the legacies of conflict for the post-war university sector and has had problematic interactions with pre-existing social fault lines.

On the first of these points, the Bank's work in the post-war era offered relatively little in the way of accounting for and addressing the issues in the university sector and beyond that had been central to the war. In its 2009 report on its vision of the future of the sector, the Bank acknowledged the conflict and the role that higher education might play in transforming Sri Lanka to "a country at peace" but opted instead to focus on the idea of "economic relevance" as the crux of the sector's development (World Bank, 2009). The major World Bank intervention that followed the report, the Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century (HETC) project, did, nevertheless, offer funding for activities that centred on exchanges between Tamil and Sinhalese students (World Bank, 2016). The efforts in this area, however, appear to have fallen short on two major counts: their short-term focus and their overreliance on inter-group contact as a means of conflict resolution and cohesion building. With regards to the former, Dr Samarakoon, a lecturer at the Open University, commented on how the university-wide scope of activities had shrunk to just his department, social science, and had generally petered out due to staff in the university not understanding or believing in the need for such programmes (OUSL3). The short-term focus of these activities is also apparent in their absence from the Bank's next higher education intervention, the Accelerating Higher

Education Expansion and Development programme, with programme planning documents barely mentioning the war or its causes and legacies (World Bank, 2017).

In terms of the contact approach, the Bank supported the UGC's decision, which itself came under pressure from the Rajapaksa government, to adopt policies to facilitate changes to the ethnic composition of universities. These changes appear to have been somewhat controversial in the north and the east, where Sinhalese students were reintroduced to universities without sufficient work being done to work through tensions and build bridges between groups, especially given the context of ongoing militarisation by a predominantly Sinhalese army. As acknowledged elsewhere, contact alone is unable to build effective social cohesion, and, as shall be discussed in Chapter Six, there continue to be significant ethnic divisions between and within campuses. The Bank's apparent ignorance of these challenges is reflected in the blinkered statement in a 2016 report that "all universities in Sri Lanka are now multiethnic" (World Bank, 2016, p.18).

Turning to the relation of programming to other social fault lines, HETC contained a major emphasis on 'ensuring relevance and quality in teaching' which was embodied in a series of competitive grants that engaged primarily with English, ICT, and soft skills provision. These areas have been trumpeted by the Bank as key to ensuring the employability of Sri Lanka's graduates and their competitiveness in the world's labour market (World Bank, 2009). English, however, is more than communication proficiency in the language. The language has been heavily intertwined with both ethnic and class conflict in the country (Colenso, 2005; Little and Hettige, 2013). As one lecturer at the University of Colombo described, "Here language is more than communication. English is more than the communication. English is a kind of lifestyle" (UC4). A common expression in Sinhala refers to English as a *kaduwa* (sword) with which one can protect one's privilege, and, correspondingly, English often acts to both constitute and symbolise the division in society between the haves and the have-nots (Amarasuriya, 2010). Related to this, another academic at the language studies department at the Open University spoke about the shifting goalposts involved in English provision through the World Bank (OUSL4). Here, students can be seen to chase a particular vision of what having English might mean only to find out when they get there that the form of English required, in terms of associated mannerisms or style of speech, has changed.

Due to the prioritisation of English in this way, students are sorted upon entry into universities into those who will need to have additional English support and those who will not, with the latter more likely to be coming from socio-economic backgrounds which have facilitated acquisition of the 'language of business'. Similar concerns exist around social sorting effects related to ICT, with wealth facilitating access to the necessary resources to learn, and soft

skills training, which appears to try to mould students towards an imagined idea of a global professional (OUSL4). The key point here is that the technical, and therefore purportedly neutral, recommendations around the pursuit of English, ICT, and soft skills, based on their value for the global jobs market, are interacting with the socially and historically embedded structures of division and differentiation in ways that are likely to entrench rather alleviate social divisions, especially when taken in concert with a shift in attention away from issues of access. Ultimately, this points to how the rational individualism underlying such approaches (Harrison, 2005) mischaracterises the university, painting it as an aggregation of individuals that can be bestowed with economically advantageous human capital almost regardless of their context. By doing so, it obscures the very real consequences of those individuals being fundamentally embedded in, and constitutive of, social groups, including the university itself, in ways that shape how those people act in and experience the world (Elder-Vass, 2010).

### ***Agency and the Politics of Post-War Funding***

The above discussions of the role of international actors in funding, and orienting, higher education in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka point to the importance of the politics around funding. This is also evident, for example, in the role of university access in conflict dynamics in Sri Lanka, as discussed in the previous chapter. In this final section, I take this idea further by using consideration of the practices of negotiating funding in Sierra Leone to show that funding negotiations can themselves have significant implications for the functioning of universities beyond the availability of resources. I then discuss how the case of the Federation of University Teacher Associations (FUTA) strikes in Sri Lanka illustrates that university communities can have meaningful agency in determining funding outcomes as well as in pushing for changes to the broader politics of funding.

### ***Negotiating and Navigating Funding in Sierra Leone***

In Sierra Leone, as elsewhere, university budgets are the subject of negotiation and wrangling between governments, university administrations, students, and staff. Here, I identify two main features of these negotiations that have implications for the wider functioning of the universities, starting with the historical budget allocation system. This allocation method bases current funding on previous budgeting. Such a system is recognised as containing the potential for rewarding the negotiation skills of institutions due to the opacity of the decision-making processes involved (World Bank, 2010). There is also an important historical dimension to the issue due to the way in which Siaka Stevens enmeshed himself with the

state's mechanisms for distributing resources. This meant that state funding became tied to the personal relationships between Stevens and institutions as well as to Stevens' political calculations, with the personalised politics of funding then continuing into the post-war era. Reflecting this, conversations with senior staff pointed to a recognition that accessing funding necessitated a form of political negotiation with the state, opening up avenues by which universities could be influenced by the dynamics of party and governmental politics.

The most striking example of how a university might engage in these political negotiations was provided by the overt political affiliation of Njala University staff in the 2018 elections. As articulated by my interviewees, there had been a sense prior to the elections that they had been largely ignored under the APC government (2007-2018). A lecturer at Njala spoke about how the APC government's President and Minister of Education were graduates of Fourah Bay College and, therefore, were likely to give preferential funding treatment to that institution. As he put it, "When the last elections happened, this university took sides. Colleagues here decided the past government has not paid any attention to us, so we better take our chance. Let's align ourselves with one of the political parties in the hope that, if they win, hopefully our problems will be solved" (NJ1). A large billboard outside the main campus explicitly affirmed the university staff's support for the SLPP leader, Julius Maada Bio. While Bio's electoral victory might suggest that the strategy had paid off, there have continued to be funding issues at Njala, particularly with regards to unpaid staff salaries. There are also new limitations associated with the need to avoid appearing to speak out against the party. In particular, there is also the risk that when the political wheel turns again, the university will be punished by a different government for its political partisanship.

Such political interference in university administration in the post-war era has also taken less overt forms, with attempts to influence a wide range of administrative activities at the university. Professor Redwood-Sawyerr, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sierra Leone, provided the example of how a government's Chief of Staff had called to apply pressure for leniency to show on behalf of a student undergoing disciplinary proceedings (UoSL3). Dependence on government funding makes standing up to such requests a risky endeavour. Professor Alie at the University of Sierra Leone lamented, "he who pays the piper, you know... if the university becomes too critical then funding and other facilities are curtailed" (UoSL1), highlighting also the potential negative implications for critical voice more broadly.

Further to this, the politics around the funding system has implications for where funding gets directed to within institutions. A report on funding in Africa notes that "Historical budgets also tend to favor expenditures linked with obvious advocates (for example, staff, students) over those with no advocates (for example, maintenance of buildings and grounds)" (World Bank,

2010, p.121). Professor Redwood-Sawyer commented, for instance, that there was limited space for allocating money to projects that would develop the capacity of the university, with those budget lines frequently being cut first in the processes of the negotiation (UoSL3). Similarly, Professor Noni, a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, indicated that in recent years, leading up to 2018, less than 1% of total expenditure at the University of Sierra Leone had been spent on research (UoSL16).

Related to the point on the importance of visibility for funding, the second major feature of the funding negotiations is the centrality of students and student protest action to the political calculus of funding. The absence of sufficient direct state funding for free higher education leads to the reliance on alternative means of funding for universities, primary among which in Sierra Leone has been levying fees on students. One important element of the choices around fees, however, is wariness about student reactions. As Dr Johnson, a lecturer in education at Njala University, put it, “The students are very, very important. You don’t want students going on strike. It’s going to affect so many other areas” (NJ11). Similarly, when considering the prospect of raising fees, Dr Ansumana, a Dean at Njala, commented that “I could say, let’s raise the fees up by 50% and provide quality services. It’s all money speaking, right? But then who pays? The students. Will they be able to pay? No. Will they agree? No. Will they protest? Yes. Will they destroy the furniture? Yes. Will they burn down buildings? Probably” (NJ8). His comments are not made without precedent. In 1987, for instance, Njala university students burned down the provincial secretariat in Bo (Harris, 2013), while more recently, students at the Bo campus set fire to a hostel building during a protest over fees (Awoko, 2014). Consequently, government concerns around avoiding such demonstrations then lead to a restriction on the ability of universities to raise funds through student fees.

An important arena for student funding contestations is around the payment of fees before exams. When university administrations have tried to ensure that only those who have paid their fees can sit exams, this has set off resistance from students in the form of protests and campus disruptions. As described by senior staff at both the University of Sierra Leone and Njala University, the government then responds to student protests by telling the universities to allow the students to sit the exams without paying fees, often with some reassurance that students will pay later or that the government will cover the costs (NJ4, UoSL5). It is not that staff are unsympathetic to the financial plight of students. Dr Ansumana, for example, told me that “We want to collect our fees, but the students will tell us we don’t have money.... they come and beg. Our hearts are not made of stone” (NJ8). Instead, using access to exams as leverage to get students to pay fees appears to be a reluctant strategy employed by the universities in order to pressurise the government, and those students who can afford it, into providing enough funds to keep the university going. A similar strategy appears to be at work

in relation to staff strikes, which can be used to generate student protests as frustrations over the absence of teaching can lead to student action. As long as staff can rely on student solidarity with their action, staff strikes can leverage the power of student protests in order to support their negotiations with government over pay and funding. The pursuit of such a negotiating strategy, however, is necessarily premised on disruption, with the university sector suffering from broken academic years throughout the post-war period.

### *The FUTA Campaign and Funding in Sri Lanka*

The above discussion of Sierra Leone highlights the ways in which funding struggles can influence university functioning beyond the presence or absence of resources. At the same time, it also points to the agency that university communities can have in these negotiations. In Sri Lanka, the 2012 FUTA strikes provides a clear example of the success that university communities can have in funding struggles, further emphasising that structures around funding, and hence funding conditions for post-war contributions, are not static but are the dynamic outcome of political negotiation. This example illustrates how universities can use coalitional politics as well as locally legitimate discourses around education, in this case tied to ideas around education as a driver of social mobility and the state's duty to provide free education, to shift the balance of power, albeit in a temporary and contextually contingent manner, in their relations with the dominant actors within the state and to thus secure greater resources.

The strikes emerged against a background of increasing state power under Mahinda Rajapaksa and decreasing university autonomy and salaries. It was under the post-war Rajapaksa presidency, for example, that undergraduate students were required to attend a leadership course run by the military and wider freedom of speech was suffering due to disappearances and threats against public figures. As Dr Dewasiri, FUTA President at the time of the strikes, explained, "There were a lot of interesting situations even in senate meetings where you cannot express your views freely. Those who are critical about the system would be identified as those that are against the country. That was the context in which this FUTA struggle emerged" (UC2). In May 2011, FUTA members launched trade union action, demanding higher wages for university staff (Schubert, 2012). While this action was brief, it would be the precursor to 100 days of strikes in 2012, the second longest trade union strike in the country's history (De Alwis, 2012).

Although funding was only one of many issues behind the strikes, the calls to 'Save State Education' and for the government to allocate 6% of GDP to education became the most prominent slogans. The particular phrasing of these slogans was carefully constructed. While

there were those who advocated for a call to instead save 'free education', the desire of the leadership to accommodate the diversity of views that members held on the issues of fees and private universities supported the idea of formulating the language of the strikes around 'state education' (OUSL1). As emphasised earlier, the potency of appealing for public support based on the welfare state is well established in Sri Lanka. According to McLoughlin, the concentration on state education tapped into core concerns of a large segment of the population around the state's retreat from "welfarism and its legitimate, interventionist role as protector of the poor", with FUTA supporters repeatedly vocalising the "the potentially destabilising consequences of such a retreat" (2017, p.151). Another significant feature of the strikes was the breadth of involvement, with universities across the island involved and support from the Inter University Students' Federation in the form of parallel, but distinct, mobilisation. While the University of Jaffna unions had previously generally stayed separate from FUTA, the 2012 strikes also saw much greater involvement from Northern academics, with Kadirgamar noting that "busloads of [Jaffna] lecturers went to the major FUTA protest rally" (2012).

Ultimately, the strikes were successful in helping to negotiate improved salary levels for university staff, with more minor concessions in other areas. While the 6% demand was not met, there were increases in the allocation of government funds to education, and university education in particular, in the following years (UGC, 2019b). In interviews, academics I spoke to generally expressed contentment with their levels of remuneration. Fears remained, however, around the space for academic freedom and autonomy in universities, and there were ongoing concerns around issues of equity. Nevertheless, the strike had far-reaching implications. It is even credited with impacting the course of the 2015 elections, which had been widely expected to be won by the increasingly authoritarian regime led by the Rajapaksa brothers but instead resulted in a surprise victory for the opposition coalition. The strike itself arguably opened up space for broader conversations in society about state interference and repression. As Dr Witharana, a lecturer heavily involved in the strikes, described, to begin with "Only the brave were... vocal. When FUTA gained momentum, others started talking" (OUSL1). What the strikes suggest is that universities can be instigators of forms of coalitional politics with other social groups – here, by making use of established ideas and expectations in wider society around the public provision of education – that can provide a counterweight to government funding agendas even in states where conflict has served to consolidate and centralise state power.

## **Conclusion**

Through discussion of Sierra Leone's pre-war decline and wartime stagnation, the opening section of this chapter demonstrated that the economic history of a country can lead to conditions which severely inhibit the potential for universities to make significant post-war contributions. By comparing this with the situation in Sri Lanka, however, I have argued that funding is not an absolute constraint that necessarily arises from the occurrence of a war but one that is contingent on the particularities of the conflict and the economic and governance context. Similarly, while the historical, economic, and geopolitical structures discussed in the first three sections may set meaningful limits on the resources post-war universities can access, the final section contends that universities themselves do not have to be passive in the face of these constraints. Universities can leverage different sources of power associated with, for example, the implications of student unrest or the social resonance of a right to public education to shift the share they receive of state funds. Even if universities are able to relatively successfully in processes of negotiation, however, it does not mean that they can and will use the garnered resources in ways that support peacebuilding and development. This highlights the necessity of going beyond the sole question of resource availability in order to understand the factors that can constrain universities' contributions to post-war recovery. The chapter further underscores this point by providing examples of how material conditions interact with the structures and practices within universities to influence their functioning, for example with regards to the disruption caused by student protests over fees in Sierra Leone. The following chapter expands upon this insight by turning the focus towards how to analyse and conceptualise the internal dynamics of post-war university communities, starting with what I call their *substrates*.

## Chapter Five

### Substrates and the Making of Post-War Faculties

One particularly striking feature of the post-war environment at Jaffna is that qualified candidates for faculty positions have been blocked from entering the university, with positions awarded instead to candidates with fewer, or less prestigious, qualifications or with less experience. Such practices appear almost paradoxical to the common-sense logics of human capital theory and institutional capacity, which would see the maximisation of high-status qualifications and years of experience as the natural course to take for both university reconstruction and state and society recovery. What is it, then, that best explains established faculty and administrators at Jaffna pushing in a different direction with regards to recruitment? Answering this question requires grappling with the fact that the historical trajectories outlined in the preceding chapters have shaped not only the resources available to post-war universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, but also the very constitution of the university communities that form them. In the case of Jaffna, I argue that the experiences of the university under the LTTE led to the creation of a social order in the faculty which has since resisted the entry into the community of those who might, on grounds of either academic status and ability or ideology, challenge the status quo. As I shall illustrate, this example reveals the manner in which the social history of conflict-affected universities can affect recovery both indirectly, by influencing the processes of faculty reconstruction and, thus, the skills and knowledge available in the community, and directly, through effects on the sorts of practices and politics that are seen to be legitimate within the university. At its core, therefore, the chapter speaks to the question of how universities engage in their own social reproduction, even in the wake, and the midst, of the disruption caused war.

To set the stage for this discussion, I start by noting that prominent ideas used to discuss the effects of conflict on universities, such as human capital flight and losses in institutional capacity, fail to capture the breadth of ways in which post-war universities are marked by their experiences. In order to grasp this broader picture and to better understand the phenomenon of selective recruitment at Jaffna, I then introduce the concept of the *substrate*, which captures the path-dependent nature of who constitutes a university community at a particular point in time as well as the set of practices and social structures that are present within the university.

With this analytical lens in hand, the second section explores the evolution of the social configuration of the faculty at University of Jaffna over the course of the war, offering a stark example of the changes in social configuration that can occur as well as of the post-war impacts such alterations can have. I outline the ways in which pre-war and wartime dynamics acted to create a mono-ethnic university and contend that the wartime environment shaped the social practices and structures of those who stayed. Subsequently, I take both these points forward into the post-war era by discussing how the social order entrenched in the university through the war affected the manner in which the university faculty engaged with the project of its own post-war reconstruction and with wider processes of recovery. Ultimately, this likely served to inhibit the ability of the university to contribute to processes of post-war peacebuilding and development. Building on this case study, the third section of the chapter turns to the implications of the findings for other contexts, including Sierra Leone.

Although the chapter makes use of relevant documents and sources to support its arguments, the availability of sources which speak directly to the nature of malpractice in recruitment processes, for example, is relatively limited, due to the sensitive and often deliberately opaque nature of the topic. Throughout, therefore, I rely significantly on the knowledge and analysis of interviewees and fieldwork interlocutors, whose personal and professional involvement with universities in the two case countries enabled them to provide invaluable insights into the evolving social constitutions of the universities under study. A morning spent discussing changes in Jaffna University with a former administrator who had been involved with the institution since close to its inception in the 1970s, for example, yielded a rich picture of how the social life of the university community had altered over time, a picture which also reflected the broader transformations in Jaffna that are captured in the reports of University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) and the scholarship of academics like Thiranagama (2010; 2011). Similar conversations in Sierra Leone, particularly with older academics who had personally experienced the evolution of the university sector over time, brought together the broader social and political shifts associated with economic decline and the war with the more particular changes in the universities. Professor Joe Alie at Fourah Bay College, for example, spoke at length about the tough personal decisions involved in returning to Sierra Leone in the 1990s and the effects this had on the constitution of the faculty, with four of his academic cohort leaving for the US to pursue their PhDs but only two coming back.

Fieldwork observations also informed the arguments of this chapter. Clear divides were evident, for instance, in how different members of the Jaffna staff talked about the war, its causes and legacies, and the relationship between the university and the Tamil population. These divides mirrored the fractures in the community pointed out in interviews by academics who felt that they were outside of the entrenched networks of power that had been put in place

over the period of the war. Introductions by interviewees tended to occur within these different groups in the Jaffna staff body, further impressing on me the sense of a fractured faculty. While the data limitations in terms of supporting documents means that some of the specific findings of the chapter remain tentative, the overall approach and conclusions, nevertheless, offer a potent means of exploring and explaining the impacts of conflict on the social constitution of universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka and the corresponding consequences for the limited ability of universities in the two countries to contribute to post-war recovery.

### ***Understanding the Foundations of Post-War Faculties***

#### *War, Migration, and Brain Drain*

One of the fundamental areas for interrogation regarding the ability of universities to contribute to post-war processes relates to how universities have themselves been affected by conflict. A crucial dimension of this is that, although one of the potential contributions associated with universities in post-war contexts is the retraining of skilled-worker populations (Milton and Barakat, 2016), universities are often suffering from their own personnel shortages as a result of conflict. A global context where attacks on educational institutions are increasingly frequent means that schools and universities cannot be viewed as safe spaces which are unaffected by wars (Milton, 2013). Evidence from a variety of contexts, including Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, highlights how universities can themselves become important battlegrounds (Jeong-Ho and Van Voorhis, 2010; Novelli and Selenica, 2014; Poppel, 2015). The resultant displacement and death affects the contemporary availability of university staff while also disrupting the future supply through the effects on school and university students. Milton and Barakat note, for instance, that “after decades of conflict, Afghanistan had lost an estimated 20,000 experts and academics” (2016, p.404). The outbreak of armed conflict can also exacerbate pre-occurring outward movements as well as sparking new patterns of migration, with academia being a historically mobile profession (Bauder, 2012). Those who receive overseas academic training at higher levels, for instance, do not always return home (Bauder, 2012; Cloete et al., 2015; Tessema, 2010), creating further breaks in the academic pipeline.

Understanding the limitations on the capacity of universities to contribute to post-war processes requires grappling with the consequences of these histories of departure and the connected practices around reconstructing faculties after war. Existing discussions in this area frequently focus on interlinked ideas of brain drain, human capital, and capacity. Brain drain refers to the departure, principally through migration, of skilled workers from an institution,

sector, or from a geographical area more broadly. Such skilled workers are often presented as carriers of, or simply as embodying, human capital, with brain drain also being described as 'human capital flight' (Milton, 2013). In recent years, this language of human capital has been central to prominent notions of development, such as those around the knowledge economy (Couch, 2019; Molla and Gale, 2014). As Tessema articulates, "In development circles, there is a growing realization that sustainable development cannot take place without sound human capital" (2010, p.131). As Daniel Couch (2019) documents, the reconstruction of the higher education system in Afghanistan, for example, was predicated on human capital theories, which positioned the goal of such a reconstruction as the creation of human capital which could then drive economic development. According to this lens, a core concern with regards to post-war universities and their role in recovery becomes the degree of human capital they possess, which is seen as constituting a measure of an institution's capacity to carry out roles such as retraining essential skilled workers or providing expertise for peacebuilding (Milton and Barakat, 2016; Novelli, 2011).

In addition to well-documented issues with the conceptualisation of individuals as human capital for the nation and the indeterminate nature of what actually constitutes human capital or capacity (Bebbington et al., 2004; Brown, 2016), the language of brain drain, capacity, and capital fails to capture the complexity of the transformations that university communities experience in relation to staff departures and the related processes of faculty maintenance and reconstruction. This failure can be seen to occur along multiple lines, two of which are particularly relevant for comprehending the situation in post-war universities. First, as a means of understanding the effects of conflict and migration on education institutions, these lenses are unable to effectively recognise the variable form of departures. Use of the homogenising labels of the brain drain or human capital flight in existing research on education (Barclay, 2002; Milton and Barakat, 2016; Novelli, 2011) serves to bundle academics into a simple elite category, which does not account for the variation in who stays, who goes, and how the demographics of higher education communities are consequently affected. As literature from displacement studies demonstrates, forced migration does not necessarily occur in a homogenous fashion, with intersecting effects associated with, for example, class, race, occupation, gender, and religion (Van Hear, 2006). More specifically, the dynamics of war mean that certain populations can be particularly targeted, both in terms of violence and the restriction of mobility, resulting in the potential for skewed proportions of death and displacement among different groups within university communities. This is evident, for example, in the departure of Jewish academics from institutions in Nazi Germany (Niederland, 1988) and in the university purges in Spain under Franco (Pacheco, 2013).

A second, related, issue is that the use of human capital and capacity concepts depicts a situation of either presence or absence, or perhaps sufficiency or insufficiency, which does not account for the interactions that occur between individuals in the form of the practices and social structures that they collectively constitute. Speaking to the potential narrowness of capacity framings, Caroline Hughes highlights that there are “ideas about capacity development which assume that better public services require only a transfer of technical knowledge from one individual to another” and which posit institutional change, therefore, as “a mere technical process of upgrading” (Hughes, 2011, pp.1498-1499). In such a view, the departures and deaths associated with war and migration appear as a loss in technical knowledge and skills, which would then need to be replaced in the processes of post-war reconstruction or ‘upgrading’. While it is certainly important to acknowledge the loss of such skills and knowledge, this approach does not incorporate the fact that one ‘unit’ of human capital cannot simply be replaced by another without altering, on some level, the social constitution of a university, which can then correspondingly alter the functioning of the university. Consider the situation of a set of lecturers from a particular social or political group being replaced by those from another group, such as was attempted with the de-Baathification processes in Iraq (Milton, 2013). Viewed from a perspective of human capital or technical capacity, measured through, perhaps, the level of qualifications or publications, the situation may not have significantly changed. In reality, however, the social and political environment of the university would likely be substantially transformed, with consequences for how, for example, curricula are created, how staff interact with students from different social groups, or the sorts of political campaigns that are prevalent on campus. As I argue throughout, these types of changes are not peripheral to the functioning of universities but are, instead, fundamentally intertwined with how institutions operate, with such a transformation in functioning being arguably the goal of de-Baathification, for example, in the first place.

### *Beyond Capital and Capacity: Introducing the Substrate*

In order to address these limitations of human capital and institutional capacity framings, while retaining acknowledgement of shifts in academic skills and knowledge, I propose viewing the processes of migration, death, and community shaping that can occur during, and leading up to, conflict as the creation of particular *substrates* for post-war universities. In Chapter Two, I discussed the significance of seeing the university as social group for understanding its functioning. By introducing the concept of a substrate, I am seeking to further operationalise this framing of the university. I define the substrate of a university at a given point in time to be its social constitution in terms of its membership, considered in relation to contextually pertinent social divisions and intersecting social groups, and the dominant structures,

practices, beliefs, ideologies, and social institutions that are embodied by that particular configuration of members. The former aspect of the substrate captures the variability in departures during war, and the latter aspect enables analysis of the shifts in systems of social interaction that can occur due to conflict. Drawing on analogies from both geology and biology, the concept of a substrate emphasises that the particular configuration of the university is both the result of path-dependent processes of historical constitution, like the creation of a stratum of rock through historical processes of accumulating material, and also the present foundation upon which the university will evolve and grow, akin to the idea of the underlying landscape upon which an organism lives and grows. Through such an approach, the historical legacies of conflict for universities can be understood not as disembodied forces that nudge institutional trajectories but as social group features that are passed on and maintained through the social reproduction of universities.

To help make use of the concept of the substrate for understanding selective recruitment in post-war Jaffna and the broader social reproduction of universities, it is valuable to consider two clarifying questions. First, which features of substrates are likely to be particularly relevant for understanding how post-war universities function and relate to post-war processes, and, second, how are substrates changed or maintained over time? With regards to the former question, it is useful to think in terms of university demographics, community and sub-community practices, and power structures. In relation to demographics, it is important, for instance, to think about who forms the university community in relation to salient social and political fracture lines in the surrounding society. Universities in South Africa, for example, still have high levels of inequality along racialised lines, due in substantial part to the legacies of Apartheid practices, which then impacts the experiences of those who go to study and work in those institutions (Case et al., 2018). The technical knowledge and skills of the staff population is also significant to consider, but, unlike human capital-centric approaches, here their presence or absence is just one feature among many of the demographics of a community. A substrate analysis might also investigate, for example, the distribution of those skills and knowledge among different community groups, or how opportunities for professional development are allocated. A further point is that, in addition to fundamentally affecting the functioning of universities, the social constitution of a university is, itself, significant for issues of post-war justice, such as those associated with the dimensions of representation and redistribution identified in the 4Rs framework (Novelli et al., 2017). This is because the constitution of a faculty can point to how educational and professional opportunities are distributed as well as influencing whose voices are given the weight of academic legitimacy in decision-making processes.

