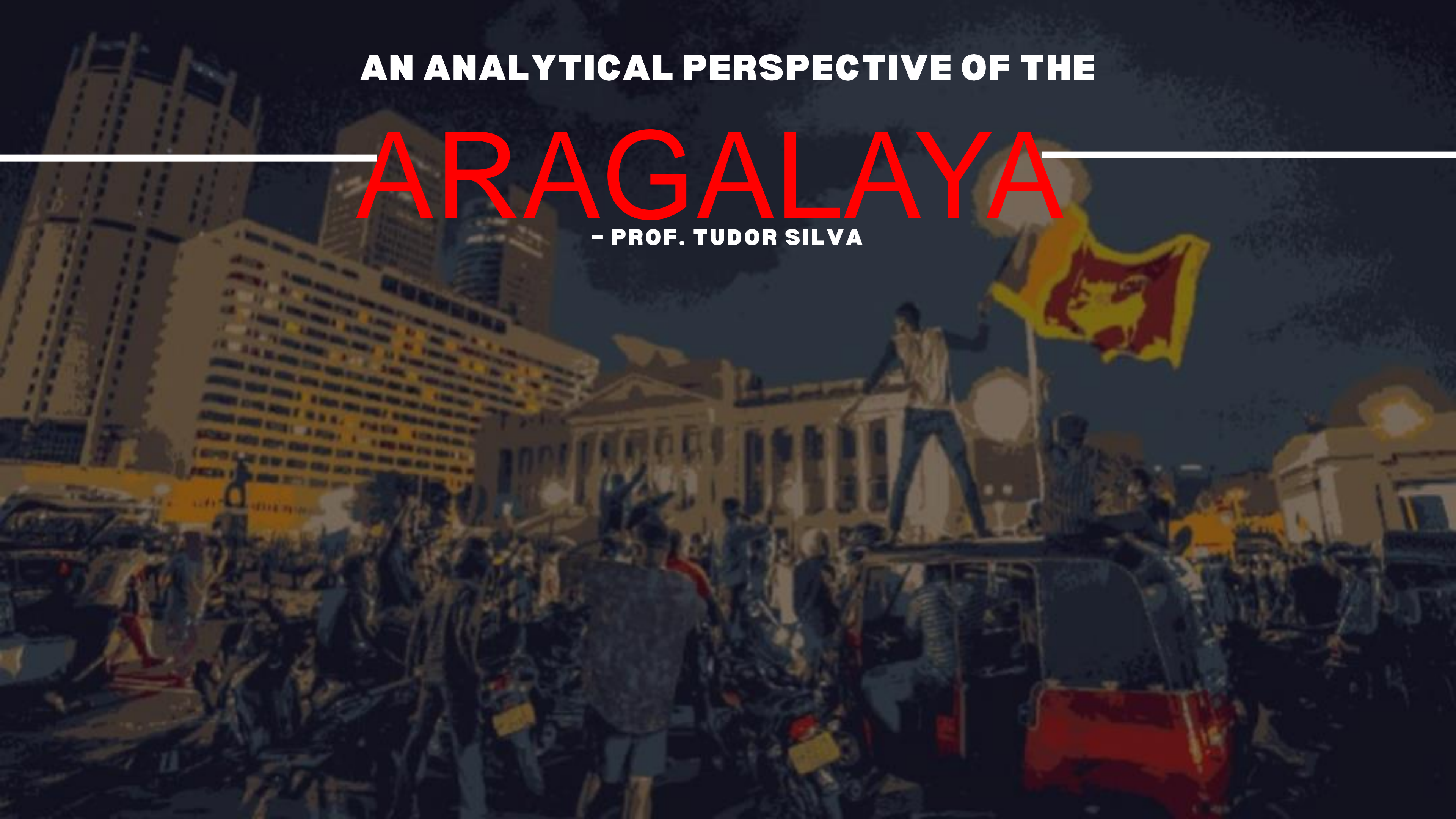


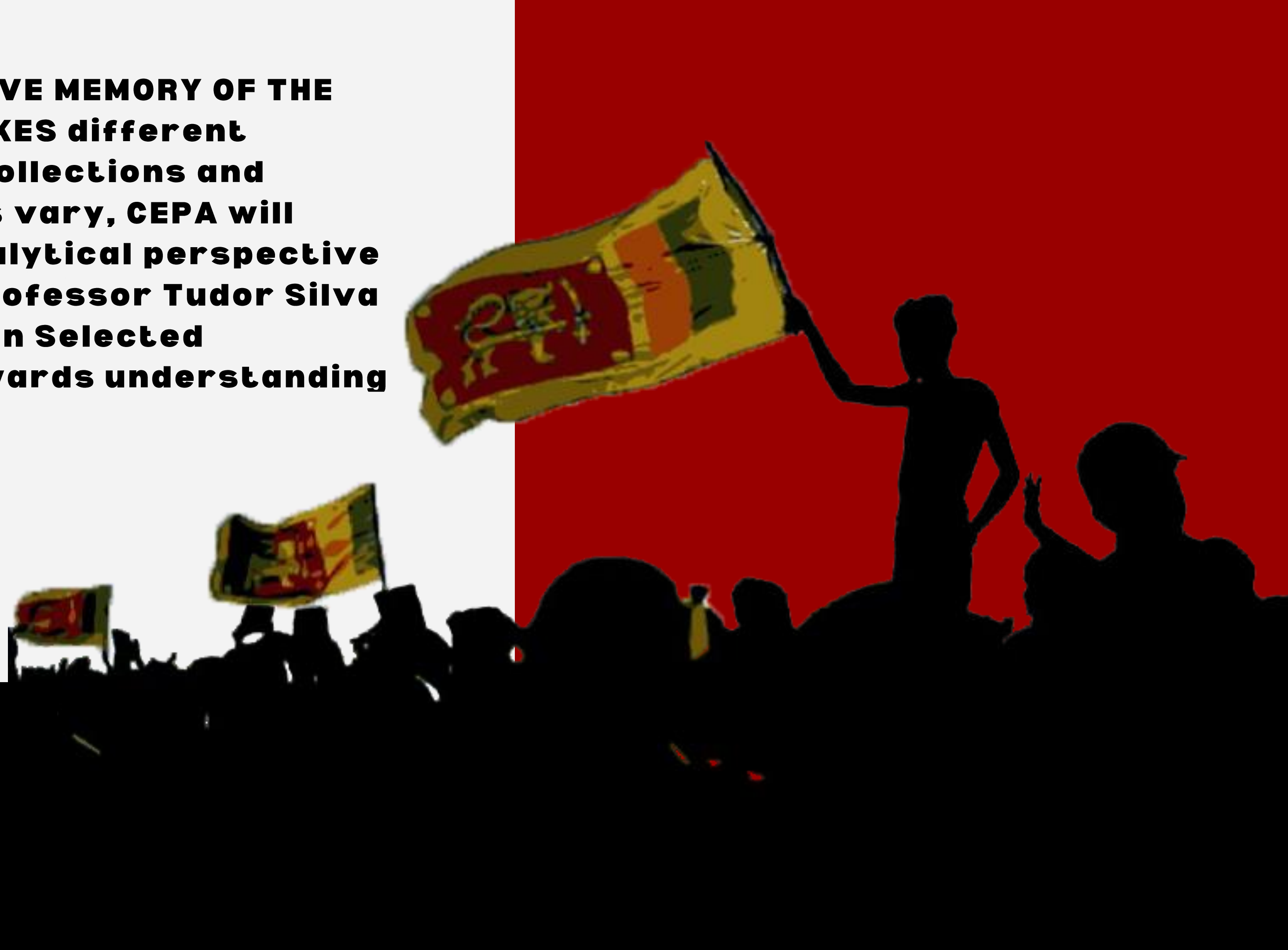
AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE

ARAGALAYA

- PROF. TUDOR SILVA



AS THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE 'ARAGALAYA' TAKES different shapes, and recollections and interpretations vary, CEPA will focus on the analytical perspective presented by Professor Tudor Silva in August 2022 on Selected Approaches towards understanding 'Aragalaya' .



TWO SELECTED SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES, VERY DIFFERENT TO EACH OTHER, WITH THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES WERE DISCUSSED TO UNDERSTAND THE 'ARAGALAYA'

