The Bullet in the Living Room
Linking Security and Development in a Colombo Neighbourhood

Camilla Orjuela
School of global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
E-mail: camilla.orjuela@globalstudies.gu.se

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Abstract
This article investigates the security-development nexus through local experiences in a neighbourhood in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo. As the Sri Lankan state struggles to secure 'the nation' from 'terrorism' and to develop it towards a twin vision of modernisation and return to a glorious past, large parts of the population in Colombo 15 are at the margins of this 'nation'. They are ethnic and religious minorities, forgotten tsunami victims, terrorist suspects and unauthorized dwellers – those often depicted as threats to, rather than subjects of, 'security' and 'development'. This study reveals that the security-development nexus constitutes a complex web of linkages between factors related to housing, income, tsunami reconstruction, party politics, crime, political violence and counter-violence, social relations and religious beliefs and rituals. People's perceptions of and opportunities to pursue security/development are intimately linked to their position as dominant or marginalized within 'the nation', 'the community' and 'the family'. 'Security' and 'development' issues are mutually reinforcing at times, but do just as often undermine each other, forcing people to make tough choices between different types of security/development.

Key words: security-development nexus, Colombo, Sri Lanka, civil war, tsunami, identity.

Author Biographical Statement
Camilla Orjuela is an Associate Professor at School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and can be contacted at camilla.orjuela@globalstudies.gu.se. The author wishes to thank the four anonymous reviewers as well as Maria Stern, Joakim Öjendal and Helena Lindholm Schulz for very helpful comments on earlier drafts of the article.

Introduction

The Ismail family lives a couple of hundred metres from the sea in northern Colombo, Sri Lanka. A stanza from the Koran decorates the front door to protect the home from misfortune. This, however, did not prevent a bullet from going through a window in late 2008 and landing in the living room where the children were sleeping. It was the night of the last aerial attack by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – the world's only guerrilla group with an air force – which was at the time fighting an intense but losing battle against the Sri Lankan government. The bullet that entered the Ismails' house did not come from the LTTE, but from a nearby navy camp. As such, it vividly illustrated to the family that measures taken by the Sri Lankan state to ensure the protection and wellbeing of its citizens may just as often undermine their safety. The numerous identity cards and permits that Mr. Ismail carries provide a further illustration of this dilemma. To protect Colombo from guerrilla attacks from the sea, the beach has been declared a 'high security zone' and fishing – Mr. Ismail's livelihood – is fraught with restrictions and requirements for identification. 'We used to go to sea at night. Now it is not allowed. You can go, but you cannot come back until after six in the morning. You will have to spend the night even if the sea is rough, so there is a risk if you go', he explains (interview 12). The ways in which security measures against LTTE attacks affect both Mr. Ismail's personal safety and his ability to earn a living, and the ways in which his nonetheless continued fishing jeopardises his personal safety is only one example of the many intricate and contradictory ways that security and development issues intertwine in the lives of people like Mr. Ismail.

This article aims to understand and deconstruct the meaning and dynamics of the so-called security-development nexus by bringing in the perspectives and lived experiences of people situated at the periphery of official security and development policies. In Colombo 15 – Mr. Ismail's neighbourhood in the northernmost part of Sri Lanka's capital – large sections of the population belong to ethnic and religious minorities –Tamils and Muslims, Hindus and Christians. Although far away from the main battle fields in the northeast of the island, the war has been present in Colombo 15 through occasional discoveries of explosives, the fear of 'terrorist attacks' and 'disappearances', and the suspicions directed against Tamils in checkpoints and frequent house-searches. The area was also affected by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami which displaced 38,000 and killed 150 persons in Colombo district. Unlike in other parts of Sri Lanka, the tsunami-affected in Colombo received very moderate attention from the resulting massive international humanitarian and development 'invasion' (ADB, 2005: 1; Caron, 2009).

As international actors talk about the interdependence between security and development, and the Sri Lankan state musters its strength to secure 'the nation' from 'terrorism', turn the tsunami disaster into an opportunity to 'build back better' and develop the country towards a twin vision of modernisation and return to a glorious past, large sections of the population in Colombo 15 find themselves at the margins of the state-defined (predominantly Sinhalese,

Buddhist) 'nation' that is to be 'secured' and 'developed'. Those who belong to the deprived, the unauthorized dwellers, the ethnic and religious minorities or the displaced by war, natural disaster or 'development', are ambiguously depicted as threats to and/or the subjects of 'security' and 'development'. An inquiry into the security-development nexus from the perspective of inhabitants at the margins of official security-development efforts serves both as a 'reality check' of the abundant but often intangible theorising and policy making ventures concerning the nexus, and as a counter discourse to the security-development discourses established by international and national players. From a local perspective, this article argues, the nexus cannot be simplistically understood as two sets of issues ('security' and 'development') that reinforce each other (as in 'security leads to development and development leads to security'). Rather the nexus makes up a web of interconnections between concerns (that may or may not fit into usual definitions of 'security' or 'development') which sometimes reinforce each other and at other times undermine each other. The article hence makes an empirical contribution to the debate about the security-development nexus, which, apart from serving to destabilize taken-for-granted perceptions of the nexus in official policy and discourse, can also provide input to further theoretical enquiries into 'the nexus'.

