A History of Tamil Diaspora Politics in Canada:
Organisational Dynamics and Negotiated Order, 1978-2013

Amarnath Amarasingam

INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE FOR
ETHNIC STUDIES

A History of Tamil Diaspora Politics in Canada:
Organisational Dynamics and Negotiated Order, 1978-2013

Amarnath Amarasingam

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Amnesty International	AI
Canadian Foundation for Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation	CAFTARR
Canadian Humanitarian Appeal for the Relief of Tamils	Canadian HART
Canadian Human Rights Voice	CHRV
Canadian Tamil Chamber of Commerce	CTCC
Canadian Tamil Congress	CTC
Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre	CanTYD
Centre for War Victims and Human Rights	CWVHR
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	CIC
Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils	FACT
Global Tamil Youth League	GTYL
Indian Peace Keeping Force	IPKF
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam	LTTE
National Council of Canadian Tamils	NCCT
Non-Governmental Organisations	NGO
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	RCMP
Society for the Aid of Ceylon Minorities	SACEM
Sri Lanka Islamic Foundation of Ontario	SLIFO
Sri Lankan/Tamil	SL/T
Sri Lankans Without Borders	SLWB
Tamil Eelam Society of Canada	TESOC
Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation	TRO
Tamil Resource Centre	TRC
Tamil Sovereignty Cognition Declaration	TSCd
Tamil Student Associations	TSAs
Tamil United Liberation Front	TULF
Tamil Youth Organisation	TYO
Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam	TGTE
TGTE-Democrats	TGTE-D
World Tamil Movement	WTM

ICES Research Papers:

1. Krishnan, Sonny Inbaraj (2012), *Transition to Civilian Life of Teenage Girls and Young Women Ex-Combatants: A Case Study from Batticaloa*, ICES Research Paper 1, June 2012.

2. Wickramasinghe, Nira (2012), *Producing the Present: History as Heritage in Post-War Patriotic Sri Lanka*, ICES Research Paper 2, July 2012.

3. Rambukwella, Harshana (2012) *Reconciling what? History, Realism and the Problem of an Inclusive Sri Lankan Identity,* ICES Research Paper 3, August 2012.

4. de Mel, Neloufer (2013) *The Promise of the LLRC: Women's Testimony and Justice in Post-War Sri Lanka*, ICES Research Paper 4, February 2013.

5. Samararatne, Dinesha (2013) *A Provisional Evaluation of the Contribution of the Supreme Court to Political Reconciliation in Post-War Sri Lanka (May 2009-August 2012)*, ICES Research Paper 5, March 2013.

6. Schubert, Andi (2013) *Victorious Victims: An Analysis of Sri Lanka's Post-War Reconciliation Discourse*, ICES Research Paper 6, March 2013.

7. Bastian, Sunil (2013) *The Political Economy of Post-War Sri Lanka,* ICES Research Paper 7, May 2013.

8. Keerawella, Gamini (2013) *Post-War Sri Lanka: Is Peace a Hostage of the Military Victory? Dilemmas of Reconciliation, Ethnic Cohesion and Peace-Building,* ICES Research Paper 8, June 2013.

9. Dewasiri, Nirmal Ranjith (2013) *History after the War: Historical Consciousness in the Collective Sinhala-Buddhist Psyche in Post-War Sri Lanka*, ICES Research Paper 9, July 2013.

10. Karunanayake, Dinidu and Waradas, Thiyagaraja (2013) *What Lessons Are We Talking About? Reconciliation and Memory in Post-Civil War Sri Lankan Cinema,* ICES Research Paper 10, September 2013.

A History of Tamil Diaspora Politics in Canada:
Organisational Dynamics and Negotiated Order, 1978-2013

Introduction

On 10 January 2012, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President Mahinda Rajapaksa's brother and Secretary of the Defense and Urban Development Ministry, delivered a lecture to the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute and Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited. The President's brother, arguably the second most powerful man in the country, began his lecture by stating that Sri Lanka still faces 'several threats' following the end of protracted civil war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers) in May 2009. The very first threat mentioned and discussed at length by Rajapaksa was the "reorganization of the LTTE in the international arena" (Rajapaksa 2012). Mentioning several Tamil diaspora groups by name, he argued that even after the defeat of the LTTE, "the rump of the LTTE's global establishment is still active." Rajapaksa argued, for example, that the 'unwavering intent' of LTTE-linked groups overseas "is the division of Sri Lanka and the establishment of a separate state." He went on to note: "Most of them say they engage only in political activism and not violence. Almost all of them pretend to have a democratic face. But make no mistake. The Tiger has not changed its stripes" (Rajapaksa 2012).

While the Defense Secretary's remarks should not automatically be seen to reflect the views of mainstream Sri Lankans nor the broader international community, it is true that with the end of the war in Sri Lanka, many have expressed uneasiness and uncertainty with respect to the activities of the Tamil diaspora around the world. Indeed, such a stark verdict on diaspora activism by someone as powerful as the President's brother and Defense Minister is worrisome to say the least. However, in addition to the Sri Lankan government, state officials and media organisations in numerous countries, accustomed to viewing the Tamil diaspora through the lens of national security, were also not entirely clear what the defeat of the LTTE in Sri Lanka would mean for the often sizable Tamil community within their borders.

Much of this uneasiness arose, needless to say, because the LTTE's tentacles stretched far beyond the tiny island of Sri Lanka, and were a constant presence in the lives of diaspora Tamils. As Bandarage (2009: 171) has noted, "Operating like both a multinational firm and an intelligence agency… out of the main centers of its global network in London, Toronto, New Jersey, and Norway, the LTTE utilises the vast resources extracted from the Tamil diaspora and from its illegal and legal enterprises to influence policymakers, media, academia, and other influential sections in the state and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sectors within the international community." It was also evident throughout my research that the Tamil diaspora, for the most part, did not have an enviable reputation in governmental and policy circles, and is widely believed to have been overly radical and fundamentally corrosive to the prospects for peace in Sri Lanka.

This paper sets out to examine diasporic mobilisation in Canada in its various organisational forms, from the 1980s to the present. Even as there is much talk about the Canadian Tamil

diaspora, the largest population of Sri Lankan Tamils outside of Sri Lanka itself, there is, maybe quite surprisingly, very little actually written about organisational dynamics in the community (Cheran 2007; Wayland 2004, 2003). It is perhaps best, then, to briefly outline what this paper does *not* seek to do. While I look closely at the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Canada, the focus is not to provide an exhaustive treatment of the community as a whole, exploring intergenerational religious identity, the proliferation of temples and ethnic churches in Canada, gay and lesbian issues, debates about caste identity, refugee experiences, mental health concerns, gang violence, and so on (Ranganathan 2010; Clothey 2006; Sekar 2001; Balasingham 2000b; Fuglerud 1999; McDowell 1996).

Rather, this paper examines the diaspora's *organisational politics* in Canada from the late-1970s to the present day (Goldring and Krishnamurti 2007; Glick Schiller et.al. 1992). This discussion could in theory be undertaken thematically, dividing up organisations according to whether they engage in cultural events, settlement activity, political lobbying, and so on. However, this is in fact not as easy as it seems. For one, most of these organisations cannot be divided neatly into separate categories. Some do settlement work *and* lobbying, for instance, or organise cultural events while also mobilising politically. I argue that my more chronological approach has the added benefit of showing how the community's needs in Canada, as a diaspora, evolved over time, and how the LTTE's international network interacted with these groups along the way. In other words, I approach the story of Tamil diaspora politics in Canada as "history."

Keeping this in mind, this paper makes several inter-related arguments: first, far from being monolithic or homogenous, Tamil diaspora politics in Canada is constantly in flux. Second, with respect to issues of reconciliation among ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, the diaspora's role is ambiguous at best. What is clear, however, is that in the post-war period, the "organizational field" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) has become quite diverse, and the notion of reconciliation is being openly and actively debated and criticised. This paper is based on a much larger study of post-war diaspora politics in the Sri Lankan Tamil community in Canada, consisting of 69 interviews with Tamil youth and 61 "miscellaneous" interviews with diaspora community leaders, former members of various militant groups, and law enforcement officials in Canada, as well as numerous hours of participant observation at diaspora events in Canada and the United States (Amarasingam 2013). I begin by providing a brief overview of scholarly debates surrounding the definition of "diaspora" as well as a snapshot of the Canadian Tamil community, before examining the pre- and post-2009 organisational dynamics. In the conclusion, I examine the role of diasporas in homeland conflict in general, as well as the role of the Tamil diaspora in post-war Sri Lanka.

What is a Diaspora?

It is difficult to begin writing about diasporas, transnationalism, or transnational networks without soon realising that one is slowly wading into increasingly muddy waters, characterised by definitional and conceptual pitfalls (Baubock and Faist 2010; Braziel 2008; Cohen 2008; Chandra 2006; Brubaker 2005; Amersfoort 2004; Butler 2001; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1992; Safran 1991). As Cohen has pointed out, diaspora studies have gone through four phases in its history. The first "classical" phase confined the study of diasporas to the Jewish experience, but eventually led to the inclusion of Armenians,

Africans, Greeks, Palestinians, as well as the Irish. A particular definitional characteristic of the first phase was to conceive of diasporas as "arising from a cataclysmic event that had traumatised the group as a whole, thereby creating the central historical experience of victimhood at the hands of a cruel oppressor" (Cohen 2008:1).

In the second phase, beginning in the 1980s, scholars extended the use of the term as "metaphoric designations for several categories of people — expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*" (Safran 1991: 83). The third and fourth phases, beginning in the 1990s and continuing today, are characterised by a social constructionist rethinking of terms like "homeland" and "ethnicity," and with an equally important recognition that, while these terms may be socially constructed, "ideas of home and often the stronger inflection of homeland remain powerful discourses" (Cohen 2008: 2; see also Dufoix 2003; Brah 1996). In other words, despite the "spectacular career" enjoyed by the term "diaspora" in recent years, "its meaning has become less and less clear" (Brubaker 2000: 1).

There have, however, been many attempts to delineate, despite the complexities, some core characteristics that may be constitutive of diaspora communities. Brubaker (2005:5), for example, argues that most definitions of diaspora contain three elements: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary-maintenance. *Dispersion* is perhaps the most obvious and straight-forward of the three, and connotes the "scattering of people from their homelands into new communities across the globe" (Braziel 2008: 24; see also King and Melvin 1999/2000; 1998). *Homeland orientation* refers to a community's continued orientation to a real or imagined homeland that they hope to preserve and protect, and with which they have a sense of solidarity. While previous definitions emphasised that diaspora communities viewed this homeland as "the place to which one would (or should) eventually return," recent scholarship on the diasporic identity of second and third generation immigrants shows this not to be a key characteristic (Safran 1991: 83; see also Clifford 1994).

Finally, *boundary-maintenance* involves the committed preservation of a communal identity markedly distinct from the host society. As Brubaker (2005: 6) rightly argues, "It is this that enables one to speak of a diaspora as a distinctive 'community', held together by a distinctive, active solidarity, as well as by relatively dense social relationships, that cut across boundaries and link members of the diaspora in different states into a single 'transnational community'." However, there has been some (and in my view needless) disagreement between notions of boundary-maintenance and the equally significant process of hybrid identity formation. While the debate has tended towards an either-or dichotomy, much recent scholarship has shown that these processes are only opposite sides of the same coin.

Scholars like Safran (2005, 1991), Vertovec (1997), and others have each developed influential lists enumerating the characteristics of diaspora communities, as well as what differentiates them from "mere immigrants" (see also Reeves and Rai 2006). However, of particular importance for our purposes will be Sokefeld's (2006) theorising of diaspora formation. The academic debates about whether ethnicity is primordialist/essentialist or situationalist/constructionist has often failed to see more complex forms of identity construction, particularly during diasporic activism. For instance, many ethnic communities,

including the Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, engage in a kind of *construction* of primordialism, through the telling of ancient myths and origin stories (Jeganathan 1995).

