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Economic reform, Infrastructure development and bridge-building? Terence O'Neill, J.R. Jayewardene and managing conflict in deeply divided societies

Dr Chaminda Weerawardhana

School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy, Queen's University, Belfast

c.weerawardhana@qub.ac.uk

Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice

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Abstract

This paper sheds light upon the political legacies of two leaders, Terence O'Neill (1914-1990) and Junius Richard Jayewardene (1906-1996). O'Neill's premiership (1963-1969) led to unprecedented developments in Northern Ireland and Jayewardene's presidency (1978-1989) led to a tremendous socioeconomic and political transformation in Sri Lanka. Examining their economic reform agendas and overall impact on the rise of ethno-national conflict in their respective societies, this paper reflects upon the feasibility of a combination of market reform and infrastructure development, an assimilationist outlook (in the case of O'Neill), limited decentralisation and constitutional reform (in the case of Jayewardene) in managing ethno-national divisions in deeply-divided societies.

Keywords: majoritarian politics, market reform, infrastructure development, constitutional reform

Introduction

The appointment of Capt. Terence Marne O'Neill (1914-1990) as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland on 25 March 1963 marked a turning point for Unionist rule and for the province's future. His appointment was not devoid of controversy, as Lord Brookborough, having headed the Stormont government for twenty years, had previously promised an election when selecting his successor. Pursuing an approach to governance that differed considerably from his predecessors, O'Neill prioritised reaching out to the Irish Nationalist community, addressing persistent socioeconomic inequalities, and most importantly, spearheading an ambitious economic and infrastructure development agenda. O'Neill believed in the prospect of encouraging Nationalists to gradually shift their political preferences towards an increasingly 'British' identity, if steps were taken to reduce socio-economic inequality. Incompatibilities in his reform project resulted in O'Neill's growing unpopularity, and to a series of political developments that paved the path to violent sectarian agitation and a long-winded conflict, referred to with the euphemism 'The Troubles'.

The election of Junius Richard Jayewardene (1906-1996) as Prime Minister at the general election of 1977 – Sri Lanka's last national election held under the first-past-the-post system – marked a watershed in the island nation's 20th century history. Jayewardene's centre-right United National Party (UNP) emerged victorious with a landslide mandate of 140 parliamentary seats out of 166, reducing the outgoing Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)-led United Front (UF-1970-77) to eight seats.[1] The UNP campaign revolved around the promise of market economic reform, inverting the UF's Maoist-Socialist economic policy. Responding to growing tides of Tamil nationalism, Jayewardene proposed a system of devolving powers at district level, the District Development Councils (DDCs), which the Tamil United Liberation

Front (TULF) – the main Tamil coalition in the legislature and at the time and the principle parliamentary opposition– accepted. As a result of strong opposition from Sinhala nationalists within Jayewardene's own government, the project was eventually shelved. The new Constitution of 1978, with its national language and citizenship provisions, was subsequently perceived as sufficient to respond to the Tamils' political grievances. In this scenario, the Jayewardene administration was left with no viable alternatives (and among its Sinhala nationalist elements, a clear unwillingness) to effectively address Tamil nationalist discontent, which was increasingly finding expression in armed resistance.

This paper seeks to reflect upon the reformist agendas of O'Neill and Jayewardene in a comparative perspective, exploring their collective impacts on their respective polities. Questions could be raised on the suitability and relevance of such a comparison. It is an advisable comparison due to the fact that the O'Neill and Jayewardene tenures represented extremely decisive (if not *the* most decisive) junctures in the evolution of ethno-national contentions in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, with their policy decisions having extremely significant and long-lasting effects. Their legacies have much in common, especially with regards to shared experiences of spearheading reforms judged as 'progressive' and failing to contain rising ethno-national discontent. Both O'Neill and Jayewardene were brought to confront the double-edged existential challenge of being leaders of the majority community, introducing measures targeting inter-community coexistence, which were simultaneously a) unpopular with the target minority as insufficient or 'too little too late', and b) condemned by their own political folds (or segments within) as betrayals, or politically disadvantageous moves.

O'Neill and Jayewardene have been separately studied, in the fields of Irish and Sri Lankan politics and history (see notably Bew *et al.* 2002, Miracle 1987, Mulholland 2000, De Silva

and Wriggins 1988, 1994, Wijesinha 2007, Venugopal 2011, 2015). However, there has been next to no attempt at positing their roles as advocates of reform in a comparative perspective. This paper seeks to do so, in an effort to contribute to the comparative understanding of the shared challenges of conceptualising economic and infrastructure reform, limited political and institutional reform (envisaged invariably from a majoritarian perspective) and in O'Neill's case, an assimilationist discourse as responses to ethno-national divisions in deeply divided societies. The present reflection is developed on the basis of the reality that Ireland and Sri Lanka share the common historical legacy of British rule, and in the specific case of Northern Ireland and post-independence Sri Lanka, links within the Commonwealth of Nations.[2]

A comparative reflection of this nature faces substantive methodological challenges. O'Neill held power from 1963 to 1969, a period characterised by an emphasis on state-subsidised infrastructure development and social welfare in the UK. Indeed, O'Neill's reform project was near-exclusively based on funds from the British exchequer. Jayewardene's presidency from 1977 to 1989 represents a period that stands in extreme contrast to O'Neill's tenure as the head of a provincial government within the UK. In the Cold War's last decade, Jayewardene staunchly adhered to an open market economic policy and privileged relations with the Western block, overlooking the extremely vital Delhi-Colombo partnership – the root cause of the complex challenges Jayewardene eventually faced in balancing Indo-Sri Lanka relations and national security priorities.[3]

The political legacies of these two advocates of economic reform and infrastructure development in two deeply-divided societies provide food for thought to present-day debates on Western-led liberal peacebuilding approaches, which, more often than not, revolve around an emphasis on socioeconomic empowerment as a means of promoting

peacebuilding. There is a fast growing literature that constructively critiques approaches to peacebuilding, calling for more pragmatic approaches that take local political sensitivities into account, leading to discussions on transformed policy approaches such as debates on 'hybrid peace' and 'post-liberal' peace (Richmond 2009, 2010, 2011, Mac Ginty 2010, 2011, see also Sabaratnam 2011). Despite the multi-faceted and influential nature of such critiques, liberal peacebuilding *à la carte* continues to be extremely influential in world politics, forming a central (if not *the most* central) approach to Western conceptualisations of conflict in deeply divided societies in the global South. Here, by revisiting two different political agendas driven by a quasi-identical rationale, this paper outlines the challenges inherent in perceiving coexistence and conciliation through the sole, if not primary, prism of socioeconomic dividends.

However, this analysis is not intended at casting peacebuilding strategies in a negative light. Zooming in on the challenges inherent in prioritising the 'peace as development' paradigm in deeply divided societies, this paper purports to outline the importance of juxtaposing socioeconomic reform with concerted efforts to address divisive political questions at interplay. In developing non-violent conflict management agendas there exists a crucial need to clearly distinguish between the socioeconomic dividends of peacebuilding and the thorny politics of conflict management. Many liberal peacebuilding initiatives (especially in the global South) fall short of giving due priority to the latter, oftentimes resulting in the failure of otherwise well-intentioned ventures. The collective legacies of O'Neill and Jayewardene provide historical testimony to this reality that many contemporary politicians and diplomats (in the global North, and South alike) are somewhat slow to come to terms with.

In the following, I shall first focus on the core components of O'Neill's reform project. His market reform and infrastructure development strategy was accompanied by an assimilationist discourse, intended at moving the nationalist/Catholic community towards a more 'British' identity. Secondly, the focus shall shift to Jayewardene's open market economic reform project and his measures to address Tamil political grievances through limited decentralisation and constitutional reform. The primary focus of this comparative exploration revolves around the key aspects of each leader's reform agendas.