This study adds to the body of research which insists that 'security' and 'development' have to be studied close to the ground, making use of qualitative and ethnographic methods (see Ackerly et al, 2006; Pain & Smith, 2008: 3; Chambers, 2003). The main data for this article consists of 24 qualitative interviews conducted in November-December 2008, almost four years after the tsunami and when the war in Sri Lanka was at a peak.[1] Apart from the interviews, the study is anchored in a thicker understanding of the local context gained during frequent visits to and stays in Colombo 15, and through interaction with particularly one family and its social networks from 2001 to 2009. The 24 interviews, as well as informal conversation with additional persons, aimed to include a broader representation of the population and local key actors in Colombo 15 (Modara and Mattakuliya wards). The people interviewed included NGO representatives, religious leaders (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian), Navy and Police personnel, local politicians and government officials, as well as fishermen, homemakers, business owners, day labourers and housemaids.[2]

Most of the interviews took their point of departure in the interviewee's experiences and views of the tsunami disaster and reconstruction efforts. This was because 'tsunami reconstruction' provides an interesting focal point where the coming together of local, national and global actors and discourses around security/development concerns can be

[1] Funding for this research from Sida's Research Council is gratefully acknowledged.
[2] The interviewees came from all ethnic communities (Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim), and ten of the 24 interviews were with women. Apart from four interviews conducted in English, all other interviews were done in Sinhala or Tamil using professional interpreters. The interviewees are not referred to in the text by their real names.

fruitfully studied. Moreover, 'the tsunami' offered a relatively neutral space from which a foreign researcher could approach life experiences in Colombo 15. While the tensions surrounding war related matters rendered a direct reference to 'security' difficult, a foreigner was almost 'expected' to be interested in tsunami issues (a consequence of the huge number of foreign nationals who had come to Sri Lanka for tsunami reconstruction and research), and people were willing to generously share their experiences and ideas. The interviews thus often started with the interviewee describing his/her experiences of the disaster, relief work and/or reconstruction.[3] Thereafter the interviewees were asked about their personal history, particularly in relation to Colombo 15, changes in the area over time, livelihood issues, as well as what they defined as significant problems, worries or 'dangers'. The role of different actors to provide security/development and the strategies employed by the interviewee to pursue safety and wellbeing were also discussed. 'Security' and 'development' concerns were then deciphered from the interview narratives through the search for themes such as 'vulnerability', 'danger', 'safety' and 'well-being' brought up in relation to 'war', 'criminality', 'livelihoods', 'social relations' etc. A sample of 24 is obviously not sufficient to make any claims to represent the views of 'Colombo 15 inhabitants'. However, the relatively broad selection of interviewees allows for a good look into how people understand security/development from their different vantage points. Although the research design caused an over-focus on tsunami related concerns, it was nevertheless clear that the interviewees saw the tsunami as merely one set of issues in a much larger web of security/development concerns.

The article continues from here with a discussion about security and development research of relevance for a bottom-up analysis of the nexus, which serves as a frame and motivation for the empirical study. The next section analyses national efforts and contestations of security and development in the case of Sri Lanka. This is followed by an introduction to the Colombo neighbourhood under study. Thereafter, local perceptions and experiences of security/development are looked into, with a particular focus on how these are shaped by identity positions. This leads into a discussion of how different aspects of security/development reinforce or undermine each other in the everyday lives of people, before conclusions are drawn in the last section of the article.

The Security-Development Nexus: Bottom-up Perspectives

The interdependence between security and development increasingly often figure in the rhetoric and on the agendas of the top-most actors in states and international organizations. Simultaneously, a re-consideration and broadening of the two concepts has paved the way for a discussion of local, bottom-up perspectives on what security and development mean and how they are interlinked. Maria Stern and Joakim Öjendal show (in this issue) that the security and development debates have followed similar trajectories: from unproblematised

[3] Eleven of the interviewees were directly tsunami-affected.

state-centred approaches, to the various endeavors to broaden, critique and reformulate the meanings of security and development. The focus of security and development discourses has shifted from the state to the individual, and the extent to which identity and power positions (for instance based on ethnicity, class or gender) shape experiences and priorities regarding security/development has been recognized. Critical researchers within both international relations and development studies have exposed how 'security' and 'development' have been used to justify extreme measures to extend the control of elites over populations. The most recent scholarship in both fields has also emphasized that both security and development problems can no longer be seen as merely local or national, but that they are inherently global (see Stern & Öjendal in this issue; Duffield, 2007; Hettne, 2009). The merging of 'security' and 'development' has taken place in the political rhetoric, in security and development practice (where the military engages in 'development' as a counter-insurgency strategy and development actors use aid to 'promote peace', see Duffield in this issue), as well as analytically as concepts like 'human security' and 'human development' allow space for wider understandings of security and development (see UNDP, 1994).

This article is interested in the gap between state-centred security/development definitions and policies on the one hand and locally lived experiences and strategies on the other. An abundance of scholarship has looked at this from either a security or a development perspective (e.g. Ackerly et al, 2006; Stern, 2005; Bubandt 2005; Kent, 2006; Scott, 1985). Questions such as 'security for whom?' and 'development for whom?' have effectively challenged the assumption of a congruency between the interests of the state and the needs of its people. Feminist scholars have made significant contributions showing how relations of dominance and subordination within a state, local community or even a family determine which security threats individuals and groups face and how they understand security differently. Threats do not only, or even primarily, come from outside the state (the traditional view of state-centred security thinking), but could just as well come from within the state, community or family (Hoogensen & Rottem 2004; Stern, 2005; Hansen, 2000). That security is structurally and contextually determined is clearly revealed in gender analysis, but it can also be studied in relations between dominant and subordinate groups on the basis of ethnic or religious identity, class, age or political affiliation. A generalized understanding of 'the citizen' and his (sic!) security needs are hence inappropriate and renders many relevant security problems invisible. Lene Hansen has used the case of systematic violence against women in Pakistan to shown how power structures hide certain security problems and can make it impossible for certain groups to even voice them, as doing so risks aggravating the threat (Hansen, 2000: 287).

