

# Contradictions of the Sri Lankan state

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**The policies of the Sri Lankan state since the late 1970s have seen a widening gap between its neo-liberal foundations and its attempts to claim popular legitimacy, and this structure of politics seems set to persist. This paper argues that the tension between neo-liberalism and populism is articulated in the disparity between the island's urban and rural areas, and vice versa. This defines contradictory aspects of the Sri Lankan state as we understand its appeal to different constituencies, both the new urban middle classes and increasingly impoverished small farmers.**

**Instead of looking at how neo-liberalism deploys populism to garner mass support, the study examines the messy consequences of the ways in which populism attempts to manage the effects of neo-liberalism, manifest primarily in the increasing immiseration of the masses.**



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**[\\*http://www.epw.in/conflict-transition-and-development/contradictions-sri-lankan-state.html](http://www.epw.in/conflict-transition-and-development/contradictions-sri-lankan-state.html)**