With respect to community practices, areas for examination include both those that correspond to the official, communicated remit of an institution and those that do not, and which may instead connect to the array of unrecognised, or misrecognised (Bourdieu, 1984; Grenfell, 2014), social functions that universities perform (Castells, 2001). In the former category, there are, for example, the processes around how staff are recruited and promoted as well as the decision-making processes around what gets taught and how. While these practices may be tied to legislated protocols, they can also rely on the community 'common sense', for instance by doing things in the way in which they have 'always been done' or in the manner which produces the preferred social outcome, as shall be seen for the case of recruitment in Jaffna. The realm of practices tied to what Willis (1977) calls the 'real social functions' of institutions can be similarly bound by community common sense. This includes practices related to the means by which collective action by the community can be organised and the ways of making or closing down space for critical dissent, as well as those concerned with the socialisation of both staff and students. Lastly, and dynamically tied to considerations of demographics and community practices, the power structures of university communities can be usefully explored in relation to the official hierarchies that exist, for instance with regards to academic titles, as well as in relation to the social hierarchies that sit alongside, and intertwine with, those official hierarchies. Furthermore, it is vital to consider how the relationships that constitute these power structures, for example between senior and junior faculty members, are formed, maintained, and broken, with practices of patronage being a key aspect of these links in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

Turning to the question of how substrates change or are maintained over time, it is necessary to think of the university as a distinct social space, with its own set of internal struggles, as well as a space that is embedded in a broader environment, which can act directly upon a university and can also serve to influence the social terrain upon which the internal struggles take place. Borrowing from Bourdieu's analysis of the French social order in *Distinction* (1984), the configuration of a university substrate at a particular point in time can be seen to reflect the 'balance sheet' of past struggles. As discussed in Chapter Two, the differential ability of groups and individuals to carry out such struggles is substantially dependent upon, although not wholly determined by, the balances of power between different actors, which in turn depends on factors such as their relative positions in power structures and their degree of access to different forms of capital. To conceptualise processes of internal struggle, it is also valuable to draw upon Henrik Vigh's concept of navigation. For Vigh, navigation "is the act of moving in an environment that is wavering and unsettled, and when used to illuminate social life it directs our attention to the fact that we move in social environments of actors and actants, individuals and institutions, that engage and move us as we move along" (2009, p.420).

Thinking in terms of navigation illustrates the way in which individuals and groups within universities can make their own moves within the context of a particular substrate, causing it to evolve over time. In more grounded terms, this might refer to the ability of individuals to speak out critically despite the practices around silencing or the social hierarchies in place. Such acts may then create space for others to speak up about previously stifled issues and to push for change, as was the case more broadly for the FUTA struggles discussed in the last chapter.

University substrates are also shaped by the ideological and material environments in which they operate and through their interactions and intersections with other social groups. At a near global level, the power structures and dominant practices in universities have been influenced, for example, by the wider dominance of neoliberal ideologies in higher education governance in recent decades, with the rise of the professional-managerial class within universities being just one example of the associated changes to university structures (Brown, 2015). Relatedly, organisations like the World Bank have acted to transform university substrates by, for instance, directing resources towards STEM activities and away from other faculty areas. The direct intersection and interaction of universities with political groups can also be seen to substantially alter substrates. The government-facilitated return of Sinhalese students to Jaffna University after the war and the post-election installation of party-affiliates in senior leadership positions in Sierra Leone, discussed in a later chapter, represent clear instances of stark changes to the social constitution of university due to the operation of such dynamics. Shifts in material circumstances, such as those associated with the economic decline under the one-party state in Sierra Leone, can also affect the form of substrates due to their impact on the material basis of certain forms of power, for example with regards to the ability of actors to maintain patronage relations.

University substrates evolve in relation to this mixture of struggle, intersection and interaction with other groups, and environmental shaping. A crucial point here for understanding post-war universities is that the ideological and material conditions and the social forces that generated and maintained a particular wartime substrate may no longer be fully in operation in the post-war period. This is especially relevant in cases like Jaffna, where the force that dominated and crafted the Jaffna environment over the course of much of the war, the LTTE, was effectively eliminated. As shall be seen, however, a change in environment does not mean that the power structures and practices generated through war suddenly disappear. Instead, those benefitting from entrenched power structures can find ways of ensuring the partial reproduction of those structures, for example by exerting influence over processes of recruitment.

### ***Jaffna, Entrenched Orders, and Selective Reconstruction***

In order to understand the issue of selective recruitment and related considerations about the ability of the university to engage with post-war recovery, this section examines the evolving situation of the faculty at the University of Jaffna over the course of the war and during the post-war period. I begin with a discussion of the changes in the composition of the faculty at Jaffna, highlighting how these acted to create a mono-ethnic university while also disrupting the generational reproduction of the institution. Next, I move to consider how the environment of suspicion under the LTTE, and the interrelated valorisation of loyalty to their particular cause, likely shaped the practices of faculty members as well as the nature of the power structures within the university. Finally, I reflect on how these three elements of the university substrate at the end of the war – composition, practices, and power structures – appear to have impacted upon the (re)construction of the faculty in the post-war period as well as the corresponding implications for the engagement of the university with post-war recovery processes.

#### ***Migration and the Making of a Mono-Ethnic University***

When Jaffna University began in the mid-1970s, the university, like others on the island, was comprised of students and staff from across ethnic groups. A retired administrator who had been at the University of Jaffna at the time, for instance, described how there were well-respected Sinhalese scholars at the university (JU9), with Dr Thiruvarangan similarly commenting that a “notable aspect of the University of Jaffna in the 1970s was that it had arguably the most progressive Sinhala Department in the country at the time” (Thiruvarangan, 2016). The departure of Sinhalese scholars and students following violence in 1977 and the early 1980s and the Eviction of the Muslims in 1990 (Thiranagama, 2011), however, served to dramatically shift the constitution of the university towards being a mono-ethnic Tamil institution. With regards to the first of the two, disturbances in Jaffna in 1977, following police provocation of the Tamil community, and the subsequent anti-Tamil pogroms that took place in the South, led to the government no longer sending Sinhalese students to Jaffna (Hoole, 2001; Thiruvarangan, 2016). The broader escalation of tensions in the lead up to the war, including the burning of Jaffna Public Library in 1981, ultimately meant the departure of all Sinhalese members of the university. As well as affecting the availability of staff and the diversity of voices at the university, the absence of Sinhalese staff and students can also be considered in terms of the language mix at the university, with the fact that Muslims also generally use Tamil as their mother tongue meaning that the institution became less linguistically diverse.

The Eviction of the Muslims in 1990 by the LTTE then left the university as an ethnic Tamil space. Pointing to the size and speed of the displacement, Thiranagama notes that “70,000–80,000 Muslims had been forcibly cleared from the five districts of the north that the LTTE (at the time) controlled in October 1990 within 24–48 hours” (2011, p.106). A lecturer who had been a student at the university at the time commented on the scale of the departure from Jaffna, with his batch of 97 students having only 14 left after the exodus of the Muslims (JU4), with part of this drop coming also from the departure of many Tamil students for the south and east. Beyond the numbers, departures of this magnitude can also lead to the reconfiguration of ethnic categories themselves. Sharika Thiranagama’s (2011) exploration of the experiences and identities of Muslims who had been forced to move from the north of Sri Lanka, for example, articulates how the displacement led to the constitution of a new identity category of ‘Northern Muslims’, which was connected to, but distinct from, the pre-existing ethno-religious Muslim label. In contrast to homogenising narratives of brain drain or human capital flight, therefore, these episodes of departure strongly emphasise that the wartime creation of absence in university communities can occur in very different ways for different ethnic or religious groups.

In addition to inter-ethnic considerations in Sri Lanka, it is important to recognise the intra-ethnic violence that took place in Jaffna and the effects this had on the university community. The documentary *Demons in Paradise* (2017), for instance, contains conversations with former members of different Tamil nationalist militant groups who highlight the inter-group killings and how some members were forced to flee Jaffna and go into hiding. As one of the key sites of militancy, the university was also affected by these contestations. As one Professor at Jaffna described, student members of different groups were targeted during power struggles, while staff members who took sides could also be affected (JU6). The LTTE’s struggle for dominance over the civilian population in Jaffna and its efforts to eliminate rivals acted to quell dissent and remove or silence those who would criticise or contest their actions (Lilja and Hultman, 2011). Rajan and Kirupa Hoole, a couple working in the university who had been instrumentally involved with the work of documenting human rights abuses by multiple groups during the conflict, described to me how they were informed that the LTTE was looking for them and how they were forced to stay away from Jaffna (JU3). This occurred in the wake of the LTTE’s assassination of Rajini Thiranagama, another founding member of the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) group. Such assassinations and forced departures also constitute further examples of how deaths from conflict are often not random but rather frequently correspond to important characteristics of those targeted, including political affiliations or a willingness to speak out the injustices of conflict, with Rajini being one of those who had documented and communicated about LTTE violence during the war. In this sense,

universities can also be selectively hollowed out in relation to significant fine-grained characteristics that go beyond larger ethnic or other identities.

When discussing the impact of the conflict, and of pre-war decline, on the constitution of faculties in Sri Lanka, another aspect to emerge in conversations was the disruption of the generational continuity and generational structures in the academy. For those in Jaffna, the periods of violence that had preceded the beginning of the war had also led to the emigration of many Tamils. As well as constituting significant departures in their own right, these pre-war migrations meant that there were already established networks in countries such as the US, UK, and Canada which facilitated further departures once the war started (Jayawardena, 2020). The cumulative effect of such large-scale migration is to thin out entire generations of communities, including academic communities. As Dr Guruparan, Head of the Law department at Jaffna, explained about the contemporary environment, “You see a senior crop of people... operating, then you see a major gap. One generation that has either left or been washed out and then you see completely young people. So, the sort of institutional continuity, the generational continuity is massively affected” (JU7). This gap appears to be evident in the distribution of staff at different levels at Jaffna University in comparison with other established universities in Sri Lanka. Just under 9% of Jaffna University’s permanent academic staff were at the level of Professor or Associate Professor in 2010, while the same figures for the universities of Colombo and Kelaniya were 16% and 23% respectively (UGC, 2011). By 2019 the gap is even wider, with figures of 6%, 21%, and 21% for Jaffna, Colombo, and Kelaniya respectively (UGC, 2020a).

Part of this dynamic is that, again, the nature of departure is non-random. In his work on the intersection of socio-economic status and migration potential, Van Hear, for example, notes “that the form of migration and ultimately its outcomes are shaped by the resources that would-be migrants can muster” and that, in turn, “the capacity to mobilize such resources is largely determined by socio-economic background or class” (2014, p.100). This and other research on academic migration during conflict (Barclay, 2002; IIEP, 2010) suggests that those higher up the academic ladder and those with the strongest academic records are likely to be those most able to migrate. This resonates with conversations in Jaffna that point to the loss of the cream of the academic crop during the war, including those who would have likely gone on to occupy senior posts, which can be understood as disrupting the inter-generational reproduction of the faculty.

### *The Shaping Effects of War*

The examples of departure and change above highlight how the dynamics of conflict can drive many scholars to leave universities during war, affecting the composition of university communities in ways that I capture through the concept of the changing university community substrate. Staying at an institution, however, does not mean stasis. Kalyvas's study (2006) of the nature of violence within civil wars, for instance, illustrates how pre-existing personal and community grudges can become imbricated with logics of violence, tying these smaller-scale relationships to the broader dynamics of conflict and potentially upending social hierarchies. The same dynamics that drive departure fundamentally shape the lived realities of those who continue to work at universities during conflict, altering which practices form part of university community life as well as how institutions are socially structured. For Jaffna, I focus on wartime practices around discussion, dissent, and loyalty and related shifts in the institution's social structure as these dimensions of the substrate appear particularly significant for the post-war reconstruction of the university, which I discuss at the end of this section.

In the early days of the university in the 1970s the Jaffna campus was described as a place of vibrant discussion, with the expression and contestation of different views about the situation of Tamils and the way forward (Sritharan, 2010). This is evident, for example, in the proliferation of different political and militant groups on the campus itself. This situation changed, however, once the LTTE rose to dominance and began to exert its authority over social life. Under the LTTE, for instance, demonstrations of loyalty to the group and their cause could form an important part of survival strategies for individuals and households. Satkunanathan describes, for example, how "a young woman who was forcibly recruited stated it was not possible to hide from the LTTE to escape recruitment, as neighbours would inform the LTTE. This was likely done to prove their loyalty to the LTTE and thereby prevent the forced recruitment of their own family members" (2016, p.420). The other side of this dynamic was the denunciation of those who were deemed to be traitors (Thiranagama, 2010), for whom the punishment would often be torture and then death. As Terpstra and Frerks note, "The boundaries of the categories that defined treasonous acts in areas under LTTE control grew wider creating an ever-looming possibility of destructive punishment" (2017, p.291). The results of living in such an environment were that "Keeping quiet, conforming to expectations, and being invisible thus [became] ways of surviving in everyday situations" (Brun, 2008, p.410).

These changes were deeply felt at the university. A retired administrator who had been present at the university since its inception spoke about the way that the "democracy or intellectual freedom" of the university was lost, with dissenters unable to speak openly amid fear of violent retaliations (JU9). The LTTE's use of spies on campus to inform on dissenters deepened the

environment of suspicion and further stifled free speech. The environment of suspicion and the dangers of being branded a traitor by the LTTE (Thiranagama, 2010) served to further shape those who had stayed, by emphasising a certain loyalty to the LTTE and its cause as a prime virtue and, relatedly, bringing an atmosphere on the campus that pushed for conformation to the LTTE's ideology and practices. As Ahilan Kadirgamar, a lecturer at Jaffna after the war, described, "The LTTE's control of the university for two decades was a kind of militarisation" and that kind of militarisation "set the context for an exclusive Tamil nationalist politics in the university" (JU2). Speaking to the effects of this environment, he further explained that a "generation of lecturers were living under these wartime conditions of militarisation. A very brutal environment... assassinations and so on. So maybe they just got used to keeping their head down and not getting involved in anything and maybe... that culture has continued after the war as well" (JU2). As Kopalasingham Sritharan, a founding member of the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna), put it, the university "became subservient to the LTTE's politics purely as a means of survival" (2010). These comments point to the way in which the war meant a shift from an environment that enabled contestation and debate to one in which the narrative espoused in Jaffna around the Tamil struggle and the role of the LTTE became substantially homogenised and where deviation from that narrative was harshly punished.

### *Structuring the Faculty*

The dislocations created by war frequently mean that ad hoc and temporary measures may be used to fill gaps and forms of personal or even military power, as opposed to legal-bureaucratic power, may become the determining force in appointments, providing avenues for stacking the faculty along particular lines. In this way, the departure of academics from Jaffna University appears to have created space for the culture and practices described above to be more firmly embedded through the hiring of new staff. Recruitment came to be aligned, in part, with the priorities of the new social environment (JU6; JU10), which altered the social hierarchies in the university. One aspect of this is that the performance of LTTE loyalty became a central part of power dynamics on campus over the course of the war, interacting with who might be considered a 'good candidate' for the university. Professor Jeevan Hoole, who had tried to return to Jaffna as Vice-Chancellor during the war but was forced away by the LTTE, explained, "In Jaffna during the Tiger period, you either were with the Tigers or were a traitor. People who didn't support the Tigers went quiet. Those that supported the Tigers became VCs and that and this. Ironically, although it's the president who appoints [the VC], the Tigers made sure all three [candidates] were amenable to them" (OT4). These comments were echoed by other interviewees in Sri Lanka who spoke about how certain staff had been

brought into the university by the LTTE during their period of control and how these staff continued to occupy powerful positions within the institution. As one professor summarised, the LTTE “had their own loyal [people], both staff and students” (JU6). This also resonates with Klem’s work on LTTE involvement in the management of civil servants in the East of the country (2012), pointing to the significant power that the LTTE were able to wield over the selection of state employees.

The shifting of the construction of the good candidate, even if not absolutely, likely allowed for those who were otherwise academically underqualified to access positions at the university by appealing to the alternative standard associated with loyalty to the LTTE cause. Speaking about the situation at Eastern University, which shows similarities with Jaffna in this respect, Jeevan Hoole notes that “several senior academics left for Colombo en masse. Soon Eastern University was left with no one at the rank of professor and even very few PhD-holders. In the absence of qualified and experienced personnel, the pool of unqualified contenders and aspirants to new appointments grew. Some competitors became informants – going to the LTTE with tales of other candidates not supporting the LTTE’s goals of a separate state and so on” (2007, p.515). A significant part of this dynamic at Jaffna appears to have been the way in which academics, once established in the faculty hierarchy, could use their position to bring in young candidates who would support them, resulting in entrenched power structures which would last beyond the end of the war. What these points serve to suggest is how actors within the university were able, and willing, to navigate the dynamics of the wartime environment in order to gain access to, and substantiate, powerful positions within the university community. That power could then be used to try to shape the substrate of the institution in ways that would sustain the position of those actors within the community, even beyond the end of the wartime environment that had enabled their positioning in the first place.

### *Shaping Reconstruction*

Post-war recruitment at the University of Jaffna has been a site of ongoing struggle, providing a powerful example of how a university’s substrate can affect how its faculty develops after a war. A key feature of conversations about staffing in Jaffna was discussion of the ways in which academics has faced barriers in their attempts to return or move to Jaffna after the war. Jaffna University Science Teachers’ Association (JUSTA) documented multiple cases of irregular recruitment practices, which included political interference in the choice of candidates and the use of practices to frustrate the applications of some candidates. As a 2014 report put it, JUSTA “found blatant, endemic abuse across several university departments and units in the selection of academic and non-academic staff” (JUSTA, 2014). Tamils who had left during

the war and tried to return often found their way blocked by administrative hurdles and shifting goalposts while favoured candidates saw their path to a position cleared of such obstructions. Younger Tamil staff members who had been working or educated elsewhere in the country also sometimes had to fight for their place in the university (Colombo Telegraph, 2017). One of these academics, Dr Thiruvarangan, had only just joined the university before my visit in 2019 despite having applied for permanent posts at Jaffna since 2010 (JU1). He spoke about the subtlety of discrimination in recruitment with, for example, interviews being postponed for some candidates that were unable to attend the suggested date but not for other candidates. While the fact that Dr Thiruvarangan was able to join the university shows that these barriers in recruitment are not absolute, the prevalence of incidents demonstrates that they, nevertheless, likely constitute a significant means of directing the post-war reconstitution of the faculty and, by extension, of shaping how the institution interacts with issues of peacebuilding, development, and social change.

Engaging with the historical social evolution of the faculty at Jaffna, encapsulated through the concept of the substrate, allows for delineating two important factors underpinning the recruitment struggles at the university. First, practices of selective recruitment and malpractice can be seen as ways in which the social order entrenched by the war has worked to maintain the extant power structures in the university by avoiding the recruitment of those who might challenge the legitimacy of established academics and drawing in those who will act as supporters. On the former, cases of recruitment malpractice were repeatedly described as discrimination against merit. The JUSTA report highlights, for example, that there have been strident instances of discrimination where candidates with higher levels of qualifications or larger numbers of publications were rejected in favour of those who were clearly weaker candidates (JUSTA, 2014). As Dr Arivalzahan, a former union activist at the university, described, those who are part of the entrenched networks are careful to avoid bringing in talented academics so as to avoid challenges and safeguard their positions (JU10).

In place of the more academically qualified candidates, there appears to be a corresponding tendency to bring in young local graduates who are more likely to support the existing structures in the university. In the words of the JUSTA report (2014), “Too frequently... our young graduates who excel in their fields are treated with contempt and made to doubt their ability and worth. This is because sycophancy towards those in authority, rather than merit, is the route to academic employment”. Underscoring this point in relation to the issues of recruitment malpractice at Jaffna, the JUSTA report also emphasises that “The root of [the] abuse is both political and personal patronage which operates at all levels” of the university system (JUSTA, 2014). While patronage in public institutions is a broader issue (De Silva, 1978; Little and Hettige, 2013), the form of these practices echoes those around performing

loyalty and avoiding visible dissent during the war, with prospects for employment, as well as professional progression, in the post-war period being similarly tied to showing allegiance, to both people and ideologies, and not 'rocking the boat'. This is likely to have problematic implications for the functioning of the university due to, for instance, qualified academics being turned away who could have otherwise helped to raise the quality of teaching and research at the institution. As will be discussed further in Chapter Seven, it also feeds into dynamics that limit the potential for critical voice and for critical reflection on the conflict and issues of peacebuilding and development.

A second aspect of recruitment struggles at Jaffna is how selective recruitment appears to advance, and to be intertwined with, the ideological agendas and practices associated with the social order entrenched by the war. Returning to the idea of the conflict affecting how the idea of the 'good candidate' is constructed, whether or not candidates aligned themselves with the particular conception of the Tamil university ascribed to by the existing network of powerful academics in the university seems to have become an important marker of suitability for joining the university community. One head of department described, for example, how some staff at the university would resist recruiting anyone who was opposed to the Tamil national struggle (JU7). Paraphrasing the associated ideology, a former administrator explained that the viewpoint connected with this resistance was that "Throughout the history Tamils have been treated as second class citizens so all the Tamils feel that this a university for Tamils. It's our property. Our university. We are the people" (JU9). Deviating from the avowed secularism of the LTTE, constructing a particular image of a Tamil university also extended to the domain of religion, with barriers put in place to facilitate the exclusion of, for example, Christians from the Vice-Chancellor position (Colombo Telegraph, 2017; JU3; OT4). Pointing to the way in which such considerations might be implicitly included in decision making, the 2014 JUSTA report documents how recruitment schedules have been used, for example, which weight a collection of non-academic criteria such as 'attitudes' much higher than relevant qualifications and knowledge. One such schema, for instance, suggested that academic qualifications and subject knowledge should be worth 16 out of 100 points while the group of non-academic traits should be worth 60 points (JUSTA, 2014).

The practices and structures of this particular instantiation of the Tamil university appear to be closely linked with the substrate developed over the course of the war. The creation of a mono-ethnic institution during the war, as well as the continuing power of ideologies around Tamil ownership of public institutions connected with the broader project of secession, served to legitimise certain Tamil claims to the university space and to delegitimise those of people who did not fit the mould. Referencing the notion of ideological biases in recruitment, one Northern Professor articulated that only those who could 'toe the line' with regards to a certain sort of

'Tamil mind set' were accepted into the university without resistance (JU6). What this points to is that performing loyalty to the Tamil-nationalist cause, which has itself been somewhat reshaped by the end of the war, remains a key practice of belonging in the post-war university. Taking the idea of a continuity in practices and structures further, a female academic at the university noted how such dynamics can be viewed, in part, as the war being continued by other means, with resistance to change in areas such as staff recruitment being a way to perform the Tamil nationalist struggle in the post-war space (JU15). Providing another example of this continuation of wartime practices in the post-war space, she also highlighted that staff continue to utilise the word 'traitor', which formed such a powerful part of the LTTE's practice of power over the Jaffna population (Thiranagama, 2010), to describe those who, for example, engaged in academic collaboration with people in the South. Through the continuation of the war within the university through such practices, the social environment by which the extant power structures were generated can be reproduced, albeit imperfectly. By this process, those in positions of power within the university community can be maintained there, with the strong credentials they possess in the field of fighting the 'Tamil struggle', for example, providing an ongoing source of legitimation.

As has been illustrated throughout, these practices can also be consequential for how the university functions. Further to throwing up obstacles for highly qualified candidates, for instance, they can also act as incentives for those who do not share the dominant ideology to leave the university. Dr Arivalzahan, who had fought against the discrimination in recruitment from the inside, spoke about considering leaving the university in response to the way in which established academics in Jaffna were continually pushing for the university to be a Tamil, Hindu university (JU10). Similar to the issues around exclusionary memorialisation noted in the next chapter, ongoing attempts to maintain a form of Tamil-nationalist ideological control over the university also act to limit the space for recognising the grievances of other communities, such as the Muslims forced out from Jaffna during the war, and thus also the possibilities for peacebuilding on campus. Ultimately, these practices constrain what the university can become in the post-war period and, thus, constrain the ways in the university can engage with post-war recovery.

### ***Applying the Substrate***

The example of the University of Jaffna highlights how engaging with the social history of a university community, encapsulated in the form of a generated *substrate*, can yield important insights into how that university functions and, thus, how it interacts with issues of conflict,

social change, and post-war recovery. In this section, I begin to illustrate the wider validity and utility of such an approach beyond the particular case of Jaffna. In the first part of the section, therefore, I comment on key aspects of the social histories of Sierra Leonean universities at the beginning of the post-war period. In doing so, I point to the degree of contrast with the situation in post-war Jaffna while, simultaneously, indicating the usefulness of the substrate approach for also capturing the distinct features of institutions in Sierra Leone, underscoring the concept's broad applicability. The second part of the section proceeds to discuss likely commonalities and dimensions of difference across different post-war contexts. It also highlights the importance of considering the multidirectional links between university substrates and social and political forces, returning to the idea of universities as embedded but distinct social spaces.

#### *Economic Decline, Conflict, and the Faculty in Sierra Leone*

As with the University of Jaffna, migration played an important role in shaping the constitution of the post-war faculty in Sierra Leone. Unlike Jaffna, however, the story of departure from the Sierra Leonean institutions, is not clearly marked by selective violence against particular ethnic or religious groups in society, such as occurred with the Eviction of the Muslims in 1990. Instead, departures from the universities in Sierra Leone are best understood as occurring in response to the political and economic environment under the one-party state and the broader disruption and threat of the war (Paracka, 2001). The economic decline of the 1980s encouraged migration more broadly, with academics being among those with the capacity to leave (Banya, 1991). Across a similar period, the political repression associated with the desire of Siaka Stevens to build and maintain personal power selectively hollowed out the faculty. For example, the story of Mohamed Sorie Forna, a physician, academic, and politician, highlights the way in which those who stood against the Stevens regime were either forced into silence, pushed to leave the country, or faced detention and death (Forna, 2002).

The hardships of the war then further squeezed the faculty, leading to more departures from those with the economic and social resources to emigrate. Encapsulating this double hit to the higher education sector, Professor Yormah, a former member of the University of Sierra Leone, commented that "Those who were able to stand the vice of politics, bad politics, could not stand the gun" (UoSL13). Similar to Jaffna, this extended period of migration can be seen to have contributed to a generation gap in the universities. The post-war faculties consist of a small cadre of professors on the verge of retirement, some of whom had chosen to return from abroad, alongside an expanded group of younger and more junior academics, with relatively few qualified staff in the ranks in between. For 2009/10, for example, across the ten core tertiary institutions in the country, of which the University of Sierra Leone and Njala University are the largest, there were just 20 professors and 9 associate professors out of the nearly

2000 permanent and temporary staff (World Bank, 2013). Unlike Sri Lanka and despite the established presence of ethno-regional political contestation, ethnicity did not form a major fault line during the war, with, correspondingly, no clear evidence that departures from universities had been significantly ethnically skewed.