Following Sokefeld and others, then, I argue that research needs to put these concepts into *motion* and decipher how identities are politically constructed in the context of ongoing social movements. Put differently:

> It requires us to ask how, why, by whom and for which purpose such identities are deployed. As identities become politically effective only when they are employed and endorsed by a certain number of people, we have to ask how these people are *mobilized* for such an identity, how they are made to accept and assume it. Rather than being regarded as something that from the outset provides continuity and fixed structures for social life, as in primordialist approaches, identity becomes an issue of movement and mobilization. (Sokefeld 2006: 266-67)

From this perspective, according to Sokefeld (2006: 267), "sentiments of belonging, attachment to a home and ideas of a place of origin do not constitute the 'substance' from which diasporas — like other identity groups — are made but the codes in terms of which 'a' diaspora is imagined." Sokefeld (2006: 267), drawing from Cohen's and Safran's conceptualisations of diaspora, particularly their reference to shared identity, simplifies the definition of diasporas to *imagined transnational communities* (see also Satzewich and Wong 2006). According to Sokefeld, incorporated in such a definition of diasporas is both a subjective and objective element often unclearly theorised in the academic literature. In his (2006: 267) definition, the objective and subjective criteria are combined: a diaspora "has to be a transnationally dispersed collectivity that distinguishes itself by clear self-imaginations as community." The approach extends what much of the recent literature in diaspora studies also points out: the mere movement or scattering of people does not *automatically* result in a diasporic consciousness. Rather, communities may develop diasporic consciousness, even many years *after* the migration, in response to certain "critical events" in the country of origin, such as episodes of discrimination, pogroms, or the birth of a civil war (see also Baser and Swain 2010).

For Sokefeld (2006: 268), if diasporas are indeed best conceptualised as imagined transnational communities, and diasporic consciousness does not automatically develop out of the process of migration, then "the crucial question becomes why and how a diaspora discourse arises among a certain group of people and how people are made to accept a certain discourse and to participate in it. The formation of diaspora is therefore an issue of social mobilization." Similarly, Baser and Swain (2010) have noted the importance of viewing diaspora communities as mobilised entities, rather than simply scattered communities. Understanding the ways in which the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Canada constituted itself as a "mobilised entity" is the primary goal of this paper. To better situate ourselves going forward, I first provide a brief snapshot of the community as it has developed in Canada since the 1980s, before turning to a more in depth examination of the "mobilised" nature of the Tamil diaspora in Canada.

The Tamil Community in Canada: A Brief Overview

Even as the majority of Tamils from Sri Lanka arrived in Canada after "Black July" 1983, there is evidence of migration as early as 1948. In the Canadian Census data over the last several decades, people of Sri Lankan background are divided into three categories of ethnic origin: Sinhalese, Tamils, or Sri Lankans. Surprisingly, as also reflected in the 2006 Canadian Census (see below), most people identified their ethnic origin as "Sri Lankan," even though "they usually would not identify themselves this way" in the country itself (Chandrasekere 2008: 2). The earliest Sri Lankan migrants to Canada were Burghers, and it is estimated that between 1946 and 1955, about 27 individuals migrated to Canada (Chandrasekere 2008: 11). Sinhalese and Tamils started arriving after 1956, but the numbers remained fairly small, with the total number of immigrants not exceeding 5,000 by 1970. As Chandrasekere (2008: 12-13) points out, these early migrants represented "only one segment of the Sri Lankan society — the Westernized middle class," most of whom came with enough money to support themselves and their families, as well as with a high level of education. By most scholarly accounts, then, a distinction needs to be drawn between pre-1983 migrants and post-1983 migrants, who were mostly asylum seekers fleeing an increasingly brutal civil war (see Table 1).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, changes in Canadian immigration and refugee policy largely facilitated the arrival of many of these post-1983 migrants (Amarasingam 2013: 138-63; Knowles 2007; Dirks 1995). As Wayland makes clear, "Sympathetic to their plight, Canadian policies facilitated the entrance of Tamils by allowing most Tamil asylum-seekers to bypass one or more stages of the refugee hearing process. The Tamil asylum claims lodged with the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board between 1989 (when the Board was founded) and 1998 had an average acceptance rate of 85 percent, compared to 60-70 percent acceptance rates overall" (2003: 69). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, tens of thousands of Tamils arrived in Canada and settled in large metropolitan cities like Toronto and Montreal.

This "density" is not an insignificant theme in our story. The concentration of the Tamil population in Toronto, as well as the broader transnational character of the city, is itself an important aspect of the political context, which allows not only for diasporic identity formation, but also political mobilisation. As diverse immigrant populations started to repaint the ethnic character of cities like Toronto, settlement services and ethno-cultural organisations also became a well-developed element of these large cities (Preston et.al. 2006: 92). Indeed, between 2001 and 2006, seven out of ten immigrants chose to settle in Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. In 2006, about 46 percent of Toronto's population was foreign born, "higher than in Miami (40 percent), Sydney (31 percent), Los Angeles (31 percent), and New York (21 percent)" (Kelley and Trebilcock 2000: 419).

Today, Toronto is home to the largest Sri Lankan Tamil population outside of Sri Lanka itself. According to the 2006 Canadian Census, the total population of those who chose either "Sri Lankan" or "Tamil" (hereafter SL/T) as their ethnic origin is 138,130 people (see Table 1). This is indeed smaller than Tamil community estimates, which often range from 200,000 to 300,000 Tamils in Canada. One reason for this, as Wayland (2003: 80) has suggested, is that it is quite possible that "many recent immigrants simply do not fill out the census forms, possibly as

many as half of the population according to some Tamil organizations." I believe, however, that the Census data provides as clear a picture as we can hope for, even while acknowledging much of the limitations.

Indeed, included in the "Sri Lankan" category could be members of the Sinhalese community, Burghers, Sri Lankan Muslims, as well as other minority groups from the island. Chandrasekere (2008: 18), for example, suggests that perhaps five percent of those who chose "Sri Lankan" as their ethnic origin are in fact Sinhala language speakers. However, as the vast majority of immigrants and asylum seekers from Sri Lanka have been Tamil, we can be fairly certain that most of those who chose "Sri Lankan" as their ethnic origin are Tamil as well. In terms of their age, as outlined in Table 1, the majority are under 15 years old or between the ages of 25 and 44 years old. The sex breakdown of the SL/T population is split almost evenly with 51 percent being male and 49 percent female (see Table 2).

Table 1: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Total Population in Private Households by Census Family Status			
	Sri Lankan	**Tamil**	**Totals**
Total – Age Groups	103,550	34,580	138,130 (100%)
Under 15 years	26,160	8,655	34,815 (25.2%)
15 to 24 years	15,065	4,665	19,730 (14.3%)
25 to 44 years	35,015	11,250	46,265 (33.5%)
45 to 54 years	13,855	4,515	18,370 (13.3%)
55 to 64 years	7,480	2,645	10,125 (7.3%)
65 years and over	5,985	2,845	8,830 (6.4%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

Table 2: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Total Population by Sex			
	Sri Lankan	**Tamil**	**Totals**
Male	52,315	17,500	69,815 (51%)
Female	51,235	17,080	68,315 (49%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

According to the Census data, almost half of the SL/T population in Canada arrived when they were between the ages of 25 and 44 (see Table 3). For the other age groups, the number of immigrants seems to be fairly consistent, ranging from 15 to 20 percent, with only 5.7 percent arriving when they were under the age of five. When considering the period of immigration, it is striking that the number of people who arrived before 1991, between 1996 and 2000, as well as between 2001 and 2006 remains remarkably consistent (see Table 4). Taking a step back, the Census data also reveals that about 25 percent of the SL/T population was born in Canada, and of these individuals, 92 percent still live in their province of birth (see Table 5). The vast majority, 75 percent, are immigrants, with close to 80 percent of them having received Canadian citizenship (see Table 6).

Table 3: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Total Immigrant Population by Age at Immigration			
	Sri Lankan	Tamil	Totals
Under 5 years	4,405	1,330	5,735 (5.7%)
5 to 14 years	11,430	3,445	14,875 (14.8%)
15 to 24 years	14,625	4,745	19,370 (19.2%)
25 to 44 years	33,915	11,415	45,330 (45%)
45 years and over	10,880	4,625	15,505 (15.3%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

Table 4: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Total Immigrant Population by Period of Immigration			
	Sri Lankan	Tamil	Totals
Before 1991	17,135	5,645	22,780 (22.6%)
1991 to 1995	24,845	9,325	34,170 (33.9%)
1996 to 2000	17,075	5,440	22,515 (22.3%)
2001 to 2006	16,200	5,145	21,345 (21.2%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

Table 5: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Immigrant Status			
	Sri Lankan	Tamil	Totals
Non-Immigrants	25,975	8,400	34,375 (25.4%)
Born in Province of Residence	23,870	7,875	31,745 (92.3%)
Born Outside Province of Residence	2,100	525	2,625 (7.7%)
Immigrants	75,250	25,560	100,810 (74.6%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

Table 6: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Citizenship Status			
	Sri Lankan	Tamil	Totals
Canadian Citizens	81,970	27,595	109,565 (79.3%)
Canadian Citizens Only	79,030	26,900	105,930 (96.7%)
Citizens of Canada and At Least One Other Country	2,940	695	3,635 (3.3%)
Not Canadian Citizens	21,655	6,995	28,650 (20.7%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

As is well known, the issue of language was one of the main points of contention leading to the outbreak of civil war in Sri Lanka (DeVotta 2004). Many of the older generation of Tamil migrants, of course, carried their language and their culture with them to Canada. They attempted to speak Tamil at home with their children, as well as send them to language training classes to ensure that they did not forget their mother tongue (Amarasingam 2008). However, they soon found it difficult to keep up as their children were learning English at school, and speaking mostly in English with their friends. A remarkable 30 percent of the SL/T population, according to the 2006 Census data, speaks only English at home (see Table 7). Looking closer at the age breakdown of this segment of the population reveals, perhaps unsurprisingly, that 57 percent of them are under the age of 24. Perhaps most interestingly, if we assume that the "non-official language" that the SL/T population is speaking is Tamil, then around 63 percent still speak their mother tongue at home, while about 7 percent speak a mixture of English and Tamil.

Table 7: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Total Population by Language Spoken Most Often at Home			
	Sri Lankan	Tamil	Totals
English	32,405	8,375	40,780 (29.5%)
French	410	125	535 (0.39%)
Non-Official Language	63,220	23,120	86,340 (62.5%)
English and French	80	30	110 (0.079%)
English and Non-Official Language	7,100	2,835	9,935 (7.19%)
French and Non-Official Language	230	35	265 (0.19%)
English, French, and Non-Official Language	185	70	255 (0.18%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

Table 8: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Total population 15 years and over by highest certificate, diploma or degree			
	Sri Lankan	Tamil	Totals
High school certificate or equivalent	28,170	9,380	37,550 (40%)
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	4,390	1,435	5,825 (6.2%)
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	9,960	3,025	12,985 (14%)
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	5,080	1,985	7,065 (7.5%)
University certificate,	10,800	4,450	15,250 (16.2%)

diploma or degree at bachelor level or above			
Bachelor's degree	7,000	2,805	9,805 (10.4%)
University certificate or diploma above bachelor level	1,395	690	2,085 (2.2%)
Degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry	515	230	745 (0.8%)
Master's Degree	1,440	565	2,005 (2.1%)
Earned Doctorate	455	160	615 (0.6%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

Table 9: Special tabulations from the 2006 Census of Canada, sorted by total single and multiple ethnic origin responses.

Total population 15 years and over by total income in 2005			
	Sri Lankan	**Tamil**	**Totals**
Without Income	6,805	2,260	9,065 (8.8%)
Under $5,000	11,260	4,155	15,415 (14.9%)
$5,000 to $9,999	9,040	2,900	11,940 (11.5%)
$10,000 to $19,999	17,760	5,980	23,740 (23%)
$20,000 to $29,999	11,790	3,725	15,515 (15%)
$30,000 to $39,999	8,480	2,710	11,190 (10.8%)
$40,000 to $49,999	5,035	1,740	6,775 (6.5%)
$50,000 to $79,999	5,405	1,800	7,205 (7%)
$80,000 and over	1,880	660	2,540 (2.5%)

Source: Statistics Canada.

Looking at the Census data with respect to education levels among the SL/T population in Canada, it is clear that 40 percent have at least a high school certificate or equivalent, with another 30 percent holding a college-level or university-level certificate, diploma, or degree (see Table 8). In terms of income levels, 23 percent of the SL/T population in Canada, taking into account that this figure includes a disproportionate number of *school-age* young people, made between $10,000 and $19,999 in 2005, with around 35 percent having no income or making under $10,000 (see Table 9).

There is, then, a sizable population of Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada, and many in the community have been consistently active in creating lobby groups designed to influence Canadian foreign policy, as well as service-oriented organisations which seek to aid the Tamil community in Canada (see Figure 1). Writing a history of these organisations proved to be immensely time-consuming and difficult. Many of the early organisations, active for many decades, kept little historical records or information about their activities. As such, extensive interviews had to be conducted with early members of these organisations even to obtain a basic "summary" of when the group was founded, their early lobbying efforts, as well as inter-organisational dynamics. Indeed, on several occasions, members of these organisations expressed gratitude that "someone was finally writing this stuff down." While I have attempted to be as accurate as possible, checking and cross-checking much of what is

presented below, some inaccuracies may persist. Since I lack the space to thoroughly discuss all of the organisations listed in Figure 1, I limited my focus based on organisational dynamics and identity politics that are of particular relevance to our current discussion.