Minorities perceive security threats differently from majorities, Ramesh Thakur has pointed out (2004: 347; Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006: 213) – a statement which can be unpacked infinitely, since the notion of what makes up a 'minority' and a 'majority' can shift according to context. Security, hence, is closely linked to relations of dominance and subordination (see

Hoogensen & Stuvøy 2006: 218), and entwined with the question of identity. Security, according to Maria Stern, needs identity; a (seemingly) stable 'we' which is to be secured. The creation of this 'we' – whether in attempts by those in power (e.g. the state) or by resisting marginalized groups – involves processes of boundary-making between 'us' and 'them' (Stern, 2005; Campbell, 1992). The quest for unity within a marginalized group struggling for their 'security' may through such processes produce new, internal marginalization and suppression of difference (Stern, 2005; Jabri, 1996).

Within development studies there is a similarly rich literature which has questioned the top-down definitions of development and highlighted the rights of marginalized groups to formulate and control their own development (Hettne, 1995; Friedman, 1992) and the need for the voices of the marginalized to be heard (Chambers, 2003; Schumacher, 1973; Narayan, 2000). Just as the broadening of the security concept has made it enclose more development related issues, so has development studies increasingly recognized violence as a development issue (McIlwaine, 1999).

Official development discourses can, just as security discourses, serve to forge unity and draw boundaries between 'us' (the 'nation' that is to be developed), and 'them' (those who are excluded or who threaten the development of the nation). Development strategies by states and international development agencies define who can be 'developed', i.e. improved and uplifted – and who should be excluded as dangerous or abandoned as useless (Duffield in this issue; Buur et al 2007: 15). Accusations of crime can, for instance, be 'a legitimate way to distinguish between those who have the right to belong to the community and those who do not' (Buur et al 2007: 21). In that way, the drug dealer, the terrorist suspect, the illegal migrant and the political adversaries may be defined as the dangerous 'other' (Ibid: 26).

In both security and development studies and practice a key issue is hence who is to define and control security and development strategies. A local perspective uncovers the ways in which global and national discourses are accommodated, rejected or reformulated locally (cf. Bubandt, 2005: 276; Pain & Smith, 2008). Moreover, locally grounded and culturally sensitive studies can contribute to complicating simplistic portrayals of persons from marginalized or subordinate groups as 'victims', and revealing how victimhood and agency are intertwined (cf. Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006: 211).

Although studies of everyday experiences of 'security' or 'development' show that the two fields are inseparable in people's everyday lives (e.g. McIlwaine & Moser, 2003), most research approaches the security-development nexus from *either* a security *or* a development angle rather than through an explicit focus on the nexus (for an exception, see Buur et al 2007). There is hence still space for more in-depth local studies of the 'infinite number of possible linkages and relations' which make up the security-development nexus (Stern & Öjendal in this issue). In official discourse, the nexus is often described and analysed through

a ‘vicious circle’ metaphor (Buur et al, 2007: 9), where insecurity and underdevelopment is understood to reinforce each other. An investigation into the perspectives of people with different positions in the power-play of dominance and marginalisation within ‘the nation’, ‘the community’ and ‘the family’ is likely to paint a much more complex picture of how the nexus is lived and linked up with global and national discourses.

Sri Lanka: Securing the Nation, Developing the Nation

Security and development have been closely intertwined throughout Sri Lanka’s modern history. The question of who is to be secured from what and by whom has been at the core of the armed conflict raging between 1983 and 2009, as has the issue of who is to be developed, how and by whom. The understanding of the conflict has been polarised between those who see it as a ‘terrorist problem’ (a view held by the Sri Lankan government and large parts of the Sinhalese population) and those who maintain that it is a ‘liberation struggle’ (the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, LTTE, and many Tamils). The conflict has its roots in the contested space between ‘state’ and ‘nation’. Ethnicity was made politically relevant during British rule (a time when the Tamil minority was somewhat over-represented in the administration and higher education). In post-independence and newly democratized Sri Lanka, the political elite had to satisfy their most important constituency – the Sinhalese, which make up 3/4th of the population. Language policy, university admission reform, access to public service employment and state-led settler programs contributed to a sense among the minorities of being second class citizens in a mainly Sinhalese state (see Spencer, 1990; de Silva, 1998; Wilson, 2000).

Tamil political protesters framed the many shortcomings of the Sri Lankan state as discrimination against the Tamil minority (18 per cent of the population). Unsuccessful negotiations and civil disobedience campaigns were soon followed by militant strategies (Swamy, 2002; Balasingham, 2004). The Tamil demand for self-determination in northeastern Sri Lanka was based in a striving for both ‘development’ and ‘security’. In the centralized Sri Lankan state the minorities experienced a lack of control over and inability to take advantage of crucial development resources such as education, employment and land. ‘Development’ – particularly large-scale infrastructure investment or hand-outs – was strategically used by politicians to gain support from the crucial Sinhalese electorate (Bastian, 1999). The state’s development discourse and rituals have emphasized unity and made links to the glorious past of the Sri Lankans – but with a sliding of meaning which often makes ‘Sri Lankans’ equal ‘Sinhalese’ (see Tennekoon, 1998). Violent attacks on Tamils at several points in history – justified by what many Sinhalese perceived as the Tamils’ unreasonable demands and protests – contributed to the LTTE-led discourse which portrayed Tamil self-determination as *the* solution to Tamil insecurity.