The wartime experiences of Njala University are instructive for illustrating the multi-faceted nature of wartime displacement and the related diversity in the ways university community practices are affected by conflict. As Poppel (2015) notes, the Njala campus was the site of a number of battles during the war, and over the course of the war Njala was forced to relocate first to Freetown from its rural base and then within Freetown itself. While my initial questions probed the challenges this engendered, staff spoke to me of the openings that occurred associated with the displacement. Coming with the disruption was the chance to build new connections in the capital and for staff to better understand the role that their students were playing there, particularly in terms of school teachers. The period of dislocation also represented an opportunity to reshape and grow, with student enrolment and the number of schools increasing during the displacement (NJ2; NJ9). This period of 'exile' was talked about by another senior staff member as fostering adaptability and innovation in the university. This is not to say that the relocation to Freetown did not pose difficulties. As noted earlier, it was highlighted in conversations that the move increased the potential for staff to access other employment opportunities that would not be available in Njala or Bo, resulting in further staff departures (NJ2). Nevertheless, as with Thiranagama's exploration of Northern Muslims, these comments illustrate the way in which war can change the self-understanding of a community, in this case a university community, with the necessity of adaptation during displacement, for example, then being reflected in descriptions and performances of what the university is after the war.

With the ending of the war, there was a need to re-staff the faculties in Sierra Leone, both in light of the departures and deaths due to the war and the expanding numbers of students. The infrastructural issues, lack of finances, and general work conditions in post-war environments, however, means that attracting staff from other institutions can be difficult (NJ1). Speaking to the related changes in the composition of the staff in Sierra Leonean universities, Professor Koso-Thomas, who served as Chairman of the Tertiary Education Commission, lamented that "They had the cream of the West African intelligentsia here, but the war drove everybody away" (UoSL18). Although there were specific schemes initiated to deal with this situation, such as in the case of the Nigerian academics who supported in Sierra Leone, these types of approaches to staffing are likely to be short-term, with the Nigerian staff, for example, conducting the work while on sabbatical or other leave. Similar to Jaffna, universities in Sierra Leone have, therefore, appear to have leant heavily on their own recent graduates as a means

to repopulate the academy. The power structures in Sierra Leone's universities and the prevalence of patronage politics have also led to the potential for the filtering of new staff according to the preferences and politics of the existing faculty, although the underlying dynamics are less clear than in the case of Jaffna and the visible forces working around ethnicity and Tamil nationalist ideology,

Referring to the reliance on the recruitment of one's former students, a university librarian described the situation as incestuous (UoSL4), while Professor Yormah commented that the universities were monolithic (UoSL13), with both then pointing out that the creation of a monolithic university can be seen as detrimental in a number of ways. Concerns around monolithic universities in Sierra Leone included the implications for the relationships between new staff and students. As discussed in the next chapter, powerful social clubs exist in all of the country's public universities. Related to the fact that the bonds of membership can continue after graduation, it was suggested that the affiliation of recent graduates who are now staff members can result in their involvement in pressuring new students to join clubs, with one Fourah Bay student describing to me directly about how a lecturer had pressured him to join a club (UoSL2). In the examples given by interviewees, the newfound authority of staff mixes with the social bonds that were present with fellow students from other years in order to generate a potentially confusing landscape of mixed familiarity and hierarchy in social interactions. Issues such as corruption and sexual harassment were also suggested to be tied to the blurred boundaries of staff-student relationships in Sierra Leone.

One issue raised in Sierra Leone is the overly homogenous academic atmosphere and a lack of diffusion of ideas and practices, both in academic and administrative terms. Professor Yormah explained that "The university has become monolithic, in the sense that we are just inbreeding Sierra Leonean students, Sierra Leonean staff and no foreign staff to come and mix and give us that healthy blend... exchange of ideas and culture, which is what a university is all about" (UoSL13). This can be contrasted with the earlier days of the universities, when academics and students from other countries, predominantly other West African nations, the US, and the UK, would be present on campuses (Paracka, 2001). An important contextual factor here is the small number of full-fledged universities in Sierra Leone, meaning that there is less circulation of people and ideas between different institutional environments within the country than in places such as Sri Lanka which have a greater number of national institutions. While the transformative effects of contact at universities may be easy to overstate (Allport, 1954; Ohanyan and Lewis, 2005), the cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices, nevertheless, remains an important avenue of academic and institutional change. The lack of mixing, therefore, represents a potential means by which transformation can be stifled, affecting the ability of universities to act as spaces that generate new modes of social transformation.

### *Context and Complementary Considerations*

Contrasting the case of Jaffna with the key features of the Sierra Leonean universities highlights the way in which wartime and post-war substrates can possess significant commonalities as well as bringing to light important dimensions of difference. The presence of generational disruptions in university structures due to extended periods of displacement and death is a feature of both cases that appears to also have wider resonance. Barclay's research on the faculty situation at the University of Liberia over the course of that country's conflict, for example, finds that "the higher the academic level, the higher the brain drain" (2002, p.45). As Barclay notes, this shift can partly be seen in the changes in the proportions of the University of Liberia's staff with different qualifications, with faculty with doctorates constituting 26.6 percent of the total in 1982 compared with 5.3 percent in 2001 while the figures for those with only a bachelor's degree swung from 1.1% in 1982 to 37.4% in 2001 (2002). While the relationships between junior and senior faculty will vary between cases based on, for example, the institutional systems in place, the difficulty of recruiting senior staff from abroad in post-war contexts and the power differentials between surviving senior staff and recent graduates turned junior staff suggest that the issues observed in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka with regards to patronage and political support dynamics would likely find fertile terrain in post-war faculties. Similarly, it can be expected that the disruption of processes of generational transmission in faculties is a common feature of conflict-affected universities, due to the departure of those carrying academic and institutional knowledge. As Rappleye and Un (2018) note for the case of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, for instance, the total rupture caused by the violence, which frequently targeted educated individuals, meant a serious dearth of staff who could work to train and pass on knowledge to the next generations, which had long-lasting implications with regards to, for example, the balance between teaching and research.

While noting such commonalities is valuable for interrogating the significance of broadly occurring features of university substrates, such as strong faculty stratification, the power of the substrate approach lies in its encapsulation of variation and path dependence. This pushes against, for instance, the sort of 'blueprint' approach that Rappleye and Un highlight with regards to the World Bank's involvement in Cambodian higher education (2018). A first point of contrast between the cases can be seen in the depth of social history available for an old institution like Fourah Bay College as compared to Jaffna, which has much less pre-war history to draw upon. A particularly salient difference is that while both Sierra Leone and Jaffna experienced forms of differential departure in relation to seniority, Jaffna also saw social fracture lines, predominantly but not exclusively around ethnicity, entangled with faculty

migration in ways that Sierra Leone did not. Other cases, for example that of the University of Pristina in Kosovo, show that there can also be diversity in the routes to such stark changes in demographics. Prior to the war the University of Pristina was bilingual and served both the Albanian and Serbian communities. Over the course of the war, however, the institution split into an Albanian-language university and a Serbian-language university, with a corresponding split in the ethno-linguistic constitution of the university communities (Heath, 2009). In Sri Lanka itself, there is significant variation between the experiences at different institutions on the island with regards to, for example, the different forms of militarisation that were in place at universities in the South as compared to the North and East. While the war had a broad dampening effect on, for instance, critical discussion, particularly around the 2<sup>nd</sup> JVP insurgency and during the Rajapaksa government towards the end of the conflict, there was, nonetheless, generally a much more open environment in the South, with institutions being more able to carry on with international exchanges and to engage in critical scholarship about the war.

The variations in the creation of university substrates are important to examine as they can generate effects on the evolution of post-war faculties and the university functioning that are, correspondingly, tied to these path-dependent processes of formation. In Jaffna, it was seen that the resistance to recruitment has likely impeded transformation of the post-war faculty in terms of the technical knowledge and skills available as well as the ideological or cultural practices present in the community. This has inhibited the ability of the university to recover and build its teaching and research activities as well as for the staff community to collectively reflect on the role the institution might play in bringing different groups together. Contrasting with a relatively homogenised entrenched order in Jaffna, Johnson and Hoba's study of the rebuilding of a university in Cote d'Ivoire (2015) highlights that wartime fighting along social fracture lines had exacerbated the same inter-group divisions within the university leading to corresponding contestation around the processes of reconstruction. In Sierra Leone, the social fracture lines around, for example, ethnicity were not a dominant element in wartime dynamics and, correspondingly, did not produce similar substrate patterns, in this respect, to either Sri Lanka or Cote d'Ivoire, with polarisation on and between campuses emerging from more indirect effects of the war on broader political dynamics.

Related to this last point, a further aspect of variation between universities is that the substrate is not a static object as universities are fundamentally embedded in wider social, political, and economic environments that can act to shape universities while also being shaped by them. The tense co-existence of different factions and networks at Jaffna University, for example, suggests that while the shaping effects of the LTTE's wartime actions and post-war legacies have been hegemonic in many ways, they have been neither omnipotent nor omnipresent.

Internal contestations, diasporic return efforts, ongoing migration patterns, and the strong arm of the government have also acted upon the formation of the faculty in the post-war period. Similarly, an array of external factors have also influenced the path of university development in Sierra Leone. A Head Librarian, for example described how the “post-war created a lot more avenues and possibilities for employment with all the international NGOs”, which then also interacted with the staffing situation within faculties (UoSL4). In both cases, features of the global environment can also play an important role. Access to postgraduate scholarships, for example, can draw promising graduates abroad, with an established tendency for many to then stay and work in their host country (Altbach et al., 2009; Cloete et al., 2015; Jua and Nyamnjoh, 2002). In addition to emigration, universities also have to contend with graduates, and faculty, choosing other sectors that are more lucrative or more secure (Ishengoma, 2008). Interviewees commented that Njala’s wartime displacement to Freetown, for instance, opened up more opportunities for such moves to other roles. Just as tracing the formation of substrates in post-war universities requires engaging with the wider wartime environment through which university communities evolved, understanding the post-war development faculties requires interrogating the interaction between a substrate and its contemporary surrounding environment.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the question of how to understand the effects of conflict on universities, using the concept of the *substrate* as a means to speak to how the very social fabric of university communities can be disrupted by war and how that can have limiting implications for post-war contributions. In contrast to human capital and institutional capacity framings, what the substrate approach offers is a recognition of the multidimensionality of the changes to universities over the course of wars. Rather than seeing universities in post-war contexts through the lens of a paucity of disembodied technical skills and knowledge, which can correspondingly be remedied by the ‘copy-and-paste’ application of training programmes (Rappleye and Un, 2018), I view them as sites of rich social complexity, where academic knowledge and skills are inextricably bound to the people who carry them, the structures these people inhabit, and the practices they perform. As shown by the example of Jaffna, acknowledging the importance of such a view leads to the further recognition that the ability of universities to contribute to post-war recovery (Milton and Barakat, 2016) is, to some extent, determined by these social configurations and is not simply dependent on, for example, the average level of qualifications that a faculty may possess.

Through the coming chapters, I continue to engage with the concept of the substrate and the pictures of social complexity that it brings into focus. While the emphasis of this chapter has largely been on faculty, university communities, of course, do not just consist of staff, with the most changeable part of who constitutes a university being the student population. Who is able to access university is also often deeply intertwined with the broader politics of education, potentially serving as a key avenue for external influence over the constitution of universities, as seen in the standardisation processes in Sri Lanka in the 1970s. While the access aspect of the social configuration of universities receives significant attention, including in work focussing on the post-war distribution of educational opportunities (Novelli et al., 2017), the structures and practices of university communities often go neglected, especially when stepping outside the classroom walls. Building on the insights of this chapter, the following chapter, therefore, turns to address student populations in post-war universities, their links with wider social and political forces, and the consequences of their divisions, and unities, for questions of conflict and political mobilisation.

## Chapter Six

### Dividing and Uniting the Student Community

University students have often been at the leading edge of struggles for social transformation. The significance of student populations for social and political change is well evidenced by their role in protests for democratisation and decolonisation as well as in their involvement in the outbreak of conflicts (Altbach, 1984; Altbach, 2007; Luescher et al., 2016; Nkinyangi, 1991; Rukato, 2020). The ascendance of knowledge economy and human capital discourses in education policy, however, has seen the obscuration and marginalisation of these dimensions of student life amidst the narrow framing of universities as sites where individuals are socialised for skilled economic labour in pursuit of individual financial gain and national economic growth (Brown, 2015; Molla and Gale, 2014). Using the lens of university substrates, I bring back into focus the social and political dynamics of student collectivities and their implications for contributions to post-war processes. While it is common to refer to the social world within universities as a microcosm of the society in which they are embedded (Johnson, 2013; Nyamnjoh and Jua, 2002), I show that the reality is that universities are spaces of social effervescence where distinct social formations can occur. The chapter, therefore, expands the concept of the substrate by providing important examples of the distinct social features that can be embodied by universities as social groups and by illustrating how, even in transient student communities, power structures can be reproduced and practices can persist, such that these features can continue to condition university functioning across different generations of university members. Crucially, in doing so, I make visible ways in which these features can limit the effectiveness of the mechanisms of university contribution to post-war recovery highlighted in Chapter Two and comment on how some such mechanisms may be grounded in characterisations of universities that do not sufficiently reckon with the actual experiences of student communities.

After a brief discussion of key ways of thinking about the relationship between student populations, politics, and social change, the chapter proceeds in two parts. In the first two sections, I consider the form and functioning of student groups in Sierra Leone and ragging practices in Sri Lanka. Starting with Sierra Leone, I discuss the camp system that has emerged within universities, with the division of most student clubs between two main groups: the black

camp and the white camp. While these camps and clubs perform a range of valuable social functions for their members, they also compete for dominance in student elections, with the environment of long-running political interference in student politics contributing to the potential for such competition to break out into violence. In contrast to the practices of division in Sierra Leone, ragging and Sri Lankan student politics can be seen to centre more closely on ideologies of unity and conformity. The forms of violence and humiliation used to fashion this appearance of unity, however, rely on structures of division and stratification and can create oppressive university environments, with damaging consequences for the notion of higher education as a space of critical discussion. These cases suggest that the structures and practices of student populations can, in themselves, be significant factors in post-war dynamics of recovery and conflict generation. By pointing to the powerful influence of student groups across different domains of university life, this chapter acts to contest the reliance on demarcated educational activities, such as classroom-based learning or conflict management workshops, as the primary sites of relevance for post-war socialisation towards peace.

The second part of the chapter brings the two cases into conversation with each other and delineates three aspects of student communities that are particularly relevant to understanding the role of universities in post-war recovery and social change. In the first two sub-sections, I argue that the array of social practices and social functions within these groups have the potential to contribute to the entrenchment of social fracture lines, highlighting also the complex significance of social networks, for instance, which is missed by narrow human capital approaches. Next, noting the links between student groups and political forces in both countries, I contend that the particular sets of social structures and practices related to processes of differentiation and conformity in student communities can constitute forms of *political socialisation*, which can then serve to hinder, as well as facilitate, student mobilisation for substantive social and political change. Finally, I argue that the dynamics of division and unity inculcated by these socialisation practices can dampen the potential for critical voice on campuses and can reproduce separating lines between different populations within universities, thereby undermining the creation of university communities that can work towards reconciliation and the critical exploration of pathways to positive peace.

As with the discussions in the previous chapter, the nature of student politics in both countries means that the workings of student clubs and groups involved in ragging are not often readily available in documents or other sources, with this chapter, correspondingly, drawing significantly on fieldwork interactions with students and the insights of interviewees. In Sierra Leone, hanging out with students in my shared accommodation in Freetown and meeting students in and around the Fourah Bay College campus led to discussions about student life and 'clubism'. These eventually provided an opportunity to interview recent graduates like

Musa, who proudly described his experiences as a club member and commented on his ongoing connections to clubs. While no longer identifying as student group members, some interviewees were, nonetheless, able to draw upon a diverse range of past and present roles when discussing the situation of student groups. For example, Dr Lakkoh, an energetic and enterprising academic at the University of Sierra Leone, spoke to me about his personal experiences as a post-war student union leader, offered insights utilising his academic training and knowledge, and outlined features of contemporary student life based on his work engaging with student welfare issues. This latter set of interactions were particularly helpful in Sri Lanka, where my ability to speak to current students was constrained by language barriers. Older academics were able to contrast what they knew about contemporary ragging practices with their own experiences in previous decades, while younger academics could comment more directly on the contemporary 'rag', with both groups often layering in analytical insights about its forms and functions. Ruwanpura's (2011) ethnographic account of student life provided a valuable reference point for many of these discussions, as did my conversation with Dr Jani de Silva, who was researching ragging at the time we met. A limited number of interactions with current students further served to pinpoint the key dynamics of ragging that I discuss in this chapter.

### *Student Societies, Politics, and Social Reproduction*

Echoing the contrasting positions on education's role as a driver of social change noted in Chapter Two, existing examinations of student politics and community dynamics can be seen to frequently characterise students in two ways. In the first, students are described as a radical political force, generating and performing new forms of social and political struggle. In the second, student communities are vehicles for the reproduction of the social status quo, with universities constituting the training ground for the elite (Hodgkinson, 2019; Martelli and Garalyté, 2019; Rodgers and Young, 2017). Before exploring what student groups in post-war Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka reveal about the ability of universities to support processes of recovery, it is valuable to briefly comment upon these two characterisations of student communities and their engagement in politics and to, thereby, outline key dimensions of student group practices and structures that speak to their role in processes of social and political change.

With regards to student communities serving as instigators of social and political change, advocates can point to examples spanning from the decolonisation movements in Africa across the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to the activities of students in Chile and Hong Kong in sparking and driving protests in 2019 (Cuffe, 2019; Nkinyangi, 1991; Purbrick, 2019). Both the

JVP insurgencies in Sri Lanka and the fomenting of revolutionary intent amongst youth by students in pre-war Sierra Leone speak to this potential for students to agitate for radical political transformation. The prevalence of youth and student protests is sometimes explained by reference to inherent characteristics of those populations, either in terms of, for example, the restless energy of idle students or the “fact that every generation of youth experiences a “fresh contact” with the world around them” (Rodgers and Young, 2017, p.194). Particularly in conflict-affected contexts, the under-occupation of young people, in terms of either unemployment, underemployment, or perceived idleness in education, has been framed in alignment with a narrative where youth, especially young men, represent a ‘ticking time bomb’ that must be carefully defused in order to avoid the return of conflict (Enria, 2018). As evidence from across contexts highlights, however, student and youth politics is neither inherently tended to struggle for radical transformation of the social order nor untethered from its social, political, and historical environment. Van Gyampo et al.’s review of student politics in Ghana (2016), for instance, notes how student leaders have over time become more loyal to political parties than to their student constituencies, thereby undermining the radical expression of student concerns. Similarly, Kuttig’s research into student politics in Bangladesh highlights how student political groups are deeply entangled with the machinery of national political parties, with student groups providing the parties with a steady supply of political labour rather than espousing or mobilising for a transformative political alternative (2019). Such examples emphasise the need to view radical student politics and practice as grounded in particular contexts as opposed to being an inherent and universal feature of student life.

Further to this, student groups and their associated cultures can also be understood as crucially important for reproducing the social status quo. Pointing to the significance of student cultures and networks for social reproduction, Paul Willis argues in his study of working-class boys and schooling in the UK that the “particular meaning and scope of the role of institutions in reproduction may be less to do with their formal nature and manifest communications than with the unintended and often unseen results of their relationships and habituated patterns of interaction with located and informal cultures” (1977, p.176). In terms of universities, a vital part of this reproduction dynamic is that the social experiences and training provided by university communities and student social and political groups can be seen as generating within their members the dispositions, or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984; Grenfell, 2014), that support and legitimate their access to, or their continuing membership of, the elite classes. In a more directly apparent form, coming into contact with the elite networks that run through universities, and that are maintained and forged by their constituent communities, can be a vital means of accessing the social resources necessary to gain employment or political opportunities (Bolten, 2015; Little and Hettige, 2013). Touching on both of these features of student politics,

Snellinger's work in Nepal, for example, finds that student movements "are a training ground for participation in mainstream politics" (2007, p.291).

Alongside the interaction with dimensions of class, the structuring forces within student communities can serve to replicate and entrench other forms of existing social divisions. As Oanda highlights, for instance, in many African countries after 1990, "the ethnicisation of national politics has permeated universities and student organisations to the extent that representation and organisation of student unions are articulated through the prism of narrow ethnic interests" (2016, p.82). The socialisation into particular forms of gender roles can also constitute part of the structures and practices of student communities, as shown in Ruwanpura's work on how the experience of university in Sri Lanka can act to maintain and reinforce restrictive notions around women's sexuality (2011). In addition to grappling with the form of the structures within student communities, it is vital to recognise that the manner in which student organisation and mobilisation occurs can itself involve the inculcation or maintenance of problematic community dynamics. Suykens's study of student political groups in Bangladesh, for example, finds that violence is used "to mark out and maintain power relations between student groups and factions" (2018, p.883). This points to the value, particularly for studies of conflict, of interrogating how student groups are brought together and how their constitutive social relations are maintained.

While, as these examples suggest, student communities can be understood as operating in ways which reinforce extant social structures and their attendant forms of oppression, it would, nevertheless, be a mistake to discount the long history of student groups acting to bring about meaningful political and social change. Collective action by students may not be necessarily tended towards progressive transformation, but it often creates openings for change, for example by being the 'first movers' that open the doors for broader swathes of society to engage in protest or by articulating and disseminating languages of struggle. As Rodgers and Young explain, "there is no doubt that the youthful condition involves a potential for difference, for innovation, and for breaking from the past" (2017, p.209). The question of the social role of student populations, therefore, becomes about what it is that means that some student communities are able to spearhead movements pushing for transformative changes while others are working to replicate existing social and political power structures. In post-war contexts, this is also implicated in the question of when student groups might serve to recreate the dynamics of conflict rather than being generative of new post-war pathways.

From the literature discussed above and the analytical approach connected with the concept of the substrate, I identify three promising areas for exploring this question in the contexts of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. First, there is the question of how students relate to political actors

in the relevant local and national spheres. For example, are they antagonistic to the dominant parties, like the earlier incarnations of the JVP in Sri Lanka, or are they implicated in the political machinery, as is the case for Suykens's work in Bangladesh? Second, it is important to ask how student groups are structured, what the nature of the structuring practices are, and what form of socialisation is thereby provided. Finally, it is necessary to examine the interrelation between student group structures and practices and social fracture lines, through which insight can be gained into how student communities relate to the reproduction of the social order. These questions are the key guiding forces in the discussions of student communities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka to which I now turn.

### ***Camps, Clubs, and Student Society in Sierra Leone***

Despite student clubs being officially banned at the time of my arrival in September 2018, the topic of student societies was still one of the most passionately discussed in my interviews with staff and students. This was partly related to the Criminal Investigations Department's announcement, shortly before my arrival in Freetown, of a manhunt for executive members of the Klymax student club at Fourah Bay College in relation to the alleged murder of Albert Madison Bio, President Maada Bio's nephew, whose death appears to have been connected to club initiation processes (Awoko, 2018). Even aside from this incident, the topic of 'clubism' or the 'black camp-white camp business', referring to the two major student groups that have been at the centre of student politics for decades, was frequently brought up as one of the most significant issues affecting how the universities function. This section begins to unpack key features of this phenomenon of clubism in Sierra Leone with a view to reflecting on its implications for how universities in the country relate to issues of conflict and social change. In particular, I focus on the divisions and unities it creates and maintains in the student community, the contestation and violence that can occur around student elections, and the diversity of social functions that clubs can perform for their members, both before and after graduation.

#### *Origins and History*

Although it is difficult to pin down exact details on the founding and development of the camp system, it is clear that student activism during the period of the one-party state was crucial for their formation. As Bolten describes, "Sierra Leone has a long history of student activism that has been intimately intertwined with violent riots, uprisings, and recently encouraging a spirit of 'revolution' that led to the civil war" (2009, p.350). Under Siaka Stevens, anti-APC activism

became popular on campuses, and university students served as the *de facto* opposition to the one-party state (Abdullah, 1998; Datzberger, 2015). The pre-war vibrancy and potency of student groups can be seen in their involvement in 1977 in one of the most important moments of resistance to the one-party state of Siaka Stevens, which constitutes an important inflection point in the trajectory of student politics (Abdullah, 1998). On January 27<sup>th</sup> of that year, students showed their displeasure with deteriorating conditions at the university by interrupting Stevens' presentation at the Conferment Ceremony, holding signs and throwing powder. The resulting government crackdown at Fourah Bay College, with students beaten and raped, sparked broader protests across the country, with secondary school students lending their support (Rashid, 1997). While some temporary concessions were granted, the main response of the Stevens' government to the apparent political threat posed by students at the time was to seek out ways to control the nature of student politics, including the infiltration of student groups and the establishment of patron-client relations between national politicians and student organisations.

The work of Stevens to defang and co-opt the student activists likely accelerated the formation of divisions among the student body. In the mid-1990s, a split in the dominant student organisation of the time resulted in the creation of a second pole of power in the student body (Gardner, 2014). A number of interviewees suggested that the names that arose as labels for the two entities were to mark those who were 'black', i.e., those who were against the APC rule, from the rest who were, by contrast, 'white'. While most are quick to point out that black and white were not racial terms (Gardner, 2016), it is interesting to note that the affiliations appear connected with notions of Africanisation, for the black camp, and Westernisation, for the white camp. These identities also tie into the nature of ethno-regional politics, with the black camp being loosely associated with the SLPP, who have their historical base of power in the provinces, and the white camp being somewhat linked to the APC and their historical ties of the Westernised elite of the colony and Freetown. The result of these linkages and the related hardening of the divisions between the camps over time is that, as Ibrahim Abdullah puts it, "What used to happen in the past, when students used to come together to fight for a common cause... those days are gone" (quoted in Gardner, 2014).

### *Structuring Student Life*

As the above quote suggests, one of the primary features of the camp system is the manner in which it fragments and structures the student body. Within the contemporary Fourah Bay College Campus environment, for example, camps operate in ways which act to divide a space that otherwise appears to be open and unbounded (Gardner, 2016). In lectures, for instance,

students from different camps will sometimes segregate (UoSL22). As well as offering a powerful example of how dynamics from outside the classroom can inflect the classroom experience, this shows how the dynamics of student groups can act to physically separate out the student body (Gardner, 2014). In a similar vein, there are places on the grounds for each camp to meet, with the black camp's location designated as 'The Shrine' according to Musa, a graduate member of the camp (UoSL22). Students gather in these places to perform together the administration of social and political life on campus, such as when a meeting is held for the 'black family' to decide on the selection of a new person to fill an executive position. This ownership over different spaces on campus can be understood as both a means of division, through the marking out of a distinct area for camp members, as well as a mechanism for generating and performing unity, through the engagement of members in common practices.