While Sokefeld's argument that diaspora communities are best seen as mobilised entities informs our discussion below, another point is important: diaspora organisations do not exist in a vacuum, simply reacting to events in their native countries. Rather, the character or "personality" of diaspora groups is often formed *relationally* through repeated communication and competition with other *diaspora* organisations (Lacroix 2011; Baubock and Faist 2010). Through these frequent interactions, a kind of "negotiated order" is achieved (Day and Day 1977; Strauss et.al. 1963). According to negotiated order theory, organisations quite often "negotiate the terms under which they will interact" with each other in the future, with these relations being "subject to changes as new events occur or new parties become involved" (Nathan and Mitroff 1991: 165). As discussed below, such a negotiated order has been a large part of the story with respect to Tamil diaspora politics since the 1980s. With the end of the war in Sri Lanka, much of these negotiations continue, with new and more diverse voices entering the discussion. It is to this that we now turn.

Political Organising and Organisational Politics Before 2009

In the late-1960s, according to members of the early Sri Lankan Tamil community in Canada, most Tamils were part of a South Indian/Sri Lankan Tamil cultural organisation called Bharathi Kala Manram, which remains active to this day. Most of the Tamil cultural events, for both South Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada, took place as part of this organisation. As the Sri Lankan Tamil population increased in Canada, and as ethnic tensions heightened in Sri Lanka, the community conceived of a separate organisation for themselves, focused on more socio-political issues.[1] This group, known as the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada (TESOC), was registered as a non-profit organisation in 1978 with the late Nagaratnam Sivalingam serving as the first president.[2]

Discussions about the creation of such an organisation started shortly after the 1977 elections in Sri Lanka and the riots that occurred thereafter. The Sri Lankan government's dismal response to the rioting and the death of hundreds of Tamils on the island made it clear to many in the diaspora community that they had to form an organisation in Canada to lobby on their behalf. Shortly after the elections, the Sri Lankan Minister of Justice Kanapathipillai William Devanayagam visited Canada and held a meeting organised by former Supreme Court Judge and the then Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Ottawa, H.W. Thambiah. According to an early member of TESOC: "I was not at that meeting, but I understood from people who spoke to me afterwards that it was not a good one, and that

---

[1] The Sri Lankan Tamil community in Canada and the South Indian community would further drift apart during the war between the LTTE and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in the late 1980s. According to some sources, another point of contention was the attempt by the World Tamil Movement (WTM) to make inroads into South Indian organizations.

[2] Sivalingam was an admired and important member of the Tamil community in Canada. Arriving in Canada in 1966, he would be credited with being one of the "founders" of the Tamil community in Canada. He died in 2010. As one of the obituaries written about him noted, after arriving in Canada, he "would go on to build a community, the Tamil community, so that all of us can embrace the great things about Canada, while, proudly, holding on to our roots and values. He was not just a pioneer; he was a community builder. Over the course of these four and a half decades, he built one institution after another, most of them standing tall today as the servants of this community and as monuments to the enduring work of Mr. Sivalingam and his peers." (Tamil Canadian 2010).

the High Commissioner in particular and Minister Devanayagam had hinted at consequences to people's families — people who had asked hard questions. This frankly outraged the community here."

Within a week or two, a town hall meeting was called and it was decided that an organisation should be created in Canada that could provide support for the notion of "Tamil Eelam" as well as the Vaddukoddai Resolution, with its separatist platform. TESOC functioned throughout the late-1970s, and gradually developed a very strong relationship with the Canadian government. There was some controversy at the time with a number of community members, euphemistically identified as "Colombo Tamils," reluctant to join an organisation which contained "Tamil Eelam" as part of its name, assuming that this reflected an expressed sympathy for separatism as well as Tamil militant groups in Sri Lanka.

A parallel organisation that arose in part to differentiate themselves from TESOC was the Society for the Aid of Ceylon Minorities (SACEM), formally incorporated on 25 November 1983. According to many respondents, a point on which TESOC and SACEM differed was whether to provide support to the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the 1976 Vaddukoddai Resolution. The use of the term "Ceylon Minorities" also caused backlash from some members of the Tamil community who argued that Sri Lankan Tamils were not a minority, but a nation unto themselves. As one early member of SACEM pointed out, "People were commenting, but we explained the reason. They say we are not minorities. But, we didn't choose the name from *that* perspective. We chose it because at that time, we wanted to include Muslims from Sri Lanka also."

From very early on, then, identities were being negotiated and political "platforms" with respect to rising ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka were being consolidated. TESOC and SACEM also served as the arena on which the subject of Tamil identity was debated, with uncomfortable class-based conversations happening about "Colombo" and "Jaffna" Tamils, and about the precarious position of Sri Lankan Muslims within such identity constructs. While TESOC and SACEM engaged in similar projects, there was very little inclination from both parties to work together. As one member of TESOC noted, "Initially, they said they were interested in assisting refugees but it became very clear sooner rather than later that they had ambitions of representing themselves as *the* organisation in the Tamil community. So, there was a growing rift between the two organisations. They would go to Ottawa and meet with the government, and we would go to Ottawa and meet with the government." Similarly, a former member of SACEM pointed out that there was a sense of "elitism" among some members of SACEM that precluded any joint initiatives with TESOC. As he recalled:

> The thing is, SACEM included a number of the individuals who came in the 1970s and while they were willing to help the newcomers, they were not particularly fond of them [laughs]. They thought of them as interlopers and saw themselves as the elite, ignoring the rather limited evidence that substantiated this perception. They also had this particular mindset and looked down on the new crowd. They didn't much like the independence struggle back home. These are people who came in the 1970s when the situation was much better in Sri Lanka, and they sort of viewed the struggle through that particular lens. And they thought that the Tamil Eelam Society

> [TESOC] was composed of this 'other crowd', so to speak, and hence tried to stay away as much as possible.

SACEM, while failing to develop as strong a relationship with the Canadian government as TESOC, succeeded in providing some much-needed help to the early Tamil immigrants that arrived in Canada. Both organisations would begin to focus much of their efforts on settlement issues as the immigrant and refugee influx increased. As an early member of SACEM recalled, "After the 1983 riots, people started coming here, and those days the main problem was there was no shelter where they could stay. Nowadays, when anybody comes, there are already family members here to help them. But, in 1983, very few Tamils were here so that's why SACEM started. The goal of SACEM at the time was to provide for the immediate needs of the people who were coming here."

One of their major projects in the early 1980s was the building of what came to be known as the Tamil Co-op Homes, currently located in the west-end of Toronto. With the completion of this cooperative housing project in 1984, a grant application was submitted to the City of Toronto, in order to have one of the units within the co-op allocated for new arrivals. As one former member of SACEM pointed out, "With that grant, we rented an apartment within the Tamil Co-op Homes, and had refugees from Sri Lanka stay in it for three or four months until they found their feet. And they basically stayed there free of charge, until they got their Social Insurance Number, their work permit, etc. And then we also helped them, once they started earning some money, moving them out and finding them other accommodations so that they could move on with their lives."

A third organisation, created in 1986, was the World Tamil Movement (WTM). Very little of any substance is written about the organisation, and it proved difficult to get many members to talk on the record about what exactly the group set out to do (see Bell 2004). According to most respondents, however, the WTM was the "Canadian arm" of the LTTE, and was tasked with not only raising money for the Tigers, but also keeping alive the sentiment of Tamil separatism in the diaspora. In interviews with members of TESOC, SACEM, and almost all other Tamil organisations in the diaspora, it became clear that WTM, right from their beginning, attempted to make inroads into these groups, or at least dictate the parameters of the conversation taking place in diaspora organisations with respect to the conflict in Sri Lanka.
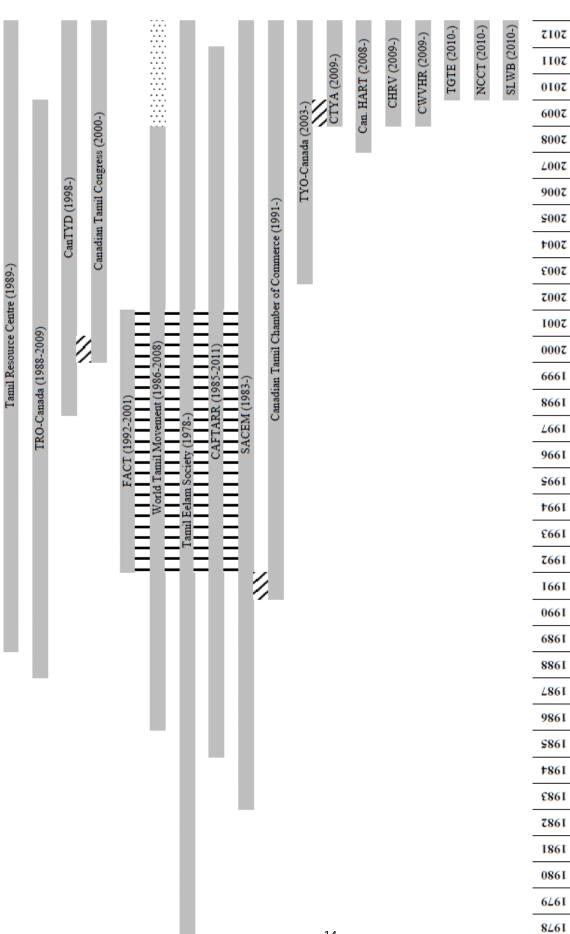
Even in the early 1990s, the Tamil community in Canada held conferences, organised protests attended by thousands, and engaged in lobbying efforts on behalf of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka (Wayland 2003: 71; see also Chalk 1999; Levy 1995). When I asked a former member of TESOC about the influence of WTM on the organisation, he responded, "WTM was in the background. We never knew their role, or what they were doing or anything like that. We didn't know *what* they were doing. Whether they were in the money-collection business or what…Me and them didn't get along. I knew they were going to drag everybody down. I told those guys, 'you are encroaching on every area, and you are going to drag the whole community down'. They didn't listen." According to many respondents, TESOC in the 1990s, largely because it had come under the influence of WTM and the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils (see below), was profoundly mismanaged. As

a result, TESOC was audited by the Canada Revenue Agency on several occasions (see Naumetz 2001).

Even with WTM encroachment, both TESOC and SACEM continued with much of their activities. In the late-1980s, TESOC approached the Canadian government and, as one former member noted, "told them that we wanted to provide the settlement services ourselves." In 1990, TESOC was formally converted from a socio-cultural and advocacy group into a settlement organisation, and began to receive funding from the Canadian government. The organisation began focusing much of its efforts on running computer training sessions as well as language classes for new arrivals. As government funding arrived, according to some respondents, there was also increased interest from WTM. As one of the early members of TESOC lamented, "I regret converting TESOC into a settlement organisation. I regret it now, looking back. Because it's an advocacy group. Until 1990, there was no money in the Society. It was all completely voluntary. When the money came into it, then there was *severe* interest from WTM. That's when I left."

SACEM was also undergoing similar changes in the mid-1990s. The organisation's focus had shifted from providing shelter for new arrivals to issues of settlement and integration. As one member pointed out, "The need is no longer shelter, but health, youth education, and integration with the mainstream. Those are the issues we face. So, we had many seminars. One of the seminars was on volunteerism, and was done in conjunction with five Tamil organisations in Canada. We organised other seminars on addiction, internet and computer skills, youth violence, and career issues for youth, and so on." In 1991, one of the seminars organised by SACEM was to help foster small businesses in the Tamil community. At that seminar, a special committee to deal solely with businesses, entrepreneurship, and volunteerism was established. This special committee went on to function independently as the Canadian Tamil Chamber of Commerce (CTCC), largely under the leadership and guidance of the late Joseph Augustine Jeyanathan. The CTCC is currently one of the premier organisations dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship and volunteerism in the Canadian Tamil community. SACEM, especially in the 2000s, rarely engaged in diaspora politics or political lobbying, and continues its mandate as a service-oriented organisation. In 2008, SACEM, while keeping the acronym in place, officially changed the name of the organisation to Society for the Aid of Community Empowerment.