So different yet so alike? On the basis for an O'Neill-Jayewardene comparison

Parallels in their backgrounds largely facilitate a comparison between O'Neill and Jayewardene. Born to a prestigious Anglo-Irish aristocratic household,[4] O'Neill's privileged background was the key factor behind his entry into politics. Similarly, Jayewardene's family, composed of business magnets and legal luminaries, occupied a definitive place among British Ceylon's wealthiest urban, English-speaking elite.[5] Whereas O'Neill attended Eton, Jayewardene attended Royal College, Colombo's premier public school of his day. They entered politics at relatively early stages, O'Neill in 1946 and Jayewardene, being eight years older than O'Neill, in the late 1930s. Apart from a shared a passion for economic and infrastructure development initiatives, both O'Neill and Jayewardene held the Finance portfolios at relatively early stages of their political careers.[6] Both were advocates of open markets and 'self-help', rather than a social-democratic state.[7] Internationally, Jayewardene shot to fame during his very first ministerial term itself, after his powerful and highly publicised speech in favour of Japan at the September 1951 Japanese Peace Treaty Conference in San Francisco.[8]

O'Neill shared a singular feature of prominent political personalities of the Anglo-Irish elite – engaging in Irish politics while having spent, or spending – prolonged periods in the English metropolis. The sociocultural reality that F.H. O'Donnell captured in his statement that Charles Stewart Parnell's business address was Kill Sassenach, Ballyslaughter, Ireland, but his tastes were in the little villa in Eltham, Kent,[9] can also be attributed to O'Neill, who grew up in London, but would spend his holidays at the family home in Ahoghill, Northern Ireland. He settled down in Northern Ireland only upon entering politics. O'Neill's considerable alienation from the majority of Northern Ireland's local community has been often highlighted (see, for instance, Bleakley 1974, Houston 1978, Scoular 2000, Mulholland 2000). Jayewardene, in a somewhat similar vein, was of a reserved demeanour, and despite his preference for the national attire and his grasp of the power dividends of populist politics, still kept a distance from overtly populist political engagement. The most revealing contrast between O'Neill and Jayewardene, however, was the latter's strong sense of perseverance. Having faced substantive obstacles and a decades-long wait to reach party leadership, Jayewardene led the UNP to victory in 1977, and despite his late age, maintained a strong grip on power. In contrast to O'Neill, Jayewardene was a political dynamo, a strategist who provided strong leadership to the UNP. It is of equal importance, too, not to loose sight of the basic difference between O'Neill's role as head of government in Northern Ireland's local polity, and Jayewardene's role in national leadership, as the wielder of Gaullist executive power in a sovereign state.

The present reflection is also a parsimonious contribution to a growing *renouveau* of interest in O'Neill's legacy. Exploring O'Neill's reforms and the EU-funded PEACE programmes that were put in place in the 1990s, for example, it has been argued that O'Neillism and PEACE represent two points on the trajectory of a 'long peace' in Northern

Ireland (Mitchell 2010: 372, see also Mitchell 2009). As far as Jayewardene is concerned, his economic and political reform agenda continues to have decisive ramifications in present-day Sri Lankan politics.[10]

The foremost challenge of the present comparative reflection is that of identifying a comparative thread that holds two leaders and their policies together. This can be found in their very similar political ideologies, marked by the shared prioritising of infrastructure projects and socioeconomic reform. At the height of their power, both leaders were keen to present themselves to their respective polities as economic 'modernisers'. Elevated to peerage after his retirement from Ulster politics, an aging Lord O'Neill – just like the elder statesman Jayewardene at the same period – eschewed the neo-liberalism of the Thatcher-Reagan decade (Mulholland 2000: 69).[11] Both were advocates of a technocratic and presidential form of government. Jayewardene openly called for an executive presidency since the mid-1960s (Warnapala 1979). O'Neill was an admirer of Gaullist and U.S. style presidential systems, and, according to a comment by Rev. Ian Paisley in the British House of Commons, expressed ambitions of seeing himself as a possible presidential candidate in Ireland after the retirement of Eamonn de Valera (House of Commons, 1971). Yet another shared area of interest of the two leaders was electoral reform based on proportional representation.[12]

In addressing the ethno-national contentions of their respective deeply divided polities, O'Neill and Jayewardene faced the most excruciating challenges. Indeed, their specific approaches (and most importantly, the considerable failure of such approaches) added a lasting scar to their records as leaders. O'Neill, for his part, preferred an assimilationist outlook *vis-à-vis* the increasing outcry of the Nationalist/Republican community for equality

and social justice. Having understood the political advantages of capitalising upon Sinhala nationalism, Jayewardene proceeded on a cautious path of limited devolution through the aborted DDCs initiative, and subsequently in 1987, through the Indo-Lanka Accord, amidst unprecedented Indian pressure. Jayewardene also viewed some clauses in his 1978 Constitution as capable of addressing Tamil grievances. However, as it will be discussed below, these reforms proved to be inadequate in providing a meaningful strategy to reduce ethno-national violence and to address the issue of Tamil secessionist resistance. Most importantly, Jayewardene, despite his strong leadership skills and tight grip on the UNP rank and file, was unsuccessful in containing Sinhala nationalist extremist elements within his own party, a shortcoming that resulted in heightened violence and a long-standing legacy of hatred.

The two leaders' priority area of market reform, while not being devoid of economic dividends, failed to positively impact efforts to manage rising ethno-national tensions. Concerning Jayewardene, the Indian-induced system of Provincial Councils implemented under his presidency in 1987, despite standing the test of time to the present day, failed to contain the challenge of Tamil secessionism. This was largely the result of a dual challenge, stemming from the LTTE's considerable strength by the late 1980s one the one hand, and substantive opposition to the Indian-facilitated limited devolution package from influential Sinhala elements in the Jayewardene government itself, on the other. Jayewardene's socioeconomic reform drive did not include a viable mechanism to address social and economic inequalities affecting ethnic minorities. Concerning O'Neill's reforms, the economic dividends of O'Neillism were in themselves insufficient to address Nationalist/Republican grievances.

O'Neill's ordeal: assimilationist imperatives and vision of a post-sectarian Ulster

> "It is pleasant to know that at long last we have here a Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, a person descended in one way or another from Eoghan, son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, and that one of the great clans of Ulster [the O'Neill clan] is now represented well and truly in the chair of Prime Minister".
>
> - Charles Stewart, MP for Queen's University, speaking at Stormont soon after the appointment of O'Neill as Prime Minister

> …as the 1960s went on, it became clear this [the prospect of Catholics voting Unionist] was something we ought to be thinking about. The evident economic progress of the province, the benefits brought by the British link, and the healing properties of time itself were leading to a willingness among many Catholics to consider voting Unionist. The figures in my own constituency [East Down] in the 1965 election proved conclusively for the first time that there at least many had done so.
>
> - Lord Faulkner (cited in Houston 1978 44).

> 'I thought I knew my Ulsterman, but I was wrong'
> - Jack Sayers, Editor of the *Belfast Telegraph* and strong supporter of O'Neill's liberal Unionism (Gailey 1995: 159)

The untimely demise on 2 March 1962 of Education Minister William Morrison May, a moderate Unionist widely regarded as a would-be successor to Lord Brookeborough, resulted in a situation in which O'Neill assumed a new significance (Bleakley 1974: 63-64). O'Neill's family background was crucial to his appointment as Prime Minister by the then governor of Northern Ireland, Lord Wakehurst. This could be described as a continuation of

an older policy, as O'Neill's three immediate predecessors were also appointed to office without an election (Scoular 2000: 51). O'Neill's appointment, however, caused surprise in the Unionist electorate and offended his parliamentary colleagues who had expected a democratic vote for the selection of a successor to their aging and long-term leader, Lord Brookeborough.[13] O'Neill's premiership thus began with a chord of discontent among the Unionist Party rank and file. Being rather detached from the broader electorate, O'Neill's overarching challenge was that of ensuring unity and consensus within his party, a challenge in which – as it was apparent by his departure from office in 1969 – his successes were minimal.[14]