The way in which the camps structure and stratify campus life extends beyond the overarching distinction between the camps to include both horizontal and vertical differentiation within camps. In terms of horizontal differentiation, there is a plethora of social clubs which students can join within each camp, with an array of brother and sister groups, which are single gender entities, as well as mixed-gender clubs (Dari, 2012). Clubs are marked out by their different functions, styles, and histories. Some, for example, are described as 'enjoyers' and are often responsible for organising camp parties, while others are designated as 'soldiers', although this appears to have more to do with dress sense than a tendency towards violence. Each camp also has a leading political group – the Auradicals for the black camp and the Liberals for the white camp – which has overall responsibility for selecting the camp's candidate for student elections (Tunkara, 2015). Provocatively, and perhaps playfully, the head of the black camp is called the Dictator and the head of the white camp is the Liberator, suggesting a gulf in the political approach of the two camps. In reality, however, substantial divergences between the two camps in terms of political ideology or proposals for student life are hard to find. Nevertheless, the strong contrast these position names display, a contrast also evident in the names of clubs, can be seen as offering another means of distinction between the camps.

### *Membership and Initiations*

The presence of leading political clubs also points to the fact that there are important vertical processes of stratification at work in camps. Both seniority, based on years of membership, and elected executive status are defining features of club hierarchies, with access to the latter seeming to rely on the former. One arena in which seniority has a significant bearing is that of

initiating new members. Joining a club is not a straightforward process but rather requires prospective members to endure frequently gruelling initiation procedures. Initiations can take place over the course of months, involving multiple stages, and are led by senior members, who are able to dominate prospective members in a number of ways (Tunkara, 2015). The use of direct violence, for example, was a frequent theme of initiation conversations. One former member of a ladies' club in the black camp, for instance, described how existing members would take it in turns to lash new initiates, with more senior members being permitted to give a higher number of lashes (UoSL24). A graduate member of the white camp spoke to me in hushed tones about how hot candle wax had been used as part of his initiations (UoSL23). Such violence, however, was described carefully so as to paint it as serving an important purpose for the clubs instead of it being arbitrary or sadistic. In framing the situation for me, Musa commented that, for his club, "We beat you, but we don't torture you" (UoSL22). In such a phrasing, the beatings are to be seen as a test of determination and desire as opposed to random violence or violence for the sake of cruelty.

Further insight into the purposes served by initiation violence can be seen in its cyclical nature, with victims of beatings one year being transformed into the perpetrators the next year. This suggests a way in which initiations form part of the inter-generational transmission of structures and practices within the student community. As one of Dari's student interviewees put it, "If I'm beaten during initiation next year I will beat the new initiated even more as reprisal, so that the initiations are getting more and more violent" (2012, p.89). In such a way, senior-junior power dynamics can come to be reproduced on campuses, with the presence of club elders arguably serving to put limits on the escalation of violence and to ensure that initiations are done 'properly'.

It is not only seniority hierarchies, however, that are transmitted through these practices. Initiations involve acts which serve to socialise their members into gendered forms of adulthood. One former member of a ladies' club commented that clubs teach women students "the way to behave like a lady. The way to dress up like a lady. The way to portray yourself as a lady" (UoSL24). Depictions of enduring pain in student initiations similarly appeal to certain images of adulthood and masculinity, with Musa at times wandering between highlighting the restrained purposiveness of mere beatings and emphasising the struggle to cope with such 'torture'. Drink and drugs were frequently mentioned in connection with club initiation processes and transitions to adulthood. 'Exposure' to such substances was framed as part of becoming more mature or adult, with drugs like Tramadol, for example, also being used by some initiates in order to make the pain of the beatings more bearable. With regards to gendering dynamics, Musa and a current student, John, also indicated that women could be blindfolded and made to perform sexual 'challenges' with men members as part of initiation

processes, particularly in the mixed gender clubs. Although data around such practices are extremely limited, it is instructive to note that these practices are taking place in the context of already persistent issues with male lecturers using their power to trade higher grades for sex with students (Dari, 2012). The above differences in initiation and socialisation experiences tied to gender can, therefore, be seen to suggest that student clubs contribute to the reproduction of gendered structures of difference and dominance at universities.

As suggested by the role of elders and graduates, the longevity of the club and camp affiliation is a key aspect of their functioning. In one of my earliest conversations about student clubs, Musa showed me his wristband, which signified his belonging to the 'Commoners'. Speaking about when he joined the club, Musa emphasised that as soon as you "become a member, you are going to be a black man till death" (UoSL22). While not all graduates possess the same degree of ongoing connection to their clubs, the idea that membership to a club, and a camp, extends beyond the duration of a university degree can be important to how student organisations are perceived on campus and beyond. Musa and others highlighted, for instance, how there were members of parliament who were known to be affiliated with one club or other. These links, tenuous as they may be, were brought up as an avenue for potential future benefit, with Musa, for example, repeatedly raising the idea that a member of the 'black family' might be able to provide him with steady work. Initiations appear to play a central role in this process of cohering these social networks, with the violence involved serving as a cost of entry into that social space. As Musa himself put it, "You have to value what you are going into".

In some notable respects, for example with regards to gendered preparations for adulthood, club initiation processes resemble practices seen outside the university amongst groups such as the Poro and Sande. For induction into the Poro and Sande, youth are taken to the bush to receive cultural education from society members and undergo rites and rituals as part of transitioning to gendered forms of adulthood (Coulter, 2005; Ménard, 2017). While such commonalities are striking, the assemblages of structures, practices, and beliefs associated with the two sets of groups are, nonetheless, distinct, as can be seen through, for example, the cosmopolitan elements of initiations at Fourah Bay College and the different structural connections between clubs within camps. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the form of practices and structures within student communities have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by the shape of existing institutions like the Poro and Sande. Perhaps one way of viewing the similarities is in terms of student groups adopting and adapting structures and practices over time from their broader social environments in order to attempt to fulfil similar social purposes, such as with the alternative transitions to adulthood that form part of club practices.

### *Student Politics and Electoral Conflict*

Staff and students highlighted the generally normal coexistence of the camps on campus for the majority of the time, with only sporadic incidents of inter-camp violence. As shown by the partitioning of space on campus and in discussions around, for example, social restrictions on courtship between camps, normality, nevertheless, entails creating and maintaining a sense of difference between the camps. Furthermore, this normality breaks down when it comes to student election campaigns. As one former student put it, “When it’s time for politics, everyone will go on the rampage. There is no interaction [between camps] because we are fighting for power.... Because when you have the power, you have dominion” (UoSL25). Underscoring this idea of a distinct campus environment during campaigns, student elections in the post-war period have seen significant incidents of violence on campuses. In 2011, for example, the unveiling of the white camp’s candidate for student union president at Fourah Bay College was followed by black camp members hurling bottles and stones at the gathered crowd from the library and the white camp responding in kind, with police then using tear gas to clear out the library (Awoko, 2011).

The escalating violence in post-war student elections can be understood as being partly linked to the legacies of the war and the way in which they have been embodied in the university substrate and its interactions with the political landscape. Engineer Badamasi and others argued, for instance, that the use of increasing levels of violence in student rituals emerged from the violence and trauma of the war (UoSL8). A less direct, but arguably more enduringly potent, connection between the war and political conflict on campuses can also be found in the broader resurgence of political polarisation in the post-war period. As Enria describes for youth in Freetown more broadly, politicians have long made use of networks of youth to help campaign and to utilise violence in the pursuit of electoral victory, with the youth involved often hoping for some reward in terms of either resources or a political or government position (2018). The division on campus to some extent mirrors these wider processes, with loose political ties between the two major camps and the two major political parties (Gardner, 2014).

Given the potency of student protest, there are also significant incentives for parties to try to control the student body in order to be able to influence, although not control, the levels of student dissent and protest. Professor Alie at Fourah Bay College, for example, highlighted that during the previous APC regime “It was not uncommon for central government officials to support one camp against the other because the view was that if you have the black camp leading, there will be a lot of student protests against the government” (UoSL1). The winning camp can also benefit from these arrangements. In connection with the SLPP winning the

presidency in 2018, for instance, Musa told me, “So when the SLPP is in power now, the Black man will enjoy. We... have no limitation of doing whatever we want on campus” (UoSL22). While likely somewhat exaggerated (Gardner, 2014), this sense of freedom for the black camp to act under an SLPP presidency, nevertheless, matches with senior administrators’ descriptions of selective political interference in disciplinary cases to save party supporters from punishment.

### *Social Functions*

In addition to initiations, part of making such student mobilisation possible is the ways in which clubs can fulfil important social functions for their members. Fourah Bay interviewees, for instance, spoke about how clubs have their gathering places at different outside locations on the verdant mountain top, where members can come together to unwind and enjoy by throwing parties. Aside from offering members the opportunity to relax from the stresses of college life, interviewees spoke about how clubs can provide financial and academic benefits. For those who cannot afford the fees or who experience financial shocks, such as the death of a parent, club colleagues can operate in ways similar to microfinance groups, where each member contributes in order to ensure their struggling peer can pay their debts. Such support does not necessarily end with graduation. For example, a member of the white camp, Manju, spoke about how graduate members came together to help a colleague afford his exam to become a barrister (UoSL23). In terms of academic aid, clubs can serve as networks for note-sharing and for liaising with lecturers, who may also be members or former members, in order to intervene where tests have been failed or where a student is having issues with a class.

Bolten’s work (2012) on the materiality of ‘love’ and friendship in Sierra Leone emphasises the way in which such practices of material support and reciprocity factor into the formation of meaningful and strong bonds. Part of this idea is that those who have resources will share as part of their ‘love’ for those in their social circle and, thus, reinforce loyalties and ties, suggesting that these practices can be important for cohering student groups in ways that then facilitate their collective mobilisation. Similarly, social clubs can be central to experiences of belonging and exclusion on campus, or as one former student put it, when coming up to campus you need to “associate” (UoSL25). John, a student who chose not to join a club because of the death of a friend in club activities, told me that when he was approached by a lecturer who wanted him to sign up, he was told that “if actually you are part of the [club], socially now you belong” (UoSL2). Such sentiments of connecting club membership with belonging appear to be echoed in the use of the language of ‘families’ to describe the camps (Tunkara, 2015) as well as the ways in which batches of students are initiated together to

create a 'squad', blending in also, perhaps, a militaristic element. Through such discursive and material practices of support and belonging clubs and camps can create and maintain the bonds that facilitate mobilisation, substantiating collective entities that can then be fought for and defended. In addition to their potential for facilitating the political instrumentalisation of student bodies, these practices constitute important processes of socialisation, building networks and identities that fall outside the limited scope of those envisioned in depictions of universities as spaces of socialisation for economic labour.

### ***Ragging and Conformity in Sri Lanka***

Standing in relief to the relatively clear segmentation of Sierra Leone's student body, the presentation of student politics in Sri Lanka, and Jaffna in particular, often focusses much more on ideas unity and equality. As this section shows, however, closer examination of student structures points to stratification, segregation, and coercion forming a central part of the phenomenon of 'ragging', a form of collective hazing, that is a deeply entrenched part of student life and politics in universities across the island (Coalition Against Violence in Universities, 2020; Jayawardana, 2018). After a brief discussion of the history of ragging, I survey key contemporary aspects of ragging practices and their relationship to student politics in Sri Lanka, and Jaffna in particular. This suggests that ragging can be used to create oppressive forms of unity that facilitate collective mobilisation while simultaneously being utilised to maintain clear distinctions in the student community based on ethnicity, gender, seniority, and other social markers. I posit that the legacies of the conflict in Jaffna are embodied in the university substrate with regards to how students are mobilised through ragging and the form of the divisions created between different groups on campus. At a broader level, I argue that the characteristics of ragging can fundamentally undermine the potential for the formation of cohesive and critical student communities that can constructively engage with post-war processes.

#### *Origins and History*

Ragging is an established phenomenon for the induction of students into university cultures across the world. The origins of ragging in Sri Lanka can likely be traced back to the colonial foundations of the higher education system and the fact that many of the island's colonial elite had been educated in British schools and universities or in similar institutions in India (De Silva, 1978). The practice was then transferred to Sri Lanka once higher education institutions, in the British mould, were established on the island (Ruwanpura, 2011). Ragging, therefore,

has been a feature of the higher education environment since the system's inception, albeit one that has evolved in response to changing dynamics both inside and outside of the universities. Unlike student initiations in Sierra Leone, ragging does not appear to incorporate features of similar practices around youth in the surrounding society, standing out, instead, as a more clearly distinct phenomenon. As with student politics in Sierra Leone, however, a key element of the history of ragging on the island has been its enduring connection with the activities of political movements and parties (Weeramunda, 2008). The JVP, for example, has used ragging as a means of gaining new members and spreading political ideals. During contemporary ragging practices, for instance, students can still be exposed to the famous 'five lectures' of Rohan Wijeweera, the JVP's charismatic leader during the period of the insurrections of the 1970s and 1980s. The historical strength of the JVP, a leftist party, in student unions (Venugopal, 2010) has, therefore, influenced the shape of ragging across much of the island. The dominance of different student groups in different universities, for example in those in the North and East, as well as recent splits in the JVP itself mean, however, that the exact form and function of ragging varies across and within universities (Perera, 2015).

#### *Equality, Conformity, and Humiliation*

There are, nevertheless, a number of features of ragging that tend to commonly recur. The practice is often framed as a process of introducing freshers to, and inducting them into, the university and its 'sub-culture' (Jayawardana, 2018; Weeramunda, 2008). In connection with this idea of bringing students into the university community, one of the most potent discourses around ragging relates to notions of levelling and equalisation (Ruwanpura, 2011; UGC, 2020b). Ragging on this basis seeks to erase, at least in rhetoric, the distinctions between students of different socio-economic classes as well as those associated with the interrelated, but distinct, rural-urban divides. As Professor Uyangoda put it, "Students come from different backgrounds, but the university community is one homogenous community. There's a strange notion of egalitarianism. So, the students coming from the diverse variety of backgrounds need a kind of levelling... mechanism.... Ragging is the instrument by which this culture of egalitarianism is imposed" (UC5). This commitment to social levelling can be seen as emerging partly from the historical and contemporary influence of leftist ideology on campuses, for example through the JVP's Marxist roots, as well as, perhaps, through a particular reading of the principles underlying free state higher education, with reference to ideas of social mobility and equal educational opportunities.

This notion of levelling and homogenising the student population is visibly apparent in some of the practices of ragging. One of the most striking elements of ragging in Jaffna, for instance, was the way in which dress was controlled. During my visit, I observed groups of new students dressed in almost identical fashion as part of the rag, with boys in white shirts, dark trousers, and smart shoes, and girls generally in long skirts and blouses. The spectacle, as it was described by some of my interviewees, was added to by the way in which these students would move around campus in extended, single-file lines. This experience in Jaffna also appears to be a lengthy one, with a student leader informing me that for the first two years the students all have to follow the dress code (JU5). Like with other aspects of ragging (Jayawardana, 2018; JU5; OT3; Perera, 2015), justifications for the existence of such dress codes can be formulated around equalisation, with the imposition of a code meaning that students from wealthier backgrounds could not display their wealth through their clothing and, therefore, poorer students with worn clothing would not have to feel a sense of inferiority. Through such control over appearance a vision of student unity and homogeneity can be created, entrenched further by the almost militaristic practice of ‘uniformed’ students walking single-file between classes.

As this last point suggests, ragging goes much deeper than controlling what students wear. While the form of ragging practices varies substantially, it frequently involves forms of individual and collective humiliation that are performed with batches of students (Liyanage and Liyanage, 2020; OT3). Threats and the use of demeaning and obscene language can be an important feature of ragging. Describing this aspect of the rag at Kelaniya, and pointing to its gendered dimensions, Ruwanpura comments, “It was common to hear women shouting at and using abusive language on first-year women but it was equally common to hear senior men using abusive and sexually laden language on them. Words like *topi* (impolite pronoun for either sex), *umba* (impolite pronoun for either sex), *vēsi* (whore), *yakō* (devil) and *bælli* (bitch) could be heard at every turn” (2011, p.101).

Controlling the physical aspects of freshers’ lives also extends far beyond dress codes. Dr Jani de Silva, a researcher compiling a report on ragging when we met in 2019, noted that this control may focus on, for instance, dictating how and when food is to be consumed. In one such practice, students are forced to buy their food, mush it into a paste, and then pass it to another ragging victim for them to eat. Ragging may involve sleep deprivation and control over time, with students being, for example, made to sit in lecture halls for hours before morning classes are due to start. The practices of control and humiliation can also include sexualised activities (Liyanage and Liyanage, 2020). One student at a higher education institute, for instance, reported being “blindfolded and stripped down to his underwear before being marched into a dark hall” before being “told to remove his blindfold and forced to urinate into

a basin along with his batch-mates while a senior shook flour over them”. The same student was then told to go into a “‘porno room’ where he was forced to watch X-rated movies”, following which he was taken to the “‘circumcision room’ where he was blindfolded and stripped naked after which surgical spirit was poured on his genitals to simulate circumcision” (Warakapitiya and Fernando, 2018). A key element of such practices appears to be instilling a sense of near ultimate control of the seniors over the juniors, down to the most intimate parts of their lives, and doing so through fear, intimidation, and humiliation.

The levelling of the student body present in ragging can be seen as suppression of multiple aspects of individuality as a means to generate unity. The practices of humiliation and control are, as Dr de Silva contends, partly “aimed at destroying sense of self”, with going through ragging meaning that students “are left with no respect” for themselves. Professor Carlo Fonseka, a prominent academic and public intellectual, referred to this as reduction to the lowest common denominator, highlighting the contrast, also articulated by Ivor Jennings at the conception of the Sri Lankan higher education system, between raising up to achieve equality and an “equality of degradation” (OT2). As Dr de Silva argues, ragging “does not create an egalitarian culture. It brings people down to your level. Egalitarianism is raising people up to what is your best not reducing them to your worst” (OT3). Furthermore, despite the discourse of equalisation and unity, ragging was not targeting all students equally. In some cases, those who were from higher socio-economic backgrounds who spoke English fluently could avoid ragging, while in others these characteristics apparently singled them out for harsher treatment (Fernando, 2018). Similarly, ragging practices vary within faculties, partly due to the different political affiliations and demographics that faculties can have (Ruwanpura, 2011).

### *Separation and Hierarchies*

In addition to recognising the problematic form that levelling through ragging can take, it is crucial to understand that discourses around equality and unity can obscure significant divides in student communities and that practices of ragging can, in fact, serve to entrench and substantiate divisions and hierarchies. Here, I illustrate this point by referring to the relationship between ragging and structures of seniority as well as considerations of ethnicity and gender. As highlighted by the preceding discussion, the distinction made between seniors and juniors is central to the mechanics of ragging (Ruwanpura, 2011). Ragging both works through pre-existing structures where seniors have power over juniors and reinforces those structures (JU6; Liyanage and Liyanage, 2020; UC5). The language of degradation can discursively construct seniority differences while punishment for those who stand against the instructions of seniors during the rag viscerally illustrates the power structures. The

demarcation of different statuses for seniors and juniors can also be seen in the 'softer' forms of ragging. The perks of seniority can extend to, for example, juniors carrying out academic work on the behalf of their seniors or doing their domestic tasks (OT3). As in Sierra Leone, the cyclical element of the process is noteworthy, with those who experienced ragging in one year then meting out the same treatment to others the next year (Perera, 2015). One possible explanation for this is that the structures and practices disseminated through ragging come to be, in a sense, normalised, meaning that seniors ragging juniors comes to be seen as the 'right' thing to do in the sphere of the university sub-culture. It is important to note, however, that it seems to generally be a smaller cohort of seniors who are responsible for organising ragging (Ruwanpura, 2011) rather than all those who have been inducted through ragging, suggesting any such process of normalisation is far from complete.

Standing in contrast, again, to the narratives of equality and unity is the fact that ragging is conducted in an ethnically segregated manner. As was highlighted throughout my interviews in Sri Lanka, ethnic groups, at least Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims, were expected to carry out ragging separately, with ragging constituting, thus, a means of separate socialisation. Segregated ragging can be explained in two main ways. First, in light of the ethnic divisions in the country in the post-war period, inter-ethnic ragging could be construed as a 'double sin' due to the connotations that might be attached to, for example, a senior group of Sinhalese students harassing a Tamil junior. In this, there is also the danger for the stoking of larger social conflicts if the violence of ragging was perceived to be carried out in a racist manner that suggested the targeting of one ethnic group by another. Keeping ragging separate, therefore, is potentially important for avoiding the escalation of violence. A second consideration, however, is the way in which ragging acts to transmit a particular culture to new students, with that culture being inflected by ethnicity (De Costa and Nazeer, 2019). For example, a northern Professor told me about how a senior Muslim student went to the parents of a Muslim girl who was due to be joining the Jaffna University in order to explain that he, and the other seniors, would ensure that the girl would not do any 'bad things' that would not be in keeping with the appropriate cultural values (JU6). In this sense, ragging is likely operating as a means of ethnic socialisation within the university space.

In a comparable manner, ragging is also a practice of gender socialisation. Ruwanpura (2011) and Perera's work (2015; 2017) highlights that ragging takes place along gender lines, with, for instance, women predominantly ragging women. Furthermore, the example given of sexualised practices above and Ruwanpura's work on sexuality within the University of Kelaniya (2011) illustrate that the very practices of ragging can also be intertwined with transmission of gendered norms and behaviours. The case of the 'porno room' and the 'circumcision room', for example, shows how ragging can be involved in the construction of

masculinities, while De Costa and Nazeer (2019) point to how the dress codes associated with ragging can form part of disciplining women on campus and pressuring them to follow norms of respectability, with dress codes also varying according to ethnic group.

### *Ragging, Politics, and Protest*

Understanding the logics of unity, and division, embedded in ragging practices requires also engaging with the dynamics of student associations, known as unions. Student associations in Sri Lanka are largely faculty based. As Ruwanpura comments for the University of Kelaniya, for example, the “common expectation is that students from all non-science faculties at UoK should join the Ēkābaddha Śiṣya Peramuṇa, which is affiliated to the JVP. Students from the Faculty of Science are expected to join the Śiṣya Sahayōgitā Padanama which is affiliated to the United National Party (UNP)” (2011, p.95). This split in the student community brings with it the potential for conflicts on campuses between rival unions as they try to exert influence over the wider student body. Perera, speaking mainly about the South, highlights that “Clashes between student unions regularly occur during certain times of the academic year, most notably during union elections”, suggesting that “Fights amongst groups of students have become such a regular feature of university life” (2015, p.37). Despite this fractiousness, there are also broader federations which serve to facilitate collective action, such as in the case of student activities in support of the 2012 FUTA strikes. The largest of these agglomerations is the Inter-University Students’ Federation (IUSF), which has links to the JVP (Weeramunda, 2008), although unions in Jaffna, for example, are not affiliated with the IUSF. Underscoring the significance of these political links for parties, Weeramunda notes that the JVP “has followed a systematic method to recruit and indoctrinate new batches of enthusiastic supporters and a hardcore [sic] of activists every year”, adding that “the party is also assured of a continuous supply of new entrants with the commencement of the academic year” (Weeramunda, 2008, p.11).

While their presence on campus is clearly visible, it is, nevertheless, generally a small minority of students who are actively involved in unions (Perera, 2015), generating a need for structures and practices that allow this minority to exert control over and mobilise a wider section of the student population. The role of ragging in these processes of mobilisation appears to be crucial. As Perera explains, “It is ragging that creates and sustains the submission of the larger body of undergraduate communities’ to the will of the political visible student unions” (Perera, 2015, p.39). Dr Thiruvarangan, a lecturer at Jaffna who had also worked at universities in the South, articulated a similar idea, saying that ragging “is one way in which... they are trying to create some homogeneity so that people won’t defy the student

leaders or the powerful elements who control the student union.... There can be no opposition or dissent. You have to internalise that whole process and ragging is the avenue for that internalisation” (JU1). This idea of unquestioned unity was in evidence in my conversation with a senior union member in Jaffna who, when asked about the decision-making process in the union, informed me that the union’s choices were made to be in alignment with Tamil nationalism, and, therefore, there was no need for voting because they all followed the same Tamil nationalism (JU5). Under such a system, student leaders can then use their positions to mobilise this ‘one voice’ for political protests, supporting the agendas of the parties to which they are tied. The success of student leaders in such mobilisation work was suggested in a number of conversations to then be a factor in influencing the ability of that student to gain employment or other benefits through their party affiliations after graduation.

As well as facilitating mobilisation for political protests, the mobilisation power gained through ragging can also be used against university administrations in order to further extend and maintain the control that student leaders have on campuses. Dr de Silva argues that “ragging practices were used to create an absolutely passive and docile student body. So that whenever student leaders needed to make a point to the administration, they could be brought out to terrorise the university administration” (OT3). This includes student protests that have been organised in response to students being disciplined for carrying out ragging, with Dr de Silva suggesting that tactics such as surrounding a Vice-Chancellors office then often resulted in the disciplined students being granted a reprieve. The mobilisation power generated through ragging can, therefore, be used to protect the practice of ragging itself, thereby preserving the power structures on campuses. The relationship between the faculty and university administration and ragers is not always adversarial, however, with the visibility of clothing practices associated with ragging at Jaffna, despite the 1998 law prohibiting ragging, hinting at the ways in which staff may acquiesce to or support the presence of ragging on campuses (Weerakoon, 2016). Student mobilisation may, in fact, work to aid the political agendas of some staff members, both in terms of internal university politics and local and national politics (Weerakoon, 2016). Other staff may simply connect ragging with the maintenance of traditions that were part of their own formative university experiences, with acquiescence or support then serving to facilitate the reproduction of this feature of university substrates.

### ***Analysing Student Communities***

What does a joint analysis of these accounts of student groups in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka tell us about the functioning of post-war universities and their relationships with issues of

peacebuilding and development? In this section, I respond to this question in three different ways. In the first two sub-sections, I consider the implications of the role of student groups in social reproduction. Counter to notions of students leading social transformation, I highlight the potential for problematic reinforcement of social fracture lines by student groups in both cases. I then suggest that student collectivities should be understood as imbricated with, rather than incidental to, student pathways to post-graduation economic labour, thereby problematising narratives of the relationship between universities and post-war economic development that obscure or marginalise the effects of such social relations. Next, turning to the capacity of student groups to act as significant political actors in post-war reconstruction, I comment on the ways in which student group practices and structures in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka can create reservoirs of political labour, through what I term to be *political socialisation*, that can be instrumentally mobilised, directly and indirectly, by different actors. Finally, I explore the effects that student activities have on the core functioning of the universities under study and discuss the significance of the practices of student groups for issues of violence, cohesion, and critical voice. I note, for example, how the practices of unity and conformity associated with ragging appear to stand in sharp contrast to conceptualisations of universities as spaces for critical thought.