Another organisation that formed in the late-1980s was the Tamil Resource Centre (TRC), a small leftist group, made up largely of former militants who were expelled from groups like Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) by the LTTE. Started in Canada in 1989, the TRC to this day functions rather independently from other diaspora organisations, and is highly critical of both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. As one of the founding members told me, when the group started "the LTTE front organisations were forcing people to give them money, and forcing them to adopt their views. So, we didn't accept that and said we were fighting for the alternative views for the people. Also, we are based on human rights, and we criticised any militant movement which turned against the people. And we were also criticising the government." The purpose of the organisation was to bring about an "alternative voice," and while many members of the TRC were part of militant movements

14

Figure 1. Some of the major advocacy and service organisations in Canada. All of the organisations listed in this chart cannot be discussed in this dissertation. These include the Canadian branch of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO-Canada), the Canadian Foundation for Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation (CAFTARR), Canadian Humanitarian Appeal for the Relief of Tamils (Canadian HART), Canadian Human Rights Voice (CHRV), and the Centre for War Victims and Human Rights (CWVHR). There are also dozens of alumni associations and home-village associations (HVAs) that operate in Canada, and are simply too numerous to name

| 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |

Tamil Resource Centre (1989-)

TRO-Canada (1988-2009)

CanTYD (1998-)

Canadian Tamil Congress (2000-)

FACT (1992-2001)

World Tamil Movement (1986-2008)

Tamil Eelam Society (1978-)

CAFTARR (1985-2011)

SACEM (1983-)

Canadian Tamil Chamber of Commerce (1991-)

TYO-Canada (2003-)

CTYA (2009-)

Can. HART (2008-)

CHRV (2009-)

CWVHR (2009-)

TGTE (2010-)

NCCT (2010-)

SLWB (2010-)

in Sri Lanka, they forcefully denounced the human rights violations of the LTTE. As such, they soon received threats from LTTE supporters in the diaspora. Their Toronto offices and their library were twice — in 1989 and in 1994 — targeted by arsonists.

In 1994, the TRC publicly mourned the death of Sabaratnam Sabalingam, a journalist killed by LTTE supporters in Paris for writing an "expose" about LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran (Sivaram 1994). A few weeks after the TRC event, their library in Toronto, containing some 3,000 rare manuscripts, was burned to the ground. The TRC has attempted to highlight the pluralism of the Tamil community through its *Thedaham* library, *Thedal* journal, *Thavani* theatre, as well as study circles and seminars. When the Canadian government banned the LTTE in 2006, the TRC organised a meeting criticising the ban. While they are deeply critical of the LTTE, the TRC argued that the Canadian government was wrong to take sides. As one member of the TRC told me, "Canada should remain neutral, or ban both sides, since the Sri Lankan government is practicing state terrorism against the people as well." They no longer have an office, and their membership today stands at about twenty people. When I asked some of the members why they do not have more of a following in the diaspora, they argued that since they are highly critical of the LTTE, widespread support has been out of reach. They point out that in order to become leaders in the Tamil diaspora in Canada, you have to be *selectively* critical of human rights violations, and manipulate public opinion. "We are not willing to do that just to achieve a leadership position," one member said.

With the number of Tamil diaspora organisations steadily increasing, an effort was made in the early 1990s to form an umbrella organisation. In 1992, TESOC, SACEM, WTM, and seven other organisations came together to form the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils (FACT)[3]. The president of FACT would be chosen, every six months, from one of the constituent organisations. While each group maintained its own identity, they worked together whenever there was a common cause. The main goal of FACT was to have an organisation that could presumably speak on behalf of the whole Tamil community in Canada. As one of the former leaders of FACT told me in his Toronto home, "We were involved in lobbying and trying to put across to the Canadian government the fact that the people in Tamil Eelam were being oppressed, and undergoing persecution at the hands of the Sri Lankan government."

Even though FACT consisted of ten different groups, most of whom I spoke with noted that WTM was easily the dominant voice within the broader umbrella organisation. As organisational studies scholars point out, even when there is a diversity of organisations in a particular "organisational field," collaboration can occur "when a group of key stakeholders work together" to address certain problems (Nathan and Mitroff 1991: 169; Phillips, Lawrence, and Hardy 2000). Such initiatives can be enormously important for developing or changing existing negotiated orders. However, events over the next several years would come to hamper any future plans that were being entertained by FACT or WTM. With

---

[3]   The ten organizations that came together under the banner of FACT were: the World Tamil Movement (WTM), Society for the Aid of Ceylon Minorities (SACEM), Tamil Eelam Society (TESOC), Eelam Tamil Association of British Colombia, Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec, Tamil Coordinating Committee of Ottawa, Thamilar Oli Association Incorporated, Canadian Foundation For Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation (CAFTARR), World Tamil Movement of Canada (Quebec), and the Senior Tamils' Centre (STC).

FACT and WTM coming under increased suspicion from Canadian and American authorities, "structural" constraints would be put into place, with heightened government scrutiny and negative media portrayals forcing a drastic rethinking and reformulation of FACT's organisational direction (Kerlin and Manikowski 2011).

In 1990, as Bell (2004: 37) notes, the Tigers sent one of its veteran operatives, Manickavasagam Suresh, to Toronto. As one of the former leaders of FACT also recalled, "He was the man responsible for the entire running of the World Tamil Movement. He's the key man. He came as a refugee, and his appointment was probably made by the Tigers." Suresh was arrested on 18 October 1995 on charges of being a member of an organisation which engages in terrorism. As Bell (2004: 55) points out, after his arrest, FACT and WTM started a Free Suresh campaign and portrayed him as a political prisoner, and a human rights activist. One respondent, heavily involved in the Free Suresh campaign, told me, "The LTTE was not listed as a terrorist organisation at that time, but still the Canadian government had unofficially declared the LTTE as a terrorist organisation, which we were not aware of at the time." The following years also saw the proscription of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation in Canada (April 2006), as well as raids on its "front organisation," the World Tamil Movement (WTM).

In April 2007, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) raided the offices of WTM and hauled away several boxes filled with documents. The RCMP investigation, known as Project Osaluki, was one of numerous similar probes launched in the United States, France, and Great Britain to weaken diaspora networks engaged in fundraising for the LTTE. As Sergeant John Macdonald of the RCMP noted at the time, "The RCMP investigation into the fundraising activities of the World Tamil Movement is a long-term, sophisticated investigation requiring a great deal of time and resources" (quoted in Bell 2007). According to Bell (2007), following their raid on WTM offices, "Police found Tamil Tiger flags, manuals on missile guidance systems, books encouraging suicide bombings and paperwork they claim is evidence of terrorist fundraising. Also seized were 'comprehensive lists' of ethnic Tamils living in Canada that showed the amount of money each had donated. Lists of business donors and cancelled cheques to the WTM were found as well, many of them in excess of $10,000."

Following the raid and the ensuing investigation, the World Tamil Movement in Canada was also proscribed as a terrorist organisation in June 2008. As WTM increasingly came under the scrutiny of the Canadian government, FACT and its constituent organisations also experienced heightened attention. The United States State Department had identified both organisations as "front groups" for the LTTE, which it had designated as a foreign terrorist organisation in 1997. The Canadian government's stance on the LTTE also began to change following the decision by the Tigers, in April 1995, to withdraw from the peace talks (see Stackhouse 1995). While FACT spokespersons are quoted in newspapers throughout the 1990s as representatives of the Tamil community in Canada, the organisation underwent a public beating following its annual fundraising dinner on 6 May 2000. The dinner, organised yearly to raise funds for the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) in Sri Lanka, was attended by federal Finance Minister Paul Martin and Maria Minna, the Minister for International Cooperation. Following the dinner, both Martin and Minna were heavily criticised in the media for attending an event hosted by a "terrorist front organisation." For

example, John Thompson, the director of the Mackenzie Institute, published an article in *The Ottawa Citizen* titled, "Dining with Tamil Terrorists", in which he asked "Would Paul Martin and Maria Minna accept a dinner invite from the IRA or the Mafia?" (Thompson 2000).

With negative attention on the rise, a meeting was convened in late2000 to discuss the future of FACT. As one member who was present at the meeting told me, "The FACT meeting was summoned to consider a few things. One was the holding of the dinner to raise funds for the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation — an annual ritual. In this meeting, the *poruppaalar* [person-in-charge] of WTM said that the activities of FACT had been interdicted/stayed. When I asked for the reasons I was told that it was on the advice of some Liberal [Party of Canada] Members of Parliament who were of the opinion that FACT is considered a front organisation of the LTTE by governments, including the U.S. State Department. This was of course true. That was the last time anything was heard about FACT." What precisely occurred after FACT was "put on hold" seems to be, depending on whom one asks, a matter of some debate. According to former members of FACT, the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) was created as a replacement, and initially envisioned as a broader umbrella organisation in the diaspora community. For example, as one early member of FACT told me, "we wanted the Congress to be an umbrella organisation, but in the transition it didn't evolve as such."

Most early members of CTC, however, vehemently disagree with the characterisation that CTC was created to replace FACT. They note, for example, that planning with respect to CTC had begun months prior to the decline of FACT and that this planning took place without any communication or consultation with members of FACT. Indeed, one founding member of CTC found it audacious that members of FACT, having rejected CTC after its founding, were now claiming "ownership" over the organisation. Many respondents explained that while the timing of the collapse of FACT and the birth of CTC do indeed coincide—both occurred in the mid-2000s—it would be grossly inaccurate to then conclude that one was created to replace the other. The birth of CTC, they point out, has its roots not in FACT, but in the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre (CanTYD).

The reasons for the creation of CanTYD are fairly easy to discern. The late-1990s was a period of heightened gang violence for the Tamil community in Toronto. A bloody war between rival gangs—AK Kannan in the east-end of Toronto and the VVT (named for the Sri Lankan town of Valvettithurai) in the west-end—led to the deaths of dozens of Tamil youth. As one of the founders of CanTYD told me later, "Basically, we didn't want any more shooting in the community. We didn't want youth, especially, to spoil their future. So, it was a matter of us deciding that this was not a future that we wanted for us or for our future here—our generations here. And as recent graduates, we felt that we were able to provide the leadership to the youth at that point in time and then take initiative."

In particular, the shooting death in Toronto of Kapilan Palasanthiran, a first-year physics major at the University of Waterloo, on 27 December 1997, became a rallying cry for the community (Edwards and Yum 1997). According to one of the founders of CanTYD, Palasanthiran's death was very much in the media and "gave us the initial push to do something urgently and immediately" to address the issue. As such, CanTYD was founded in February 1998 by about seventeen Tamil youth in Toronto. Tamil gang violence began to

decline in Toronto in the early 2000s following the arrest and subsequent deportation orders of several gang leaders as part of Toronto Police's "Project 1050." Project 1050 was a joint police and immigration investigation "that ended with the arrest of close to 51 alleged gang members on October 18, 2001. The majority of the accused were charged under a section of the immigration act that prohibits involvement in a criminal organisation, marking the first time street gangs were classified as 'organised crime' under immigration laws" (Shephard 2006).

While CanTYD was successful in addressing many of the issues that Tamil youth were facing at the time, the community as a whole had many other concerns as well. As one of the early founders of CTC pointed out, the community did not have an organisation that was "advocating for Tamil people's rights in the general context of Canada." While groups like TESOC and SACEM were dealing with broader settlement issues, the founders of CTC felt that the Tamil community lacked a strong organisation that could advocate, from a rights-based approach, on behalf of the Tamil community in Canada. They insist that organisations like FACT did not have the adequate tools to perform this much-needed role in the community. As one respondent noted:

> There was a need and they were all tied. The youth issue was a smaller issue and the community issues were bigger issues but by the time that we had formed CanTYD and then had rallied a lot of youth together to get involved, we had enough resources within the community and we had identified enough resources to say that we could actually try and tackle some of the other bigger issues that we as a community were facing. So, most of the people that were initially part of CanTYD also became co-founders of CTC.

However, CTC had a somewhat rough start. While it was created in 2000, it did not receive widespread support from the Tamil community in Canada, and went through a period of dormancy between 2004 and 2005. When asked why CTC was initially unpopular, one recent member pointed out, "I guess they didn't have a lot of support from the community and it kind of went under. I'm not sure if the community was ready to accept a need for a CTC in that angle, you know, where it looks after policy of the local [Canada] and the policy of the international. I guess at that point the community was so focused on just pumping all of their energy and resources into the homeland struggle alone. So I'm not sure if the community was ready for a concept like CTC." In 2005, CTC experienced a kind of rebirth, and functions today as perhaps the leading mainstream organisation advocating for the Tamil community in Canada. Their annual Walk-a-Thon has been successful in raising large sums of money for different charities (see Moy 2011)[4].

However, the accusation that CTC was once closely associated with FACT and WTM has often "tainted" the organisation, and some in the diaspora as well as in Sri Lanka continue to argue that CTC is an LTTE front organisation. Following the 2011 Walk-a-Thon, for instance, the *Sunday Observer* in Sri Lanka lambasted Amnesty International (AI) for accepting donations from an "LTTE front group". As the newspaper argued: "The harsh truth surfaced with the latest information about a fund raising campaign by the CTC, one of the

---

[4]   CTC raised $42,000 for the Sick Kids' Foundation in 2009; $35,000 for the Canadian Cancer Society in 2010; $50,000 for Amnesty International in 2011, and $45,000 for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in 2012.

strong pro-LTTE front organisations in Canada which is lobbying for the LTTE cause and collecting money from Tamils in Canada since 2005…AI should be ashamed of its connections and also running their campaigns on funds collected by front organisations of a banned terrorist outfit" (*Sunday Observer* 2012). AI issued a statement in response stating that the CTC's donations "in no way impair the independence of Amnesty Internationalwhich is nonpartisan and works on human rights issues around the globe" (Amnesty International 2012).