After the outbreak of full-scale war in 1983, the war itself caused new security and development problems. The LTTE’s use of suicide attacks extended the war zone to the

capital and other areas. Measures to prevent LTTE attacks often led to an indiscriminate suspicion of Tamil civilians, and the number of reported cases of torture, disappearances and killings of such suspects mounted (see Human Rights Watch, 2008). While the war has provided much needed incomes to the Sinhalese rural poor, for whom enlistment in the armed forces has been one of few employment opportunities (*The Economist*, 2009), it has stifled development in the war affected (Tamil-majority) areas in the northeast of the island (Sarvananthan, 2008).

Polarisation and conflict has served to conceal the diversity within the Sinhalese and Tamil populations, and the perpetual negotiations about the definition of 'the nation'. On the Sinhalese side, these negotiations have revolved around the nation as 'Sinhalese' or multi-ethnic 'Sri Lankan'. The Tamil struggle has forged unity and suppressed the many differences within the Tamil community along geographical, class and caste lines. The ambivalent position of the Muslims (eight per cent of Sri Lanka's population) has also been eclipsed by the polarized understanding of the conflict. The long-lasting situation of insecurity has forged unity within groups, while creating new spaces of insecurity as those who do not toe the line risk being defined as 'traitors' who may be attacked or killed.[4]

'National' security and development discourses in Sri Lanka have been closely intertwined with global discourses. The Sri Lankan government has successfully situated its war against Tamil separatism within the global war on terrorism and thereby secured international support for it (cf. Bubandt, 2005, on the case of Indonesia). That the government forces could ultimately defeat the LTTE and kill its leadership in May 2009 was largely due to this backing and the lack of legitimacy internationally for LTTE's liberation struggle discourse. Although Sri Lanka is not overly dependent on foreign aid,[5] international actors are still influential, and Sri Lankan leaders have repeatedly framed its strivings for national unity and development in opposition against the 'interference of western powers' in the conflict (e.g. calls for peace negotiations and criticism of gross human rights violations) and in development (westernisation as a threat to local tradition and religion). This stance against western influence has been manifested in strong criticism of and attacks against foreign-funded Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and against Christian Churches (DeVotta, 2007). Sri Lanka's official development discourse has often emphasized the ambition to restore the harmony of the traditional (Buddhist) village, while parallely envisioning a proud, modernized Sri Lanka (Brow, 1990; Winslow & Woost, 2004). The tsunami disaster in late 2004 brought a hitherto unrivalled wave of foreign aid, which in turn triggered criticism of foreign donors for inefficiency, corruption and undue conversions to Christianity. The Sri

[4] Much published examples of the many such killings are those of the Sinhalese newspaper editor Lasantha Wickrematunge in 2009 (a critic of the war and government corruption), and Sri Lanka's Tamil foreign minister Lakshmir Kadirgamar in 2005.
[5] At about 2% of GNI in 2000 and 5% in 2005, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/table6_11.pdf

Lankan government and the main donors agreed on an ambition to use the disaster as a development opportunity: '[O]ut of the rubble of the Indian Ocean's coastlines, and the suffering of its inhabitants, we would 'build back better': placing coastal communities on a better development path' (UN Special Envoy Bill Clinton, quoted in Khasalamwa, 2009: 78). The 'build back better' policy initiated a process of tying 'security' measures to reconstruction. The government took the chance to introduce far-reaching emergency regulations which could potentially be used for the control of political opposition (Jansz, 2005). For the sake of the 'safety' of the coastal dwellers (many of whom were poor fisher families) a 100-200 metre no-build zone was established. However, as this land could still be used for business purposes, the policy looked more like a way to rid the beaches of the untidy dwellings of the poor and make space for the tourist industry (Hyndman, 2007: 365).

In the name of security and development successive Sri Lankan governments have been able to use emergency regulations to entrench their power position, while the wellbeing and safety of local populations have been sacrificed, as has been the case of the soldiers waging the war, and the people displaced for the benefit of tsunami reconstruction, 'high security zones' and large-scale development projects (see *The Economist*, 2009; Caron & da Costa, 2007). After the defeat of the LTTE in 2009, suspected terrorists continued to be portrayed as the dangerous 'other' in official state discourse and policy, while criminality and 'the underworld' re-emerged on the list of enemies that were to be either exterminated or rehabilitated to achieve 'security' and 'development' for the Sri Lankan 'nation' (Kumara, 2009; cf. Duffield in this issue; Buur et al).

