

A Typographical Note on Separatism

Questions of sovereign recognition – the central concern of this book – have far-reaching ramifications. One of these is the question of capitalisation in the English language. The problem of recognised officialdom is folded into the difference between common and proper nouns: official institutions, when referred to as a single entity, are usually considered to be proper nouns and are therefore capitalised (the *President*; the *Constitution*); non-official institutions or nonspecific terms are considered common nouns and are therefore not capitalised (*team meeting*; *my kitchen rules*). Given that this book challenges the categorical differentiation between recognised states and sovereign aspirants, this interpretation of proper and common nouns raises a problem of interpretation. It would yield a text where the authorities of the Sri Lankan state are capitalised but the institutional forms of Tamil separatism would remain in lowercase. To grapple with dilemmas of categorisation and institutional interpretation, which abound when discussing Sri Lanka's civil war, we often resort to prefixes or scare quotes to describe insurgent political forms – *pseudo*-states; rebel 'courts' – but these analytical qualms cannot be evaded with a typographical proviso (see Bryant and Hatay [2020: 6–8] for a conceptual discussion on this issue in relation to the liminalities of northern Cyprus). I therefore seek to confront these problems of classification explicitly in my text, and I minimise the use of capitalisation for all institutions in this book (I do capitalise proper nouns like Sri Lanka, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Northern Provincial Council and Peace Secretariat). Similarly, I do not use scare quotes for capturing the purported difference between recognised (the Sri Lankan state and nation) and unrecognised (a Tamil 'state' and 'nation') political realities. However, I do use scare quotes for vernacular phrases that I principally disagree with (such as 'high' or 'low' caste).