As we move in this paper to analyse some post-war diaspora organisations, like the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE), it should be kept in mind that there are many organisations that began in the early 2000s that continue to have a strong influence on diaspora politics even in the post-war period. While CTC is indeed one of these organisations, another important group is the Tamil Youth Organisation (TYO). TYO exists in several countries around the world, but seems to have started in the Vanni region of Sri Lanka. According to many respondents, during the 2002 peace process, many youth from around the world travelled to the Vanni region, and met with the leadership of the LTTE. They were told that the future of the Tamil liberation movement lies with them. Many of these youth, inspired by the faith that LTTE leadership had placed in them, returned to their respective countries with the expressed purpose of mobilising youth, and keeping nationalist sentiment alive in the diaspora.

TYO Canada was started in 2003, and seeks to wield a fair amount of influence over many Tamil Student Associations (TSAs) on university campuses in Canada. By recruiting members into TYO directly from TSAs, the influence that the former has is often very organic. Leading up to May 2009, TSAs around Ontario held fasts, awareness campaigns, and mini-demonstrations at their respective campuses. From my field research, it seems evident that some TSAs are beginning to openly question TYO's "influence" over their campus group. The influence that TYO has over many TSAs in Canada seems to arise from the mythology of TYO's origins. In other words, since TYO professes to have started with the LTTE's (and perhaps even Prabhakaran's) blessing and encouragement, TSA leadership are often reluctant to behave too independently, lest they be perceived to be going against the movement as a whole.

While many in the community accuse TYO of "radicalising the youth," they, to be fair, openly express a commitment to Canadian society, and Canadian values. They also feel that they have a duty to ensure that Tamil youth do not forget their past, particularly the many sacrifices made throughout the war. This sentiment can be traced to Prabhakaran's 27 November 2008 Heroes Day speech, during which he states, "I would also take this opportunity to express my affection and my praise to our Tamil youth living outside our homeland for the prominent and committed role they play in actively contributing towards the liberation of our nation" (TamilNet 2008). Many youth in the diaspora believe that Prabhakaran foresaw the imminent defeat of the LTTE, or at least an admission that the armed conflict phase of the movement had done everything possible, and passed the torch of the liberation struggle to them during this and other speeches.

The organisations that began before the end of the war but continue to have a significant voice in post-war diaspora politics — like TYO and CTC — are not of secondary

importance to our story. Rather, the landscape of diaspora organisations has expanded. Many individuals and groups are attempting to maintain their influence in the post-LTTE environment, while others who held viewpoints that were largely sidelined by the "dominant" LTTE ideology, have increasingly banded together, hoping to have a more varied and open dialogue about diaspora politics and its role in post-war Sri Lanka. As Vimalarajah and Cheran (2010: 5) note, the end of the war in Sri Lanka "signifies an important rupture in the continuity of Tamil politics at the national and transnational levels while offering challenges and opportunities for Tamil communities to rethink and re-articulate anew their demands for equality, justice and sovereignty." As we see below, while this rethinking and rearticulating is indeed taking place, it has not been without difficulty, as leadership struggles and petty infighting have come to mark some of post-war diaspora politics in Canada.

Negotiating the Post-War Order

There are many organisations that arose in Canada after the end of the war in May 2009, some calling for reconciliation and others professing to continue the struggle for self-determination. One of the leading organisations in the former category is Sri Lankans Without Borders (SLWB), which on July 2011 was awarded over $250,000 by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to support its mandate to "promote dialogue, reconciliation, and peace in the diaspora community in Canada." While a small organisation, composed of a core group of 12 board members, it boasts a broader network of perhaps a few hundred "supporters". The group has organised many unique events that have rarely been a part of Tamil or Sri Lankan diaspora politics. To take just one example, on 23 June 2012, SLWB organised an educational and dialogue event with the Sri Lanka Islamic Foundation of Ontario (SLIFO). Quite surprisingly, even though the Tamil community had been in Canada in large numbers since the 1980s, and the Sri Lankan Muslim community, while small, began to arrive in Canada throughout the 1990s, this was one of the first events where both communities sat in the same room together.

SLWB, however, has been roundly criticised by many members of the Tamil diaspora for using the language of reconciliation to gloss over serious human rights violations. The organisation, perhaps mistakenly, has been branded as naïve for placing reconciliation before the need for justice and accountability. A similar critique often levelled against the group has been that the organisation often fails to present itself to the diaspora community with a clear focus or end goal. In other words, many members of the group so often insist that *all* viewpoints are welcome within the organisation that it is at times difficult to discern the *group's* viewpoint. More recently, in my own conversations with group members, some admitted that the kind of *strict* separatism advocated by the LTTE, for instance, would not be something that they would support. Moreover, according to many members of SLWB, issues of devolution and power-sharing, as well as justice and accountability, should be debated openly, but these conversations should ideally occur within the broader framework of a unified state.

On the other side of the "spectrum", one of the leading organisations carrying forward the torch of self-determination is the National Council of Canadian Tamils (NCCT), which arose in 2010 with the expressed purpose of serving as an ethnic lobby group in Canada. The

NCCT wishes to serve the needs of the Canadian Tamil diaspora, but is at times plagued by some suspicion in the community. Numerous individuals interviewed in Toronto noted that since a select few of the early organisers of the NCCT are "former members of WTM," the NCCT is believed by some in the community to be simply a "rebranding" of the group after it was listed as a terrorist organisation in Canada. Shortly after the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) elections in May 2010 and after organisers made several appearances on Tamil media outlets in Toronto, the NCCT elections were held on 20 June 2010. Another accusation often levied against the NCCT is that it was designed to directly compete with the Canadian Tamil Congress. According to some of the early organisers, CTC does not speak for the grassroots Tamil population in Canada. Rather, it is an "elitist" organisation whose vision of leadership is not shared by many in the community. As of this writing, a kind of "cold war" still persists between the NCCT and the CTC.

In a more recent development, the NCCT and TYO have organised several conferences and meetings to more formally express their commitment to the self-determination of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. The NCCT and TYO organised an Eelam Tamil Youth conference on 26 February 2012, taking place at Toronto City Hall, where they pledged to "continue the struggle for Tamil sovereignty" (TamilNet 2012a). As TamilNet (2012a) reported, student activists who attended the conference "reaffirmed the principles enshrined in the Vaddukkodai Declaration of 1976, the Thimpu Declaration of 1985 and upheld the Tamil Sovereignty Cognition declaration released on Heroes Day last year as a conceptual reference point." The Tamil Sovereignty Cognition declaration (TSCd) was released in November 2011 and attempts to carve out a strong position for the continued commitment to the self-determination of the Tamil people.

The TSCd is largely a response to a specific strand of discourse that has arisen in the diaspora since the end of the war in May 2009, namely the argument for reconciliation. As discussed above, many Tamil youth, including members of TYO, see such arguments as naïve attempts by individuals in Sri Lanka and the diaspora to take attention away from what should really be on the agenda: truth, justice, accountability, and sovereignty. As reported in TamilNet (2011b), the TSCd states,

> We the undersigned declare that all outside players should stop insisting on finding solutions only within a united Sri Lanka. We declare that it is time for the international players to drop pretensions of 'domestic' solutions and vigorously engage in a transparent international mechanism to approach the Sri Lanka-Tamil Eelam conflict as a question between nations and to bring in lasting peace and justice to the crisis in the island, in order to facilitate the two nations in conflict to co-exist peacefully with full control of their respective sovereignties.

Reaffirming its commitment to the TSCd, the conference organised by the NCCT and TYO in February 2012, brought together representatives from 14 Tamil Student Associations (TSAs) in high schools, colleges, and universities in Canada. At the end of the conference, the representatives passed nine resolutions (TamilNet 2012a). While these resolutions reiterate much of what is already present in the TSCd, there are two additions, which, I argue, may prove to be increasingly significant for the future diaspora politics, especially for Tamil youth identity in Canada. They are:

1. We reject the territorial integrity of the Sri Lankan state that occupies Tamil Eelam and we reject the imposition of the 'Sri Lankan' identity, politically and culturally on the Eelam Tamils.
2. We will boycott any Tamil Diaspora organisation that compromise the principles of Homeland, Nation and Self-Determination and therefore lends legitimacy to the unitary state of Sri Lanka.

As noted, the TSCd as well as the resolutions passed at the NCCT/TYO event are largely critiques of the language of reconciliation. Similar events took place throughout 2012 in France (May), Germany (July), and Italy (August) (TamilNet 2012b). In Canada, members of the NCCT and TYO have also criticised the diaspora for *only* lobbying for an independent inquiry into alleged war crimes that took place in the final months of the war. Their argument, in other words, states that the continued push for investigations on the part of the diaspora, *inadvertently privileges* discourses presenting the conflict in Sri Lanka as a civil war between a majority and a minority. As the resolutions above point out, the NCCT and TYO categorically reject any conversation that takes, as an unstated assumption or starting point, the unitary state of Sri Lanka. This approach, they argue, is a fundamental waste of time and resources, and should be abandoned by diaspora activists. Instead, the conflict is in fact one *between* two nations, which can only be resolved through a two-state solution.

If the first step in re-orienting the strategies and goals of some Tamil youth in the diaspora took place in February 2012, with the conference at Toronto City Hall, then the logical second step took place in April in the United Kingdom. If the first step was to gather representatives from various Tamil Student Associations from Canadian high schools and universities under the TYO-led banner of Sovereignty Cognition, then the April meeting attempted to once again bring together representatives from TYOs around the world to agree on a more unified mandate going forward. The Global Tamil Youth League (GTYL), a coalition of TYOs from various countries, adopted a resolution at their April meeting, which called for "the establishment of an independent, international mechanism to ensure truth, accountability, and justice," while also resolving to work towards a "political solution that recognises the uncompromising, fundamental principles of the Tamil freedom struggle," to "raise awareness about the ongoing multi-faceted genocide" of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, and to "promote the identity of the Tamil nation" (Tamil Guardian 2012).

The resolution was adopted by respective TYO groups in Canada, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While it is *not* accurate to view the GTYL as "giving orders" to its constituent TYO members, who then transmit these orders to the TSAs of various countries, what is evident is that the GTYL wants to refocus much of the political activity undertaken by its members and the diaspora community as a whole around the issue of self-determination. They are open to dialogue, but with certain intellectual parameters in place; they are dedicated to mobilisation, but with a single goal in mind. As such, some TSAs in Canada have often felt that they cannot speak freely, and cannot ask a full range of questions about Tamil identity or Sri Lankan history.

The Tamil diaspora in Canada, then, many of whom fled an increasingly brutal civil war in Sri Lanka, and who were aided in their arrival by legislative shifts in Canadian immigration

and refugee policy, have also been a deeply politicised community consistently involved in the politics of their country of origin. It should be clear from our discussion thus far of diaspora politics that Tamil demonstrations, organisational dynamics, and identity politics did not begin after the end of the military conflict. However, I do want to suggest that post-2009 diaspora politics are, in many ways, *different*. For the remainder of this paper, I want to examine closely a particularly novel post-2009 organisation, the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE), which I argue reveals much about what post-LTTE diaspora politics will look like.

The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam

In order to fully understand post-LTTE dynamics in the diaspora, we must first talk about the changes in the leadership of the international LTTE structure. From around 1983 to 2003, the international fundraising, arms smuggling, and propaganda structure of the LTTE was run by Selvarasa Pathmanathan (also known as Kumaran Pathmanathan, or KP). KP's life for the two decades that he was in charge of the international structure reads like a Hollywood thriller. He was known to use around two dozen aliases, carry around two hundred passports, and maintain bank accounts in several countries around the world. In 2003, for reasons largely unknown, KP was replaced by Veerakathy Manivannan (known as Castro). Castro proceeded to populate many of the overseas offices with his own trusted individuals. Between 2003 and 2008, KP was effectively out of the LTTE, and had 'retired' in Thailand. In December 2008, KP spoke with Prabhakaran on the phone. As he stated in a recent interview with respected journalist D.B.S. Jeyaraj (2010): "Prabhakaran called me and we had a very long conversation. He told me of the military situation in very frank terms…he wanted me to re-join the movement and start purchasing and transporting supplies again."