### *Socialisation, Gender, and Becoming*

In processes of post-war recovery, a social transition from the dynamics of conflict is of fundamental importance, both in terms of a move away from the underlying social conditions that drive conflict and a transformation of the social relations generated through conflict (Galtung, 1969). Student communities have been envisioned as supporting such transitions through, for example, contact at educational institutions fostering cross-group cooperation and the formation of more inclusive collective identities (Aturupane and Wikramanayake, 2011; Milton and Barakat, 2016). One critical dimension of what the case studies above emphasise, however, are the ways in which student group socialisation practices can serve to reproduce the extant social order and to, thus, stave off substantive social change. With regards to inter-group contact, for instance, segregated ragging in Sri Lanka encourages ongoing separation between ethnic groups and acts to cohere enduring social networks that operate within, rather than across, ethnic lines. The significance of violence in ragging practices, with their reliance on verbal, physical, and sexual degradation, can combine with the persistent power of mobilisation along ethnic lines in Sri Lankan society to disincentivise common socialisation through ragging due to the possibility of transgressive student violence inciting broader conflict. Socialisation into student communities through ragging, therefore, likely serves to

maintain and entrench the social polarisation that took place during the war and in the lead up to it rather than challenging and transforming such distinctions.

Comparing this to the situation in Sierra Leone, what is striking at first glance is that, despite the significantly different forms of student organisation and of wartime dynamics in the two countries, student groups in Freetown and Njala appear to similarly contribute towards the entrenchment of social divisions through, for instance, the separating out of the politically affiliated camps. There are, however, important points of divergence between the two cases. In Sierra Leone, the divisions between student groups are not connected with clear wartime fracture lines, and neither are they directly tied to apparently immutable forms of identity, such as with ethnicity in Sri Lanka (Azmi et al., 2013). Instead, they are tied to resurgent social fissures due to the loose political affiliation of camps with political parties and the related ethno-regional associations of party politics in Sierra Leone. It is first, therefore, an issue of camp and then through the camp an issue of political affiliation and ethno-regional associations. This distance, and the more volatile nature of ethno-political coalition building in Sierra Leone, lends the relationship between student socialisation and the entrenchment of ethno-regional or even political fracture lines a seemingly much more contingent character than in Sri Lanka. This is in the sense that ethnic identity, region, or individual political affiliation in Sierra Leone do not necessarily structure student socialisation to the degree that ethnicity does in Sri Lanka. There is greater room, for example, for a student from the South of Sierra Leone to join the camp affiliated with the political party that is commonly connected with the North and to, thereby, become part of social networks that might transcend ethnic or regional lines. While student groups in Sierra Leone have acted at times to reproduce important fracture lines around ethnicity and regionalism, that reproduction, nevertheless, is partial and is dependent on the particular connections between parties and camps as well as those between parties and their ethno-regional coalitions.

The structuring effects of student groups occur not only in relation to the most readily visible lines of social conflict, such as ethnicity in the case of Sri Lanka. In both countries, student organisations can play a role in the transmission of the dispositions, hierarchies, and behaviours which are constitutive of the gender divisions in each society. With regards to hierarchies, for example, this process of transmission can be seen in the way in which student groups model the dominant power relations in mixed gender communities. In Sri Lanka, for instance, despite the majority of students being women the positions of power within student associations generally remain with men (Liyanage and Liyanage, 2020; Perera, 2017). As Ruwanpura notes in her work on ragging at the University of Kelaniya, it “cannot be denied that in every aspect of the rag, older men have an advantage over women and younger men”,

with senior men being able to “rebuke women who transgressed rules and express age-based power differences” (2011, p.115).

In Sierra Leone, there appears to be greater participation of women in the upper ranks of student politics. When women do stand for powerful positions in the camps, they can, nevertheless, face ongoing intimidation and discrimination. Illustrating this, one student leader spoke about how when there was a woman running for president at Fourah Bay College, students of an opposing camp “brought some teared pants, messed up and... they raised it up and said this is [her] pants” (UoSL6). Highlighting the bind that women students can be in, the same student leader, a man, then went on to say that women are to blame for their lack of representation in the university due to them shying away from roles in the face of such pressure. Musa’s comment that women initiates in Sierra Leone might be sexually ‘used’ by senior members as part of their inductions into mixed clubs suggests at how practices around bringing members into the club system can work to confer subordinate positioning. Such practices can be understood as a means of maintaining the gender hierarchy within student groups and, therefore, a means, albeit not always a fully effective one, of excluding women from access to the opportunities and networks that powerful positions within student groups can provide (Fofana Ibrahim et al., 2013).

As evident in the case of women becoming ladies through their socialisation in student groups in Sierra Leone, the transmission of expectations around gender roles can also come from the habits and behaviours that these group practices inculcate. In the case of Sri Lanka, similar processes of transmission can be seen to occur within the example from Jaffna of the older Muslim student, a man, reporting to an incoming student’s parents that he would ensure that she would act in the ‘right way’. It is also apparent in the use of gendered dress codes during ragging with women at Jaffna being made to wear the attire of village girls, befitting a certain constrained imaginary of appropriate womanhood (De Costa and Nazeer, 2019). Again, Ruwanpura’s work at Kelaniya is instructive here for delineating mechanisms by which student group practices pass on gender norms. Ruwanpura observes that the “gendered difference in how the rag was meted out functioned to further maintain gender norms at Kelaniya by exposing the freshers to patterns of gender appropriate behaviour”, noting that “Women who adhere to the rules of the rag and portray an image of the submissive woman... are treated more kindly” (2011, pp.115-116). The movement towards adulthood that takes place at universities and through student group activities, therefore, can occur in both cases as a transition towards a potentially gendered form of adulthood. As these points illustrate, the activities of student groups in the two contexts can be seen to be working through multiple pathways to maintain gender hierarchies rather than acting as the leading edge of social transformation in this space.

### *Class, Employment, and Student Groups*

In knowledge economy accounts of the university's role in development, the instrumental utility of education for enhancing economic production is brought to the fore of descriptions of who gets employed and how. The cases of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka suggest, however, that the activities of student groups can potentially have an important role to play in pathways to employment, complicating the linear narrative of university contributions to economic advancement. One of the most significant features of student groups in this regard appears to be the power of such communities for building social networks. Ragging processes in Sri Lanka, for example, are performed in batches, with your batchmates being constituted by those who are in your class group for the given year. These practices work to mould a collective group identity, through, for example, the expectation that students would memorise the personal details of all their batchmates, which can then be utilised to help with advancement at a later stage. In Sierra Leone, the example of fellow club members offering each other financial support, for instance to pay tuition fees or to take a barrister exam, points to this dynamic, as does the idea that elder members might help younger ones to find jobs. At the same time as reinforcing social divisions and hierarchies as described above, student groups, therefore, can cohere social networks, which can then affect a student's ability to navigate university life and beyond (Amarasuriya et al., 2009; Bolten, 2015).

While these processes of network formation can, and do, constitute an important aspect of class reproduction (Amarasuriya et al., 2009), access to universities or student groups alone is far from enough to ensure access to high-status employment or, indeed, employment of any form (Hughes, 2017). To illustrate the key dynamics at play here, it is useful to consider the example of English in Sri Lanka. For graduate employment in Sri Lanka, proficiency in English is frequently a key prerequisite (Little and Hettige, 2013). Proficiency, however, is not just a matter of technical mastery of the language but is associated with a set of mannerisms and attitudes, reminiscent of Bourdieu's accounts of class differentiation in France in terms of a person's *habitus* (1984). It is those who have been exposed to, and have internalised, this larger conception of English, through, for instance, private schooling or familial environments, who are most likely to access high-status employment (Amarasuriya, 2010). As one lecturer with experience in teaching English noted, "It's not about the language. It's about a performance of a particular class, particular way of inhabiting the world" (OUSL4). While English or soft skills programmes may attempt to teach the 'right' mannerisms, a key part of their distinguishing quality emerges from the fact that they appear to be effortless and natural for the true bearers of English.

University group networks, like those between batchmates, cannot simply overcome such barriers, but they can provide alternative mechanisms by which aspiring graduates can seek to carve out employment opportunities for themselves. On this point, it is revealing to note that those elite students who possessed such English abilities, and who were, thus, in less need of the support of batchmate networks, were those identified by interviewees as being most likely to avoid ragging or to be anti-raggers, although this may vary by university (Perera, 2017). For other students, by being connected through student groups with their peers and with alumni, such as is the case for club members in Sierra Leone, they gain access to an extended pool of people that might offer a way into employment (Bolten, 2015). This strategy is, however, not a sure means of achieving employment. Despite Musa's fondness for the clubs he has been associated with, for instance, he expressed frustrations that the club connections had not yet yielded him a secure graduate job. The changing dynamics of universities can also affect the strategy's viability, even as the structures and practices carry on within student communities. The expansion in student numbers in both countries over recent decades and the stratification of university access has altered the value of student group networks for employment due to the changing composition, and selectivity, of those networks, with wealthier students often heading abroad in both cases and to the most prestigious national universities and most lucrative courses in the Sri Lankan case (Hughes, 2017; Little and Hettige, 2014). For many of Sri Lanka's universities, the demographics of the student body, particularly in the Arts Faculty, have become increasingly rural and poor (Amarasuriya, 2010; Kalugalagedera and Kaushalya, 2017), with the student community networks, therefore, reflecting that change. In short, it appears that the student group networks available for students without elite backgrounds are increasingly less likely to be the right networks for securing high-status jobs, highlighting a diminishing capacity in both cases for university student networks to facilitate opportunities for social mobility.

Entry into the networks of student groups, however, offers other means of pushing for access to employment. University experiences can provide a training ground for national politics (Hodgkinson, 2019), and working to become a student political leader or influencer is, therefore, another pathway that students can take to try to secure future employment (Kumara, 2016). While this option is often restricted to the limited few who manage to rise to the top of student organisations and to effectively mobilise their student communities, the pressure put on governments by student and graduate protest can lead, particularly in the run up to national elections, to mass bouts of hiring into the public sector, marking out such protests as a part of class struggles for employment and access to state resources. For example, Little and Hettige comment for Sri Lanka that "the low rates of unemployment recorded among university graduates can be deceptive as successive governments have taken special measures to

create government jobs for them in order to contain protest and revolt” (2013, p.75). In contrast to notions of university-gained skills being efficiently applied to boost state capacity, the allocation of such intakes into the state apparatus was described by interviewees to lead to positions with little practical function and to the placement of graduates in departments that have little connection to their areas of study. Nevertheless, such use of collective mobilisation to secure graduate employment or better terms for entering the labour market can be seen as a mechanism of struggling for social mobility.

### *Student Groups, Political Forces, and Mobilisation*

Further to this employment dimension of student protest, collective student action can also be a key means of pushing for political change and for social justice, with student groups in Jaffna, for example, repeatedly organising around issues associated with wartime disappearances and human rights violations (De Alwis, 2016). In relation to both aspects of student protest, the question of how students are mobilised, and what for, is, therefore, powerfully relevant for comprehending the relationship between universities and post-war processes of social and political transformation and reconciliation. In order to better understand student mobilisation in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, I propose viewing the practices of student groups as constituting a form of *political socialisation*, by which I mean that such practices create the social conditions under which student leaders and other actors can make use of student communities as reservoirs of political labour. In both countries, it is the combination of practices of unity and practices of stratification that enable student leaders to marshal significant swathes of the student population. In Sierra Leone, I suggest that it is the logic of the camp and club family, the ‘til death’ approach to entering into clubs, and the escalation of stakes around elections combine with the hierarchy of club elderhood and the political hierarchy between clubs within a camp to allow leaders to rally students for their cause. In Sri Lanka, the utilitarian rhetoric around ragging and student politics and the use of collective humiliation appear to operate together with powerful stratification to similarly facilitate mass mobilisation by student leaders.

Pointing to the functional significance of student group practices for mobilisation extends existing descriptions of the relationship between educational institutions, mass mobilisation, and conflict (e.g., Lange, 2011). It shows that an analysis focussing only on the outbreak of electoral violence associated with clubs in Sierra Leone, for example, misses the ways in which these organisations act as support networks for students and, thus, how members can become bonded into collectivities that can be mobilised in the first place. A crucial point here is that while structures and practices of political socialisation for mobilising youth are certainly

not unique to higher education institutions, universities do provide a distinct institutional space by which such structures and practices might be consistently transmitted to new cohorts of young people. The idea of students being inducted into the university culture is evident in both cases, with senior students performing the work of inter-generational transmission through such initiation practices. This is not to say, however, that student group practices and structures are static. Accounts of student experiences before and after the war in each country emphasised the changes that have occurred (Gardner, 2016), for example with regards to the increased level of violence involved in initiations in Sierra Leone. Similarly, the alignment of student politics and practices in Jaffna with a specific variety of Tamil nationalism can be seen as an outcome of the interaction between existing social practices in student communities, such as ragging, and the broader wartime environment in which the university was embedded. In such ways, the substrates of the universities can be seen to have changed through interaction with their surroundings.

Political socialisation in itself does not necessarily define a larger particular interaction between student mobilisation and issues of conflict and social change. The ability of student structures to act as means for controlling a reservoir of political labour may be used to organise forms of political violence, or it may be used to, for instance, push for more state resources for underfunded public education institutions. In short, the implications of political socialisation for processes of post-war recovery, development, and social change depend significantly on what the student body is instrumentalised for and, relatedly, which actors are able to draw upon the available political labour. The creation of memorials on the Jaffna campus, which commemorated the Tamil suffering during the war without recognising, for instance, that of the evicted Muslims, is an example of how the goals of student mobilisation can be significant for issues of reconciliation and peacebuilding. In other campuses in Sri Lanka, students are frequently mobilised as part of inter-factional competition for control over campuses even though the ideologies espoused by these groups may be similar, with most unions being aligned with a broad Sinhala-Buddhist ideology (Perera, 2015). The relative unimportance of ideology here resonates with the situation in Sierra Leone, where it is hard to distinguish any meaningful ideological dispute between the two camps. Engagement with politics emerges more from the instrumental use of student political labour by parties and other political actors, and the student leaders seeking to gain their favour, than from the generation of radical politics on campuses. Accordingly, mobilisation in the post-war periods of both countries appear to often be more closely concerned with the fulfilment of the immediate needs and desires of student populations than the transformation of wider society. Furthermore, as evidenced by the way in which, for example, students in Sri Lanka can be mobilised to protect raggings from

punishment, political socialisation and mobilisation are likely central to the mechanisms of ensuring the continuation and reproduction of student group structures.

### *Cohesion, Critical Voice, and University Functioning*

A final point to make is that the practices of student groups, even while partial in the proportion of university populations that claim membership or meaningful affiliation, are imbricated with broader university life, leading to the potential for such practices to alter or disrupt university operations. For example, as well as being part of the instrumentalisation of student bodies, the practices of humiliation and violence involved in political socialisation can themselves be considered as an integral part of the relationship between universities and conflict, peace, and social change. The very idea of ragging serving to create a “passive and docile student body” raises fundamental questions about whether universities can perform a critical role in society when their internal social structures tend towards an oppressive unity. The push for unity behind a certain form of Tamil nationalism in Jaffna, for example, seems to leave little space for the kind of critical, multi-perspective debates on Tamil self-determination that occurred in the 1970s. Elsewhere, it has been noted that the space for critique of ragging itself can be limited, with Dr de Silva commenting on how, “Criticism becomes a betrayal” (OT3). Therefore, pushing back against the very practices of oppressive unity, in order to open spaces for criticality, remains difficult. While it might be expected that in Sierra Leone there would be a greater sense of critical debate on campus, due to the contestation between the different camps, the lack of clear ideological divisions and the tendency noted with regards to the controlling influence of student elites seems to have meant that criticality has been dampened. In this case, the divided nature of student politics also means that students have been largely unable to speak out with a common voice on issues, with the apparent exception of those most directly related to student welfare, such as fees.

Further to this, the practices of violence highlighted in this chapter raise questions about how students come to relate to the use of violence through their university experiences. Davies (2004), for instance, posits a connection between the normalisation of violence in educational environments, including forms of structural violence, and conflict in wider society. The association noted earlier between elections, a struggle for dominance, and the legitimacy of students going a ‘rampage’ is one such example of how understandings of electoral violence, for instance, can be framed through university experiences. Similarly, the cyclical feature of ragging and club initiations arguably serve to normalise linkages between seniority, domination, and the use of force. For a number of lecturers in Sierra Leone, the concern around the violence of initiations related to this potential for the situation to further escalate,

with some also making references to issues of 'cultism' in Nigeria where lecturers had been killed by clandestine student organisations (Rotimi, 2005). Without sensationalising the violence attached to initiations or ragging, the point here is to take seriously these experiences as a constituent part of what education is or can be for university students. Recognising that violence is already significantly embedded in one of the key mechanisms for socialisation and the maintenance of social hierarchies serves to render problematic the idea that universities, or educational institutions more broadly, will necessarily act as spaces of peacebuilding among and between groups.

The practices of student groups in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka can also fundamentally affect the functioning of the universities in terms of the common tripartite mission. The consequences of enforcing unity and conformity in Sri Lanka, for example, can be dire for the individuals involved, with substantial numbers of students dropping out of universities in response to experiences of ragging, cases of ragging-related death and suicide, and impeded learning due to the stress and problems associated with, for example, sleep deprivation (Perera, 2015; Warakapitiya and Fernando, 2018). Student protests in the two countries, both on and off campuses, have shut down universities, disrupted academic calendars, and damaged infrastructure. Attempts to deal with these disruptions can also have implications for the functioning of institutions. Faculty at the University Colombo, for example, engaged in a boycott of lectures in response to ragging violence, while the government and university administrations in Sierra Leone have imposed multiple bans on student clubs and student representation in Sierra Leone in order to deal with student violence, cutting off a vital means of student communication with university administrations and the government. As John, a current student at Fourah Bay College, described, "We have no one to stand up and say, you know what, what you are doing to these students is wrong" (UoSL2). What these points underscore is that student group practices cannot be seen as incidental to how universities operate but must instead be seen as critically intertwined with their functioning.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has shown how the analysis of substrate features, in the form of the complex sets of social relations in student communities, can yield valuable insights into how universities function and, correspondingly, into limitations on the role that they are able to play in post-war processes. Although camps in Sierra Leone and ragers in Sri Lanka certainly do not have complete control over student bodies, as evidenced by the many students who avoid club affiliation in the former and the presence of anti-ragging groups in the latter, their powerful

influence over the student experience is hard to deny, not least in the way that responses to both phenomena have led to closed campuses and disrupted learning. By taking student group structures and practices seriously, it becomes possible to see more clearly how universities can, for instance, operate as spaces that socialise youth in ways that reproduce existing divisions. In post-war contexts, the entrenching of conflict-inflected social fracture lines seems likely to undermine processes of peacebuilding and the possibilities for collective action. In this chapter, I have also highlighted the importance of interrogating the group structures and practices that enable student mobilisation, arguing that the combined operation of these structures and practices in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka can be conceived of as producing a form of *political socialisation*. At the same time, I have pointed to the need to examine how historical experiences have shaped which causes students are likely to mobilise for as well as which actors are positioned to make use of this mobilisation potential. Returning to the idea of universities as being both embedded in their social, historical, and political context and possessing a unique social configuration, the discussion of mobilisation emphasises the significance of interrogating the way in which universities are connected with larger political forces. I take this forward in the next chapter through consideration of the concept of *political entanglement* and the related ability of universities to act as sources of critical voice.

## Chapter Seven

### Political Entanglement, Social Silencing, and Critical Voice

In post-war contexts, one of the most crucial roles that academics are argued to play is to serve as critical voices, articulating, both in universities and beyond campuses, the dynamics and legacies of conflict and positing ways forward towards reconciliation and recovery (Pacheco, 2013). When asked about the contribution that universities had made in the area of social critique, however, the answers that interviewees in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka gave suggested an absence of such a critical role for their institutions in society, with the exception of a few outspoken individuals who had become prominent in the public sphere. A senior staff member at Njala University, for instance, suggested that academics do not want to 'rock the boat' by engaging in academic critique (FN). In Jaffna, one Professor articulated that self-censorship was a substantial element of the university environment and that, after thirty years of war, people had learnt to be careful about what they say (JU6). This chapter seeks to explain and explore this finding by grounding the possibilities for social critique in the features of university substrates in the two countries and their interactions with party and state politics.

The chapter is split into two main sections. The first half introduces the concept of *political entanglement* as a means of thinking through the ways in which university communities are connected to the government, political parties, and broader political forces. Working with political entanglement allows for engagement with important features of university functioning, such as has already been suggested with regards to student groups and political mobilisation, while also offering a means to more directly link the concept of the substrate of a university community to the wider environment in which that university operates. In particular, the section looks at the issue of political appointments to senior university positions and how this can spread political influence through the faculty. The second half of the chapter then takes this forward by using the concepts of political entanglement and the substrate, as well as considerations around resource availability, to better understand practices of self-censorship and social censorship in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Related to these concepts, I outline four areas which can have a significant bearing on the possibilities for critical voice. I consider, for instance, the idea of *social silencing*, referring to the pressure for self-censorship that emerges from ostracising practices within the social environment of the university. I also argue that the

political control of senior figures and bodies within universities can create incentives for political alignment, thereby dampening the potential for political dissent. The chapter then concludes by drawing these threads together in order to discuss the implications of the social and political embeddedness identified in the chapter for the creation of spaces of critical commentary within universities as well as in the wider social space.

Given the chapter's focus on political influence and silencing, it is, perhaps, unsurprising that clearly grasping the precise dynamics of the phenomena under study was a difficult task. The complexities around researching these topics were clearly illustrated to me one day in Jaffna when an interviewee informed me, carefully, that the previous interviewee that day had held close links with the LTTE. That this informing interviewee was one of the few who declined to be recorded, giving the reason of their poor language skills despite their excellent English, feels indicative of the silencing pressures at Jaffna, with their comments on the previous interviewee pointing to the known and yet largely hidden affiliations that pervaded the university. With a few exceptions for prominent public figures, such as Professor Carlo Fonseka, conversations with academics in Sri Lanka were often laced with a seeming awareness of the risks of being too vocal about the wrong topics in the wrong environment or in front of the wrong people. The troubling history of enforced disappearances in the country, vividly represented by descriptions of people being bundled into white vans and then never being seen again (BBC, 2012), offers plenty of justification for such fears. In Sierra Leone, politics was everywhere and nowhere at the universities. Some interlocutors emphasised the technical, apolitical nature of decision-making in universities but then contradicted this through their own examples of political interference in higher education. At Njala, in one such moment of apparent contradiction, one interviewee extolled the health of academic freedom in the universities before then emphasising the importance of keeping senior management informed about our conversation. Similarly, another Njala academic seemed to suggest that there would be much more he could tell me about the university, if only I had the right sort of approval from higher ups. In such ways, silencing dynamics were woven throughout my data collection experiences, both in the foreground and the background.

The findings in this chapter represent the piecing together of these conversations and experiences into a picture of the social and political connections that can extend through universities and that can inflect the possibilities for critical voice within university communities. Where possible, I make use of supporting documents and newspaper accounts, which can articulate directly what is half-said in conversations or that which is commonly known but not generally discussed. While the picture presented here is not a complete one, reflecting both the exploratory nature of the study and the opacity of the topics under study, it, nevertheless,

offers clear insights into factors which can limit the ability of universities to act as critical voices that push for post-war recovery and transformation.

### ***Political Entanglement and the Faculty***

#### *Framing Politicisation as Political Entanglement*

To understand the relationship between public universities and post-war social and political change, it is vital to consider the different ways in which universities are connected to their surrounding political environments. The significance of political interactions for university functioning is apparent in the negotiation of funding discussed in Chapter Four, is manifestly present in relation to the dynamics of rebuilding faculties in Chapter Five, and is also evident in the conversations around the interaction between student politics and national politics in Chapter Six. In terms of explaining these interactions, the most prevalent commentary emerging from interviews in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka focussed on the idea of the 'politicisation' of universities in both countries, which was then frequently pointed to as one of the key reasons why universities had failed to live up to their potential for contributing to post-war processes of recovery and change. Speaking to the perceived reach of this phenomenon, Dr Mbayo, a Head of Department at the University of Sierra Leone, lamented that "In this country, we say politics has entered everything, everything's now politicised" (UoSL5).

Engaging with the idea of politicisation raises important questions around what, precisely, should be understood as political when examining universities and what it might mean to study the connections between a university and its political environment. A Foucauldian analysis, for instance, would suggest that power and, therefore, a form of politics permeates the full social field (Allen, 2014), while a Marxist approach might highlight the role of universities in political projects of class domination (Callinicos, 1999). While valuable for contesting the construction of universities as purely technical or apolitical institutions, which is an inherent part of the notion that they can *become* politicised, these presentations of the political do not sufficiently correspond with the features of the environment that my participants were directly pointing to in their interviews. Instead, their discussions of politicisation tied the political to something more specific, something which could be seen as related to distinct actors and processes rather than the entirety of the social space within the university. In particular, the sense of politicisation emerging from these conversations centred on the interactions between the university community and political institutions, such as parties and the government. To capture this particular framing of politics, while avoiding the problematic implications of conceptualising universities as apolitical objects that then become politicised, I use the term

*political entanglement* to describe the dynamics of connection between universities and the set of political actors and forces to which my interviewees referred.

Four particular features of the concept of political entanglement are important to delineate here. First, by moving from politicisation to political entanglement, I am, correspondingly, moving from a unidirectional process, that of making something more political, which has an apparently defined endpoint, that of something being politicised, to an analytical focus on the degree and form of connections with political institutions. This move allows for greater recognition of the possibilities for variation and change in political ties. Second, by referring to the idea of entanglement, I am seeking to point to the complexity of such links, with the potential for multiple forms of connection that can be ‘tangled up’ with each other. For example, a political party’s influence over university administrators may encourage the opening up of greater space for student groups that are affiliated with the relevant political party while simultaneously shutting down the space available for other groups that are affiliated to opposing political forces. Third, and related to the previous point, entanglement also speaks to how the interaction of political institutions with one element of a university may yield further effects through the extant structures and connections in that community, much like how pulling at one cable from a tangled nest of wires may move the entire nest. This point is key for conceptualising the interaction between the substrate and political entanglement, with political actors acting through, as well as on or against, features of a substrate. Finally, with regards to how political entanglement relates to the dynamics and legacies of conflict, both direct effects, such as war shaping the particular political allegiances that exist, and indirect effects, such as war altering the broader political environment in ways that then affect the nature of political entanglement, are possible. An example of the former is the way the in which war shaped university ties with Tamil nationalist political forces in Jaffna, while the latter is exemplified by the political partisanship emerging from the war in Sierra Leone and its influences upon student politics.

### *Forms of Political Entanglement*

To ground the concept of political entanglement and emphasise its consequential nature with regards to university functioning, I offer here two brief examples of different forms of political entanglement observed during the research before engaging with a third example in depth throughout the rest of the section. Together, the three examples begin to illustrate the breadth of forms that political entanglement can take. This also underscores the need for the relationship between universities and political institutions to be analysed at multiple scales and across different elements of universities as social groups.