**A POLITICAL ECONOMY
FRAMEWORK**

**A SYMBOLIC
INTERACTIONIST
PERSPECTIVE**



**AN ECLECTIC OR HYBRID
APPROACH IS PERHAPS
more suited to
understand what
happened ,**

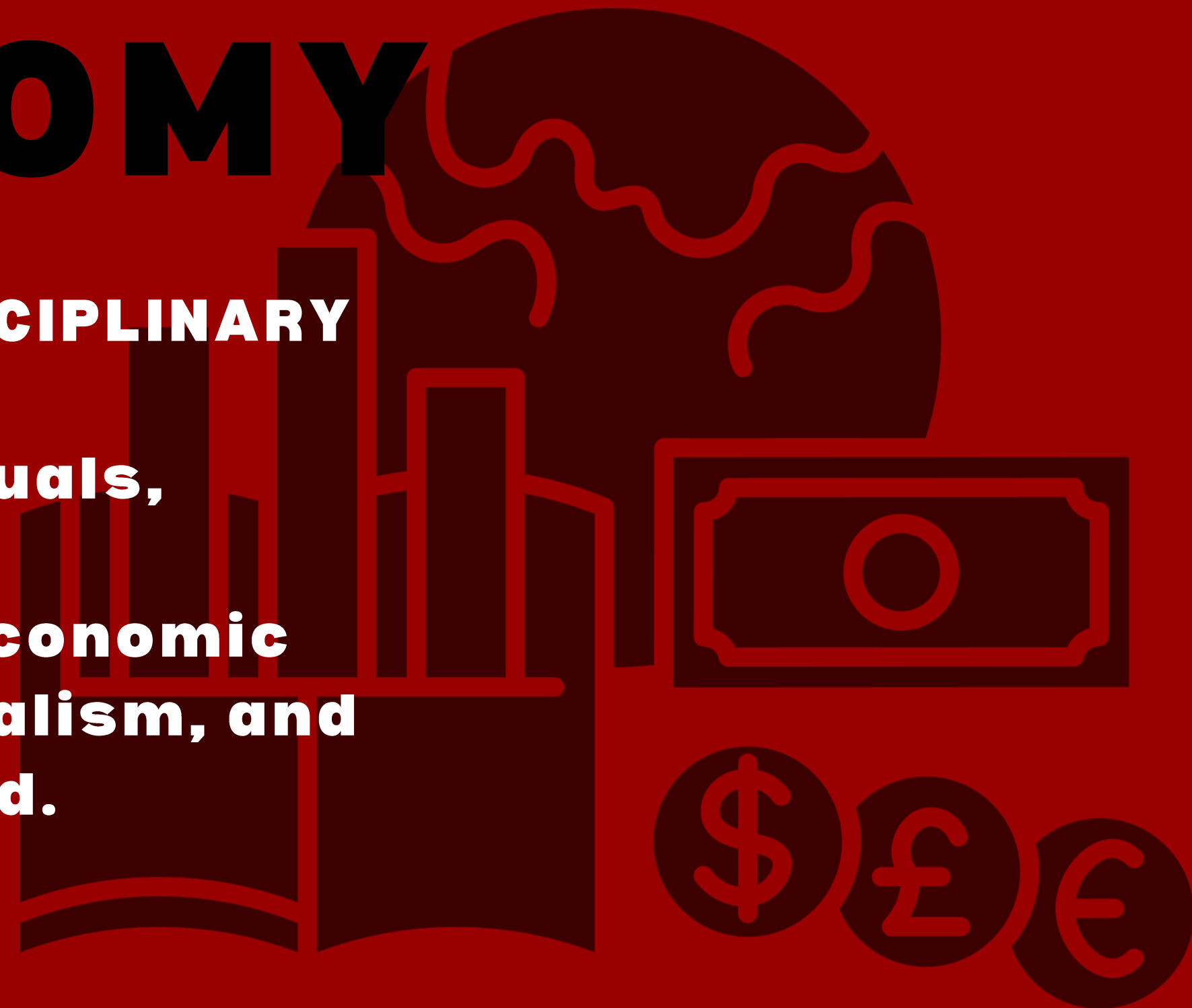
NOTES

Professor Tudor Silva



POLITICAL ECONOMY

POLITICAL ECONOMY IS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE THAT focuses on the interrelationships among individuals, governments, and public policy. Political economists study how economic systems such as capitalism, socialism, and communism work in the real world.



SYMBOLIC

INTERACTIONISM

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM IS AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL THEORY THAT TRIES TO understand the symbolic foundation of human social interaction. This perspective relies on the symbolic meaning that people develop and build upon in the process of social interactions

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM THEORY ASSUMES THAT PEOPLE RESPOND TO ELEMENTS of their environments according to the subjective meanings they attach to those elements, such as meanings being created and modified through social interaction involving symbolic communication with other people.