KP told Prabhakaran that it would likely take him over a year to re-establish smuggling networks. With the LTTE and its front organisations on terrorist lists in many countries, including Canada, fundraising and other activities would prove difficult. Prabhakaran responded that the LTTE would probably not survive another year. According to KP, "Prabhakaran said that I must spearhead the task of bringing about a ceasefire and getting the LTTE a respite. He wanted me to commence talks with whomever necessary and bring about a ceasefire" (Jeyaraj 2010). In my interviews with several close confidants of KP, I was given a copy of a letter that Prabhakaran had sent to the then Prime Minister of Thailand, Abhisit Vejjajiva. Dated 12 January 2009, the letter states, "I take great pleasure in letting you know that our organisation has appointed Mr. Selvarasa Pathmanathan, a senior representative of our organisation, as the Head of our newly constituted Department of International Relations. In this capacity, he will also function as chief diplomat and negotiator on behalf of our organisation from now onwards." With KP's re-entry into the Tamil political scene, a rivalry began between himself and the Castro faction. With Castro killed in Sri Lanka along with the other top leadership of the LTTE in May 2009, the leadership of the international structure passed to Perinpanayagam Sivaparan (known as Nediyavan, or 'tall man'), who currently lives in Norway (ICG Report 2010: 8). As will become evident, this leadership struggle between the so-called 'KP faction' and the 'Nediyavan faction' would come to greatly colour post-LTTE developments in the diaspora.

Following the defeat of the LTTE, a two-day meeting was called in Malaysia attended by KP and diaspora leaders from around the world. During this meeting, ideas were floated around about what to do next. Initially, a kind of "government in exile" was discussed and later abandoned in favour of a more transnational structure. It appeared in the beginning that progress would be smooth despite the internal quarrels between the Nediyavan and KP camps. However, as one of the organisers of the initial meeting exasperatedly told me, "Then petty bickering took over. These people cannot come out of their…notions, you can say. So they wanted to put 'Tamil Eelam' as part of the organisation's name and that in itself is killing their purpose." In the end, the new organisation came to be called the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE).

On July 21, 2009, the Executive Committee of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam issued a press release stating that KP, "who had been appointed as Head of International Relations by our National Leader, will lead us into the next steps of our freedom struggle according to the vision of our esteemed leader." While it was decided that KP would lead the TGTE, his arrest in August 2009 made this impossible. KP appointed Visvanathan Rudrakumaran, a lawyer based in New York City, as the acting head of the TGTE. Rudrakumaran wished to set up a working committee for Canada, which was immediately marred by infighting between KP and Castro loyalists. One respondent recalled, "I advised Rudrakumaran, don't take any one of them. Just select some people from the general public, and give it to them. Let them handle it. But, it didn't happen. Nothing happened. It was just fighting between two parties."

Once the idea for a Transnational Government was agreed upon in Malaysia, and once it had been announced to the global Tamil community, candidates began coming forward to contest in the organisation's first election to be held worldwide in May 2010. From the very beginning, the leadership struggle between the KP/Rudrakumaran faction and the Castro/Nediyavan faction would hamper the smooth functioning of the TGTE. TGTE candidates began campaigning throughout April 2010, and elections were held on May 2 (see Table 10). Going into the election, supporters of the TGTE argued that Nediyavan and his supporters saw the TGTE as a threat to their authority over the international LTTE structure, which is all that remained after the defeat of the LTTE in Sri Lanka. Many in the Tamil community in Canada assumed that the Nediyavan faction would take over the TGTE, and plot to destroy it from within. In Canada, 15 candidates were elected in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), five were elected in western Canada, and five were elected in Quebec and eastern Canada with around 30,000 people coming out to vote. After the Canadian elections, many respondents insisted that somewhere between 13 and 15 of the elected candidates were supporters of WTM and the Castro/Nediyavan camp.

Table 10: Planned Country Breakdown of Elected Representatives and Appointed Delegates. All positions were not filled after the first election.

Planned Country Breakdown of 115 Elected Representatives	
Australia	10
Benelux	3
Canada	25
Denmark	3
Finland	1
France	10
Germany	10
Ireland	1
Italy	3
New Zealand	2
Norway	3
South Africa	3
Sweden	1
Switzerland	10
United Kingdom	20
United States	10
Planned Country Breakdown of 20 Appointed Delegates	
Caribbean & South America	1
India	5
Malaysia	3
Mauritius	1
Middle East	2
Oceania	1
Rest of Africa	1
Rest of Asia	1
Rest of Europe	1
Singapore	2
South Africa	2

A month after the TGTE elections, I interviewed several elected representatives and organisers in Toronto. Many were eager to talk about the Nediyavan/KP feud, as they viewed it as an unfortunate reality of the post-LTTE political climate. When I asked one of the elected representatives whether the leadership rivalry between the Castro/Nediyavan and KP/Rudrakumaran camps was negatively affecting the smooth functioning of the TGTE, he replied, "Yes very much so. Every aspect of the Tamil issue is affected by that. Here and all over the world, every aspect. If I say no, I am telling you a lie. I don't like it but that is the reality. These two groups, in my opinion, they are weakening our cause and are destroying good opportunities." Similarly, when I asked one of the organisers of the TGTE election the same question, he responded, clearly exasperated with the turn of events, "Big time. Big time. Yes. To me, they are still emotionally-driven. Either emotionally-driven or very

cynically led by people, right? They are not getting that, it's not getting into their heads. That's how I would bluntly put it, right? They don't get it."

According to election organisers, one of the main tactics that was used by WTM to tarnish the Canadian election results was to bring the Tamil Tiger flag to the post-election celebrations. They were unsure as to whether it was part of WTM's strategic ploy to link the TGTE with the LTTE thereby discrediting it in the eyes of the broader public, or whether they are simply too "emotionally attached" to the flag, and failed to understand the longer-term downside of bringing the flag into public venues. Whatever the motive, soon after the elections, the TGTE, as a rational-legal body functioning through rules, regulations, oaths, and elections began the process of defining itself as a necessary successor to the LTTE, albeit as a post-military, international lobby group. As one elected representative from the TGTE told me:

> We need to make our people back home and here [in Canada] trust us so we have to build credibility with our behaviour and our conduct. If you have this in-fighting and KP versus Castro, or the flag versus no flag, or is Prabhakaran alive or dead, there are big arguments going on. We have to come to a settlement. The problem is also that we need to do a self evaluation of everything that has happened and come to a conclusion about the mistakes we made, these are our strengths, and these are our weaknesses. This is what we did wrong; this is what we did right. We accept it, and then move forward. Easy. If we pretend that we didn't make any mistakes and we want to move forward, that is a horrible mistake we are making again. I think that part didn't happen. We have to have this self analysis within the organisation. What are the mistakes we made, what are the correct things we did and what is our strength and what is our weakness and how are we going to move forward. If everybody pretends that they never did any mistakes and everybody was 100 percent perfect and now they want me to follow them, I'm not ready. I'm not ready.

This respondent later went on to remark, without explicitly naming the LTTE, that one of the mistakes made by the Tigers was that it functioned as a kind of totalitarian organisation, whose own record of human rights violations unfairly discredited the social movement (i.e. Tamil nationalism) as a whole. Others in the TGTE disagree that the organisation must necessarily shed all ties to LTTE symbolism or ideology. For most, however, reframing Tamil nationalism and Tamil grievance is one of the prime goals of the Transnational Government, and the Tamil diaspora in Canada more broadly. According to many of the organisers and representatives, the particular strength of the TGTE is that it is an elected body, which has received a mandate from a significant number of people in the Tamil diaspora to represent them. Working with the Tamil diaspora around the world, the TGTE attempts to lobby on behalf of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. However, many of the representatives seem to understand that the needs of Tamils in Sri Lanka need to be taken into account. As one representative told me:

> So what Transnational Government can do is they can tell the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, advise them to do certain things, but they cannot make the decisions for them. We have a certain arrogance when dealing with Tamils in Sri Lanka. We think we know lots of things that they don't know. We are going to tell them what they

should want. What is good for them. That's not right. They are smart people; they
are not stupid.

Such a manoeuvre by the Tamil diaspora to influence affairs in Sri Lanka resembles what
Keck and Sikkink (1998: 12) have called the "boomerang pattern" whereby individuals or
organisations within a particular state (State A), unable to redress their grievances directly,
urge their networks (for example, diaspora communities) to pressure their own state (State
B), which in turn pressures State A on behalf of the local population. As Keck and Sikkink
(1998: 12) point out, "Governments are the primary 'guarantors' of rights, but also their
primary violators. When a government violates or refuses to recognise rights, individuals and
domestic groups often have no recourse within domestic political or judicial arenas. They
may seek international connections finally to express their concerns and even to protect their
lives."

However, critics of the TGTE point out that while they may have the mandate of some in
the global Tamil diaspora, no mandate was given to the TGTE by Tamils living *in* Sri Lanka.
Tamils in Sri Lanka, critics argue, neither asked the TGTE for help nor granted them the
permission to speak and work on their behalf. They insist that continued international
pressure by diaspora groups may backfire and serve as the ideal foil for the continued
subjugation of Tamils by the Sri Lankan government. As journalist D.B.S Jeyaraj (2011)
recently lamented, "We have no choice but to live in an undivided Sri Lanka.… To rebel
against this reality beyond a certain point can only result in terrible disaster. This is the
disaster that has been brought upon us by the self-imposed sole representatives and their
irresponsible moronic supporters in the diaspora and Tamil Nadu. To continue with this
suicidal course is to invite more destruction on the Tamil people living in Sri Lanka.…
Moreover an already diminishing people would deteriorate further numerically, politically,
economically, culturally, and socially."

While the TGTE, from the very beginning, embraced a bureaucratic way of functioning, it
was not until its inaugural meeting at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia that
the bureaucratic structure reached full bloom. For three days beginning on May 17, 2010,
exactly one year after the defeat of the LTTE, around seventy elected representatives from
the TGTE met to formalise the organisation, work on drafting a constitution, elect a Chief
Executive, and appoint a cabinet. One respondent, who contested for the TGTE elections
and lost, still expressed support for the inaugural meeting: "May 17-19, 2009 were our days,
alright? So this one goal was on our agenda from last year. On these days in 2010, we have to
be working again. Doing so would tell the international community, 'You know what, one
door's closed, this is our next door. We are opening up a new door in the path of democracy
and transparency'."

By the end of the meeting, the bureaucratic structure of the TGTE had, for the most part,
been established. Visvanathan Rudrakumaran, from New York, was elected as the first Chief
Executive of the TGTE. Following this move, delegates selected seven additional members
to the Interim Executive Committee. The elected members of the legislative body then
converted themselves into a Constituent Assembly, which formed the Constitutional Affairs
Committee tasked with drafting the Constitution of the TGTE. The Constituent Assembly
also established 11 committees responsible for handling matters ranging from trade and

commerce, economic affairs, and the release of "prisoners of war" (those interned) to international lobbying, seeking welfare for the families of martyrs and cadres, and the investigation of war crimes. The Assembly also named Pon Balarajan from Toronto as the Speaker for the first Assembly of the TGTE. Before the meeting came to a close, delegates also took a Declaration of Commitment to work towards the goals of the organisation, namely to fight for the freedom and self-determination of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

In the months following the meeting in Philadelphia, the various representatives worked through their particular committees, while also preparing for the more important second meeting. On September 29 and October 1, 2010, representatives met again at the United Nations Plaza Hotel in New York during which the Constituent Assembly was transformed into the parliament of the TGTE. It was decided that the TGTE parliament will have a bicameral legislature. It will consist of a parliament of elected representatives and a Senate, which would serve as an advisory body. It was determined that the head of the government would be the Prime Minister, who would appoint three deputy Prime Ministers. Also at the meeting, the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and the Prime Minister were elected. According to supporters of Rudrakumaran, controversy soon arose when the "Nediyavan faction" proposed that the Deputy Prime Ministers, instead of being *appointed* by Rudrakumaran, be *elected* by the Assembly. When the issue came to a vote in New York, 46 delegates voted for allowing the Prime Minister to appoint his deputies, while 43 delegates opposed it. However, the vote itself was controversial and steadily led to a schism within the organisation.

The controversy surrounding the vote can be traced back to the election results themselves. While the TGTE originally planned to have 115 elected members, by the time of the second meeting in New York, only 97 had been elected. As the TGTE press release noted, this was the case because "elections could not be conducted in some countries, due to local regulations and laws, and in other countries, inquiries are being held due to voting irregularities and complaints received" (Tamil Canadian 2010b). Election results were delayed in countries like France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Australia. In total, 74 elected representatives were present at the second meeting (47 in New York and, by video conference, 17 from Paris and 10 from London). A total of 23 elected members could not attend any of the three venues. Of these, 16 representatives applied for proxy voting rights, and 11 were approved. As the official TGTE press release states, "Therefore, on the last day of the second sitting, there were 85 members with voting rights. During the last day of the session, after a long debate, the constitution was voted upon and all 85 (100%) members who were present unanimously accepted the changes and the amended constitution" (Tamil Canadian 2010b).