Northern Colombo Neighbourhoods

Colombo 15 makes up the northernmost part of Colombo and has the sea to its west and the Kelani River to its north and east. This cluttered multi-ethnic area is associated more with poverty and crime than with affluence. A huge variety of people have ended up living and making their living here. The poor fisher families along the seashore and the somewhat more wealthy business-owners have been joined by numerous people displaced from the war-torn northeast of the country. Between 1981 and 2001, the population grew by 66 per cent.[6] Colombo 15 has Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese, and an array of Buddhist and Hindu temples, mosques and, most of all, churches. We find the somewhat haphazardly patched together dwellings of poor fisher families along the seashore, the two-story buildings recently constructed for people affected by the tsunami, as well as the gradually improved and by now quite comfortable houses of the more wealthy. More than half of Colombo's population live in poorly serviced shack and shanty settlements (van Horen, 2002), many of which are to be found in Colombo 15. The area has also become the home for Muslims displaced from LTTE-controlled areas almost two decades ago and hundreds of people whose houses were demolished when the city centre was tidied up ahead of a prestigious meeting with South

[6] Modara and Mattakuliya wards (Department of Census and Statistics, 2004: 4).

Asia's political leaders in 2008. Moreover, groups of low-caste Indian-origin Tamils whose occupation as sanitary workers for the municipal council was instituted already during British rule inhabit the poorer neighbourhoods of Colombo 15 (cf. Silva et al, 2009). There is also the more affluent 'Little Jaffna' settlement with moved-in Tamils who through political connections managed to buy state-built houses intended for the poor. To make a living many Colombo 15 inhabitants commute on overcrowded buses to other parts of Colombo, while others go fishing in their own boats or as labourers, run small fruit and vegetable stores, pharmacies or communication centres, work in the tea or garment factories, do manual labour on a day-to-day basis, drive three-wheelers or do outsourced tasks at home for local manufacturers.

With its predominantly Christian and highly multi-ethnic population, Colombo 15 does not fit neatly into the dominant discourses of the (mainly Sinhalese, Buddhist and rural) Sri Lankan 'nation' that is to be secured and developed. Rather than being the target of large development interventions, Colombo 15 is home of many of those excluded from 'development'. The massive international involvement in tsunami reconstruction largely excluded Colombo 15. In 2007, over 2.5 years after the tsunami, Colombo had the highest number of tsunami affected families still in transitional shelter – this included many of those displaced in Colombo 15 – and great problems with access to compensation and assistance (Caron, 2009: 8). Although the President's office is only a few kilometres further south and the Colombo World Trade Centre is visible from the Colombo 15 beach, most people who live here are a long way away from the political and economic power of the country. When it comes to the war, however, Colombo 15 has at times ended up in the midst of it. In February 2008, a LTTE cadre blew off his suicide bomb here, and an enlarged photo of a young policeman killed in the blast is nailed onto one of the walls not far from where it happened. Explosives have been found on a number of occasions, and house-searches are frequent. Colombo 15 has also been the place for some of the kidnappings, disappearances and killings of Tamils suspected of having links with the LTTE. Through checkpoints manned by army and police the fears of war have been materialized into the local landscape (cf. Pain & Smith, 2008: 13; Hyndman & de Alwis, 2004). A 'high security zone' closes off the beach area – where in the past people would gather for evening strolls among stalls selling pinwheels, ice-cream and spiced chickpeas – for the sake of the protection of Colombo harbour further south and a Navy camp which occupies a substantial part of the beach.

Identity and Experiences of Security/Development

Accounts about 'danger' and 'worries' in Colombo 15 are clearly shaped by identity positions – whether you belong to the 'dominant' or the 'marginalized'. If you are part of a majority or minority ethnic or religious community, if you are a man or a woman, old or young, born in the area or an 'outsider', and if you have a high or low social standing in terms of class and caste background shapes your experiences of security/development. War-related insecurities provided the most obvious examples of this. Although a LTTE suicide bomb or aerial attack

(or the bullets shot against the attackers) were perceived as threats to anyone, Tamils were those who risked facing security problems stemming from the suspicion that they supported the LTTE. While a Sinhalese name on your identity card and fluency in Sinhala would often take you through a checkpoint without problems, a Tamil name could categorize you as 'potential terrorist'. But it was not only about ethnicity. A Tamil from the northeast (as indicated on the card) was more likely to be suspected than someone born and brought up in Colombo, the young were more at risk than the old, and the poor and uneducated much more than the rich and educated. 'We are Colombo Tamils, it is stated in the identity card, [because of that] there are no problems. There is less suspicion', one woman told (interview 18). Similarly, the more affluent 'Little Jaffna' was usually spared from house-searches and suspicions, in spite of its Tamil population: 'The police know that there are no terrorists here' one of its inhabitants explained (interview 8). There was hence a distinction between the 'good' Tamil, who has his/her papers in order and supported the government's war against terrorism and the potentially dangerous, 'bad' Tamil.

For the Tamils falling into the 'suspected terrorist' category, it was not the nuisance of prolonged checking-procedures that was the main worry, but the fear of abductions, killings and arbitrary arrests. Among the relatively newly arrived Tamil population in Colombo 15, plenty of stories circulated about neighbours or relatives who had 'disappeared' or been taken in by the police (cf. Human Rights Watch, 2008). The arbitrariness of this violence contributed to the fear of unnecessarily moving around: 'We are very quiet and do our business. We live quietly. We don't go and loiter about here and there', one Tamil man explained (interview 5). There was a vulnerability that came with a 'minority' identity. One Tamil woman in a predominantly Sinhalese neighbourhood said: 'There are only very few Tamils here. Internally [among the Tamils] there is a fear that if something happens, where should we go? The suspicion is here, that this is a Sinhala area, and we wonder if it is safe for us' (interview 14). 'If something happens' referred to the fear of mob violence directed against Tamils that in earlier phases of the ethnic conflict had spread throughout the country and also affected Colombo 15 (most recently in 1983).