Addressing the Ulster Unionist Council days after his appointment as Prime Minister on 25 March 1963, O'Neill maintained that the task ahead of him would be to literally 'transform' Ulster, noting that this goal requires bold and imaginative measures. As Finance Minister, O'Neill had developed close links with the British business community. The centre-point of his policy agenda was a package of economic regeneration and infrastructure development (O'Neill 1972, Bardon 1992, Mulholland 2000). These were complemented by the added goal of what he termed 'bridge-building', which included his invitation – amidst fierce Unionist opposition – to Taoiseach Seán Lemass to Stormont (Farrell 1991: 116-117, O'Sullivan 1994: 176-180, Garvin 2009: 25-32, McCann, 2012) an initiative that continued with O'Neill's own subsequent official visit to Dublin and Taoiseach Jack Lynch's visits to Stormont. These interactions served to place O'Neill as a precursor in North-South conciliation.[15] However, a closer examination demonstrates that O'Neill's interest interacting with Taoisigh Lemass and Lynch was a political strategy, which helped distinguish his liberal Unionist approach to governance from that of his predecessors. In Northern Ireland, O'Neill engaged in occasional grand gestures that received high media coverage,

such as his infamous visit to the Lady of Lourdes Intermediate School on 24 April 1964 (Mulholland 2000:65). In retrospect, measures of this nature and his efforts to develop new links with Dublin appear to have been intended at creating a profile for himself alone as the quintessential agent of reconciliation. In such initiatives, O'Neill was not keen to include his cabinet colleagues (Miracle 1987 17). These were also the acts that would enable O'Neill to strengthen his profile as a progressive leader in London and further afield, especially in the United States.

Secondly, O'Neill's interactions with Dublin can also be interpreted part and parcel of his economic reform agenda. There had been trade delegations from Northern Ireland to the Irish Republic during Lord Brookborough's premiership, but unlike O'Neill, Brookborough was thoroughly unprepared to openly endorse such measures or to formally solicit economic cooperation with the Republic. O'Neill brought in a generational and ideological change, and the economic regeneration in the Republic under Taoiseach Lemass appears to have motivated O'Neill to harness ties with Dublin. The 1960s were also marked by increasing pressure on Stormont from Northern Ireland's business community, with calls to develop trade ties with the Republic.

Direct interactions with Irish heads of government never prevented O'Neill from being critical of the Irish government's approaches to Northern Ireland. In January 1964, for instance, O'Neill was outraged by a reception held at the Irish Embassy in London for the delegation of Northern Ireland's Nationalist Party on a visit to London, which he described as a "tasteless intrusion" into domestic affairs (*The Irish Times* 1964b). The same critique was advanced at each of Dublin's reactions to developments in Northern Ireland throughout the O'Neill premiership. Taoiseach Lynch's criticism of the confrontation between the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in

Derry/Londonderry on 5 October 1968, and vow to raise the matter with Prime Minister Wilson prompted O'Neill to accuse Lynch of "unwarranted intervention" (McCann 2012 179). O'Neill's strategy, as opposed to the popular critique, was not exclusively focused on bridge-building; it was rather one focused on using the political climate of the day to his fullest advantage.

During O'Neill's premiership, the Nationalist Party began to increasingly assume its role as the parliamentary opposition at Stormont, to O'Neill's occasional annoyance (Mulholland 2000 133-136).[16] Although it is generally assumed that Taoiseach Lemass's 1965 visit to Stormont was the precursor to the Nationalist Party's active political engagement, it is better understood as the consequence of a growing realisation within that party on the importance of playing its role at Stormont as the opposition. The Nationalist Party's above-mentioned January 1964 delegation to London, for instance, was intended at raising awareness in British government circles about the situation of Nationalists/Catholics in Northern Ireland. The delegation, led by acting party leader Eddie McAteer, met with politicians including Liberal Party leader Jo Grimond,[17] O'Neill was quick to express his displeasure, observing that

> "We [the Unionist Party] now face the most active opposition which we have yet experienced. It is a situation in which (*sic*) Unionist Government can no longer be simply taken for granted…Mr McAteer and his friends want to have their cake and eat it. Having preached a philosophy very close to civil disobedience, he has now tried to surround himself with an aura of sweet reason. It is a pity that we could not, by some sort of time machine, give his supporters a foretaste of the Ulster he would like to see" (*The Irish Times* 1964a).

O'Neill's words that followed the above statement are highly suggestive of the way in which he sought to lure the Nationalist community to support his agenda for development and economic reform, encouraging them to shift towards an increasingly 'British' identity. In justifying this stance, O'Neill highlighted Northern Ireland's economic advantages of being part of the United Kingdom. In his effort to give McAteer a foretaste of Ulster under a United Ireland, O'Neill avers

> Suppose that his [McAteer's] dream were to come true, to-morrow. No more aircraft careers or other Admiralty orders for Harland and Wolff – there would be too much pressure from British yards to make it feasible to place such orders in a foreign country. No more service orders for Shortt's–indeed, in all probability, the British government would liquidate its interest and close the factory down (…) cries of distress on all sides, from the farmers, suddenly excluded from the Price Review. Dismay from the recipients of social benefits, suddenly trimmed from a British to Irish standard, and hitting particularly hard many of Mr McAteer's supporters. A dark cloud over our heavy programme of educational spending, and, indeed, over all our capital plans. The folly of compulsory Gaelic, pushing living languages out of the curriculum (Ibid.).

The prospect of assimilating Nationalists to an increasingly British, and by implication pro-Union political position was a key objective of O'Neill's reform project. The deep-seated and near-irreconcilable nature of the ideological divide did not receive adequate attention, due to the feeling that an increase in living conditions, governmental treatment and

development projects would encourage the minority to revise its political positions. This proved to be a monumentally erroneous attempt, and its failure shares a clear parallel with identical failures of similar 'peace as development' initiatives in other deeply divided societies.

In sum, O'Neill's term of office was a time of considerable political tension. The fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising of 1916 caused considerable unrest in Northern Ireland. The rise of the Paisleyite movement and associated voices of hard-line Protestant activism prompted O'Neill to ban the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in June 1966, the year – as O'Callaghan and O'Donnell have argued – to which the beginning of 'The Troubles' ought to be back-dated (O'Callaghan and O'Donnell 2006). When examining O'Neill's economic and infrastructure reform project and its legacy, it is of importance to appraise the fact that the entire venture was launched in a considerably tense political backdrop marked by growing opposition to O'Neill's persona and policy orientation.

'Changing the face of Ulster'? O'Neill's reformist agenda

O'Neill's economic reform project prioritised planning and coordination and ensuring policy cohesion across government (Mulholland 2000: 28-34. See also Mitchell 2010: 376-7). Miles Glendinning, an architect, notes that

> …[the O'Neill government] wanted to use planned modernisation in the built environment as a key component in a wider strategy of resolving Northern Ireland's political tension…Like quite a lot of the technocratic reconstructions of the 1960s, O'Neill's strategy was an essentially top-down one, depending fundamentally not on 'democratic legitimacy' but on the rule of experts, including a number of gifted and

> liberal civil servants, notably the chief planning administrator, John Oliver (Glendinning 2010: 628).