Afterwards, some members asked that the unapproved proxy votes be approved, including those from two newly elected representatives from Australia. However, Pon Balarajan, as Speaker, declared the votes to be ineligible "as they were not yet formally approved as elected members by the Country Working Group and have not taken the oath at the parliament" (Tamil Canadian 2010b). As one critic of Rudrakumaran told me, "The Australian members countered that such a requirement was not demanded of other elected members. They also noted that the whole reason for receiving the election results before the second sitting was so that members could cast votes for issues affecting the TGTE." Citing this and other grievances, 20 elected representatives (12 in New York, four in Paris and four

in London) walked out of the meeting in protest. Rudrakumaran's supporters argue that, even after the walk-out, the necessary two-thirds majority was present in order to vote on the constitution as well as elect the Speaker and the Prime Minister. Critics, however, disagree and argue that, because the two-thirds majority was not present, the Constitution in its current form is invalid.

As such, when all of the representatives were asked to take an oath to the TGTE following the second meeting, critics of Rudrakumaran scoffed at the idea. As one of them told me in a long interview, "Two or three weeks later, Pon Balarajan didn't try to do some kind of electronic voting on the constitution or anything of that sort. All he said was, 'This is the constitution; accept it by such and such date.' I asked him what authority he had to send that email to me. At the second sitting, the constitution wasn't put out for voting and approved by two-thirds of the house, because two-thirds of the house wasn't even there." Little would change over the next several months following the meeting in New York as emails were sent back and forth between dissidents and those who remained in the TGTE. Following the walk-out, and particularly after March 2011, the group of dissidents formalised their organisation under the banner of TGTE-Democrats (TGTE-D).

In the following weeks, members of the TGTE-D repeatedly refused to take the oath of allegiance to the TGTE. By the end of March 2011, it became obvious that TGTE delegates were going to "expel" representatives from TGTE-D, arguing that close to six months had passed since representatives were told that they must sign the oath of allegiance to the TGTE in order to sit in parliament. On 27 March 2011, Balarajan, sent a letter to delegates in the TGTE-D announcing that they were being formally expelled from the Transnational Government: "I hereby inform you, who was elected by the people to the parliament of TGTE, that your official membership in the parliament has been revoked due to your failure to take the necessary oath to accept the TGTE parliament. Many requests were sent to you since October 17, 2010 to take the oath to accept the TGTE parliament. I also sent you another letter stating that if you do not take the oath by March 5, 2011 you will voluntarily forfeit the position to which you were elected by the people" (TamilNet 2011a).

While much of the recent history of the TGTE may seem tediously petty to most observers, it points to an important characteristic of post-LTTE organisations in the diaspora: they are administrative structures, populated by individuals who gain and lose legitimacy based on their adherence to rational-legal principles. Leadership struggles, as well, play out not by sword but statute. The so-called "Rudrakumaran faction" recognised that the expulsion of the so-called "Nediyavan faction," in order to be seen as *legitimate* in the community, must be grounded on something more than personal dislike of the other group. In other words, since the TGTE had structured itself along rational-legal lines, the expulsion of some individuals simply based on personal enmity would have undermined the structure itself.

With the 'expulsion' of TGTE-D delegates, the future course of the TGTE initially seemed uncertain. While supporters of Rudrakumaran insist that the leadership struggle is effectively over following the expulsion, such a conclusion is likely not shared by the TGTE-D. As of this writing, all of the expelled members from the TGTE have been replaced by new members, the TGTE has held its third Parliamentary session in Buffalo, New York, in December 2011, and 11 individuals have been appointed to what will eventually be the 15-

member TGTE Senate. Among the names of newly-appointed Senators was Ramsey Clark, the former United States Attorney General (1967-69), who, along with Warren M. Christopher, was also a leading voice in support of the Johnson administration's push for the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

On 19 May 2013, the TGTE also unveiled its Tamil Eelam Freedom Charter, with which it seeks to "take the Vaddukoddai Resolution forward" and "enshrine the 'Freedom Demands' of the people" (Colombo Telegraph 2013). Among the several positions put forth in the Freedom Charter, the TGTE states that the North and East of Sri Lanka are "traditional homelands" of the Tamil people, that "the people of Tamil Eelam have an inherent right to self-determination," and that the "creation of an independent and sovereign State of Tamil Eelam remains the only viable option to lead a life with security, dignity and equality, both individually and collectively" (Colombo Telegraph 2013). The Freedom Charter also stipulates that "in Tamil Eelam" human rights will be embraced, that no religion will be given foremost status, and that the rights of all minority groups will be protected.

Conclusion: What Does All This Mean for Reconciliation?

If one thing ought to be clear from the above discussion, it is that to speak of the "Tamil diaspora" as some kind of homogenous bloc, as the Sri Lankan government often does, is deeply inaccurate. However, while most commentators acknowledge that there is no such thing as *the* Tamil diaspora — identifying the diversity that exists in the community — such recognition usually does not go far enough. In other words, acknowledging this diversity has often been confined to dividing the community into, on the one hand, a 'moderate majority' and, on the other hand, a 'pro-Tiger' bloc. This paper attempted to show that, particularly in the post-war period, such divisions are largely meaningless. Indeed, throughout my field research in the Tamil community, many respondents noted that they appreciate the diversity of opinions that have prevailed after May 2009, and believe that it will only strengthen the diaspora's ability to tackle problems affecting the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Others in the community, including many post-war Tamil organisations, lament that what seems like diversity is, in fact, the diaspora's continued inability to present itself as a unified bloc to adequately address issues on the island. These conversations will likely continue for some time, but what is perhaps important to note is that the persistence of this debate is itself a noteworthy, and perhaps even unique, characteristic of post-war diaspora politics.

These changing notions of diaspora involvement in the politics of Sri Lanka have only heightened in breadth and intensity since I completed my fieldwork. During my ongoing participant observation and subsequent follow up interviews, it is clear that the commitment of the Tamil diaspora in Canada to continue the push for war crimes investigations, post-war demilitarisation, devolution of powers, and self-determination continues unabated. By way of conclusion, though, I would like to discuss two ways in which this notion of "diaspora politics" interacts with an equally vibrant and important debate with respect to the role of the diaspora in economic and social development. First, as hinted at above, one of the main reasons precluding diaspora involvement in development in Sri Lanka has less to do with events in Sri Lanka and more to do with the internal politics of the diaspora itself.

Much of the research literature on diaspora and development, while acknowledging that "diasporas" are not homogeneous entities often still fails to properly understand diaspora politics itself. Put differently, much of the recent interest with respect to development work in Sri Lanka has been undertaken, perhaps counter-intuitively, by individuals and organisations that are largely unaffiliated with Tamil diaspora politics in Canada. These individuals are somewhat exasperated by the post-war leadership struggles and petty bickering that has characterised much of Tamil diaspora politics over the years. While common sense would dictate that the *mobilised* segments of the Tamil diaspora, consisting of dozens of organisations, would take the lead on issues of post-war development, the opposite has in fact occurred. Leadership rivalries between a variety of organisations has precluded joint development ventures in Sri Lanka.

Because of much of this organisational competition and rivalry (indeed venturing into expressed boycott of some organisations by others), these diaspora groups, again perhaps counter-intuitively, have not been able to provide an avenue for individuals interested in engaging in meaningful development work in Sri Lanka. Indeed, much of the academic literature on the role of the diaspora in homeland affairs often fails to properly take into consideration the fractured nature of diaspora politics. It is too often assumed, even while acknowledging at the forefront that diasporas are not uniform, that the mobilised segments nevertheless act in unison. In other words, academic discussions about the diversity of a particular diaspora community are often limited to the existence of a "silent diaspora," on the one hand, and the "active" or "mobilised" diaspora on the other, without recognising that mobilised segments of the diaspora are themselves quite often fractured and characterised by schisms and leadership rivalries, which at times work against meaningful activism and development work.

Second, in addition to internal organisational disputes, the debate taking place within diaspora communities also has to do with whether it is *ethically defensible* to help the people in the country, particularly when providing this help requires, on some level, *working with* the Rajapaksa government and the military presence in the North and East of Sri Lanka. It should be noted, however, that this debate takes place within a general desire to do something for the people in Sri Lanka. A young Tamil woman I interviewed, for example, noted that her decision to pursue medicine as a career is shaped and driven by her desire to help people on the island. For individuals like these, it is not enough to be "armchair activists" in Canada. Rather, according to these respondents, a big part of what the Tamil diaspora can do is to put their education, financial well-being, and skills to good use on the ground. Others argue that, even if living and working in Sri Lanka is not feasible, it is necessary to get a sense of what the people in Sri Lanka actually want from the diaspora communities who "presume to speak for them." Many argued that any solution should come from Tamils in Sri Lanka itself, with diaspora Tamils providing a strong supporting role.

As noted, however, this debate has recently been coloured by the question of how to "do work" in the North and East of Sri Lanka given the presence of the military. As Amal de Chickera (2012) recently asked, "If you really are trying to promote reconciliation, but you know there is no space to do so, and the only space available is to engage in 'humanitarian' activities on government terms, do you engage or do you desist?" He rightly points out that many humanitarian organisations have wrestled with this question in the past. In the

aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, he notes, Doctors Without Borders pulled out of the Goma refugee camp (in what is now the Congo) because it was in effect being run by Hutu genocidaires who were channelling aid into the hands of the *Interahamwe* militia. According to de Chickera, Doctors Without Borders made the argument that, "humanitarian aid which actually enhances an unjust status quo does more harm than good — and if you do not have the power to prevent the abuse of such aid, you do less harm by pulling out, than you would by staying." Their decision to pull out of the Goma camp was heavily debated in humanitarian circles and almost led to a split within the organisation.

A similar debate is taking place in the Tamil diaspora in Canada and around the world. While there is much interest in providing aid, financially helping organisations that are working on the ground, as well as much interest among many youth to go to Sri Lanka and volunteer their time and energy, some are disturbed by the possibility of doing more harm than good. It is no secret that the Sri Lankan government maintains a heavy military presence in the North and East of Sri Lanka, even four years after the end of the war (Kadirgamar 2013; ICG Report 2012). The military also seems to be on a kind of "charm offensive" as of late, showing up at weddings and birthday parties, as well as charitable events, to create the impression that their presence in these areas is not only benevolent, but also widely welcomed by the Tamil people. Thus, organisations working within this context have been criticised for inadvertently aiding the Army's initiatives, and helping to "normalise" the presence of the military in Tamil areas. As de Chickera (2012) argues, a familiar critique of this argument is, "Why question the little good we are doing just because it is not capable of changing all that is evil?" Or differently put: "It is better to light a single candle than curse the darkness". But, de Chickera disagrees. The problem, he (2012) argues, "is that a single candle sometimes gives the impression of light, when the world is actually growing darker." The debate continues in humanitarian circles as well as the Tamil diaspora about whether this single candle is doing more harm than good. What is clear is that the Tamil diaspora around the world, through its varying organisations or otherwise, will continue to be deeply engaged with events in Sri Lanka. What is perhaps less clear is whether the diaspora can be a significant force moving Sri Lanka from a post-war situation to a post-conflict one.

References

Amarasingam, Amarnath. 2008. "Religion and Ethnicity Among Sri Lankan Tamil Youth in Ontario." *Canadian Ethnic Studies*. (40.2): 149-69.

------. 2013. *Pain, Pride, and Politics: Social Movement Activism and the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Canada*. PhD Dissertation. Wilfrid Laurier University. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

Amersfoort, Hans van. 2004. "Gabriel Sheffer and the Diaspora Experience. *Diaspora* (13:2/3): 359-73.

Amnesty International. (16 February 2012). "Amnesty International and the Tamil Community in Canada." Available at: http://www.amnesty.ca/media2010.php?DocID=1309 (Accessed 30 July 2012).

Balasingham, Suthargini. 2000b. *Toronto Tamil Youth: The Realities*. Toronto: Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre.

Bandarage, Asoka. 2009. *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*. New York: Universe, Inc.

Baser, Bahar and Ashok Swain. 2010. "Stateless Diaspora Groups and their Repertoires of Nationalist Activism in Host Countries." *Journal of International Relations*. (8.1): 37-60.

Baubock, Rainer and Thomas Faist. 2010. *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Bell, Stewart. 2004. *Cold Terror: How Canada Nurtures and Exports Terrorism Around the World*. Mississauga: John Wiley and Sons.

------.(27 April 2007). "RCMP's Tamil Probe Extended." *The National Post*. Available at: http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/story.html?id=f69c62dd-5f49-421a-9253-c17517612601

Braziel, Jana Evans. 2008. *Diaspora: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Brah, Avtar. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge.