By organising vigilante committees, covering every area in Colombo 15, the police had handed down the responsibility for securing Colombo from terrorist attacks to its inhabitants, who were requested to register visitors and report 'suspicious behaviour'. The process of naming those who made up a (potential) threat to the nation, and who should therefore be eliminated or rehabilitated, was thus becoming institutionalized in local lives. The definition of 'suspicious' was vague – someone unable to produce an identity card or who looks nervous around check-points, or someone unknown who is Tamil and from the northeast.

> We have vigilante committees. They go and make lists of the people who are staying in each house. Then they [the police] may come and check if this is correct. If there is a Sinhalese

> person staying without being registered, the police are not that particular. But if it is a Tamil person it would be different (interview 21).

The fact that 'danger' was linked to identity had encouraged people to construct their identities in ways that reduced risk for harassment and threats – most often by downplaying their Tamilness (cf. Hyndman & de Alwis, 2004: 550). Several Tamil women disclosed that they removed their *pottu* (a forehead adornment that distinguish them as Tamils) when going out. 'When we go out we speak in Sinhala. Our children are learning Sinhala language as a medium [in school]', one Tamil woman added (interview 14). This 'Sinhalesation' of Tamils who had lived for a longer time in Sinhalese-majority areas can be understood as a way to distance oneself from the identity as 'the dangerous Tamil'. However, the ethnic boundary-making was not always directly linked to the war. Some poor Sinhalese saw the growing and often more wealthy Tamil and Muslim population (who own most small businesses in Colombo 15) as a threat – 'they are taking over the area'. Tamils and Muslims, on the other hand, sometimes depicted the Sinhalese 'other' as 'poor, lazy and uneducated' and responsible for the area's alcohol and drug problems, different from the hardworking and respectable 'self' (informal conversations, 2008).

The 2004 tsunami was not the first natural disaster to impact the security/development of Colombo 15's inhabitants. The area has been affected by regular floods, and in 2003 it was hit by a tornado. Economic and social standing had implications for the vulnerability of people. The inhabitants of the nicer houses in 'Little Jaffna' could survive the tsunami taking refuge on the top floor of their houses, while the unauthorized dwellings of the fisher folks close by were swept away by the wave, and some children there lost their lives. The 'Little Jaffna' inhabitants were allowed to continue living within the official 100 metre buffer zone, while some of the poor had to relocate. Access to compensation (a new house or money to buy land and build a house) was encumbered by inefficient bureaucracy and hidden costs (see Caron, 2009). In the encounter with government authorities, NGOs and religious charities, those who were already marginalized and lacking 'contacts' were more likely to face problems. 'Aid was given by [an NGO]. But the Grama Sevaka [the local government official] cheated, he didn't get our names on the lists. He accepted bribes. […] Those who do not deserve got the houses', a group of tsunami-affected women complained (interview 6). They themselves said that they were too poor to afford the bribes needed to get any benefits. Processes of reconstruction and compensation can both reproduce and challenge marginalisation – there are examples of widows and those considered as 'outsiders' (born outside Colombo) encountering problems with compensation, while at the same time many other vulnerable people (widows, the poor) were enabled by the tsunami reconstruction projects to get a house of a standard that would otherwise be out of reach for them.

Criminality was perceived by some Colombo 15 interviewees as a danger, and there were plenty of stories of housebreakings, stabbings, robberies and dangerous men coming on

motorcycles snatching people's jewellery or bags. The police station for the area had recorded 250-300 criminal cases yearly, and a local police officer described Colombo 15 as 'dangerous' with 'underworld groups', but claimed that 'due to our activities, we have been able to make this a safe area' (interview 9). The role of the police in promoting security/development was however seriously questioned. The war situation had created opportunities for the police to take advantage of the vulnerability of the Tamils who for their safety needed to keep good relations with the police. Many Colombo 15 Tamils knew of someone who had been taken into custody and asked for a bribe for his/her release, or been visited by police officers asking for 'gifts' (informal conversations, 2008 and 2009; see also Fernando, 2005, on the police and vulnerable groups).

Many of the interviewees belonging to the poorer sections of the population stated 'income' as their biggest worry – something which was often closely interlinked with other problems. Lack of income was particularly acute for some tsunami-affected families who had to relocate to areas where they could not continue their earlier income generating activities, for women bearing the sole responsibility for a household, and for those too old to work and with no relatives to take care of them. Although family, relations and social networks made up essential safety nets against vulnerability, they could also pose threats to the safety and wellbeing of people. Women find themselves in a particularly vulnerable position both within the family and the community. Domestic violence is widespread, rarely talked about and often socially accepted (see Sonali, 1990). Moreover, a woman who lose her husband lose not only important income, but also her social status, as widows in Sri Lankan society are considered 'inauspicious', 'sexually uncontrolled' and persons who can legitimately be sexually harassed and taken advantage of (cf. Young, 2006). Another 'danger' defined particularly by female interviewees was envious and unkind neighbours. The use of black magic by those wishing to teach someone a lesson was perceived as a serious threat, as was the modern form of 'black magic' – accusing someone of links with the LTTE. 'Our next-door neighbours told the police that we were hiding explosives in the house. They are jealous', one Tamil woman recounted (interview 1). She had gradually improved her house using remittances from her three children residing in Europe. In hers and many other cases, war-related threats were interlinked with the danger of bad social relations.