O'Neill's reform programme was largely inspired by a document commissioned by his predecessor Lord Brookeborough, the *Belfast Regional Survey and Plan 1962*, prepared by Sir Robert Matthew OBE, a leading architect of his day.[18] A centrepiece of the project was a recommendation to restrict further growth in the city of Belfast and a grandiose scheme to create a new city between Portadown and Lurgan (Bardon 1992: 624, Glendinning 2010: 628, See also McCleary 2012). In 1963, O'Neill appointed Thomas Wilson, an Ulsterman and Adams Smith professor of Political Economy at the University of Glasgow, as an economic consultant. The Wilson plan, released in 1965, retained the Matthew Report's emphasis on growth centres and emphasised the importance of introducing new industries (Wilson 1965, Bew *et al.* 2002: 127, Mitchell 2010: 378). A Ministry of Development was established on 1 January 1965, and William Craig, a strong O'Neillite at the time who supported O'Neill's appointment as Prime Minister (and in a political U-turn, strong anti-O'Neillite in the latter stages of the O'Neill premiership), was charged with the portfolio (Bleakley 1974: 65-66). The Wilson Plan's infrastructure components notably included a new ring-road for Belfast, a new city in the centre of Northern Ireland, four motorways, a second university, a manpower training programme and an initiative to build 64000 houses by 1970 (Bardon 1992 624-5). The Ministry of Commerce, headed by Brian Faulkner, was extremely active in developing new foreign investment initiatives and promoting Northern Ireland among business lobbies abroad (Houston 1978, Mulholland 2000: 78-79).[19]

Reforms short of consensus? Dominant critiques of O'Neillism

Despite the constant emphasis on 'planning', O'Neill's reforms did not involve a concrete and strategically viable economic strategy. Once the reform agenda and structures (including the Ministry of Development) were in place, the O'Neill government was not keen to engage economists or development specialists in drafting short, medium and long-term economic priorities (Bew *et al.* 2002 126-132). Hence the critique that the strategy of 'changing the face of Ulster' involved only a shallowly conceptualised cosmetic agenda, with the short-term political goal of strengthening the Unionist Party's vote base. Behind the ideology of transforming Ulster, planning represented the intensification of post-war dependence on subsidies from London (Ibid. 128). This involved extracting state subsidies for a large-scale public works programme of housing, motorways, a new airport and improved port facilities. Among the main analysts of O'Neillism, Farrell and Boserup have interpreted O'Neill as an agent of external capital, striving to bring international businesses to Ulster, and fighting against the (highly sectarian) old capital represented by Brookeborough (Boserup 1972, Farrell 1976). Some analysts have refuted this thesis, arguing that Brookborough did favour incoming firms, and that O'Neill's actions were determined by the Unionist Party's loss of control over the Protestant working class, leading to the conclusion that measures such as bridge-building were merely cosmetic (Bew et al. 2002: 126-132). This reading has been questioned on the basis that it makes O'Neill appear to have been sensitive to working class politics and voting patterns. His background and political outlook leave little space for O'Neill to be conceptualised as a political strategist who was sensitive to the ebbs and flows of working class politics in Ulster (Miracle 1987: 20-24).

O'Neill's reform project was criticised for being oblivious to the local community's political sensitivities. Concerning the establishment of a new university and a new city to reduce congestion in Belfast, for instance, it was decided to select the predominantly Unionist east side of the river Bann (Miracle 1987: 18-19, Scoular 2000: 54-56). In 1965, a Committee on Higher Education chaired by Sir John Lockwood made recommendations that were even more insensitive towards the local community's political positions, especially towards the political concerns of the Nationalist community. The new university roused tension within the Unionist community itself. While some argued that it should be built in the new city in the Matthew proposals, the West of the Bann Protestants[20] called for an expansion of Magee College in Derry/Londonderry (Scoular 2000: 55, Glendinning 2010: 630). This situation prompted the Lockwood Committee to select Coleraine, where the New University of Ulster (NUU) was built overlooking the river Bann.[21] The Committee did not include a single Nationalist/Catholic member, and the choice of predominantly Unionist Coleraine earned Nationalist wrath.[22]

This insensitivity to Nationalist positions had a strongly negative impact on O'Neill's efforts to reach out to that community, causing much scepticism and mistrust. The new city was to be named after Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister and ardent Unionist, Lord Craigavon, to the outrage of nationalists (Scoular 2000 55-56). Similarly, all the growth centres outlined in the Wilson Plan, despite later justifications, were in Unionist/Protestant heartlands, with the notable exception of Derry/Londonderry. O'Neill's apparent insensitivity to such political ramifications served to contradict his initial efforts to adopt a benign, – and in contrast to his predecessors – rather magnanimous stance towards the Nationalist community. O'Neill faced double-edged alienation, with his 'bridge-building' initiatives unpopular among Unionists and Nationalists viewing measures to 'change the face of Ulster' with increasing

scepticism. The absence of sufficient strategic planning had a negative effect on the development programme, with Craigavon, for instance, not developing to be the lively city it was meant to be (Matthew *et al.* 1970: 19).

Despite such criticism on the overall reform package, O'Neill's policies did result in the relocation of a number of multinational firms in Northern Ireland. The pro-O'Neill *Belfast Telegraph* referred to Northern Ireland's "face lift to meet the new world", and described 1964 as "a year of greatness" (O'Neill 1972: 67). While some 29000 jobs had been created in the manufacturing industry by the end of 1969, it did not help reduce unemployment due to the decline of long-standing manufacturing industries (Bardon 1992: 626-7). Despite its flaws, O'Neill's reformism was influential in the mid1960s, especially due to the strong support extended by leading media channels, including the *Belfast Telegraph*. The latter's iconic editor Jack Sayers, himself hailing from a liberal-Unionist background, was one of O'Neill's most ardent supporters. O'Neill also attracted a moderate support base to the Unionist Party, although moderates increasingly lost their influence by the late 1960s.

O'Neill and Unionism: A difficult relationship?

> He [O'Neill] returned to the House of Commons [after the 24 Feb. 1969 general election] at the head of a still badly divided party, and one which immediately renewed the threat to depose him...there were hopes that he could hold off yet another challenge, but not that he could survive long into the future…Captain O'Neill, holding on a tenuous majority within the Parliamentary party, has to continue the fight for reform in face of demonstrations by both Civil Rights and the movement's militant Protestant enemies, and n the knowledge that his failure either to progress or to maintain law and order could be followed by the intervention of the British Government.
>
> - Jack Sayers (Sayers 1969: 201).

Unionism, a multi-layered and complex political ideology, has never been homogenous, and divisions within Unionism were most palpable throughout the 1960s.[23] Debates on Unionist priorities and the policies that Unionist leaders ought to pursue were intensified in the backdrop of O'Neill's politics of 'bridge-building'. The Unionist Party, which held power in Northern Ireland since Partition, faced a considerable challenge from two quarters, independent Unionists and Labour politics.[24] The former often juxtaposed a critique of the Unionist Party's links with the British Conservatives and its elitism, with a right-wing, exclusionary position on sectarian politics, perceiving any concession to Irish Nationalism from Stormont as detrimental to Unionist/Protestant interests (Greer 2009: 189-191).[25] Labour politics, developed principally around the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP), actively challenged the Unionist Party's policies on both economic affairs and sectarianism.[26] While O'Neill's brand of secular, reformist and cosmopolitan Unionism faced critiques from elements within the Unionist Party itself, its most ardent condemnation came from preacher-turned activist and politician, Ian Paisley. The Paisleyite movement, which began with street protest, represented an early challenge to the O'Neill government's policy orientation. The Irish Nationalist civil rights movement subsequently complemented the challenges O'Neill faced from within the Unionist fold.

As Graham Walker has observed, modernising the Unionist Party – which O'Neill himself described as a reactionary and reluctant political party (O'Neill 1972: 50) – and beyond that the political culture of Northern Ireland, were prerequisites for the success of O'Neill's vision, but there is little evidence that he began to face up to this reality in the early part of his premiership (Walker 2004: 154). Optimistic about the imminent successes of his reforms, O'Neill miscalculated the extent to which his policies risked awakening Unionist fears.

Soon after being appointed Prime Minister, O'Neill prioritised winning back the Unionist support base that had drifted towards the NILP, which had been successful at elections in the post-1958 era - a mission O'Neill described as 'stealing Labour's thunder'.[27] These measures took their toll on the NILP at the 1965 Northern Ireland elections, when it lost two out of its four seats (Miracle 1987: 11-12). The Unionist Party's success was largely interpreted as a public endorsement of O'Neill's manifesto, *Forward Ulster to Target 1970* that contained the key points of his socioeconomic reform package. The NILP's enfeebling under the O'Neill premiership has been criticised as a step that helped strengthen the hard-line ideologues of Ulster Unionism. The weakening of the NILP also provided radicals in the Nationalist community with an outlet, with many re-emerging in the Civil Rights Movement of 1969.[28] Moreover, the NILP's collapse destroyed a viable avenue of working-class political co-operation across the sectarian divide, a void that has not been filled until the present day.