Brubaker, Rogers. 2000. "Accidental Diasporas and External 'Homelands' in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present." Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna. Available at: http://www.ihs.ac.at/vienna/publication.php?tool_e_action=download_file&id=332 (Accessed 29 August 2013)

------. 2005. "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. (28.1): 1-19.

Butler, Kim. 2001. "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse." *Diaspora*. (10.2): 189-219.

Chalk, Peter. 1999. "Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) International Organization and Operations - A Preliminary Analysis." Canadian Security and Intelligence Service. Commentary #77. Available at: http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/pblctns/cmmntr/cm77-eng.asp (Accessed 29 August 2013)

Chandra, Kanchan. 2006. "What is Ethnic Identity and Does it Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science*. (9): 397-424.

Chandrasekere, Sarath. 2008. *Inventing the Sri Lankans: Construction of Ethnic Identity by Immigrants to Ontario*. PhD Dissertation. University of Toronto.

Cheran, R. 2007. "Transnationalism, Development, and Social Capital: Tamil Community Networks in Canada." In *Organizing the Transnational: Labour, Politics, and Social Change*, eds. Luin Goldring and Sailaja Krishnamurti. Vancouver: UBC Press. 129-44.

Clifford, James. 1994. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology*. (9.3): 302-38.

Clothey, Fred. 2006. *Ritualizing on the Boundaries: Continuity and Innovation in the Tamil Diaspora*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Cohen, Robin. 2008. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Colombo Telegraph. (19 May 2013). "TGTE Launched 'Tamil Eelam Freedom Charter'." *Colombo Telegraph*. Available at: http://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/tgte-launched-tamil-eelam-freedom-charter/ (Accessed 13 June 2013).

Day, R. and J.V. Day. 1977. "A Review of the Current State of Negotiated Order Theory: An Appreciation and a Critique." *Sociological Quarterly* (18): 126-42.

de Chickera, Amal. (27 December 2012). "Racing Tanks with Bicycles: A Parable of 'Reconciliation' in Sri Lanka." *Groundviews*. Available at: http://groundviews.org/2012/12/27/racing-tanks-with-bicycles-a-parable-of-reconciliation-in-sri-lanka/ (Accessed 13 June 2013).

DeVotta, Neil. 2004. *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

DiMaggio, P. J. and W. Powell. 1983. "'The iron cage revisited': institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields." *American Sociological Review* (48): 147-60.

Dirks, Gerald E. 1995. *Controversy and Complexity: Canadian Immigration Policy During the 1980s*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Dufoix, Stephane. 2003. *Diasporas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Edwards, Peter and Kenny Yum. (29 December 1997). "Doughnut Shooting: Police Silent on Gang Link." *The Toronto Star*. A1.

Fuglerud, Oivind. 1999. *Life on the Outside: The Tamil Diaspora and Long Distance Nationalism*. London: Pluto Press.

Glick Schiller, N., L. Basch, and C. Blanc Szanton. 1992. *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.

Goldring, Luin and Sailaja Krishnamurti, eds. 2007. *Organizing the Transnational: Labour, Politics, and Social Change*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

ICG Report. 2010. "The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora after the LTTE." Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/186-the-sri-lankan-tamil-diaspora-after-the-ltte.aspx (Accessed 24 February 2010).

------.2012. "Sri Lanka's North II: Rebuilding under the Military." Available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/220-sri-lankas-north-ii-rebuilding-under-the-military.aspx (Accessed 2 March 2013).

Jeganathan, Pradeep. 1995. "Authorizing History, Ordering Land: The Conquest of Anuradhapura." In *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka,* eds.Jeganathan, Pradeep, Qadri Ismail. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association. 106-36.

Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (13 August 2010). "KP Speaks Out – 2 – An Interview With the Former LTTE Chief." Dbsjeyaraj.com. Available at: http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/1631 (Accessed 13 August 2010).

--------. (1 July 2011). "Tamil Destiny is Inextricably Intertwined with that of the Sinhalese."
Available at: http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/2443 (Accessed 5 July 2011).

Kadirgamar, Ahilan. 2013. "The Question of Militarisation in Post-war Sri Lanka." *Economic & Political Weekly* xlvIiI (7): 42-46.

Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kelley, Ninette and Michael Trebilcock. 2000. *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Kerlin, J. A. and S. Manikowski. 2011. "Organizational Change in the U.S. Afghan Diaspora: A Response to Homeland Events or Heightened Government Scrutiny?" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*. (21.4): 363-80.

King, Charles and Neil Melvin. 1998. *Nations Abroad: Diaspora Politics and International Relations in the Former Soviet Union*. Boulder: Westview Press.

-------. 1999/2000. "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia." *International Security*. (24.3): 108-38.

Knowles, Valerie. 2007. *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006*. Revised Edition. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Lacroix, T. 2011. "Indian and Polish Migrant Organisations in the UK." Final report of the Transnational Migrant Organisations (TRAMO) project, University of Oxford: International Migration Institute.

Levy, Harold. (19 November 1995). "Metro Tamils Protest 'Genocide'." *The Toronto Star*. A18.

McDowell, Christopher. 1996. *A Tamil Asylum Diaspora: Sri Lankan Migration, Settlement and Politics in Switzerland*. Oxford: Berghan Books.

Moy, Jessica. (20 September 2011). "Tamil Canadians Raise Thousands for Amnesty." *The Toronto Observer*. Available at: http://www.torontoobserver.ca/2011/09/20/tamil-canadians-raise-thousands-for-amnesty/ (Accessed 20 July 2012).

Nathan, M.L. and I.I.Mitroff. 1991. "The use of negotiated order theory as a tool for the analysis and development of an interorganisational field." *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*. (27.1): 38-64.

Naumetz, Tim. (4 October 2001). "Tamil Group Received $11M in Federal Aid: Immigrant-Aid Group Linked to Liberation Tiger Terrorists." *The Ottawa Citizen*. A3.

Phillips, N., Lawrence, T.B., and Hardy, C. 2000. "Interorganizational collaboration and the dynamics of institutional fields." *Journal of Management Studies*. (37): 23-45.

Preston, Valerie, Audrey Kobayashi and Myer Siemiatycki. 2006. "Transnational Urbanism: Toronto at a Crossroads." In. Vic Satzewich and Lloyd Wong eds. *Transnational Identities and Practices in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press: 91-110.

Rajapaksa, Gotabaya. (11 January 2012). "LTTE Linked Overseas Groups Want Armed Struggle to Resume in Sri Lanka.". Available at: http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/3587 (Accessed 11 January 2012).

Ranganathan, Maya. 2010. *Eelam Online: The Tamil Diaspora and War in Sri Lanka*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Reeves, Peter and Rajesh Rai. 2006. "The Indian Context." In *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, B.V. Lal, Peter Reeves, and Rajesh Rai. eds. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet: 18-31.

Safran, William. 1991. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora*. (Spring): 83-99.

-------. 2005. "The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective." *Israel Studies*. (10.1): 36-60.

Satzewich, Vic and Lloyd Wong, eds. 2006. *Transnational Identities and Practices in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Sekar, Radhika. 2001. *Global Reconstruction of Hinduism: A Case Study of Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. University of Ottawa.

Shephard, Michelle.(28 March 2006). "Gang Boss Deported to Sri Lanka." *The Toronto Star*. A01.

Sivaram, Dharmeratnam.(8 May 1994. "The Exclusive Right to Write Eelam History." *The Sunday Island*. Available at: http://tamilnation.co/forum/sivaram/940508eelam_history.htm (Accessed 29 August 2013)

Snow, David A., E. Burke Rochford Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review*. (51.4): 464-81.

Sokefeld, Martin. 2006. "Mobilizing in Transnational Space: A Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora." *Global Networks*. (6.3): 265-84.

Stackhouse, John. (17 June 1995). "Tamil Tiger Terrorists, Canada says. Diplomatic Weight Now Thrown Behind Sri Lankan Government." *The Globe and Mail.*

Strauss, A., L. Schatzman, D. Ehrlich, R. Bucher, and M. Sabshin. 1963. "The Hospital and its Negotiated Order." In *The Hospital in Modern Society*, eds. E. Freidson, New York: Free Press. 147-69.

Sunday Observer. (4 March 2012). "LTTE Front Funds Amnesty International." *The Sunday Observer*. Available at: http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2012/03/04/fea05.asp (Accessed 30 July 2012).

Tamil Canadian. (3 March 2010a). "A Life Well Lived – Nagaratnam (Siva) Sivalingam: 1940-2010." Available at: http://www.tamileelamnews.com/news/publish/tns_12463.shtml (Accessed 2 June 2012).

------. (15 November 2010b). "What Really Happened on the Last Day of the Second Sitting? TGTE Official Explanation." Available at: http://www.tamilcanadian.com/article/5988 (Accessed 12 March 2011).

Tamil Guardian. (12 April 2012). "Coalition of Tamil Diaspora Youth Organizations Pledges to Continue Struggle Against Genocide." Available at: http://www.tamilguardian.com/article.asp?articleid=4626 (Accessed 30 April 2012).

TamilNet. (27 November 2008). "India is our friend, we are not against any country, remove the hindrance of ban: Pirapaharan." Available at: http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=27599 (Accessed 20February 2012).

------.(27 March 2011a). "Rudra Faction 'Expels' Democrats of TGTE." Available at: http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=33726 (Accessed 30 March 2011).

------.(27 November 2011b). "Tamil Activists Assert Sovereignty, Declare For Plebiscite." Available at: http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=79&artid=34650 (Accessed 29 November 2011).

------.(27 February 2012a). "Second generation Eezham Tamils in Canada assert Tamil sovereignty at Youth Conference." Available at: http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=34924 (Accessed 28 February 2012).

------.(1 August 2012b). "Italian Academics, Activists, Political Groups Endorse TSC declaration." Available at: http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=35434 (Accessed 3August 2012).

Thompson, John C. 2000. "Dining With Tamil Terrorists." *The Ottawa Citizen.* May 10. A19.

Vertovec, Steven. 1997. "Three Meanings of 'Diaspora', Exemplified Among South Asian Religions." *Diaspora.* (6.3): 277-99.

Vimalarajah, Luxshi and R. Cheran. 2010. "Empowering Diasporas: The Dynamics of Post-War Transnational Tamil Politics." Berghof Occasional Paper No. 31. Available at: http://www.berghof-peacesupport.org/publications/SL_Empowering_Diasporas.pdf

Wayland, Sarah. 2003. "Immigration and Transnational Political Ties: Croatians and Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada." *Canadian Ethnic Studies.* (35.2): 61-85.

------. 2004. "Ethnonationalist Networks and Transnational Opportunities: The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora." *Review of International Studies.* (30.3): 405-26.

Williams, Ian. (21 June 1999). "Ramsey Clark, the War Criminal's Best Friend." *Salon.com.* Available at: http://www.salon.com/1999/06/21/clark/ (Accessed 2 August 2012).

This paper sets out to examine Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic mobilization in Canada in its various organisational forms, from the late 1970s to the present. Even as there is much talk about the Canadian Tamil diaspora, the largest population of Sri Lankan Tamils outside of Sri Lanka itself, there is, maybe quite surprisingly, very little actually written about organisational dynamics in the community. In attempting to fill this gap in the research, this paper makes several inter-related arguments: first, far from being monolithic or homogenous, Tamil diaspora politics in Canada is constantly in flux. Second, with respect to issues of reconciliation among ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, as well as economic and social development, the diaspora's role is ambiguous at best. What is clear, however, is that in the post-war period, the "organisational field" has become quite diverse, and the diaspora's role in reconciliation and economic development is being openly and actively debated and criticized. I begin by providing a brief overview of scholarly debates surrounding the definition of "diaspora" as well as a snapshot of the Canadian Tamil community, before examining the pre and post 2009 organisational dynamics.

Amarnath Amarasingam is a Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University in Toronto, Canada, and also teaches at Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo. He is the author of *Pain, Pride, and Politics: Sri Lankan Tamil Activism in Canada* (under contract with The University of Georgia Press). His research interests are in diaspora politics, social movements, radicalization and terrorism, media studies, and the sociology of religion. He is the editor of *The Stewart/Colbert Effect: Essays on the Real Impacts of Fake News* (2011) and *Religion and the New Atheism: A Critical Appraisal* (2010). He has also published articles in Studies in Religion, the Journal of Contemporary Religion, Canadian Ethnic Studies, Muslim Minority Affairs, the Journal of Religion and Film, and Mental Health, Religion, and Culture. He has presented papers at numerous national and international conferences, and has contributed to *The Daily Beast, The Toronto Star, Groundviews, The Province* (Vancouver), *The Huffington Post* and *The Washington Post's On Faith blog.*