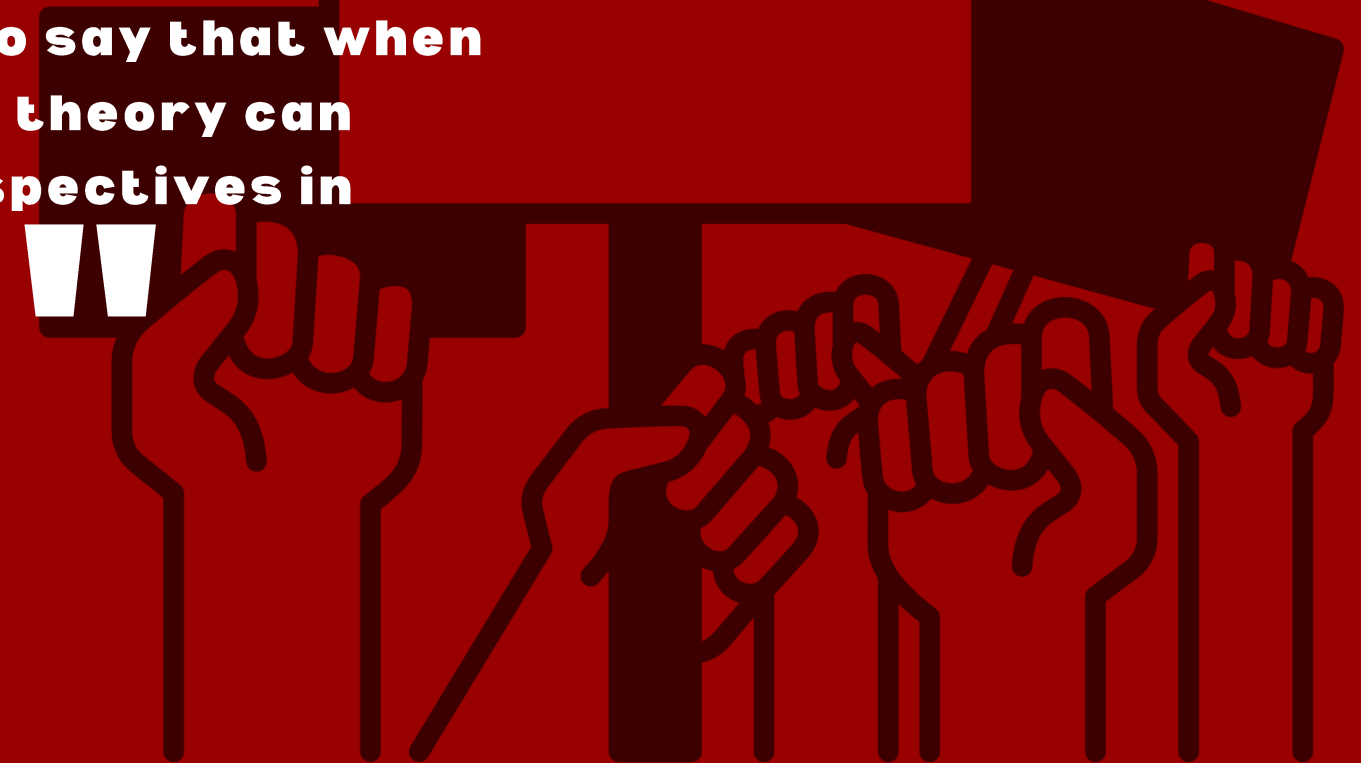


ECLECTIC OR HYBRID APPROACH

IN SOCIAL ANALYSIS YOU CAN EITHER USE A SINGLE THEORY TO UNDERSTAND ALL ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL reality or draw from different theories to understand different dimensions of social reality

|| THERE IS A NEED FOR AN ECLECTIC THEORETICAL APPROACH FOR UNDERSTANDING THE complex social crisis we are facing right now. First of all, I have to say that when it comes to social theory, I'm not a purist. I don't believe that one theory can explain it all. My view is that we need to learn from different perspectives in order to understand a complex phenomenon like the Aragalaya

says Professor Tudor



POLITICAL ECONOMY PERSPECTIVE

WOULD call for



- **A SYSTEMIC VIEW OF THE CRISIS**
- **DRAW FROM THE WORK OF MARX, WEBER AND ADAM SMITH**
- **Intermingling of the economic and political**