Despite the challenges that O'Neill faced within Unionism, moderates within the Unionist Party did rally around O'Neill, perceiving him as the only available choice in combating the Unionist Party's conservative and confessional rigidity (Mulholland 2000: 27). As O'Neill left office in the face of increasing rejection from elements within his own party, his opponents within Unionism such as the Paisleyite movement, as well as rapidly increasing Nationalist agitation were gaining momentum. Some O'Neillists of the Unionist Party eventually found new political homes in the New Ulster Movement (NUM) and the Alliance Party (Miracle 1987: 26-27 and 30-51).[29]

In a strategic miscalculation (and in retrospect), O'Neill never sought to create a workable organisational structure for moderate Unionism – and by extension, for moderate voices in the broader polity – to work together towards inter-community coexistence (Mulholland 2000: 67). This is evident, for instance, in O'Neill's complete disregard of the moderate politics practiced by other smaller political groups such as the Ulster Liberal Party (ULP) throughout the 1960s. Sheelagh Murnaghan MP, the ULP's only Stormont MP and a leading barrister, repeatedly attempted at introducing a Human Rights bill, in 1964, 1965, 1966, and twice more in 1967. At each occasion, the bill was pitifully defeated (Gillespie 1984). Despite O'Neill's advocacy of moderate politics of bridge-building and efforts to approach the Irish government, he never sought to seriously interact with other voices of the 'moderate' political centre in Northern Ireland, which had been on the rise since the 1950s (Ibid.). It was not until November 1969, months after the decisive February 1969 general election (which made his position increasingly unstable) that O'Neill introduced mild reforms tackling inequality issues, which included the appointment of an ombudsman and the introduction of a points-based system for housing allocation.[30] Although these reforms met most of NICRA's core demands, they were by then far from effective in managing the rising tide of sectarian tensions. In the remaining part of this paper, we will look at Jayewardene's trajectory and the way he shaped Sri Lanka's political landscape.

Jayewardene's reformism: executive power, at last!

> …as some members are alleged to have made certain statements to undermine the leadership when he was out of the island, [JRJ] wished to state [that] he would send a questionnaire to the parties concerned to carry out an investigation himself…[JRJ] stressed that the Kalawewa bi-election should be won by us [UNP] and the campaign would be **under his personal supervision**. Those taking part in

> the campaign … and the speakers…**would be selected by him** and the content of the speech (*sic*) **should be informed to him [JRJ] before delivery**.
>
> - Minutes of the UNP Working Committee Meeting, 30 October 1974[31] (emphasis mine).

> 'Your High Commissioner delivered to me on 4 November [1982] your reply to my message about the Argentine Resolution on the Falkland Islands which was voted on later that day. Sri Lanka's decision to vote against [the UN Security Council] resolution [502 of 3 April 1982] is most warmly appreciated in this country and I am most grateful to you for the decision you took'.
>
> - Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, telegram No 214 of 17 Nov.1982 to President Jayewardene[32]

In 1973, aged 67, Jayewardene finally secured a position he long aspired, the UNP leadership. Following a pattern of dynastic politics (that continues to be a defining feature of Sri Lankan politics to the present day), the UNP leadership had until then remained confined to the family of Don Stephen Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of the Dominion of Ceylon. Having suffered a substantive political setback at the 1970 general election, the UNP was in an exceptionally weak position when Jayewardene assumed leadership. Emphasising party discipline and introducing new younger faces to the party from across the social spectrum, Jayewardene sought to galvanise the UNP, a party with a long-standing reputation as *the* political hub of the conservative and wealthy upper classes. As party leader from 1973 to 1977 (and the leader of the parliamentary Opposition from 1970 to 1977), he prioritised strict executive control, shunning party colleagues not respecting his stipulations. A cursory glance at UNP Central and Working Committee meeting minutes from the mid/late 1970s provides proof of his strong leadership and no-nonsense attitude

to dissent and disregard for collective responsibility. This authoritarian demeanour, when transposed on to the ultra-powerful executive presidency, resulted in Jayewardene taking political decisions that verged on the dictatorial, tainting his legacy. As the UNP's political fortunes were fluctuating, an early presidential election was held in 1982 and, in a drastic move, Jayewardene sought to avoid a parliamentary election through a referendum to extend the life of parliament by a five-year term (Samarasinghe 1983: 163-164). A measure his political opponents viewed as an outright authoritative aggression on democracy and a sign of an emergent dictatorship, it proved to have fatal consequences.[33]

Policy priorities – market reform and assimilationist discourses

> My government welcomes trade, aid and foreign investment. These are the cornerstones, the very foundations of our economic policy. It is our objective to maximise foreign investment in Sri Lanka by giving foreign investors the necessary incentives and the necessary guarantees and safeguards consistent, of course, with our national sovereignty and economic goals. We expect aid and support from the World Bank and the IMF and also from the countries of the Aid-Group…we shall give the private sector its due place in our economy…the basis of a free and just society, in my opinion, is a free and just economy. We will accordingly move away from the restrictive policies and controls of the last seven years [1970-1977] to a more liberal economic policy.
>
> - Excerpt from the Budget Speech, 1977[34]

> The level of our future spending in our overseas aid programme is…at present under consideration as part of our overall review of public expenditure. But whatever the outcome…I do not think you will find us ungenerous or lacking in confidence in your country's future. We greatly value the long-standing friendship we enjoy with Sri Lanka, and the Commonwealth link between us.
>
> - Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, letter to President Jayewardene dated 3 July 1979[35]

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On a par with the 'peace as economic development' paradigm central to theoretical perspectives on liberal peacebuilding, Jayewardene perceived open market economic reform as an absolute prerequisite for the preservation of democracy (Ponnambalam 1980: 144). In the months that immediately followed his election as Prime Minister at the general election of 21 July 1977, Jayewardene precipitated to implement constitutional reforms, introducing a presidential system inspired by the French and American models (Wijesinha 2007: 38-41). As early as 1966, Jayewardene had clearly expressed his preference for a presidential system, describing it as a 'very necessary requirement in a developing country faced with grave problems', and an office that was not 'subject to the whims and fancies of an elected legislature'.[36]

Somewhat along the lines of O'Neill's plans to build a new city, Jayewardene's reforms included the creation of a new administrative capital in the Colombo suburb of Kotté, historically known as Sri Jayawardenapura. The unicameral parliament was moved to a newly built impressive structure in the heart of Kotté.[37] Within the first two years of office, Jayewardene took steps to deregulate foreign trade, removed import controls, devalued the exchange rate by 43%, eliminated subsidies on food and petrol, liberalised internal agricultural markets, reduced export duties, encouraged foreign investment, established export processing zones, modified labour legislation and deregulated credit markets (Venugopal 2011: 78). Indeed, the most vital aspect of the new foreign direct investment policy was the setting up of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission in 1978 with wide-ranging power to establish and operate Export Processing Zones (Ponnambalam 1980: 158-162). The simultaneous emphasis on aid, trade and foreign investment had a strong appeal

on Western powers and Bretton Woods institutions. The trend of the day in the developing world was one in which states were demanding fair and stable prices for their exports, calling for a 'trade, not aid' policy approach. The Jayewardene government's call for foreign investment was well-received in the West, as a strategy not unhelpful in managing the balance of payments of Western countries. This resulted in an unprecedented inflow of aid and investments (Ibid.145).

Under the new economic reforms, the Bretton Woods institutions gained unprecedented leverage in Sri Lanka. The influence of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – with the latter's emphasis on currency deregulation, welfare cuts and investment promotion – was evident in the new government's November 1977 budget,[38] which cancelled all subsidised rations of rice, flour and sugar, except for one pound of free rice and three pounds of rice at Rs. 1 per lb for those earning below Rs. 3,600 per annum (Ponnambalam 1980: 147). These were subsequently accompanied by efforts to reduce public expenditure, while providing increased incentives and benefits to the private sector (Ibid. 148-154). While the market economic policy and large-scale infrastructure development projects were thus underway, a crucial problem the government faced was a rise of inflation and the cost of essential goods. Inflation at mid-year in 1980 was around 35%, while the price of imported oil sprang from $13 in 1978 to $32 in 1980. In an attempt to meet IMF requirements, Jayewardene had introduced substantial price increases on most essential items in a Fabian, step-by-step strategy (Wriggins 1981: 204-5). The inherent challenge of this policy, as it was the case in the 5th peace process in the early 2000s, was that the government was faced with a major dilemma in balancing IMF requirements for cutbacks on subsidies and the political costs of economic burdens on the populace.