The case of Njala University in the post-war period highlights how broad institution-level connections are possible between universities and political actors. As noted in Chapter Four, following from a discussion of the perceived sidelining of the university by the previous government, a Head of Department at Njala explained that, “When the last elections happened, this university took sides. Colleagues here decided [that] the past government has not paid any attention to us, so we better take our chance. Let’s align ourselves with one of the political parties in the hope that, if they win, hopefully our problems will be solved” (NJ1). Such a linkage between the university and national politics was not hidden, as amply demonstrated by the large billboard outside the Njala proclaiming staff support for Julius Maada Bio’s, ultimately successful, 2018 presidential campaign. With these open declarations of affiliation, this is, perhaps, political entanglement at its most direct and explicit. It also, however, implies what was felt to be a preceding, subtler manner of entanglement, where, without overt affiliation, the relative funding of different universities had, nevertheless, been influenced by party political dynamics.

Another comment from a different lecturer at Njala clarifies these points and adds further depth to the interpretation of these interactions. She argued that “The academia, we have become so much a part of the politics that nationally we do not speak out. Because we are also part of the national politics. For example, Njala is known as the college for the SLPP. University of Sierra Leone was tainted as the college of APC. So, the two major parties have so many inroads academically that lecturers... it seems as if we are being muzzled” (NJ11). First, there is an implicit recognition of how public universities can be connected with the regional dynamics of politics, with the Southern areas where Njala is based being traditionally tied to the SLPP and the APC having stronger roots in the West and Freetown. Second, there is an articulation of the consequences of political entanglement, with the perceived inroads of political parties impacting upon the space for lecturers to voice their own ideas and to critique the government. This particular consequence of political entanglement was central to many conversations in both countries and shall be discussed in detail in the second half of this chapter.

Student politics represents an area where a form of political entanglement is common across many contexts (Luescher et al., 2016; Snellinger, 2007). In Sri Lanka, for instance, both politicisation and depoliticisation were prominent themes with regards to student union activities, and they can be understood here as referring to variations in the degree of political entanglement. The strength of the JVP in universities has regularly been highlighted as a particular example of political entanglement on campuses, with the potential for the JVP to mobilise student unions for political action and to control, to a substantial degree, levels of violence on campus (Amarasuriya et al., 2009; OUSL4). There have also been, however,

changing patterns of student action in universities. Interviewees articulated that students were increasingly attending university with a narrower focus on individual career goals, which resulted in less engagement by students in broader political considerations and with party student wings (Weeramunda, 2008). This can be understood as representing a decrease in the degree of political entanglement within student bodies. In contrast to comments on the more apolitical generation of students now inhabiting Sri Lanka's university (Weeramunda, 2008), however, concerns were raised over the political overtones around, and consequences of, leadership courses that were introduced for new undergraduates by the Mahinda Rajapaksa government and that were run by the army (Perera, 2015). The use of public sector employment by parties, particularly in the approach to elections, was also described as a key way in which student and graduate bodies could interact with party political dynamics, with the promise, or delivery, of such jobs serving as a means to mobilise student support for a political party (Amarasuriya et al., 2009). This influence, however, also has to contend, or at least coexist, with the power of the JVP and the Frontline Socialist Party on campuses as well as the dynamics of Tamil politics in the University of Jaffna.

A third form of political entanglement that was common to both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, albeit with slightly different mechanisms, was that of the appointment by the government, and the President in particular, of the Vice-Chancellors of the universities, who are the most senior administrative figures at each institution. Such an approach to appointing the heads of universities is not limited to Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka (Hodgkinson, 2013; Zeleza, 2003). Anugwom, for instance, comments that in the case of Nigerian universities, "The government plays the largest role... in the appointment of Vice-Chancellors, whose only qualifications in recent times have been that they are government allies" (2002, p.152). This form of political entanglement is particularly consequential because it can grant governments significant internal influence, through Vice-Chancellors and their administrative teams, over the overall direction of universities, with the potential for rapid and disruptive shifts in universities when the political winds change. The remainder of this section examines the issue of political appointments and their implications for the functioning of universities in the two case countries, particularly with regards to how political influence can spread through faculties due to the interaction between political entanglement and structures and practices within substrates.

### *Stacking the Administration in Sierra Leone*

In Sierra Leone, the President serves as the Chancellor of the universities, with the ability to select the Pro-Chancellor as well as the Vice-Chancellor, who also serves as Principal. The latter acts as the main administrative actor in each university and the former effectively serves

as the President's official representative in university bodies, such as in the University Court, the highest administrative body of each university, where they act as the Chairman. Each university campus also then has its own Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who is appointed by the University Court and who is responsible for the running of their campus. Additionally, the Court is constituted of officials such as the Finance Director and the Registrar, who are, again, appointed by Court. While there are also eight members of the Senate, who are elected by the academic community, and representatives from staff associations on the Court, as well as one representative of the student union, the majority of positions are selected or nominated by the government, and the President and Ministry of Education in particular, or by the Court itself (Government of Sierra Leone, 2005b). In this way, the constitution of the University Court is mostly in the hands of the government in power at the time. This is not an accidental outcome, but rather it appears to be part of the legacies of Siaka Stevens' efforts to consolidate power and to restrict the potential for moves against the government by powerful university communities (Paracka, 2001), efforts which have largely been maintained by subsequent Presidents.

The Vice-Chancellor, who has the responsibility of overseeing the general running of the university, sits, therefore, in a politically precarious position. My meeting with senior figures at Njala University quickly highlighted how politically dependent these positions could be, with the team having been installed relatively recently following the electoral victory of the Julius Maada Bio in 2018. While a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sierra Leone argued that he had never been a "political person" (UoSL3), he, nevertheless, acknowledged the potential for political interference in university proceedings, although this was largely focussed around student unionism. In contrast to this claim, a senior university librarian commented that, "You have to be a member of that political party that is in power to head the university, because they know you are going to be like a small unit of the political party on campus. So, you control issues based on what you want to see" (UoSL4). As Professor Ibrahim Abdullah described it, referring to the colours associated with the two major political parties, "Today is red, we bring red people. Tomorrow is green, we bring green people. That is not how you run a national institution. A national institution... it should be exactly that, for the nation. Everybody involved" (UoSL15). Dependency on political patronage for senior positions is seen in these quotes to result in the tying the administration of university to the political fortunes of the political party in power. This should also be seen in the context of the staff depletion caused by the war and the country's economic challenges, with the privileging of political logics in appointments having the potential to further exacerbate staffing issues (Paracka, 2001).

While the long-term implications of such rapid, politically motivated shifts in the administrative organisation of the university are difficult to pinpoint, frustration with the partisan nature of

these appointments and their consequences was a frequent theme in interviews. A lecturer in Education at Njala took up this theme, articulating that “The fact that as soon as we change government, they change all the academics that is one thing to make you silent. You, the VC, know immediately that I’m here because I have to satisfy the current regime. Otherwise, I would have lost my job. You know immediately that you have to toe the line” (NJ11). This comment also begins to draw out the links that interviewees observed between the application of political selection process for senior positions and the way in which universities reacted to issues that were deemed to be politically sensitive. This was evident also in the ways in which political figures might intervene in disciplinary cases against students that were associated with parties, as discussed in Chapter Six. This interference and the positioning of student political activism in electoral processes implies further meaning for the idea of the Vice-Chancellor as “a small unit of the political party on campus” (UoSL4) given above. Professor Yormah, a former Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sierra Leone, spoke about, for example, being put under pressure to conduct student union elections in a way that would not interfere with the victory of the student camp associated with the government at the time (UoSL13).

#### *Political Appointments and Pressures in Sri Lanka*

In Sri Lanka, the process of appointing Vice-Chancellors has similar characteristics to that in Sierra Leone, although there is an extra step due to the form of university governance. While the President directly nominates the Chancellor of each university, the Vice-Chancellor is chosen from three candidates that are recommended to the President by the UGC (Government of Sri Lanka, 1978). Although the UGC has responsibility for that recommendation, the Universities Act stipulates that the names should originate with each University Council, the most senior body of each university. University Councils are explicitly constituted in such a way that the majority of members are selected by the UGC. The tight central control of the universities is partly an artefact of the JVP insurgencies, which originally resulted in a regime of even greater government control (De Silva, 1984) before the passing of the 1978 Universities Act returned some powers back to universities. The continuing precariousness of the Vice-Chancellor position, and its dependence on the political currents in society, is evident, however, in the dismissal of two Vice-Chancellors in 2019. Professor Ratnam Vigneswaran was removed as Vice-Chancellor of Jaffna University in May 2019. Discussing the decision, the Chairman of the UGC at the time affirmed that “According to the Constitution, the President has the sole authority for appointment and removal of Vice-Chancellors” (Mudalige, 2019). While no clear reason was given by the government for the dismissal, the impetus for Professor Vigneswaran’s removal likely came from the fact that two

Jaffna students had been arrested earlier in May for keeping a picture of the LTTE's leader, Prabhakaran, in the student union offices (Daily Mirror, 2019). In September 2019, still prior to the election of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Visual and Performing Arts was removed from his position with no further explanation given for the decision (Perera, 2019).

There is, nevertheless, space for university communities and groups around universities to influence the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor. The small variations in the selection procedure when compared with Sierra Leone have the potential to significantly impact who ends up in the top position, as can be seen in the case of Jaffna. Fitting with their general ability to informally control the administrative structures of the Sri Lankan state in the north-east during the war (Shanmugaratnam and Stokke, 2004), the LTTE appears to have been capable, even when not in territorial control of the university area, of having a strong influence over university candidate selection, ensuring that the three candidates sent to UGC were all acceptable to the LTTE. On this, Professor Jeevan Hoole commented that, during the conflict, "People who didn't support the Tigers went quiet. Those that supported the Tigers became VCs and that and this. Ironically, although it's the president who appoints, the Tigers made sure all three people were amenable to them" (OT4). When this did not happen, the LTTE could use the threat of violence and the mobilisation of resistance from elements of the community to bring about the desired results. While Professor Hoole was selected as Vice-Chancellor of Jaffna in 2006, for instance, he was unable to take up the post due to the threats received and the resistance from LTTE-affiliated elements of the community. A significant part of the reason for this is likely to have been that his brother, Rajan Hoole, had been involved in documenting and speaking out about abuses under the LTTE. Jeevan Hoole's academic credentials, including a Doctor of Science, were insufficient to counterbalance the political considerations around his appointment that were generated by elements of the Jaffna community. As suggested in Chapter Five, the continuing influence of LTTE symbolism and ideology in the politics of post-war Jaffna means that being seen as connected to the 'right' Tamil nationalist ideologies seems to still form part of the election campaigns for the Vice-Chancellor position.

Playing the game of Jaffna politics in the post-war period must, however, be balanced with a need to avoid the ire and suspicion of the President. Speaking with a former Vice-Chancellor at Jaffna, the difficulty of managing the different forces was apparent. He described the Vice-Chancellor as an "isolated and lonely man" and highlighted that the Presidential appointment meant that it was assumed that he was a "government man", who should be using his connections to bring back resources for the university, which then created additional criticism and pressure from the student unions in particular (JU16). The idea of the Vice-Chancellor

being favoured by the President is, of course, not without its basis in the way in the system functions. The Head of the Law Department at Jaffna noted that a previous Vice-Chancellor “went on record... that he managed to become the Vice-Chancellor because the intelligence [services] gave a favourable report to the president with regards to his politics” (JU7). The same logic of, at least putative, political alignment appears to be at play in the dismissal of Professor Vigneswaran as the Vice-Chancellor, showing the dangers of having activities associated with the LTTE on campus. The risks involved in drawing upon LTTE rhetoric and advocating for Tamil struggle are not static, however, as the post-war environment of Jaffna has evolved with respect to the changes in government and the distance from the war opening up somewhat the space for advocacy around Tamil rights in the public sphere. As Rajan Hoole commented, “After the end of the war, there was still some caution about identifying openly with the LTTE because the security forces were around, and they were watching the place. After the elections in 2015, the system opened up almost completely. It was no longer a liability to be pro-LTTE” (JU3). These dynamics point to potentially complex forms that political entanglement can take, with multiple political forces contesting influence over the senior administration and the Vice-Chancellor having to navigate this precarious terrain.

As suggested by the removal of the Vice-Chancellor at the University of the Visual and Performing Arts, issues around the political dynamics of the Vice-Chancellorship are not limited to Jaffna, although the particularities of the conflict and the regionalism of politics in Sri Lanka can give rise to unique mechanisms of influence as noted above. The place of Buddhism, for example, in many of the Southern universities is a significant factor, as is the positioning of the Vice-Chancellor with respect to student unions. With regards to the former, Professor Hettige at the University of Colombo highlighted that “This is not a secular university. Even a Dean, when he takes over his office as Dean, he would invite several Buddhist monks to do all kinds of rituals” (UC6). Speaking about the factors leading up to the FUTA strikes in 2011 and 2012, Dr Witharana commented on the broader issue of appointments, noting that “It was a time when we were also feeling pressure from the government because of high politicisation within the university sector. Appointments were done to Vice-Chancellor posts, Deputy Vice-Chancellor posts, and even the council. So... highly politicised. We started feeling that we were losing the kind of autonomy we had” (OUSL1). This sentiment was echoed in other interviews, and it brings out a central concern around how an increasingly authoritarian regime might erode academic freedom and university autonomy through control of senior appointments, even where direct governmental interference in the day-to-day functioning of the university, such as research topics, was limited.

### *Filtering through the Faculty*

To better understand how political entanglement at the top levels of the university staff may lead to pressures throughout the faculty, it is necessary to consider how the political appointment of senior figures at a university can shape staffing throughout the institution. A first point to note is that in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka forms of patronage politics are widespread (Amarasuriya et al., 2009; Bastian, 2013; Cubitt, 2012; Harris, 2013), with the hierarchical nature of academic institutions then providing ample opportunities for practices of political patronage within universities. While roles such as that of Dean are often filled through elections, it is, nevertheless, possible to stack the odds in favour of preferred candidates or to block others through administrative means. Dr Arivalzahan, a former union activist and academic at Jaffna explained how such elections can be managed in the that context, saying that “In terms of the power [in] higher education, the system in Sri Lanka... the President is appointing the Vice-Chancellor... the Vice-Chancellor appoints the Heads of Departments, and only the head of a department can become the Dean. The others can’t contest the Dean selection. In a way, they are similarly controlled” (JU10). Vice-Chancellors and members of the University Court can, therefore, manipulate access to other roles in order to ensure their own supporters are put into key positions. Such reshuffles then potentially have implications for where staff feel they stand with regards to the power dynamics within universities. For example, a Lecturer at Njala commented, referring to the shifts in the academic structure that follow a change in government, “One way they put you in your place is that they make sure they have removed all of the top officials.... They have removed most of the Deans. As soon as they came, they made sure there were elections and they had all the Deans that they wanted” (NJ11). Through such mechanisms, the political alignment of the top university figures and bodies can spread throughout the institution (Dundar et al., 2017; Colombo Telegraph, 2013; Tarawallie, 2015), with similar dynamics as at the institutional scale then being replicated at the levels of faculties and departments.

An important part of these processes, especially in resource-poor institutional contexts, appears to be the incentives that reward compliant behaviour throughout the faculty. In Sierra Leone, it was highlighted by interviewees that a number of the current government cabinet had previously been members of university faculties. For example, the current Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Dr Menumata Pratt, had previously headed the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at Fourah Bay College. While there was acknowledgement that this movement further drained the already limited staff pool, it was also seen as important that there were ‘educated’ people in the cabinet (NJ8). As well as cabinet positions, academics can also get access to jobs with parastatals or on various boards and commissions (Amarasuriya, 2016), which can provide financial benefits to mitigate issues with academic

salaries. Badamasi Savage, a retired engineer and university administrator, suggested that such appointments in Sierra Leone had become less technical and more political, with government singling out candidates rather than requesting support through institutional means (UoSL8). The links that academics have through their students with the elite stratum of society (Osei, 2021) also appears to be at work here. Professor Gbla at the University of Sierra Leone observed that, “You have former students at the university who are now big people in politics [who] still also have a way of influencing the university. So, they also contribute a lot in terms of the crisscrossing between politics and the university” (UoSL19).

Simon, a PhD student at the University of Sierra Leone, emphasised both the prevalence of the situation of the government employing academics in other capacities and the potential negative consequences for university life, commenting that, “Everybody’s looking for a government job. Once you begin to accept government jobs, it comes with strings. You have to speak government language, you have to speak government policy, you have to defend your... daily bread. And, therefore, over time they become tainted and cannot be seen as independent, even when panel are set up... it’s very difficult for people to respect them because they know where they belong to at one point or the other. And I think that is what academia has lost... has not been able to build” (UoSL9). Professor Gbla noted similar concerns around academics taking on roles with government, saying that “Some [are of the opinion] that when the academics will join the political space, they are sometimes compromised. They patronise.... They just forget about what they are supposed to be, the guardians of the truth” (UoSL19). These linkages were not seen, however, as unidirectional. The earlier comments from the Head of Department at Njala, for example, illustrated that part of the logic behind supporting Maada Bio and the SLPP in the elections was that the previous Minister of Education had been a Fourah Bay College graduate and, thus, had been favouring his former university over Njala (NJ1).

Taken together, what the points in this section suggest is that entanglement with political institutions and interest groups can occur through multiple channels. Political forces can act to (re)shape the substrates of university communities, through, for example, the redistribution of administrative power, at the same time as they rely on existing features of those substrates, such as their social networks and hierarchies, in order to operate. These dynamics can then have effects on how the university performs with respect to its teaching, research, and outreach functions. One major consideration resulting from the use of the logics of personalistic politics in deciding significant appointments through university staffing structures is around the implications for academic and managerial competence. As Abdul, a former student and prominent campus figure at Fourah Bay College, described, “Because let’s say... somebody is competent... because he is not a member of your party... because maybe he

has been opposing you... you take over power and automatically withdraw that person and appoint your own person. Probably the person is not competent. That will act as a recipe for chaos at the university” (UoSL6). While the assumption of incompetence may be questionable, the underlying idea remains valid in that the criteria for appointment may not be aligned with the operational needs of the university but rather with desire for parties to have their own person in charge on campuses. Again, this seems to play out at different levels in university structures, although the desired alignment may shift from being with respect to the central government to being with respect to the Vice-Chancellor or Dean themselves. Another consequence is that, like the allocation of positions, the allocation of material resources can follow the lines of political support rather than those that would best enhance the teaching and research of the university. A third significant implication of this form of political entanglement is the potential for silencing of critical voices, which is the subject of the second half of the chapter.

### ***Self-censorship, Social Censorship, and Critical Voice***

The way in which political interests can lead to the stacking of faculties along certain lines, as described above, can have profound silencing effects in universities. In contrast with ideas of universities as important sources of critical voice, interviewees in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka frequently commented on the silencing atmosphere of universities and their lack of critical contribution in their wider societies. A conversation with Professor Ibrahim Abdullah in Sierra Leone, in response to a question on academic critique in society, illustrates this point:

IA: “...Few academics do that. Those people are allying with the political parties. When their party is in power, they keep quiet.

IR: And when their party is not in power?

IA: When their party is not power, they want to keep quiet because they are afraid of political acts falling on them. You have few brave ones that will speak up, but that is the exception not the rule”. (UoSL15)

In Sri Lanka, a Professor of Education at the Open University described how speaking out in the Senate could act as a ‘black mark’ against someone. Furthermore, she commented that in an interview with the first woman Vice-Chancellor in Sri Lanka, the Vice-Chancellor had acknowledged that “We have faculty boards, we have senate, we have council. But people don’t talk at these meetings. They just keep silent. They are bowing down to the authority, especially women” (OUSL5). A woman lecturer in the North spoke about how the environment

at Jaffna marginalises minority views, while others commented on the social costs associated with being a dissenter (JU15, OT4). Responding to a question about critical voice in Jaffna, a Northern Professor highlighted the importance of history, commenting that, under the LTTE, “The university also became like an appendage in that sense. There was no opposition. No voice against. For a long time” (JU6). It is clear from these conversations that the source of censorship did not result purely from legal instruments, but rather emerged from forms of self, social, and indirect political censorship.

In this section, I expand upon this idea by exploring four different themes that were found to be tied to these practices of censorship. The first of these considers the institutional costs of speaking up. The second refers to the political and financial opportunities described in the preceding section and the importance of not ‘rocking the boat’. The third relates to social silencing, discussing the ways in which the costs of speaking up are spread beyond a narrow professional sphere. Finally, the section focusses more directly on substrates and the role of histories, particularly with regards to wartime experiences, in creating environments of censorship. At its core, the section argues that in order to understand the capacity of universities to offer critical voices in society it is indispensable to reckon with both the historically constituted social configurations of universities and their interactions with their political and economic environments. Further to these points, the section illustrates how, despite ivory tower depictions and frustrations with the universities not serving their communities, the functioning of the universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka remains deeply embedded in their national and local contexts.

### *Institutional Costs of Critical Voice*

Related to the discussions of funding in Chapter Four, the material dependency of public universities, at both the individual and institutional levels, can be tied in with the political relationships considered in this chapter and can form a substantial part of inculcating a culture of silence. As Professor Alie at the University of Sierra Leone indicated, “he who pays the piper, you know... if the university becomes too critical then funding and other facilities are curtailed” (UoSL1). This logic of avoiding critique of the government or political parties because of the potential repercussions for university funding appears to act as a significant barrier to critical voice in universities in Sierra Leone. The willingness of Njala staff to openly espouse political allegiance to Maada Bio’s SLPP suggests an awareness of the potential significance of institutional loyalty for funding. In a group meeting with senior figures at Njala I was assured, in a manner reminiscent of political spin, that the university would be transformed in a mere matter of months now that the right leadership was in place (FN). The

precariousness of public university funding in Sierra Leone, and elsewhere, would certainly suggest incentives for institutions to avoid upsetting the central government.

While the avoidance of institutional issues with funding through acquiescence to government agendas was an aspect of the university landscape, it is necessary to acknowledge that this did not mean that, at an institutional scale, there were not shows of discontent or dissent. During my first interview at Njala, for example, I was handed a copy of letter announcing upcoming staff strikes, and substantial industrial actions have been a recurrent feature in the post-war period. In Sri Lanka, while there were claims around government favouritism in terms of university funding (JU16), it was clear that funding to Jaffna, for example, had been maintained despite of the obvious political rupture with the central government during and after the war. This highlights that, although institutional financial logics may form part of the picture of censorship, comprehensively understanding the potential for critical voice in universities requires going beyond these wider logics to explore the particularities of the social structures and practices within universities and their connections with their social and political environments.

#### *Individual Opportunities, Networks, and Censorship*

The presence of opportunities tied to political alignment and shows of support, particularly at the level of senior administration, likely works together with the negative professional consequences of speaking out against political interests to reinforce a logic of not 'rocking the boat' within universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. A Lecturer in Education at Njala, for example, articulated this when discussing the departure of academics to form part of the new government in 2018, saying, "And then the academics themselves, so many of us were taken as ministers, deputy ministers. [People think] I have to be quiet because maybe I will be called upon. Others will say these are my friends. And others are saying that if I say anything, I may lose my job" (NJ11). Similarly, a Lecturer at the University of Sierra Leone expressed a comparable sentiment in a conversation about promotions, commenting "And if they identify you to be somebody who appears not to pander to their whims and caprices, honestly it's clear here... you'll be disadvantaged.... So, in former regimes people stayed quiet rather than being identified as... [being] in the opposition" (UoSL14).

The role of social and political patronage networks is key to understanding this mechanism of silencing. As Bastian notes for Sri Lanka, the post-1977 period saw the institutionalisation of patronage politics such that political power is "utilised to dole out state resources... to groups networked with members of the political class. Family, kinship, links through old school networks, etc., provide this network" (Bastian, 2013). In Sierra Leone, Siaka Stevens' 'shadow

state' further entrenched colonial-era logics around the centrality of personal connections for accessing resources (Bolten, 2012; Cubitt, 2012). The networks formed through the creation of a particular university substrate and through political entanglement, including those resulting from the political appointment of senior figures, can provide academics with a pathway through which they can access these resources. By speaking out, however, one's position in these networks can be put in jeopardy, endangering both present material security and future economic and political progress. This can create potent incentives for those intertwined with networks of university patronage, or those wishing to join them, to keep silent or follow the party line. Efforts to preserve and enhance one's networks, therefore, can come at the cost of a degree of critical voice and independence. As the same University of Sierra Leone Lecturer quoted above put it, articulating his frustrations with the co-opting power of patronage systems in academia, "Here, even a professional is easily compromised" (UoSL14).

The closing down of professional opportunities when academics speak out can also take place through routes which entail more direct political involvement. In 2019, following the election of Gotabaya Rajapaksa to the Presidency, the UGC announced that university academics would no longer be able to practise as Attorney-at-Law (UGC, 2019a). This decision appears to have been spurred by the military contacting the UGC regarding the basis for Dr Guruparan, Head of the Law Department at the University of Jaffna, to be practising law. It is suggested in a letter about the decision, signed by academics from across the country, that Dr Guruparan's ability to practise law in court was questioned partly because of his involvement in high-profile cases about military conduct, such as that around the alleged forced disappearance of 24 boys from military custody in 1996 (Colombo Telegraph, 2019). In this case, Dr Guruparan's activities outside the university can be seen very much as 'rocking the boat', albeit, this time, in the context of national politics as opposed to the particular politics of Jaffna University itself, with the response appearing designed to have a chilling effect on such critical acts by university staff. Furthermore, this example illustrates the way in which powerful forces in society, such as the military to whom Gotabaya Rajapaksa has been closely connected, can use their influence to intercede in the engagement of academics in critical acts.

### *Social Silencing, Loss, and Community*

The implications of dissent for academics are not limited to diminished professional prospects but can also be considered in terms of the social sanctions which encourage conformity to the dominant political logics of the university. I refer to these as processes of *social silencing*. These mechanisms for censorship were highlighted by the case of Dr Arivalzahan, a lecturer

and a former union organiser in Jaffna who had been involved in the publishing of the JUSTA reports that had brought to light incidents of recruitment irregularities at the university. Asked about the space for critical voice in the post-war period, the Lecturer told me that “We have started some sort of critical discussion. Then what happened was, that is my personal experience, they will try to outcast me... in the sense that they may not be prepared to talk with me. If I go to the senior common room, then everyone will try to avoid you” (JU10). The social cost of such ostracising tactics took a toll over time, causing Dr Arivalzahan to change his behaviour. “I couldn’t tolerate that, and I stopped all this.... Even in terms of teachers’ union issues. Once I realised that I am being outcast, isolated... then I stop these activities. And after that, I started to behave like a normal academic. This is part of the problem”. The problem referred to here is the challenge of speaking out critically in the relatively closed environment of Jaffna. Linking this to the political situation there, he commented that “because of this outcasting and this sort of thing I stopped writing my political view or anything on the Facebook.... Here, the only option is you can talk aggressively, you can discuss as a Tamil nationalist, that type of politics you can talk aggressively. No problem with that.... But if you have some critical issues, you want to critically discuss... that option is not being given. No space for that... in our university”.