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS WAS CHARACTERIZED BY

1. DEBT CRISIS AND DEFAULT ON FOREIGN DEBT

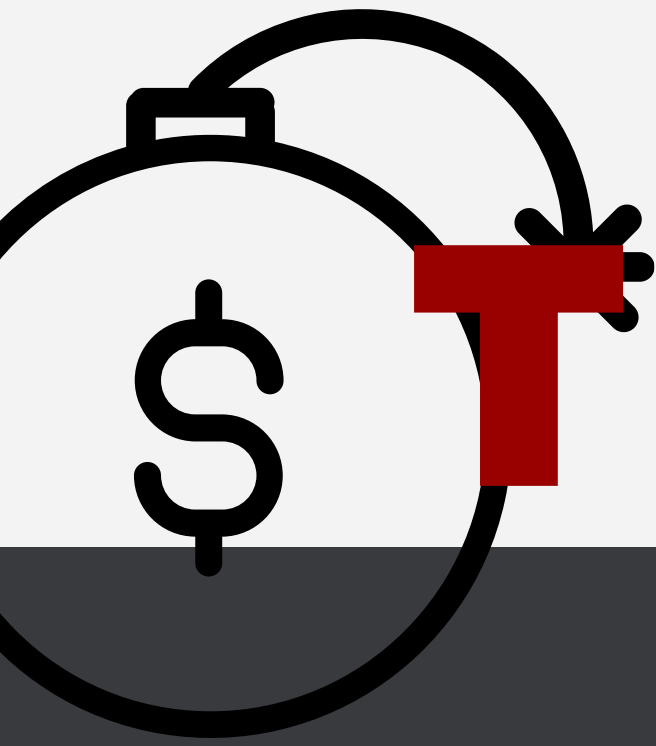
**2. DEPLETION OF FOREIGN RESERVES AND
INABILITY PAY BACK FOREIGN DEBTS**

**3. SCARCITIES OF IMPORTED ESSENTIAL
COMMODITIES SUCH AS FUEL, COOKING GAS
AND MEDICINES CAUSED BY ABSENCE OF
FOREIGN CURRENCY TO IMPORT THOSE
COMMODITIES**



**THE ECONOMIC CRISIS
in turn triggered a
political crisis in
the form of the
aragalaya.**





THE DEBT CRISIS

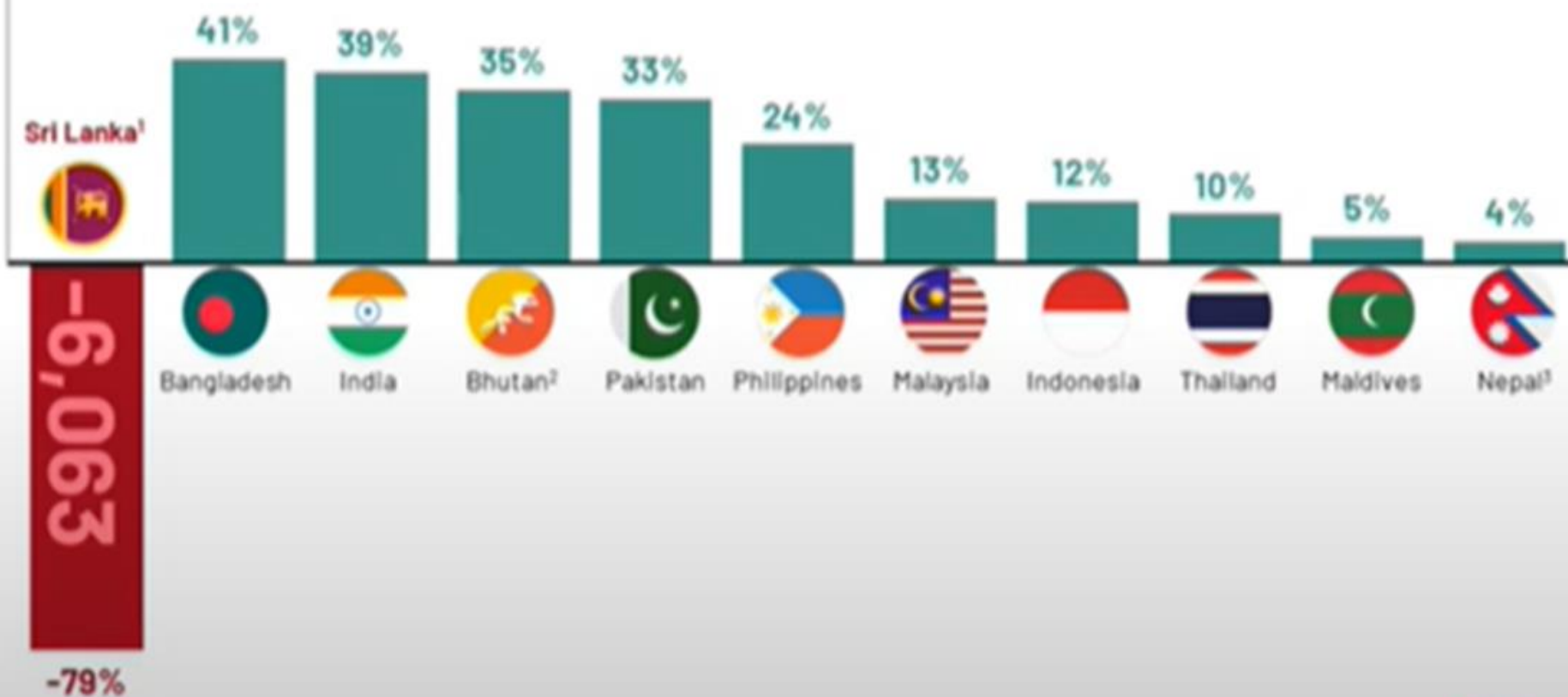
- **SRI LANKA DECLARED ITSELF TO BE IN DEFAULT BECAUSE IT LACKED THE FOREIGN currency to pay back foreign loans**
- **The pandemic may have partly contributed to the decline in Sri Lanka's foreign reserves as economic activities were disrupted and tourism collapsed, and exports declined.**
- **HOWEVER NEIGHBORING NATIONS LIKE BANGLADESH, INDIA, BHUTAN, AND PAKISTAN, ALSO EXPERIENCED THE SAME PANDEMIC! BUT THEIR FOREIGN RESERVES ACTUALLY INCREASED IN THE SAME PERIOD.**