Over the post-Independence decades, Sri Lanka had developed a social democratic state with free healthcare and education provision. The Jayewardene administration's economic policies, with their strong Bretton Woods orientation, sought to bypass and near-dismantle and the social democratic state – thereby transgressing the moral economy upon which state-society relations had been balanced since 1956 (Venugopal 2011: 85). Sri Lankans had hitherto been accustomed to being insulated from sharp fluctuations in the world market by costly subsidies, which began to change under the Jayewardene dispensation. This friction between the social democratic dimensions of the state apparatus and the market reform agenda has since expanded, as the subsequent presidencies, irrespective of party affiliation and political ideology, largely pursued the Jayewardene blueprint in managing the national economy.[39]

Investments and Infrastructure Development

> We commend the government of Sri Lanka for its ability to win the continued support and blessings of aid-giving countries and organisations of the world who reiterated their abiding faith and confidence in the leadership and the impressive record of progress that the Sri Lankan Government has made in all its accelerated developmental efforts and tangibly expressed their appreciation by increasing the quantum of aid especially to the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme, housing and district development.
>
> - Resolution passed at the UNP Working Committee Meeting, 16 September 1981[40]

Despite the implementation of open market economic reforms, substantive investments and corporate transformation only took place towards the latter years of the 1980s and especially in the early 1990s, with the post-Cold War global transformations. In the early

1980s, open market reforms primarily involved large-scale Western aid allocations for infrastructure development, in the form of the Accelerated Mahaweli development programme (AMDP), a combined strategy of hydroelectric power and agricultural regeneration, together with measures to open some 750,000 acres of irrigated land for agricultural use (De Silva and Wriggins 1994 362-364). Initially planned as a long-term development initiative in the early 1970s, the Jayewardene government transformed AMDP into an accelerated project to be fully concluded within a five-year period. The AMDP was co-financed by the British, German, Swedish, Canadian, Japanese and US governments (Ibid. 364-374).[41] International funding for the project was substantial, with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), for instance, providing a no-interest loan of some $ 76 million for the *Maduru Oya* project, together with an additional $ 8.8 million to pay for the services provided by Canadian firms engaged in the initiative.[42] Some analysts observe that as a result of the Jayewardene administration's primary focus on the AMDP, the broader market reform project lost its momentum of the early 1980s (Athukorala 2006: 22).

Jayewardene's ordeal: ethno-national unrest, limited decentralisation and constitutional reform

> "In Jaffna most of the seats were captured [at the 1977 general election] by the party [TULF] which now wants to divide the country…Problems of this Jaffna Peninsula regarding language, education and public services have now been settled once and for all [through constitutional provisions of the 1978 Constitution] and there is nothing more I can do regarding these three problems".
>
> - President Jayewardene, speaking at a press conference in Chennai, during an official

visit to India, November 1978 (*Ceylon Daily News*, 9 November 1978)

By 1977, the political situation in northern Sri Lanka had considerably deteriorated, providing a breeding ground for armed resistance among Tamil youth. Disenchanted by the repeated failures of constitutional Tamil nationalism to consolidate an equitable national policy on the rights of island's largest minority, resistance, in the form of a sharp separatist discourse and armed violence, was gaining momentum (De Silva and Wriggins 1994: 340-350). The situation was further complemented by the parliamentary configuration, with the TULF, a coalition composed of the Federal Party of Ceylon and the Ceylon Tamil Congress, which publicly expressed secessionist views, occupying the position of the main parliamentary opposition.

Jayewardene sought to pursue a twin-track strategy in addressing Tamil concerns, by introducing limited devolution through DDCs on the one hand, and through provisions in the 1978 Constitution, on the other. [43] Both Sinhala and Tamil nationalists despised DDCs, Jayewardene's main strategy to bring a political arrangement in response to the Tamil question. The TULF won the October 1981 DDC election in the Northern Province, demonstrating the northern electorate's preference for centrifugal power devolution. Yet, the DDCs initiative, and Jayewardene's measures to launch a dialogue with TULF leaders in the realm of high politics, ignored the extent of militant Tamil nationalist resistance brewing among Tamil youth in the North.[44] Disillusioned by what they termed the 'Sinhala' government in Colombo, they were increasingly subscribing to a secessionist ideology. Socialist in outlook, they perceived any accommodation with a capitalist Sinhala majoritarian government with disdain.

Despite the truism of this claim, the Jayewardene administration's economic outlook was not the primary reason for their scepticism. The legacy of failed efforts at political reform since 1957, Colombo's notoriety of introducing legislation that negatively affected Tamils, and the Sinhala nationalist discourse hovering over the Jayewardene government, strongly upheld by some of its senior-most politicians, were instrumental in increasing the disillusionment among militant Tamil nationalist youth. Although political unrest and the increasingly volatile security situation explain the fact that the dividends of open market reform never reached the Tamil majority areas, the major economic development and infrastructure regeneration projects were all revolving around what Tamil nationalists perceive as the 'Sinhalese south', with next to no concrete effort from Colombo to integrate the North and East to its economic development targets. More importantly, the Jayewardene administration's strategy on the ethnic question focused exclusively on interacting with the TULF, and Tamil nationalist militants who despised mainstream politics were systematically ignored. Hence its constant confrontations with militants, which especially deteriorated during the DDC election campaign.[45] On behalf of Colombo, there was no concrete strategy in the early 1980s – either in terms of principle strategy or behind the scenes – to approach militant Tamil nationalists. Instead, the latter received Colombo's wrath, under the controversial *Prevention of Terrorism Act* (Samarasinghe 1983: 163-164). The 1978 Constitution provided official recognition to the Tamil language and granted full Sri Lankan citizenship to Tamils of Indian origin in the plantation sector, a thorny issue since the mid-1940s.[46] These provisions were complemented by the abolition of the UF government's system of university admission, widely perceived as unfavourable to ethnic minority youth.[47] Inclusive language reform, despite being duly enshrined in Jayewardene's

1978 Constitution, was never fully implemented in practice. Even at the time of writing, it is not possible in a large majority of police divisions (including the predominantly Tamil north), to lodge a police report in Tamil. Despite their euphoria over the new constitution, open markets and infrastructure programmes, Jayewardene and his advisors failed to adequately take stock of the state of Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka in the late 1970s and early 1980s. After decades of stalemates that constitutional nationalist voices faced, Tamil nationalism and outcries for self-determination had reached a new nadir in the form of militant activity. In expressing his condemnation of Tamil militant nationalism, Jayewardene could not help developing the image – as Krishna Sankaran cogently argues – of a Sinhala nationalist leader with a Sinhala supremacist outlook on his country's ethno-national woes, which raised challenges to his relationship with the Tamils in the domestic sphere and to his relations with India at regional and bilateral levels (Sankaran 1996 and 1999).

The Jayewardene administration's primary shortcoming lay in an inadequate understanding of the sympathy that Sri Lanka's Tamil nationalist militants commanded in Tamil Nadu, and in the face of Colombo's foreign policy 'distancing' from Delhi, the latter's preparedness to exploit Tamil secessionism to India's strategic advantage. Juxtaposing domestic policy on the ethnic question with an 'inclusive' foreign policy approach that recognised India's position as the regional superpower, and consequently, securing Delhi's cooperation in developing a common Indo-Sri Lankan agenda on the latter's ethno-national question, was an absolute necessity of the day that Jayewardene – in his resolve to prioritise relations with Western powers above those with India – overlooked in the early/mid 1980s, a strategic miscalculation that entrapped himself and Sri Lanka in an unprecedented quagmire by the late 1980s, in the form of direct Indian intervention.[48]

Concluding remarks: liberal Unionism and liberal Sinhalese nationalism: path to calamity?