This issue is further illustrated by the fact that the social repercussions were not just limited to treatment of the Lecturer in the workplace, with comments made about how his wife had been worried about him and the stress that he was under as a result of the friction at work. A discussion with Jeevan Hoole, who had received threats when he tried to take up the Vice-Chancellor position at Jaffna during the war, takes these potential consequences further. “My wife tells me that I am a fool and that you are just hurting the family. Hurting all of us. People won’t recruit my children. People won’t marry my children because we are known as dissenters. And things don’t come a dissenter’s way” (OT4). By engaging in dissent, for example through speaking out against the LTTE, Professor Hoole had been painted as a form of social traitor, a powerful label in the LTTE era which retains efficacy in the post-war period, resulting in he and his family being excluded from social and professional opportunities in the Jaffna community.

A particular feature of the Sri Lanka environment that sheds further light on the potential for social silencing is the interactions between academics in the North and the South. Dr Guruparan, an academic in the North, for example, spoke about the ways in which attending events in the South as a Tamil posed challenges for his ability to articulate his views on a range of issues at such events. When speaking about critical of political issues around the Maithripala Sirisena government, he noted that “Sometimes you feel left out because [Southern academics] feel that you are being Tamil nationalist... so immediately those caps

are put on” before later continuing that “progressive academics in South will have a little bit of a drawback [sic] in identifying or working with people like me because of the fact that they don’t want to be seen to be associated with that kind of Tamil nationalism”. He further added that “I used to be a constant, shall we say, rival at the Colombo conference scene. I have over the years now stopped. Largely because it’s painful to keep assuring people that as a Tamil nationalist I don’t think that Sinhalese can’t have a rightful habitation somewhere in the Northeast. You have to keep doing these opening statements at the beginning [saying] don’t associate me with these Tamil nationalists... before you can get into that. It’s tiring, painful, and absolutely unnecessary” (JU7). Through the frustrations experienced trying to engage with academics in the South, a form of self-censorship appears to creep in, where the will to continue placing oneself in spaces of potential collaboration is slowly eroded. This fundamentally means that the number of fora in which a Northern academic might speak out, particularly around political issues, comes to be reduced.

Efforts to be involved with academics in the South can also have consequences back in Jaffna. On this issue, a female lecturer in the North commented that “If I am good with a colleague from the South, I will be isolated” (JU15). Related to this, she also commented that one has to be ‘smart’ in dealings with colleagues, suggesting a selectivity around collaboration and speaking out in different spaces based on the social silencing that can occur in relation to communal politics. Censorship, therefore, can be extended from covering simply what is said to who it is said with. The content of the conversations in these two examples were not the significant factor. Instead, it was the very act of apparent collaboration or association which led to mechanisms of social silencing being engaged.

### *Substrates, Histories of Censorship, and the Political Environment*

As the last examples suggest, the mechanisms above need to be placed within the broader historical, social, and political context, as it is only within this context that the particularities of silence and dissent can be understood. To do this, it is beneficial to engage more directly with the idea of the substrate, which helps to bring into focus the historical evolution of university communities and the ways in which wartime experiences shape the constitution of communities and their social practices. While I focus here on this historical embedding of silencing practices, it is also necessary to recognise the significance of the broader post-war context for influencing the possibilities of critical voice. In the Sri Lankan case, for example, the rule of Mahinda Rajapaksa, and his brothers, in the early post-war period from 2009 to 2015 was accompanied by the occurrence of threats towards those who raised a dissenting voice. As Dr Dewasiri described when justifying calls for autonomy as part of the FUTA

industrial action during this period, “There were a lot of interesting situations even in senate meetings where you cannot express your views freely. Those who are critical about the system would be identified as those that are against the country” (UC2). The experiences in Jaffna, however, can also be understood as part of a transition, with some continuities and some disjunctures, from the rule of the LTTE in the north to the militarised rule of the Rajapaksa brothers in the early post-war period (Satkunanathan, 2016).

A significant aspect of the silencing environment under the LTTE and afterwards were labels such as patriot and traitor, which arguably formed part of the discursive systems that held in check critical voices in society and within universities themselves. As Sharika Thiranagama writes, “The LTTE was fighting a war on two fronts, one against an external enemy, the other against an internal foe, in an effort to define a people and a place, a task that brooks no opposition and necessitates frequent cleansing” (2010, p.127). She further comments that the LTTE “was able to define treason, first, as that which was against the LTTE and, second, that opposing the LTTE was the same as treason against one’s own self-determination and national homeland. All forms of political action such as human rights activism not allied with the LTTE were described as treasonous” (2010, p.133). As discussed in the documentary *Demons in Paradise* (2017), which features interviews with former militants who had been affiliated with different Tamil armed groups, the LTTE’s treatment of those deemed to be a ‘traitor’ was brutal and generally without mercy. The high price of dissent was combined with the intimacy of the LTTE’s infiltration of life in Jaffna, where the LTTE could also mean a family member, close friend, or colleague. The network of informers operated by the LTTE created an environment of suspicion, with the university being no exception to this infiltration. As a former Jaffna University administrator put it, when commenting on the LTTE’s assassination of Rajini Thiranagama and the flight of Rajan Hoole, “They had spies all over, including the university”, adding that the radical students who had opposed the LTTE had also been killed (JU9). The publication of dissenting material was also crushed, with the release of the book *Broken Palmyra* (Hoole, 1990), which documents human rights abuses by various parties in the conflict, being a significant part of the reason why Rajan Hoole had to stay away from Jaffna. On this, a former Jaffna administrator highlighted that even possessing a copy of such a book was too great a risk during the LTTE period (JU9).

Despite the end of the war in Jaffna, the North, nevertheless, remained heavily militarised and the atmosphere of suspicion and silence did not dissipate. The military made use of similar tactics to the LTTE in terms of stifling dissenting voices and controlling the public space. As Satkunanathan describes, “in every village, or close to most villages, a military office or checkpoint was established, and military intelligence officers would gather information through patrols as well as informants. When meetings or social events were held, men in civilian

clothing on bicycles would arrive at the venue, interrogate the organisers and note details in a diary/notebook” (2016, pp.421-422). Part of the silencing that occurred in the early post-war period was around commemoration of losses, which had featured significantly in the repertoire of the LTTE’s cultural symbolism. Satkunanathan comments that “collective (majoritarian) memory was created through celebrations of the war victory, military parades and the construction of memorials to members of the Sri Lankan armed forces who died in battle. There was, however, no space for civilians to organise public events to mourn the dead, or memorials to commemorate the lives lost. Instead, each year on 19 May, the date that marks the official end of the war, the armed forces in the North actively prevented collective community ceremonies” (2016, p.417).

In terms of the university itself, Dr Ahilan Kadirgamar commented that “A generation of lecturers were living under these wartime conditions of militarisation. A very brutal environment... assassinations and so on. So maybe they just got used to keeping their head down and not getting involved in anything and maybe... that culture has continued after the war as well” (JU2). One Northern Professor spoke about the continuing risks of academics getting involved in political issues, commenting that “I guess [academics] have shied away from politics. The history here has also not been very encouraging. There’s a lot of risk getting into political.... The other parties may get revenge, or something may happen. Things can get very extreme here. Like a disappearance. Like the Vice-Chancellor of the Eastern University. People have just disappeared. They can get killed. People they don’t like. Particularly if they see they are in a position of some standing. Academics also have learnt to not get too involved in these kind of things” (JU6). The comment on the Vice-Chancellor of Eastern University refers to the disappearance of Professor Raveendranath in 2006, whose whereabouts remain unknown, following a campaign of intimidation against Eastern University academics (Hoole, 2007). Speaking in relation to the Hinduisation of the space at Jaffna University, a former administrator similarly articulated that “You can release a book... related to Hinduism or traditions of Hinduism in Jaffna university, no problem. If you release [a book]... questioning caste, religion – that’s what the university must do... consider problematic fields – if you have some radical ideas in that book... they won’t allow it. Even though, now, no threats from LTTE, but indirectly self-control, self-adapting with LTTE” (JU9).

These quotes suggest that the historical weight of repression is not so easily lifted, with negative consequences for the possibilities of critical voice in post-war Jaffna. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily that all speech is similarly restricted. As Dr Guruparan also highlighted, certain approaches to Tamil nationalism continue to find expression, while others are subject to sanction through some of the means described above (JU10). Furthermore, there is also a suggestion here that the forms and boundaries for (self-)censorship are changing in the post-

war period. The LTTE was a predominantly secular organisation, while in the post-war Jaffna space there is scope for social silencing along religious lines based on the Hinduisation of the university. In explaining the use of a term such as 'traitor' in the post-war period, one Jaffna academic commented that the 'win-loss' nature of the war, arguably further fostered by the triumphalism of the Rajapaksa regime (Wickramasinghe, 2014), led to Tamils viewing more issues through an ethnic lens (JU15), suggesting an increased role for practices of ethnic, and religious, distinction.

As suggested by Dr Dewasiri's quote, the issues of silencing are not limited to the North and East of Sri Lanka, with there also being historical use of the idea of the traitor-intellectual by Sinhala-Buddhist groups elsewhere in the country. Tennekoon's description of the treatment of Sinhalese intellectuals in the Sinhala press in the 1980s is illustrative here: "This then was the traitor-intellectual, a Janus-faced opportunist who, by virtue of his westernized training was not only presumed incapable of understanding his *real* culture but also guilty of deliberately distorting that culture for a fistful of dollars" (Tennekoon, 2004, emphasis in original). In the post-war era, the name of the group of academics who allied with the Rajapaksa government against the FUTA strikes drew upon this language of patriots and traitors, calling themselves the Patriotic University Teachers' Alliance (Edirisinghe, 2012). Furthermore, militarisation, albeit often contested, has not been limited to the Jaffna campuses. The main University of Colombo campus, for example, is in a heavily militarised zone, with the windows of accommodations for service personnel overlooking some of the university grounds where students gather. Chapter Six, on student groups, also illustrates how practices of ragging in Sri Lanka involve processes of social silencing, with the mobilisation of student groups also serving to put pressure on faculty when it suits the goals of these groups and the political organisation with whom they are linked.

There are similarities between the descriptions of the early post-war period in Sri Lanka and those from during Siaka Stevens one-party rule in Sierra Leone, with the disappearances of critical intellectuals, for example, being a common feature of both. It is within this historical context, itself embedded in the logics emerging from British colonial rule in Sierra Leone, that the mechanisms of self-censorship in Sierra Leone's universities appear to have become prevalent. For instance, the practice of 'muzzling' academics through incorporating them in patron-client relationships was central to Stevens' mechanisms for controlling the state as well as limiting dissent against his government. This is a strategy that resonates with the current practices in Sierra Leone around the appointment of Vice-Chancellors and, subsequently, in positions throughout university hierarchies. As discussed in Chapter Six, as a means of trying to control student opposition Stevens also had agents infiltrate student bodies on campuses in ways that are akin to those used by the LTTE. As Dr Mbayo, the Head of Political Science

at Fourah Bay College, commented, “That is how politics came on our campuses, by way of control” (UoSL5).

While such systems of influence and silencing were under the control of Stevens, and to a lesser extent his successor, Joseph Momoh, the polarised landscape emerging from war meant that control over these mechanisms came to be subject of contestation, with their use seeming to incorporate elements of partisan retaliation. The provision of financial and other opportunities for academics on the basis of political ties appears to have continued but so too has the risk of being identified with the wrong political side. For some, it seems, operating in this environment means staying effectively apolitical and keeping relatively silent on issues that may be painted as partisan critique so as to avoid sanction. For others, it means picking a side, at least temporarily, with the hope of receiving rewards for sticking, mostly, to the party line. Through its overt affiliation to President Maada Bio and the SLPP, Njala University appears to fall in the latter category, although the staff strikes over delayed pay mentioned earlier suggest that such loyalty is certainly not unconditional. Whether or not rewards are forthcoming, it would seem likely that the choice of the Njala University staff body to declare a side will have negative consequences if the political pendulum swings back to the APC. While pointing to the potential risks of such a strategy, this also indicates the agency of university actors in navigating mechanisms of censorship in different ways.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has argued that the possibilities for critical action in, and by, university communities are fundamentally intertwined with the particular political, social, historical, and economic contexts of those communities. Through political entanglement, I have offered a means of conceptualising the complex and varied ways by which political forces can be connected to universities and can, thereby, influence their functioning. The concept of the substrate complements this by providing a lens through which to engage with the historically dependent social structures and practices that can also, and in intertwined ways, hamper critical voice. Furthermore, the observation that ostracising practices extend beyond even the campus walls has highlighted that the issue of self-censorship in universities cannot be dealt with in isolation of the wider social environment. Similarly, it has been suggested here and in Chapter Four that material considerations can significantly shape the terrain which academics navigate when contemplating the voicing of dissent, particularly given the precariousness of funding in contexts like post-war Sierra Leone. Ultimately, I have argued that the freedom of academics to speak out publicly, or to keep silent, cannot be separated from the complex and

connected consequences they can face across different spheres of their lives for doing so. The question of whether academics in conflict-affected contexts are able to offer critical readings of the past and transformative visions of the future, therefore, is likely to be as much about whether academics can afford the social and economic costs of speaking against the grain as it is about the boundaries that are legally set on speech. Some may argue that such constraints might play a positive role in preserving stability and, thus, a form of negative peace (Galtung, 1969). I would suggest, however, that the silencing mechanisms outlined here are, nevertheless, better viewed as fundamental impediments to university contributions to peace as they limit the ability of university actors to work towards post-war transformation in ways that are distinct from the constraints imposed by strategic considerations around when to preserve stability and when to push for change.

## Chapter Eight

### Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

This thesis set out to explore the interactions between universities and post-war processes of recovery and to explain the limited contributions to post-war peacebuilding and development of public universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. By conceptualising universities as social groups (Elder-Vass, 2010), I have shown that examining the sets of social and political relations that constitute and structure universities and that connect them with their surrounding societies can yield a much deeper understanding of the constraints that can inhibit strong university contributions to post-war recovery. Through consideration of the cases of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, I have argued that the ways in which universities as social groups embody social fracture lines, political connections, and experiences of conflict and crisis are powerfully consequential for how universities operate and for how they interact with post-war peacebuilding. The dominant framings of the role of the university in society that undergird the proposed contributions discussed in Chapter Two, principally those relating to human capital and knowledge economy theories, obscure and marginalise these functionally significant elements of universities. Ultimately, it is precisely the fact that these framings elide the historical, social, and political complexities explored in this thesis that helps to explain the distance between the contributions to processes of peacebuilding and post-war development emerging from, for example, human capital approaches and the reality of the limited significant contributions to such processes realised by public universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

In this chapter, I bring the findings of the preceding chapters together in order to elaborate upon what the ensemble of factors identified through the research suggests about the limits on the ability of universities to contribute to post-war processes. The first section summarises and synthesises what the study reveals about the constraints on university contributions to post-war recovery in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. The second section expands the scope of the discussion to consider what these findings imply about the role of post-war universities, at large, in relation to peacebuilding and development. Here, I also highlight important second-order considerations which may act through the factors that I have identified in the preceding chapters in ways that further influence the possibilities for university action. This means engaging with, for example, how shifts in the dominant discourses and practices of higher

education can affect the availability of resources for post-war universities. The third section moves to discuss the wider validity of my approach to the research for the study of universities, and other institutions, in post-war contexts and beyond. In particular, I note the value of shifting the emphasis from institutional structures to institutionally associated social groups. This section also takes on the question of where the work of the study might best be expanded upon in future research before the final section offers concluding thoughts on what the research suggests about pathways for growth and change in post-war universities and the societies in which they are embedded.

### ***Understanding Constraints on Contributions***

#### *Financing Post-War Universities*

As a starting point for understanding the limitations on the actions that universities are able to take in conflict-affected contexts, it is necessary to consider the resources that those universities can access. To this end, in Chapter Four I discussed how universities in Sierra Leone have faced a serious lack of material resources and infrastructure in the post-war period. Classrooms are frequently overcrowded, with some students forced to try and listen from the corridor; the availability of learning infrastructure, whether in the form of whiteboards or laptops, is restricted; and the latest scientific equipment for research is often far outside the realm of financial possibility. In such circumstances, the task of attracting staff from other contexts to support recovery is also challenging, especially when the funds to support staff transitions are not generally available. Furthermore, Njala's reliance on its own costly electricity generating facilities illustrates the way in which operating in such resource poor environments can lead to additional costs associated with the difficulty of securing resources that might be readily available elsewhere. Although these funding issues have imposed strong constraints on the functioning of Sierra Leone's universities in the post-war period, not all post-conflict institutions share a similar dearth of resources. Counterposing the situation in Sierra Leone with that in Sri Lanka, whose economy had seen much more substantial growth in recent decades despite the war, suggests that the financial positions of post-war universities can be markedly different, with institutions in Sri Lanka having more substantial resources within their reach while also operating in the context of a more restricted expansion in student numbers. While resource environment constraints are likely a significant factor in the case of Sierra Leone, the same does not appear to be the case for Sri Lanka, pointing to the need for a more complex picture of the factors shaping university contributions to post-war processes.

### *Navigating Substrates*

The war in Sri Lanka saw waves of staff departures from the University of Jaffna. Despite this, in the post-war period former staff and talented young graduates seem to have been resisted in their attempts to join the faculty while candidates with lower qualifications have been accepted into the institution. In Chapter Five, I grappled with the question of how to understand why, and how, such selective resistance takes place, arguing that such phenomena need to be understood in terms of the social history of the university. To aid in this task, I introduced the concept of the *substrate* to represent the specific social configuration of a university at a given point in time, particularly with respect to who constitutes the university and the practices and social structures those members embody. Through examination of wartime and post-war practices at the University of Jaffna, I argued that the university community's experiences of ethnicised departure, such as the 1990 Eviction of the Muslims from the Northern province, and of life under LTTE rule built a substrate consisting of practices and power structures that privilege the entry of those who are least likely to challenge the existing social order. More broadly, the concept of the substrate can be seen to serve as the basis for understanding the range of context-dependent limiting factors that emerge from universities' historically generated social environments, with the universities in Sierra Leone, for example, being deeply marked by the personalistic politics of the one-party state. Building on these insights, a significant part of the contribution of this chapter was to push back against human capital framings of the effects of conflict on universities that shift emphasis away from the disruption of social fabrics and towards the presence or absence of technical knowledge and skills. At its core, this is an argument for viewing universities, and the broader social world in which they are embedded, as composed of meaningful social collectivities as opposed to disembedded aggregations of individuals.

### *Socialisation: Post-War Publics, Workers, and Politics*

In 1977 organised student dissent in Sierra Leone's universities inspired widespread protests that marked university students out as one of the only serious sources of opposition to Siaka Stevens' one-party state, while in Sri Lanka a youth-led insurgency with deep links to country's universities almost brought the government to its knees in the late 1980s. Responding to these histories and the observed potency of student action elsewhere, Chapter Six delved into the world of post-war student populations, asking what the structures and practices of contemporary student organisations in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka mean for how students engage in collective action. Continuing the critique of narrow human capital approaches to universities from Chapter Five, I used exploration of the social configurations of student groups in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka to contend that student group activities in both can perform a

form of *political socialisation*, which allows for actors, including student leaders, to mobilise large segments of student communities towards their own political ends. The chapter also suggests that student groups can do important work in relation to the transmission of social structures to new generations, thereby preserving university substrate features while also often contributing to the reproduction of the broader social order. It detailed how student groups in Jaffna, for instance, likely entrench rather than dissolve social fractures lines through exclusionary socialisation practices and a reliance on hierarchical social structures.

### *Political Entanglement and Issues of Critical Voice*

As the mobilisation of student groups by politicians discussed in Chapter Six shows, universities in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka are deeply connected with their political environments in ways that can strongly affect how those institutions function. The first half of Chapter Seven, therefore, considered the question of how to understand the interactions between public universities and political institutions in post-war spaces. Recognising the challenges of operationalising 'politicisation', I used the term *political entanglement* to refer to the ways in which universities can be 'tangled up' with political institutions, such as political parties. I indicated, for example, how the political appointment of senior university figures could lead to the spread of political influence throughout the faculty through, for instance, senior-junior patronage networks. As I argued, this means that the substrate features of universities and the links between university community elements and political institutions should not be seen as separate but, instead, should be seen as deeply imbricated. The second half of the chapter then continued this awareness of imbricated factors by outlining how the different features of universities discussed throughout the thesis – their resource environments, collective histories, social networks, and political entanglements – might work together to reduce the ability for university actors to engage in critical acts that push against dominant narratives and forces. I pointed to, for example, the significance of processes of *social silencing*, both inside and outside the university, for understanding the obstacles faced by those who attempt to dissent against extant power structures by performing critical acts.

### *The Relationships between Universities and Post-War Processes in Sierra Leone and Jaffna*

Taken together, the concepts developed throughout this study offer a powerful means of explaining the limited contributions made to post-war processes of recovery and change by the universities in Sierra Leone and by Jaffna University. In the case of Sierra Leone, the particular historical trajectory of the country's economy – hit by economic mismanagement under the one-party state, war, and Ebola – combined with the priorities of major international

donors to create a post-war resource environment that gave little support for the reconstruction of the public university sector. Furthermore, the support that was available frequently fitted better with donor visions than with local needs. Ambitions around, for example, the growth of STEM graduates that might boost post-war development encountered the realities of training students in laboratories that lacked the latest equipment and delivering lectures in overcrowded rooms where students were forced to spill out into the halls. This resource environment also limited the opportunities for a refreshing of the faculty through the recruitment and retention of highly qualified academics, with the staff core having been depleted through a similar set of compounding factors as impacted the economy.

While this environment alone likely constituted a significant impediment to the university sector making a substantial contribution to post-war development and peacebuilding, the potential for effective contribution was also dampened by the systems of power that operated within and on the universities. For example, the university community substrates generated through the effects of war and pre-war economic and political decline appear to have favoured the incorporation into the faculty of young graduates from that same university. These young staff members were then often subject to relations of power and patronage with their seniors, which likely served to maintain rather than transform the extant social order within the universities in the post-war period and to limit the scope for the universities to do the work of turning the lens to reflect on their own role in the onset of the war. Entangled with these academic power relations are the ties between political institutions and staff and students. The student community that had largely united to stand up to Siaka Stevens was now split, with the dominant student organisations being connected to the two dominant political parties in such a way that collective action on wider social and political problems did not generally occur. Furthermore, the socialisation and mobilisation practices of these groups appears to have led to increased conflict on campuses themselves, particularly in to relation initiations and election campaigns, and to have worked towards the division of the student body. Political entanglement at the level of the faculty has meant that there are pressures on staff to avoid 'rocking the boat', leading to silencing effects that lessen the ability of the universities to collectively speak truth to power. Although individual academics and programmes have navigated this terrain in order to constructively engage with the legacies of the war and the construction of the country's future, ultimately, these factors have limited the ability of universities as a whole to drive towards a transformative recovery in post-war Sierra Leone.

In Sri Lanka, the post-war resource environment has been much more amenable to a reconstruction of the higher education system. The restricted numbers of students in the system and the higher levels of economic growth have meant that the universities, including Jaffna, are better resourced than their Sierra Leonean counterparts, albeit with lower levels of

proportional spending on higher education than in neighbouring countries. In the case of Jaffna, it is, instead, a combination of interconnected social and political dynamics that seem to be the dominant impediment to the university making a constructive contribution to post-war processes of recovery and change. While the student community has been able to mobilise en masse for a number of important causes, such as supporting the truth-seeking protests of the Mothers of the Disappeared, student groups have also operated in an exclusionary fashion, building monuments on campus, for example, that focus on Tamil suffering during the war. The processes of ragging that are used to carry out the political socialisation that allows such mobilisation of the student community have also likely acted to entrench social hierarchies and divisions, as can be seen with regards to the ethnic segregation in ragging practices. As with Sierra Leone, the violence and humiliation that are involved in, and arguably central to, ragging also represent, in themselves, a way in which the university has failed to build peaceful and peacebuilding student communities.

The legacies of the war for the power structures within the faculty have meant that loyalty and ideological alignment have, at times, won out over academic qualifications and critical activism when it has come to rebuilding the academic staff cohort at Jaffna. The forced departures of the war created a mono-ethnic university community, with life under the LTTE stifling dissenting voices and rewarding those who actively supported LTTE-rule. The university community substrate generated by these experiences has, in some ways, been self-preserving. A central network of surviving staff, predominantly in the Arts Faculty, appear to have worked to maintain the dominance they achieved under the LTTE by resisting the recruitment of those whose superior academic capabilities might unsettle the existing hierarchies in the faculty as well as those whose politics do not fit with a brand of Tamil nationalist politics that can be seen as a perpetuation of the LTTE's approach. Those who do make it into the faculty can be subject to mechanisms of control that incentivise either silence or alignment with the dominant political currents in the university. As one interviewee put it, these practices around who constitutes the staff body and which politics are sanctioned within that social space can be seen as the continuation of the war by other means (JU15). Imbricated with these dynamics is the way in which, like in Sierra Leone, politically connected appointments at the top of the university can filter influence throughout the faculty, with, again, patronage relationships forming an important pathway by which this influence can operate. Together, these features of the Jaffna environment have dampened the ability of the staff to effectively engage in critical acts on and off campus and have led to the exclusion of academics with skills and experiences that would have supported higher-quality teaching and research. Corresponding with the social order of the university community tending towards

stasis over change and critical self-examination, Jaffna University has, therefore, been limited in its capacity to serve as a catalyst for wider social and political change in the post-war period.

### ***Public Universities and Post-War Processes***

This section turns to the broader applicability of the research for understanding how public universities engage with post-war processes. In keeping with the contextualising approach that I have adopted in the study, the act of generalisation is done with the recognition that the findings of the research will need to be translated with respect to the particular features of the universities and contexts to which they might be applied. In short, generalisation here is seen to be a practice of applying ideas and concepts based on specific explanatory utility rather than being about the stating of universal truths about, for example, the essence of post-war universities. Part of the value offered by the multiple case study approach I have taken is that this practice of situation-dependent generalisation is already modelled in the thesis itself through the conversation that takes place between findings from the different cases. The section begins by reviewing what the results of the study suggest about the relationship between universities and processes of economic reconstruction and development, returning to reflect upon the pathways for contribution discussed in Chapter Two. Next, I perform a similar review of the implications of the study for understanding the contributions post-war universities are able to make to peacebuilding and processes of political and social change. Finally, I briefly comment upon how the concepts and factors that have been developed through the thesis need to be situated in relation to larger structures, such as the workings of global economy, that also shift their form and functioning over time.

### ***Economic Reconstruction and Development***

There are two main mechanisms that have been proposed for a contribution by universities to post-war processes of economic reconstruction and development. The first is through higher education's role in training skilled workers, whose labour will, directly, create value in the economy or will help to reconstruct key infrastructure, such as in the training of doctors for the health sector, engineers for the transport sector, or bureaucrats for the public sector, that will support the growth and stability of the broader economy. The second broad pathway is through the utilisation of academic research and expertise in processes of economic innovation as well as in the generation of effective government reconstruction policies (Milton and Barakat, 2016). Leaving aside, for a moment, the question of the broader validity of these pathways for economic development in a deeply uneven global economic system, I suggest that the findings

from Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, and the concepts created to better explain those findings, have three key implications for understanding the interaction between universities and economic reconstruction and development in these terms.