WAS IT THE PANDEMIC?

Is the Pandemic the Sole Cause for the Depletion in Sri Lanka's Foreign Reserves? South Asian Peers Grow Their Foreign Reserves While Sri Lanka's Decrease

Percentage Change in Gross Official Reserves from end of 2019- end of 2021

Figure in USD millions



Notes: 1) December 2021 reserves excludes the Yuan 10 billion swap with the People's Bank of China since it is unclear if this swap can be used to settle US dollar denominated liabilities
2) The comparison of reserves have been considered from end of 2019 till the latest available data online (November 2021)
3) Data for Nepal is a comparison between Mid December 2019 to Mid December 2021
Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka | Central Banks of Relevant Countries

HOW INDEBTED ARE WE?

Sri Lanka's Outstanding Foreign Debts by Donor, Dec 2020

Agency	Value of Debt in (LKR Mn)	Percentage Contributed
Multilateral	1,601,482	23%
ADB	865,457	13%
IDA	593,238	9%
IFAD	32,153	0%
Other	110,634	2%
Bilateral	1,162,973	17%
Japan	659,260	10%
India	146,530	2%
China	124,665	2%
Other	232,518	3%
Financial Markets	4,110,181	60%
ISB	2,619,035	38%
Export-Import Bank of China	528,403	8%
Foreign Currency Term Financing Facilities	279,612	4%
Other	683,131	10%
Total Debt	6,874,636	100%

Source: Public Finance Data

SL OWES 23% OF OUR TOTAL DEBT to multilateral institutes.

17 % to bilaterals like Japan, India, and China.

The recent statistics from 2021 show that China has now become the leading foreign lender to Sri Lanka.

OUR BIGGEST PROBLEM HAS BEEN THE HEAVY RELIANCE ON ISB'S OR INTERNATIONAL SOVEREIGN Bonds with unfavourable terms and conditions