This paper examined key aspects of O'Neill and Jayewardene's reform projects, and approaches to the politics of their deeply-divided societies. The discussion on O'Neill focused on his economic and infrastructure reforms, the 'bridge-building' political agenda and their key critiques, which was then juxtaposed with a brief discussion of O'Neill's conflict-ridden relationship with Unionism. The section on Jayewardene revolved around his market reform and infrastructure development plan, and his approach (or lack thereof) to militant Tamil nationalism. Each section served to highlight the substantive challenges that O'Neill and Jayewardene, two like-minded leaders of the same generation representing the majority communities in their societies, faced when manoeuvring socioeconomic reform amidst deep-seated ethno-national divisions. Despite the odds, both O'Neill and Jayewardene could, to a considerable degree, be considered as political risk takers and advocates of change.

O'Neill was brought to manage a hostile local political situation, with the exigencies of Stormont's relations with Westminster/Whitehall. The British government, continuing its post-Boundary Commission policy of next to no direct involvement in Northern Ireland-related matters, took a cautious approach when dealing with Northern Ireland. It was only after the 1968 protests that the Harold Wilson government began to show an increasing interest in Northern Ireland, adding further strain to O'Neill's task of managing local turmoil and relations with London.[49]

Jayewardene's decision to pursue a robust market economic reform strategy involved the risk of a political backlash, due to that strategy's potential to negatively affect the state's social democratic features. His mismanagement of relations with India and the ethnic question in the early 1980s led to India's decision to exercise coercive diplomacy by the

mid/late 1980s, leaving him with no choice but accept direct Indian intervention by the late 1980s, which the British press described it as a huge gamble (Swain 1987). His economic reforms dramatically transformed the socioeconomic, political and cultural fabric of the state. His political reforms are held responsible for the polity's deterioration to record levels of clientelism, corruption and violence.

Jayewardene's passivity in controlling the 1983 Black July riots and the failure of the 1987 ILA initiative have led many analysts to concur that his approach to the ethno-national question was instrumental in aggravating ethno-national violence. In retrospect, the sharp deterioration of ethnic politics during the Jayewardene rule can be described as a consequence of its liberalising pragmatism. The dominant assumption was –erroneously – that a set of narrowly drafted technical reforms to the existing legislative apparatus would help diminish the rising threat of Tamil secessionist violence.

Both O'Neill and Jayewardene were perceived with mistrust in the Irish Nationalist and Tamil communities and polities. Aside the 'too little too late' argument, this reaction can also be described as an expression of the alienation of minority political mobilisation from the Unionist and Sinhala nationalist-dominated structures of governance that had been long established in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka. Despite initial objectives articulated with a positive twist, the O'Neill-Jayewardene agendas resulted in further widening the minorities' alienation from majoritarian politics.

The strikingly ambivalent legacies of these two leaders in their respective polities provide invaluable insights to present-day policymakers. From the challenge of reaching policy consensus between the 'tribune parties' (*i.e.* the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin) in Northern Ireland, to addressing the Tamils' continuing grievances in consultation with Tamil leaders in Sri Lanka, as well as the persistent challenge of facilitating intercommunity

coexistence in both countries, the legacies of O'Neill and Jayewardene bear a contemporary resonance for policy planning, coherence, managing party support bases and majoritarian excesses. Most of all, the challenges they faced call for critical perspectives on economic and infrastructure reform-based peace-building approaches, especially in terms of taking adequate steps to acquire an in-depth and realistic understanding of local specificities, political challenges and impasses, as well as in pursuing a forthright approach on prioritising contentious political issues, instead of subordinating them to market reform agendas.

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[1] The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) won the remaining eighteen seats, making an all-Tamil party the main parliamentary opposition for the first time in post-1948 Sri Lankan politics. The present-day Tamil National Alliance (TNA), the TULF's current successor was officially recognised as the main opposition party in Sri Lanka's newly convened 10th post-independence parliament on September 02, 2015.

[2] On continuing links between Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, especially in terms of security cooperation, see Miller 2014. On aspects of peace process-related links between Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, see Weerawardhana 2013, Ch. 6. For evidence on academic interest in the Northern Ireland-Sri Lanka comparison, see, for example, Alison 2003.

[3] Jayewardene's pro-Western leaning was strongly exemplified in his decision, against the advice of senior diplomats, to vote in favour of the United Kingdom regarding UN Security Council Decision 502 of 3 April 1982, on the sovereignty of the Falklands (see Gooneratne 2000).

[4] O'Neill's maternal grandfather, Robert Milnes (later Lord Houghton) was appointed Vice-Roy of Ireland in October 1892. According to O'Neill's own account, his grandfather, a liberal viceroy, was despised by Protestant activists, who protested against him, leading to an explosion in Dublin caste on Christmas Eve 1892. For a detailed personal recollection of O'Neill's aristocratic credentials and connections to Anglo-Irish high politics, see O'Neill 1972: 1-16.

[5] Son of a Supreme Court Judge, Jayewardene himself started his career as a legal professional, giving oaths as an Advocate of the Supreme Court in 1932 (Jayewardene 1992: v).

[6] O'Neill was Finance Minister in Northern Ireland from 1956 to 1963 and Jayewardene held the same portfolio in Ceylon from 1947 to 1953, and also from April to July 1960.

[7] On O'Neill's preference for 'self-help', see Mulholland 2000: 17-27.

[8] For the full text of the most influential of his two San Francisco speeches, see Jayewardene 1992 68-72.

[9] O'Donnell, F.H. 1910, *A History of the Irish Parliamentary Party*, cited in Bew 2011: 387.

[10] The executive presidency, Jayewardene's brainchild, remains a divisive and contentious issue, with its abolition forming a key promise of the 'common opposition candidate' at the campaign leading to the presidential poll of January 2015. The 19th amendment, which sought to address this electoral pledge, fell short of reducing several executive prerogatives while maintaining the presidency intact, prompting a political analyst to quip that the

biggest winner [of the reform process] was a dead man, President Junius Richard Jayewardene. His 1978 Constitution proved so robust a structure, that it successfully resisted the …attempt…to upend its centre-piece, the executive presidency (Jayatilleka 2015).

[11] Mulholland attributes O'Neill's authoritarian leaning, low inclination to cooperate with parliamentary colleagues and preference to work closely with civil servants to his natural shyness and little enthusiasm for ideology (Mulholland 2000: 68). Contrariwise, Jayewardene's happened to be an overt and dynamic personality, and his preference for presidential rule, proportional representation and executive power were strongly based on a conservative political ideology inspired by the U.S. presidential and Gaullist precedents.

[12] For O'Neill's views expressed in the House of Lords, and overall preference for a presidential mode of governance and proportional representation, see Mulholland 2000: 69 and 226.

[13] In 1953, Brookeborough himself had pledged that his successor would be elected by Unionist MPs (Mulholland 2000).

[14] O'Neill was appointed Prime Minister, his critics alleged, more because of his 'big house' connections than possession of any particular skill. O'Neill's aloofness and reserved nature as Prime Minister had a considerable political cost (Bew 1990). As Bleakley (1974: 69) observes, O'Neill was […] a prisoner of the aristocratic remoteness associated with the O'Neill line. His privileged background was at once his greatest asset and his heaviest liability – good for foreign consumption but difficult to retail at home.

[15] Engagements of this nature were also politically motivated. O'Neill's first meeting with Lemass was expedited to outflank Commerce Minister Brian Faulkner's resolve to meet with Tourism Minister Erskine Childers (later *An Uachtarán na hEireann*) in Dublin, a visit that had received cabinet agreement (Houston 1978 39, Mulholland 2000).

[16] On the political trajectory of the Nationalist Party, and the complex divisions within Northern nationalism, see Norton 2014.