The entrenched system of patron-client relations in Sri Lankan politics means that party political affiliation can determine people's position to pursue security/development. The support afforded by grassroots people to politicians during election campaigns is rewarded with access to employment, housing and other public goods once the party reaches power. Some interviewees had a high-up politician to thank for a house they had been able to acquire during their terms in power (interviews 6 & 8). Party political affiliation hence informs the categories of dominant and marginalized, and facilitates (or obstructs) access to power and hence the pursuit of both 'development' and 'security' (cf. Buur et al, 2007: 32). The fact that many of the inhabitants of Colombo 15 traditionally supported the party that was in

opposition at the time of the study may have increased their sense of marginalisation, as the government had less interest in investing in development in the area – people here were 'at the wrong side of politics'.

Everyday life experiences from Colombo 15 confirm the strong relationship between marginality on the one hand and insecurity and lack of development on the other (cf. Pain & Smith, 2008). However, the relations between dominance and marginalisation – and their link to the lived experiences of (in)security and (under)development – can not be simplistically understood as determined only by 'one' identity such as ethnicity or gender. On the contrary, different identity positions – relating to gender, ethnicity, class, geography, caste, party political affiliation, position in the family etc. – interplay to create shifting understandings of security/development (cf. Hyndman & de Alwis, 2004).

How 'Security' and 'Development' Reinforce or Undermine Each Other

It was clear from the local accounts of 'security' and 'development' problems that one problem can rarely be understood in isolation from other problems. A widow living in a house in a newly built village for the tsunami-affected told:

> I am afraid to travel outside the village. If you go to the road, it can be dangerous. If something happens to me, no one is there for the children. […] I have two children and my mother says: 'Don't go out unnecessarily. At any time a bomb may go off. If something happens to you, what will be the future of the children?' (interview 11).

Her war-related fears were hence closely intertwined with her responsibility as the sole breadwinner of the family. However, her restricted mobility (which may not only be related to the war situation, but also to her being a woman who has lost her husband), also made it more difficult for her to find alternative income sources. In similar ways, security/development problems reinforced each other in the lives of many others. Poor health, for instance, could become a threat to food security as it prevented the sick from earning an income, something which in turn could cause further health problems. Another example was when distressful war experiences or unemployment contribute towards excessive alcohol consumption, which could trigger domestic violence, which in turn could contribute to health problems, or the cases when economic difficulties decreased a person's social standing and power within the family or community, which in turn had consequences for his/her ability to access resources and help in the face of other security/development problems. These are not examples of simple causal relations, but of some of the ways in which an infinite number of security/development problems reinforce each other and form 'vicious circles'.

While these examples support the idea that the security-development nexus consists of problems that reinforce each other (insecurity leads to underdevelopment, underdevelopment leads to insecurity) – or, for that matter, 'good things' that underpin each other – many of the

stories from Colombo 15 instead highlighted the contradictions between different forms of security/development. Anura, for instance, was one of the young navy soldiers manning the sentry that closed off the beach. He had used his M-16 rifle four times, the last being the night of the LTTE airplane attack. He had joined the navy seeking security/development – that which comes with a decent income from a permanent and respectable job. He was not overly worried about the fact that this job soon would have him transferred into the more direct war-zone of the northeast. However, thousands of young men (and some women) from poor backgrounds have sacrificed their lives for the job they have taken up to 'safeguard the motherland from terrorism' and – often more importantly – to support their families, who continue to receive payments from the military also after the death of a soldier (cf. *The Economist*, 1999). Other income opportunities similarly come at a high risk of physical insecurity. 'My son works for a tyre factory', one woman told. 'He stands all day by the boiling rubber. It is bad for his health, but good for income' (interview 2). Employment in the Middle East as a housemaid has been an attractive option for women who can find money enough for the expenses of going there. However, this is also a risky job: 'I recommend no one to go to Saudi [Arabia]', one woman advised. 'It is a very dangerous country. The madam [employer] gave me cuts [*she shows the scars on her arms*]. Most women who go to work there stay very few days, then they flee' (interview 18; cf. Human Rights Watch, 2007). This woman, who was eventually helped by the Sri Lankan embassy to return home, was nonetheless looking for ways to go to another, 'less dangerous' country in the Middle East as she was the sole person to support her two sons and mother.

The tsunami reconstruction also put people in positions where they had to choose between different types of security/development. Some were offered a house in a village constructed by a Catholic NGO a couple of hours away from Colombo 15 by public transport. While the area was considered 'secure' – no crime, no risk for 'terrorism', and a community of only Catholics – and the ownership of a house meant not only a place to live but also a certain social status, the relocation cut off many families from their sources of income. The 'development' in the form of a house came at a price of decreased incomes or costly and time-consuming commutes. 'This house is good compared to the small hut we had before. Here the main problem is financial difficulties', explained an old man in a nice but empty house. He lived in utmost poverty due to his inability to go fishing (interview 4). Apart from losing income, people who were relocated to the NGO houses also lost their access to family and other social networks, as well as the possibilities to construct the house with a design and using religious rituals that would ensure safety and prosperity for its inhabitants.

A similar contradiction between different types of security/development could be seen in the many cases when women chose the insecurity of living with a violent husband over the insecurities that would follow a divorce – loss of value in the community and vulnerability to harassment (cf. Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006: 223, on female genital circumcision as a practice that increases the security of a woman by increasing her respectability).