First, this study has shown that the processes of rebuilding the levels of technical knowledge and skills in faculties and facilitating the use of those knowledge and skills, which are central to the realisation of the above mechanisms of contribution, can be a complex and contested affair that is dependent on more than, for example, the availability of staff training programmes or the existence of a highly educated diaspora. The findings from Jaffna, for instance, illustrate how the historically generated substrate of a university can work to filter who joins the university community and can, through that filtering work, even orient recruitment against those with the highest levels of qualifications in favour of preserving the existing power structures within the community. Similarly, the way in which political entanglement at the top of universities has been suggested to spread throughout the faculty at Jaffna and in Sierra Leone emphasises that the way in which universities are run, for example with regards to who rises to the senior positions that are responsible for administering the university, may relate more to political alignment or a willingness to enter into supportive patronage relationships than to the possession of the ability to effectively organise teaching and research activities. Further to these dynamics, the disruption to campus life caused by student groups in both countries, whether through protests or through the violence of initiations and ragging, highlights the ways in which the broader social environment of universities can have a direct constraining impact on the processes of learning and research, rather than being incidental to them. Taken together, these findings underscore that the ability of universities to perform quality teaching and research must be understood as fundamentally contingent upon the social and political dynamics of the university community at large.

Second, while dominant framings of the university experience today emphasise the idea of students being prepared for the labour market, I have indicated that students are also undergoing processes of complex socialisation which will likely affect who gets employed and the dispositions they might adopt in work. On the former, processes of distinction in student communities can create unities, through the co-constitution of the 'us' and the 'them', that can serve as social and political networks while political entanglement generates opportunities for some students to make important connections with political actors, both of which can then be useful for finding future employment. As Amarasuriya et al. note for the Sri Lankan case, "the transition of youths into adulthood is to a significant extent influenced by their ability to acquire a position in society from which they can develop networks that enable them to garner sufficient social and political capital "to get things done," for instance secure employment or access services" (2009, p.28). In contrast to the meritocratic ideals underpinning visions of the

technical prowess of students aligning with the demands of their graduate employment, thereby optimising the economic value their labour produces, the reality can often be, as suggested by evidence from both case countries, that social and political connections have a strong hand in determining where students are employed as well as which students remain unemployed.

The consequences of university socialisation in relation to employment should be thought of, however, as going beyond initial access to employment or the capacity to conduct technical tasks. If we take seriously the idea of students being shaped by universities in lasting ways (Millican, 2017a), we should also take seriously the implications of the experiences of violence, domination, personalistic politics, and corruption that form part of student group and university community practices for how graduates then act in workplaces and beyond. I am not implying that university practices and structures are simply directly transplanted into workplaces or other contexts, but, rather, that the role of universities as sites of transition towards adulthood underscores the need to pay careful attention to the content of the adulthood that is being transmitted through university experiences.

Third, my research suggests that issues around the alignment between economic needs and the orientation of university teaching and research should partly be understood through the lens of universities as social groups with their own dominant preferences that can override market logics. The decisions that have been made in Jaffna around focussing on Tamil-medium courses in the Arts Faculty, for instance, prioritise the preservation of a particular idea of a Tamil university, as well as the maintenance of the extant power structures in the faculty, over the enhanced development of English-language skills that would likely come from English-medium courses and that are seen as desirable in the labour market. There are also further related issues that have emerged in the research with regards to how the acceptance of donor money in the wake of conflict can shape university priorities. The funding of peace and conflict studies in Sierra Leone, for example, is likely insufficient for the establishment of a world-class research centre in the field and has led to a significant number of students taking courses for which there are very limited job opportunities. More broadly, the idea of orienting universities towards labour market ends is a contested one. While, for example, a number of academics in Sierra Leone spoke passionately about the need to align courses with the needs of the market, the core of the activists involved in the large-scale FUTA strikes in Sri Lanka were actively resisting such trends in the education sector, articulating instead the value of pursuing, for instance, a critical social consciousness through education.

### *Peacebuilding and Social and Political Change*

Literature on the contributions that universities might make to post-war processes of peacebuilding and political and social change (Milton, 2013; Milton and Barakat, 2016; Pacheco, 2013) includes consideration of both the broad nature of university engagement with social dynamics and more specific pathways by which universities might be seen to build peaceful social structures. With regards to the former, the 4Rs framework, for example, proposes that peacebuilding education institutions will support resource redistribution, for example through access to educational opportunities; build equitable recognition of cultures and histories, including those around wartime experiences; facilitate equitable representation of different groups politically and within education institutions; and contribute to reconciliation activities (Novelli et al., 2017). In terms of the latter, pathways for contribution include the dissemination of narratives of history and identity that promote the peaceful co-existence of difference groups and creating social ties between groups within the common site of the university (Milton, 2013; Pacheco, 2013). Furthermore, there is a recognised role for universities in working towards political change, either through direct activism or the role that education is often maintained to play in creating a democratic citizenry (Aturupane and Wikramanayake, 2011; Bolten, 2009).

I propose that my research augments this existing body of literature in three key ways. First, in contrast to ideas about universities bringing different populations together and breaking down barriers between, for example, ethnic groups, the research highlights the way in which universities can have a strong role in maintaining existing social divisions. In both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka student group activities appear to serve to substantiate rather than dissolve or reconfigure gender hierarchies. In post-war settings such a feature of student socialisation can be particularly significant, with the tendency for the entrenchment of existing social hierarchies and fracture lines in Sri Lanka, for example, meaning that the divisions generated and hardened through the war are frequently reinforced by the higher education system rather than dismantled by it. As was seen with regards to the practices of memorialisation at Jaffna, this separate socialisation can also be tied to the ways in which one group's 'ownership' of the campus space can prevent the recognition of the cultures and histories of other groups. The fact that student communities can be segregated within universities, as well as between, means that the opportunities for reconciliation and bridge-building activities to spontaneously take place, through the common interaction of peers, are reduced. The comments in Sierra Leone over how campus spaces, including inside classrooms, can be divided up, with groups from different camps sitting apart from each other, provides a further illustration of this dynamic.

A second, and related point, is that the research has outlined a sense in which universities can be fundamentally conservative in terms of their ability to preserve their own social structures, casting doubt on the idea of universities as drivers of social transformation. As demonstrated through the example of selective recruitment at Jaffna, consideration of substrate dynamics speaks to the way in which social orders in universities can work towards their own reproduction. This is important for understanding the manner in which the legacies of war or political transitions can propagate through time while also speaking, more broadly, to the notion that universities can have practices that are fundamentally self-preserving, making them resistant to change. On the one hand, this, perhaps, points to a form of resilience, an ability to maintain form despite environmental pressures. On the other, it suggests that the upheaval of university communities during conflict can create social orders that are difficult to dislodge through post-war policy shifts, casting doubt on Milton's claim that "the end of conflict represents a unique opportunity to leverage substantial change in domestic HE systems" (Milton, 2013, p.422). In such circumstances, where a university community is pushing for a form of social stasis within its own domain, the likelihood of it offering transformative visions for the surrounding society seems low. This depends, however, on the alignment between the ideologies and social ontologies that the university community is seeking to maintain or promote and those of the dominant forces in the wider society. The 2012 FUTA strikes, for example, were about the preservation of a certain form of the university, with regards to, for instance, university autonomy, against the repressive tendencies of the Rajapaksa regime, with the university sector's resistance opening up space for social and political change.

Third, the study of political socialisation and of various forms of political entanglement suggests that the particularities of the internal structures that facilitate mobilisation and the specifics of the political connections between universities and broader political forces and institutions both matter for the ability of universities to operate as potent political actors. The form of student socialisation for strategic mobilisation, or non-mobilisation, by political actors observed in Sierra Leone, for instance, can have problematic consequences for political change when student mobilisation is used as means to escalate divisive partisan political feuds, as has been the case during election periods in Sierra Leone's post-war period. Similarly, institutions such as Njala and Jaffna, which openly display political affiliations, can become places where the space for critical voices becomes squeezed due to the social and financial consequences for individuals and groups who then speak out against the political institutions and associated ideologies with which the dominant groups within the universities are aligned. Universities frequently act training grounds for political leaders, with students in Sierra Leone, for example, commenting on how some go to Fourah Bay College in order to learn how to do politics. As with the points made previously about the socialisation of graduate

workers, therefore, questions can be asked about the content and form of political engagement that university socialisation experiences inculcate. The pursuit of Tamil memorialisation that forms part of student politics in Jaffna, for example, encourages immersion in an exclusionary brand of politics, while the 'family' loyalty prioritised by the camp system in Sierra Leone reflects the patronage politics seen on the national stage. In this way, the post-war political practices within universities can be seen to work to reproduce problematic political dynamics rather than transforming them.

### *Universities in Shifting Contexts*

In order to adequately ground the findings of the research, it is necessary to also comment on the positioning of universities within wider structures and power struggles, recognising that social systems are not static but shift over time and come with effects that are translated differently into different contexts. The experiences of, for example, a French university in the Marshall Plan era of post-WWII reconstruction are likely to differ from those studied in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka not only because of the particularities of the different national contexts but also because of the altered form of the global economic environment and the changed dominant understanding of what universities are and are for. These dimensions of the problem have been present throughout the thesis in the form of a background to the foreground consideration of university social group dynamics. To close this section and further situate the findings of the research, therefore, I speak directly to these broader contextual issues and their implications for the ability of universities to contribute to post-war processes.

A first point to consider is how the social environment of universities can be affected by shifts in the social position of the groups who constitute them. Major events, such as the Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka, can exacerbate existing tensions between groups while political processes, such as those of civil rights expansion in the United States or the end of Apartheid in South Africa, can work to alter – albeit sometimes slowly and inconsistently – relations between the same social groups within universities in ways that reshape university structures and practices. This effect of intersecting social groups can be seen as another manner in which universities are embedded in their surrounding environments, with a form of resonance between the configuration of social structures inside and outside of the university. Another related consideration is that changes in political environment, such as was seen in relation to the change in Presidents in Sri Lanka in 2015, can affect the forms of political entanglement in operation and the broader political terrain on which social critique by academics, for example, might take place.

A third point is that the economic contributions proposed for post-war universities are fundamentally dependent on the form and functioning of the domestic economy, the form and functioning of the contemporary global economy, and the positioning of the relevant domestic economy within that global economic system. While a full examination of these nested dynamics is beyond the scope of this thesis, one readily visible dimension of these considerations is the way in which the migration of graduates constitutes an important part of the economic environment in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. This highlights that even where universities are able to produce graduates with the 'right' skills for high value-generating employment, migration, which is tied to the positioning of countries in the global economic system, may mean that those graduates are likely to end up working, and thus making their major economic contributions, elsewhere. A final dynamic that needs to be reckoned with is the way in which the ideologies and associated higher education policies and practices change over time. The importance of such changes can be seen, for example, in the deleterious effects of Structural Adjustment practices on the funding of public universities, which are evident in the pre-war decline of higher education in Sierra Leone. The rise to dominance of new forms of neoliberal rationality and governance in recent decades, with emphasis on, for example, entrepreneurial universities and public-private partnerships, offer, yet again, a different environment for the negotiation of funding by public universities. The availability of resources for post-war universities should be seen, therefore, as tied to the features of the global higher education environment, with the operation of institutions such as the World Bank acting as one of the conduits for the prominent ideologies of the time to become embedded in government policies and practices. As can be observed from the resistance to privatisation and the introduction of fees in Sri Lanka, however, understanding the effect of dominant global ideologies around higher education on public university funding in particular contexts requires grappling with how such global trends come to be translated into local social and political dynamics.

### ***Methodological Implications and Directions for Future Research***

#### ***Implications for Studies of Youth, Conflict, and Peace***

In addition to the particular findings that focus on the relationship between public universities and post-war processes, this study offers insights that can benefit future research in related fields and that suggest avenues for further study. This section briefly discusses these implications of the research with regards to the study of youth, conflict, and peace; education in conflict-affected contexts; and the conceptualisation of universities across contexts and fields. In relation to the first of these, this study highlights that the particular form and practices

of student groups are important elements to explore when seeking to understand why and how students collectively mobilise. While Lange (2011), for example, acknowledges the way in which the gathering together of young people in universities can facilitate youth mobilisation for conflict, there is relatively little research on the connections between student group socialisation and mobilisation (Luescher et al., 2016), perhaps linked with underlying assumptions about the spontaneity of youth action. The way in which students in Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka can be mobilised through configurations of pre-existing student group structures and practices highlights the value of interrogating the social scaffolding that can give to shape to even apparently reactionary youth protests.

The exploration in this study of student groups, the processes of socialisation they carry out, and the related political mobilisation of students also raises important questions about the role of student groups in broader political movements as well as in the formation of armed groups and the onset of conflict. For instance, in Sierra Leone, as well as elsewhere, there are a number of examples of university students acting as instigators for social action that then spreads to include a much wider section of society. This invites the question of whether there are particular features of student groups that facilitate the creation of mass protests involving broader swathes of an area's population. Alternatively, it could be that the efficacy of mobilisation mechanisms within universities means that students are frequently the first movers in periods of political instability, with subsequent mobilisation by other, perhaps related groups, then being easier because the ball is already rolling. Furthermore, more work needs to be done to understand the particular roles that student groups take on in these wider social movements and how these roles change over time. Similarly, there are questions around why some student groups choose militancy and others do not, examination of which could be seen as extending existing knowledge about armed group formations on the basis of the work that this thesis has done around understanding the significance of internal structures for practices of student mobilisation. Given the prevalence of student involvement in the instigation of armed action, illustrated through the cases of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, such research may be a particularly important addition to the extant literature on the onset of conflict.

### *Implications for Studies of Education in Conflict-Affected Contexts*

The analytical approach of this study and the resulting findings underscore the value of a shift in emphasis in research on education in conflict-affected contexts from seeing the classroom as the principal object of study to focussing on the broader university environment as an object in itself, as opposed to just the setting for the classroom. I see this as a way of working against the veil of exceptionalism that often surrounds education, where the content of the educational

experience is reduced to the workings of a classroom. Claims about the power of education to bring about development or to promote peace rarely reckon with the social world in which students find themselves, positioning such features of education as supplementary to the main act. As Bourdieu (1984) and Willis (1977) have highlighted in their works on socialisation, the social milieu encountered through one's access to educational institutions is no mere side show but a fundamental part of students' processes of social becoming. Furthermore, the attention paid to university substrates can then give insights into how classroom dynamics come to take the particular forms that they do. For example, this thesis highlights the ways in which student groups can influence classroom spaces by encouraging working with some students and not others or by physically segregating the classes along social fracture lines. Similarly, the idea of an evolving substrate speaks to the question of who ends up as a lecturer and the social structures and sets of practices that influence their role as a teacher. My point here is not to dismiss the power of pedagogy. Instead, it is to highlight that if we have a singular focus on this 'special act', we ignore the richness of practices, cultures, and discourses that are equally integral to the constitution of that which students experience as education and how university communities engage with the rest of society.

Through the concept of university substrates, this research also provides a means to think through the social transmission of wartime structures and practices in education communities, thereby offering a tool by which studies of education in conflict-affected contexts can better grasp the consequences of war. By examining the dynamics of the university community substrate in post-war Jaffna, for example, I came to better understand how practices associated with loyalty to the LTTE and with the silencing of dissent have carried on, albeit with transformations in form, beyond the end of the war. Part of the significance of such an approach is that it allows for increased sensitivity to the continuities across the, often fuzzy, divisions of pre-war, wartime, and post-war periods, with the substrate continuously evolving across time rather than being reborn afresh at the beginning of, for example, a designated post-war period. The context-dependent nature of the substrate should also be seen as a rebuttal to approaches that rely on human capital or overly economic framings of the effects of war on education, with the idea of a path-dependent social configuration standing directly opposed to conceptions of the university as composed of fungible pieces of capital that may be removed by war and then returned thereafter. Future research in this area could focus on the utility of the substrate concept for different contexts while also drawing out, for example, the variety of mechanisms by which social structures are transmitted, which could then form the basis for interventions that seek to transform the social constitution of post-war universities.

### *Implications for Studies of Universities*

Turning to the implications of the study for universities in general, the research has demonstrated that the analysis of universities as embedded but distinct entities can yield valuable insights into the actual workings of educational institutions. This is evident in the way in which, for example, the particular features of student groups correspond to different shaping effects on the university environment as well as in how alterations in the surrounding political ecosystem can lead to shifts in faculty structures. In a directly related manner, the approach of this thesis offers an alternative vocabulary for discussing and analysing universities. While both the language of microcosms and of ivory towers recognise important elements of what universities can be, neither engages with the full scope of what universities are, thereby limiting what might be considered a significant factor for understanding their functioning. In particular, describing universities as microcosms fails to give sufficient recognition to the unique social forms that occur in universities, while framing universities as ivory towers underplays and potentially obscures the extent to which universities are deeply connected to, and responsive to, their surrounding societies. In contrast, the language of embeddedness offers a way of capturing both these elements, without losing, for example, the acknowledgement of the ways in which university communities mirror their wider societies that is inherent in the microcosm framing or the attention to disjunctures between local realities and university practices that is highlighted through the use of the ivory tower label.

A further part of the shift in emphasis inherent to the research approach of this study is the move from focussing on the university as an institution to examining universities as social groups. The discussion of socialisation, in particular, draws out the significance of the social group focus through its consideration of the implications of the transmission of structures and practices that are certainly beyond, and often explicitly against, institutional frameworks. Concentrating on social groups encourages a switch from seeing such practices as deviations from an institutional form to recognising them as emergent from the particular features of a university community. In such a framing, institutional codes and hierarchies are an aspect of the social terrain that can be navigated by members of a community in different ways as opposed to static structures that absolutely define the possibilities for action. As suggested by the examples of selective recruitment in Jaffna, institutional procedures can even be co-opted by university members in order to work to maintain social hierarchies, as opposed to such social structures fitting somehow 'inside' the institutional structure. As with the above comments on pedagogy, the point is not to ignore the value of institutional analysis but, instead, to highlight how an overemphasis on institutional structures can act to obscure consequential features of the actually existing social groups that are associated with these structures. Following from this recognition, it can be seen that analysis of universities that rely

on ideal types based on institutional structures may fail to capture important patterns in the functioning of universities, which may instead emerge from the systematic study of the features of university communities across different contexts. The possibilities of such research extend beyond the space of post-war institutions, with the concept of the substrate having validity for exploring, for instance, the transmission and maintenance of sexist and racist practices and structures within university communities.

### ***Concluding Thoughts***

In Christine Cubitt's work on post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone, she argues that "international peacebuilding manifests itself as statebuilding because nobody really knows what peace means in specific postconflict locales" (2012, p.1). In a similar way, at the core of what this thesis has argued is the idea that a constructive role for universities in post-war processes seems likely to emerge only from approaches that are grounded in understandings of actually existing universities, with all their social and political complexity, and the particular environments in which they are embedded. Concern over the application of higher education policies and interventions as blueprints that are equally applicable regardless of context appears justified given the current landscape, with powerful forces pushing towards the homogenisation of higher education systems across the globe (Naude and Naude, 2005). In fragile post-war contexts, the destabilising effects of such forces may be particularly problematic and, correspondingly, the need to push back is particularly urgent. To that end, this thesis delivers a set of concepts that can be used to unpack the complexity of university communities, providing a starting point for the work of analytical description that can be used to contest the validity of the dominant, universalising notions of universities that underpin the current processes of homogenisation. While ideal formulations of what universities might contribute to post-war processes remain important, the power of such analytical description of particular university communities is to illustrate how these functions might be worked towards from a university's specific post-war social, political, and economic situation.

There is much more, however, to working with universities as embedded but distinct social groups than resisting scholarly and policy-oriented pushes towards homogeneous institutions. From within the academy, there needs to be a willingness to turn the lens towards one's own institutions and to deal with the messiness of collective self-study, something which was commented by my interviewees to be largely lacking in both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Part of the challenge of such a move in post-war contexts is that it requires academics to reckon with often painful personal histories in addition to experiencing the discomfort associated with

recognising the power dynamics in which one is, and has been, situated and which are, perhaps, sustained by one's own actions. While the thesis has focussed on collective histories, substrates, resource availability, and political entanglement as significant factors that influence the functioning of post-war universities, it has also touched upon the importance of individual actions for changing what university communities are and what they can do. Returning to Henrik Vigh's concept of social navigation (2009), it is vital to acknowledge the ways in which individuals and groups within universities can work against the structural and environmental forces identified by this thesis. The 2012 FUTA strikes, for example, show that sparks of mobilisation for change within and outwith universities can emerge even in restrictive post-war political environments. Such stories of individuals and groups from both Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka give hope and remind us that university communities are made by their members, who can work against pre-existing structures to build change on campuses and beyond.

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## Appendix: List of Interviewees

Key to the interview codes:

JU	Jaffna University, Sri Lanka
NJ	Njala University, Sierra Leone
OT	Other, multiple, or complex affiliations, Sri Lanka
OUSL	The Open University of Sri Lanka
UoSL	University of Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone, and other affiliations in Freetown, Sierra Leone

Interview code	Name or pseudonym	Date of interview	Interviewee occupation at the time of interview	Notes
UoSL1	Professor Joe Alie	26/09/2018	Professor of History, Fourah Bay College	
UoSL2	John	01/10/2018	Student at Fourah Bay College	
UoSL3	Professor Jonas Redwood-Sawyerr	03/10/2018	Professor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Fourah Bay College	Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Sierra Leone
UoSL4	University librarian	04/10/2018	University librarian	
UoSL5	Dr Alex Mbayo	08/10/2018	Head of Peace and Conflict Studies, Fourah Bay College	
UoSL6	Abdul Kpaka	08/10/2018	President of the Peace Society, Fourah Bay College	Former student
UoSL7	Dr Ezekiel Lakkoh	09/10/2018	Head of Accountancy, Institute of Public Administration and Management	Former student union leader
UoSL8	Ing. Badamasi Savage	10/10/2018	Independent Consultant	Former Dean of Engineering, Fourah Bay College
UoSL9	Simon	10/10/2018	PhD student, Fourah Bay College	

UoSL10	Dr Fatmatta Taqi	12/10/2018	Lecturer and Director of Director of Academic and Careers Advice, University of Sierra Leone	
UoSL11	Dr Charles Silver	12/10/2018	Head of Political Science, Fourah Bay College	
UoSL12	Umaru Fofana	17/10/2018	Journalist	
UoSL13	Professor Thomas Yormah	22/10/2018	Executive Director of the Standards Bureau, Government of Sierra Leone	Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Sierra Leone
UoSL14	Reverend David Massaquoi	25/10/2018	Lecturer, Fourah Bay College	
UoSL15	Professor Ibrahim Abdullah	27/10/2018	Independent Scholar	
UoSL16	Professor Samuel Nonie	29/10/2018	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Institute of Public Administration and Management	
UoSL17	Dr Chris Berry	30/10/2018	Senior Education Adviser, DfID	
UoSL18	Professor Kosonike Koso-Thomas	31/10/2018	Former Chairman of the Tertiary Education Commission (Retired)	
UoSL19	Professor Osman Gbla	01/11/2018	Associate Professor of Political Science, Fourah Bay College	
UoSL20	Dr Aisha Fofana Ibrahim	05/11/2018	Assistant Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Fourah Bay College	
UoSL21	Business leader	06/11/2018		Has taught at one of the country's universities
UoSL22	Musa	04/12/2018		Former student, Fourah Bay College

UoSL23	Manju	04/12/2018		Former student, Fourah Bay College
UoSL24	Binta	06/12/2018		Former student, Fourah Bay College
UoSL25	Former student	06/12/2018		Former student, Fourah Bay College
NJ1	Dr Aiah Lebbie	12/11/2018	Head of Biological Sciences	
NJ2	Dr Philip Mornya	13/11/2018	Dean of Natural Resources Management	
NJ3	Ibrahim Bakkar	13/11/2018	Acting Head of Wildlife Management and Conservation and PhD Student	
NJ4	Dr Muneer Jalloh	14/11/2018	Registrar	
NJ5	Dr Joseph Sherman-Kamara	14/11/2018	Deputy Vice- Chancellor	
NJ6	Professor Osman Bah	15/11/2018	Dean of Environmental Sciences	
NJ7	Dr Abdul Sesay	15/11/2018	Dean of Agriculture	
NJ8	Dr Rashid Ansumana	20/11/2018	Dean of Community Health Sciences	Joined by colleagues during the interview
NJ9	Dr Saidu Chally	21/11/2018	Deputy Vice- Chancellor	
NJ10	Ambrose Meadow	21/11/2018	Head of Mathematics	
NJ11	Dr Adlyn Johnson	26/11/2018	Associate Professor in Education	Former Dean, Njala University
OUSL1	Dr Dileepa Witharana	22/01/2019	Lecturer in Mathematics and Philosophy of Engineering	
OUSL2	Mr J. Jayatilleke	29/01/2019	Lecturer in Mathematics	

OUSL3	Dr Athulasiri Samarakoon	06/02/2019	Lecturer in Social Sciences	
OUSL4	Lecturer	20/02/2019	Lecturer	
OUSL5	Prof Chandra Gunawardena	21/02/2019	Professor of Education	
UC1	Head of Department	06/02/2019	Head of Department	
UC2	Dr Nirmal Dewasiri	07/02/2019	Head of History	
UC3	Senior Lecturer	07/02/2019	Senior Lecturer	
UC4	Senior Lecturer	22/02/2019	Senior Lecturer	
UC5	Professor Jayadeva Uyangoda	27/03/2019	Emeritus Professor of Political Science	
UC6	Professor Siri Hettige	03/04/2019	Professor of Sociology	
OT1	Visiting Lecturer	18/02/2019	Visiting Lecturer	Multiple university affiliations
OT2	Professor Carlo Fonseka	28/03/2019	Emeritus Professor of Physiology	Multiple university affiliations
OT3	Dr Jani de Silva	29/03/2019	Consultant and Independent Researcher	
OT4	Professor Jeevan Hoole	03/04/2019	Member of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka	Multiple university affiliations
JU1	Dr Mahendran Thiruvarangan	28/02/2019	Lecturer in English	

JU2	Dr Ahilan Kadirgamar	04/03/2019	Lecturer in Sociology	
JU3	Professor Rajan Hoole and Kirupa Hoole	05/03/2019	Rajan: Former Professor in Mathematics (Retired) Kirupa: Librarian	
JU4	Lecturers (x3)	06/03/2019	Lecturers	
JU5	Student leader	08/03/2019	Current student	Interview conducted in Tamil with the aid of Dr Thiruvarangan
JU6	Northern Professor	12/03/2019	Professor	
JU7	Dr K. Guruparan	14/03/2019	Head of Law	
JU8	Professor J.P. Jeyadevan	14/03/2019	Dean of Science	
JU9	Retired administrator	15/03/2019	Retired	
JU10	Dr S. Arivalzahan	15/03/2019	Senior Lecturer in Statistics	
JU11	Lecturer from Department of Mathematics	18/03/2019	Lecturer	
JU12	Professor S. Krishnarajah	18/03/2019	Professor in History	
JU13	A Jaffna University Dean	18/03/2019	Dean	
JU14	Dr Ganeshalingam	19/03/2019	Head of Political Science	
JU15	Female Academic	19/03/2019	Lecturer	

JU16	Professor Balasundarampillai	21/03/2019	Emeritus Professor in Geography	Former Vice- Chancellor, Jaffna University
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