INTERMINGLING OF THE POLITICAL & ECONOMIC CRISIS

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE CRISIS, WE MUST look at

■ **POLITICAL ANTECEDENTS**

■ **THE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS.**



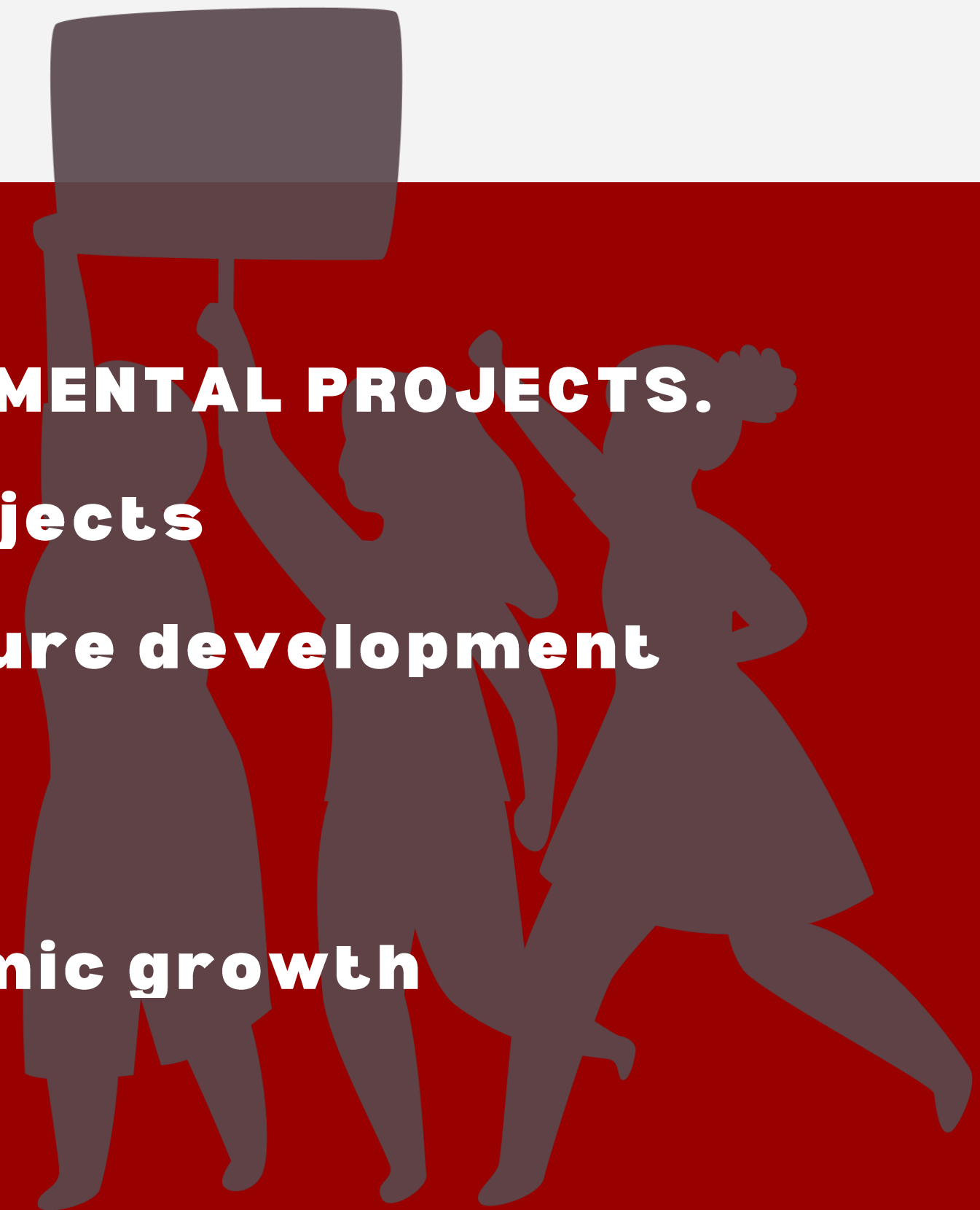
POLITICAL ANTECEDENTS

- OVERCONCENTRATION OF POWER - EXECUTIVE PRESIDENCY UNDER 1978 constitution.**
- High profile and politically motivated development projects**
- Reported high levels of corruption by politicians and their hand picked bureaucrats**
- Faulty and irresponsible decision making at all levels**
- Use of a hegemonic nationalist ideology to legitimise the ruling regime and its problematic decision-making**
- misusing public funds.**

DEVELOPMENT

BLUNDERS

- POPULIST POLITICS BEHIND FANCY DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS.
- Politically inspired high profile mega projects
- China as a lead financier for infrastructure development projects
- Adding to the debt burden
- High visibility but no stimulus for economic growth
- Loss making investments
- Environmental concerns



