

Personal statement

MPhil/PhD in Politics and International Studies · SOAS · September 2026 entry · M. Santhuru

I am applying without a master's degree, and I want to address that directly at the start. What I have instead is a substantial, public, citable body of work — a UK-registered Community Interest Company (TLTE C.I.C., Co. No. 16426152), an open documentation portal at docs.tlte.cloud, an audited citation registry of over 88 Tier-A sources, a public AI grounding system with a published eval suite, and a constitutionally constrained workflow that refuses survivor intake, perpetrator naming, and count aggregation. I am asking SOAS to read this body of work as master's-equivalent independent research output, under the department's exceptional-entry route.

I did not arrive at this work through the academy. I arrived through two decades of watching a diaspora — my own — try and fail to build durable institutions in the wake of 2009. The Tamil-Eelam diaspora has produced extraordinary scholarship (the names appear in my bibliography), extraordinary litigation (ITJP, PEARL), and extraordinary advocacy. What it has not had, until recently, is a piece of **civic infrastructure** that is neither a state nor an NGO nor a political party — something that documents, refuses, cites, and survives the founder. TLTE is my attempt to build that, and I now want to study it formally with people who can sharpen the question and tell me where I am wrong.

I have chosen SOAS, and Politics & International Studies specifically, because it is the only department in the UK where the supervisor pool — Dr Sutha Nadarajah and Dr Vino Kanapathipillai — and the taught environment (MSc Politics of Conflict, Rights and Justice) make this thesis legible as *research* rather than advocacy. I am aware that an assessor may, reasonably, read TLTE as advocacy. I want to address that risk head-on: TLTE is built under Berkeley Protocol, UCP Manual 2nd ed., Murad Code, OHCHR OISL tiering, and UK Terrorism Act 2000 §12 compliance. It refuses to do the things advocacy organisations routinely do. The point of the PhD is to interrogate whether that refusal-coded model holds up under scrutiny and whether it generalises.

I bring to the doctorate (a) a complete, frozen, citable case study available from day one, (b) two years of practice-based experience in the institutional vehicle, (c) the technical capacity to maintain the archive over the three years of study without distracting from it, and (d) an institutional commitment that the archive will not be a beneficiary of any scholarship I receive.

I am ready to defend, revise and — where necessary — abandon parts of this work under supervision. That is, in the end, the only reason to do a PhD.

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