[17] The British Labour Party leader Harold Wilson refused to meet the Ulster Nationalist delegation, but the latter did meet with a group of ten Labour MPs, led by Fenner Brockway, MP for Eton and Slough. As the *Irish Times* reported, the visit served to harness an interest among British politicians on the case of Nationalists in Northern Ireland, with Labour MPs raising the possibility of a joint committee to keep Westminster members informed of particular instances of discrimination as they arose (See Ryan 1964). This attitude stood in marked contrast with Westminster's general attitude towards Northern Ireland since the end of the Boundary Commission issue in 1925, that the province's matters are best left with Stormont. By the mid-1960s, the Nationalist Party strongly protested this policy, describing it as asking the perpetrators of discrimination to press judgement on their own actions.

[18] Glendinning notes that Lord Brookeborough, a traditional Unionist, detested planning as a social menace, but civil servants were able to use their trump card of maintaining 'parity' with Britain to slip through Matthew's appointment without Lord Brookeborough's immediate knowledge (Glendinning 2010 628. See also Miracle 1987: 16).

[19] The post-Agreement efforts of OFM-DFM to promote Northern Ireland abroad thus have long antecedents, dating back especially to the O'Neill premiership and Minister (and later Prime Minister) Brian Faulkner's efforts to promote Northern Ireland abroad. In the present-

day emphasis on developing Northern Ireland's trade links internationally, this longer legacy of concerted efforts to develop external trade ties is oftentimes ignored.

[20] Unionists living in the West of the Bann river, which conventionally divides the east and west of the province of Northern Ireland, traditionally perceive themselves as under threat from the Catholic/Nationalist community in the west of Northern Ireland (Glendinning 2010: 629).

[21] For a detailed and graphically illustrated account of the construction of NUU, from an architectural perspective, see Glendinning 2010: 630-633.

[22] John Hume, at the time a teacher at St Columb's College in Derry/Londonderry, organised a University for Derry Campaign, which received the support of Nationalists as well as Unionists in the Maiden City (McLoughlin 2010: 7). Despite a motorcade of protest to Stormont, the decision to select Coleraine was not reconsidered.

[23] For a comprehensive discussion on the multi-faceted nature of Unionism, see, for instance, Porter 1996.

[24] For an authoritative account of the Unionist Party's politico-historical trajectory, see Walker 2004.

[25] On the politics of Independent Unionism and how this tradition served as a precursor to the Paisleyite movement of the 1960s, see Reid 2008 and 2004.

[26] For a comprehensive study of the NILP's role in the politics of Northern Ireland, see Graham 1972 and Edwards 2009.

[27] By the time O'Neill assumed office as Prime Minister, the Unionist Party had long suffered with the absence of an active labour wing, which had resulted in the diminution of its working class support base (Mulholland 2000 42-60, Walker 2004 139. See also Bew 1990 and Bew et al, 2002, 9-10).

[28] In a subsequent effort to tone down divisions within Unionism and, to a certain extent, rectify the Unionist government's earlier efforts to reduce the NILP's electoral base, Prime Minister Brian Faulkner invited a leading NILP figure, David Bleakley, to enter his cabinet as the Minister of Community Relations in March 1971 (Bleakley 1974: 80-82). However, such measures were far from sufficient in making the Unionist Party resistant to the political challenges it faced in the early 1970s.

[29] NUM, in many ways the precursor to the Alliance Party, was created in 1969, as a moderate pressure group. On NUM's role in the politics of Northern Ireland in the early 1970s, see McMillan 1984.

[30] On the 1969 Northern Ireland general election, see Gillmor et al. 1969.

[31] Original copy of the Minutes, available at the J.R. Jayewardene Centre, Colombo (consulted 25 April 2014). The *Kala-wewa* bi-election caused controversy due to the UF's initial preference to field Anura Bandaranaike, Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike's son, as its candidate, in which case JRJ threatened to boycott the election. When the UF decided otherwise, JRJ was quick to put critics within the UNP in line, and take full control of the campaign, one of the first electoral engagements since his appointment as party leader the previous year.

[32] Margaret Thatcher papers, Prime Minister's personal message. Serial No. T221A/82.

[33] The decision to not to hold a general election was largely motivated by the realisation that the opposition's parliamentary seat count was to increase, in the first general election to be held under proportional representation (which replaced firs-past-the-post via the 1978 Constitution). Boycotting a much-awaited election resulted in political unrest, which especially manifested itself in the proscription of the Marxist-socialist *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP – People's Liberation Front), which subsequently launched a violent resistance campaign in 1988-1989, strongly deteriorating national security (see Venugopal 2010).

[34] Published in *The Ceylon Daily News*, 20 October 1977, cited in Ponnambalam, S. 1980, *Dependent capitalism in crisis: the Sri Lankan economy, 1948-1980,* Zed Press, London: 144).

[35] Source: Margaret Thatcher Papers. Letter stamped 'Prime Minister's Personal Message', Serial No: T37AA/79T.

[36] From a speech delivered at the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science, 22nd session, University of Colombo, December1966 (Jayewardene 1992: 93 and Warnapala 1979: 178). For a personal account of Jayewardene's perspectives on the executive presidency, see Jayewardene 1992: 93-101.

[37] The new parliament complex (www.parliament.lk), designed by leading architect Geoffrey Bawa, was a grand structure inspired by traditional Sri Lankan design and tropical modernism - Bawa's signature architectural style.

[38] By no means was this the first instance of active WB-IMF involvement in Sri Lanka. Similar debates of Bretton Woods dictates calling upon Colombo to reduce social welfare provision

characterised national economic policy throughout the 1960s and 1970s as well (see, for example, Jupp 1978). After 1977, WB-IMF involvement was elevated to a new level.

[39] On Jayewardene's successors' pursuit of open market economic policies, especially under the 1994-2005 Kumaratunga administration, see notably Shastri 2004.

[40] Resolution proposed by Douglas Abeydeera and seconded by Karuna Katugampola. Minutes of the UNP Working Committee Meetings, archived at the J.R. Jayewardene Centre, Colombo.

[41] Prioritising AMDP can be described as *the* centrepiece of the Jayewardene administration's development programme. In a speech at the White House in 1984 during an official visit, Jayewardene hailed the AMDP as the largest development programme, possibly unequalled in magnitude by any development programme in any country in the contemporary world or early. (White House record of proceedings at the official welcome ceremony for President and Mrs Jayewardene: http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/61884a.htm, accessed 14 June 2012).

[42] The firms in question were Crippen International of Vancouver, in consortium with Klohn Leonoff and Canada Concept Ltd, who served as the primary project engineers of the Canadian-funded Maduru Oya project. Apart from Canadian funding, the government of Sri Lanka paid in $ 160 million to cover the rest of the project costs (CIDA/ACDI 1983).

[43] On the historical backdrop to DDCs, their structure of and challenges they confronted, see Matthews 1982. See also Wriggins 1982: 175-177.

[44] For a short but informative account of Jayewardene's authoritative and patronising approach to the Tamil question, see Wijesinha 2007: 41-45.

[45] A confrontation between law enforcement and Tamil militants in Jaffna involving the death of a policeman resulted in a violent rampage of the Northern Province by Sinhala politicians and law enforcement authorities, which included the torching of the historic Jaffna Library (Wriggins 1982: 177). On the Jaffna Library tragedy, see Peiris 2001.

[46] On the Tamil plantation workers' travails for civic rights on Sri Lankan soil, see, for example, Shastri 1999.

[47] The UF government (1970-1977) introduced a system of university admission that favoured youth from rural areas, which was to the disadvantage of Tamil university entrants from the North. For an extensive account of the implications of this policy, see DeVotta 2004.

[48] On President Jayewardene's problematic relations with India, see Gooneratne 2000.

[49] For an extensive discussion on O'Neill's relations with Westminster/Whitehall, see Warner 2005. Warner demonstrates how London constantly erred on the side of caution concerning Northern Ireland. For a nuanced reading of the complex challenges involving Stormont-Westminster/Whitehall interactions, see Peatling 2007.

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