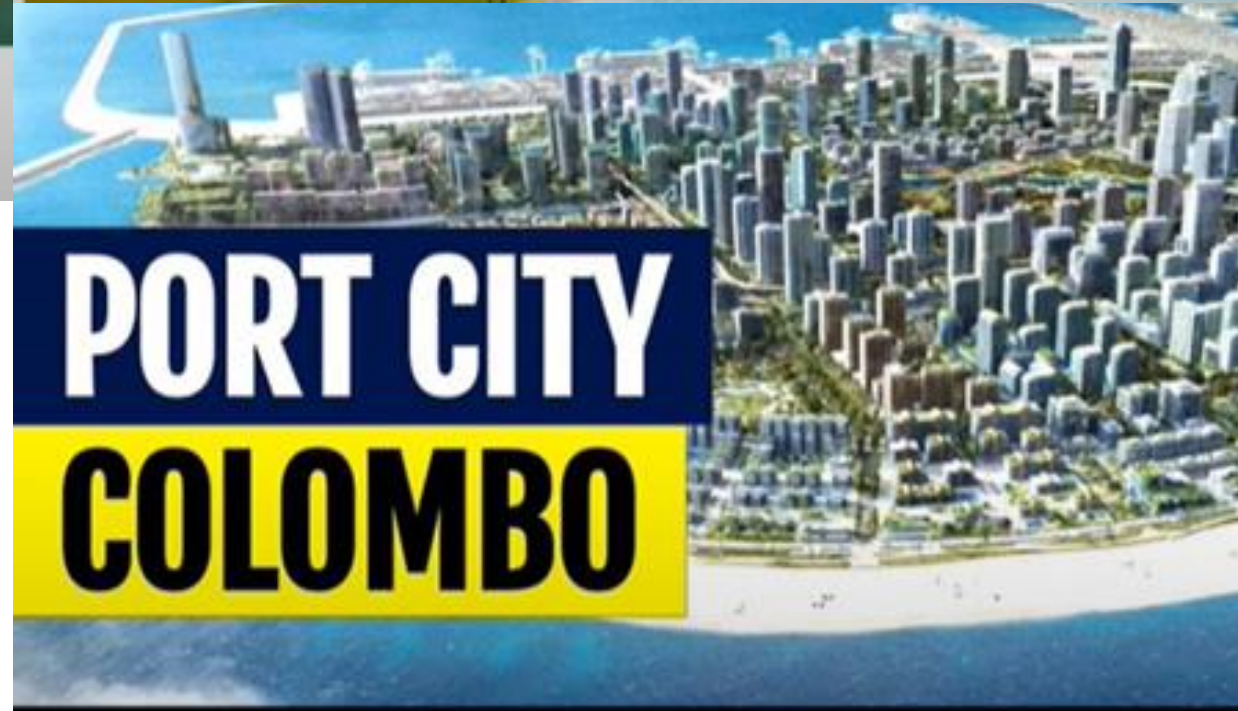
HIGH PROFILE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS with Low Returns



Cost: US \$ 104.3 million



As the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative [notes](#), “the economic rationale for Hambantota is weak, given existing capacity and expansion plans at Colombo port, fuelling concerns that it could become a Chinese naval facility,” a realisation that at the time prevented other lenders, such as India, from getting involved.



Cost: US \$ 15 billion

ANALYTICAL CHALLENGES FOR THE POLITICAL ECONOMY *perspective*

- ARAGALAYA AS A BROAD-BASED MASS MOVEMENT
rather than an agitation by a social class**
- Is social a derivative of economic or political?**
- Role of Social media in triggering Aragalaya**
- Role of Art in sustaining Aragalaya**
- Role of religious actors within the Aragalaya**

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE, ITS STRENGTHS

**HELPS US CONCEPTUALISE THE PUBLIC
RESPONSE TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS.**

**UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL
MEDIA IN TRIGGERING ARAGALAYA**

**DIVERSE INTERPRETATION OF
ARAGALAYA ; LIBERATION AND
DEMOCRATIZATION VIEW OF
PROTESTERS Vs THE
ESTABLISHMENT VIEW OF IT AS
UNLAWFUL ACTION AND TERRORISM**



HOW IT EVOLVED

-INITIAL ORGANISED PROTESTS

-CANDLE-LIGHT VIGILS

**-STREET PROTESTS LEADING TO
MIRIHANA EVENT**

-FORMATION OF ENCAMPMENTS

**-VIOLENT ATTACK ON ARAGALAYA
AND COUNTER ATTACKS**

**-FORCED RESIGNATION OF
POLITICAL LEADERS**

-STATE REPRESSION



UNDERSTANDING WHAT HAPPENED THROUGH A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST LENS



- **DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION**

- **SELF AND IDENTITY ISSUES**

- **CONTESTED MEANINGS**

- **VIOLENCE AND COUNTERVIOLENCE**

GOTA-GO-GAMA PROLIFERATION AND Interpretation of protests as liberation



CONTESTED MEANINGS



-SUBSTANCE USERS

-LGBTQ

**-Urban 'watta'
communities**

-Political or non-political

**-Use of PTA as a means of
countering the 'Aragalaya'**

* The symbolic interaction theory states that the meaning we ascribe to objects, processes, ideas, concepts, and systems are subjective. They are constructed through language, words, and communication, and differ from context to context and culture to culture.

LIMITS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

- **DOES NOT THROW ANY LIGHT ON THE ECONOMIC CRISIS.**
- **NEGLECT OF THE POWER STRUGGLES**
- **ONLY EXAMINE THE SUPERFICIAL DIMENSIONS?**
- **DOES NOT LEAD TO ANY PRACTICAL REMEDIES**



**-NO THEORY IS PERFECT,
THEORY AS A MASTER
NARRATIVE AS against each
theory as a partial
explanation of reality**

**-the same reality can be
analysed from diverse
perspective**

**-Need to be open to different
analytical perspectives**

**-Need for a methodological
pluralism in social
analysis**

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