An improved economic situation and upward mobility – gained for instance through successful business ventures, remittances from family members who have successfully migrated to Western counties or benefits granted from the government or NGOs – may cause security/development problems related to social relations. Jealousy was by some interviewees described as a common motivation for the employment of black magic – something which many believed could cause anything from death and bad health to unemployment, family quarrels and abductions. 'Development' was hence at times socially penalized, and the fear of black magic contributed to social control and conformity.

Other examples of how security/development undermines security/development are found in the gap between the official definitions of and strategies for security and development and their local consequences. The many measures to secure Sri Lanka from the threat of terrorism instead had threatened the security and wellbeing of those running the risk of abduction or arbitrary arrests, those who got stray bullets into their living rooms, and those who could not go fishing in the 'high security zone'. The post-tsunami ambition to 'build back better' did not always mean 'better' from the perspective of those displaced from their original homes. The tidying-up of central Colombo before a meeting with the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 2008 served the national security and development interests to display Colombo as a modern city while securing support from the SAARC countries for both the war and for development investments. These national security/development interests motivated the sacrifice of the security/development needs of the hundreds of displaced people who ended up in muddy and crowded temporary shelters in Colombo 15. With reference to 'danger', the government has been able to impose policies which in spite of being named security/development interventions, look less like that from a local perspective. As concluded by one man living by the beach:

> They did not ask people [before making the beach into a high security zone]. This is because it is a security reason. It is for the country's safety. Our country is in an emergency situation, so they can do anything, whatever they want without asking the people (interview 8).

Conclusions

Many families in Colombo 15 have decorated their entrance door with a cross, a picture of a Hindu God or the Buddha or a stanza from the Koran. This serves to protect the home from evil, but also labels each house with an obvious religious identity – an identity which may tell something about their position in the community. The front door adornments rarely keep problems out. However, what kind of problems people encounter and what options they have to deal with them depend largely on people's identities and the relative power position of those identities within 'the nation', 'the community' and 'the family'. In the everyday lives of people in the neighbourhoods of northern Colombo, the connections between identity, marginalization and security/development are often not straightforward. Relations between

majority-minority and dominant-subordinate are shifting and ambivalent. For instance, Sinhalese were more likely to feel that the war against terrorism (that the government marketed with an abundance of pictures of war heroes) was fought for their security, than were Tamils whose relatives in the northeast may have been the ones under attack. Some of those same Sinhalese, however, could at other times be pictured as the dangerous 'other', because of their Christianity – a religion associated with 'Western imperialism' and 'unethical conversions'. Or they could fall on the wrong side of the 'us'-'them' divide because they had supported the political opposition or come from areas associated with unauthorized housing and criminality. While the Sinhalese are a majority in Sri Lanka at large, within some neighbourhoods of Colombo 15, they may feel like a minority, due to the large influx of Tamils from the war areas and the relatively stronger economic position of many Tamil inhabitants.

Colombo 15 has been analysed in this article as an example of an area which – despite its geographical closeness to the power centres in central Colombo – is situated at the margins of power. However, there are simultaneously multiple processes of dominance and marginalisation at work within the area. A look at security/development from various such 'margins' is useful to destabilize and deconstruct dominant claims about the interests of 'the nation' or 'the community', but also to deconstruct 'the family' to reveal power relations and their influence over perceptions and priorities concerning security/development. In official security and development discourses and strategies (those of the Sri Lankan government and international donor agencies, for example), the inhabitants of Colombo 15 sometimes figure as the subject of security/development. At other times they are fashioned as the threat to security/development, or paid no attention to at all.

The people in Colombo 15 navigate their lives through a security-development nexus consisting of a criss-cross of different problems and opportunities. This nexus constitutes a complex web of linkages between factors related to housing, income, tsunami reconstruction, party politics, crime, political violence and counter-violence, social relations and religious beliefs and rituals. The rhetorical vision of 'the nexus' as two sets of issues that are mutually reinforcing – insecurity leads to underdevelopment, underdevelopment leads to insecurity – is hence complicated by the 'reality check' an analysis of locally lived experiences provides. In everyday experiences of people, 'security' and 'development' cannot be neatly separated, nor do they always reinforce each other. While there are plenty of examples of vicious circles in which one misfortune leads to another, it also becomes apparent that often security/development concerns undermine each other. An inquiry into the security-development nexus locally hence shows us the contradictions which people live with. These contradictions can be manifested at the level of individual decision-making, but also in the gaps between the security/development interests defined by the state and the security/development needs of individuals. When the voices of those at the margin (or the various margins) are taken into account, they can provide significant counter discourses to the

security-development discourses established by international and national power-holders. Thereby we can expose how those dominating the production of security/development discourse and strategy hide the pursuit of their own interests in claims to act for the security and development needs of ordinary people.

This article has argued that the continued attempts to grasp and deconstruct what is meant by the much talked about security-development nexus need continuous engagement with and participation of people at the different margins of power. As power-holders continue to pursue policies based on a linking of 'security' and 'development', the contradictory consequences and responses to such policies have to be taken seriously. The war against 'the underworld', disaster prevention or the continuous campaigns against terrorism, drugs or poverty will all produce new gaps between top-down and bottom-up security/development. A bottom-up perspective on the security-development nexus offers understandings of how ordinary people sometimes end up with bullets in their living rooms and a whole lot of other contradictory consequences of the security/development strategies that claim to 'secure' and 'develop' them.

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