

DREAMS OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Dreams, development, destiny. Every nation has a fantasy for itself, a part of which is infrastructure development. Research has shown that these visions are affected by historical visionary themes and shifts in spatial boundaries. This study aims to uncover how these visions are manifested regionally and globally. These visions have been challenged by certain realities of infrastructure development. The angle of labour recruitment brings to light how the fantasy of enhanced employment rates and economic success has been subverted through the exclusion of unskilled labour communities. Building on existing work on social exclusion I ask the question : How has labour recruitment within port structures impacted the developmental and geopolitical imaginations of state actors that are co-developing with the Chinese BRI?

This thesis critically engages with debates surrounding labour recruitment and Foreign Direct Investment through two case studies of port development - Jebel Ali Port,UAE and Gwadar Port,Pakistan. It uses port development as a conceptual space in which these labour recruitment challenges visibly undermine national visions. The study concludes that geopolitical imaginations create ideal mirages of economic development enabling accessibility through infrastructure networks while overlooking the exclusion of unskilled minority labour communities, the result of which threaten development processes.

Introduction

Infrastructure development has long been a part of the geopolitical imagination, specifically port development, which has been closely linked with national and global success. Since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, there has been a wave of new interest in megaproject research and labour recruitment, the interplay between which has demonstrated that the extension of national interests has not been inclusive of unskilled labour communities.

Port infrastructure development has been a large part of the globalisation process. According to Hill, port infrastructure development is the objective of the neo-liberal era through increased maritime restructuring. Port reformation, the most salient component of maritime restructuring is fundamentally based on the potential economic outcome - economic integration/success. What makes it neoliberal in nature is its state run influence in reducing government spending, increased globalisation of trade and more responsibility given to the private sector. Ports constructed on the BRI are vital nodal points and represent exactly that - belonging to 'one' global market thus bringing mutual economic benefits.¹

Economic integration may be the ultimate agenda however there has been a 'disintegration' when it comes to the labour forces within these port structures. Labour forces are the bedrock of these structures and there have been challenges facing the labour force which have only been enhanced with the current pace of development. The common factor in this idea is the exclusion of labour forces in the Middle East and South Asia.

¹ Douglas Hill. 'Globalisation and labour relations: The Case of Asian Ports,' The 19th Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australian and New Zealand Conference (Sydney, NSW, AIRAANZ, 2005), pp.75.

In the Middle East, for example, there is a shortage of local participation in the workforce, which has led to recruitment from labour sending countries in South Asia. As a result, the conversations around labour relations in the Middle East have tended to revolve around migrant workers and the conditions under which they work. They include a worker- employer relationship deepening the dialogue to the power structures at play within the regimes of the region. The overreliance on migrant labour in the region affirms however that the labour force in these ports are not only repressed and excluded from society but therefore strongly positioned to disrupt development on a national, regional and international scale. Similarly conversations around labour relations in South Asia, particularly Pakistan revolve around the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and the new job opportunities arising as a result of FDI. Although this may be the case, an entire community of people are being excluded in the recruitment process.

In looking at port development, there is a duality to these infrastructures being developed, namely a 'political and poetic' dimension, (see Larkin 2013) which focus on the 'poetic' dimension to infrastructures in the thesis. The 'poetic' element supersedes matter and imagines a utopian ideal of the infrastructure itself.² This romanticisation translates itself into the way in which infrastructure can create a perfect image nationally and internationally. Having considered this I would like to introduce the notion that local state actors therefore use these port structures in the romantic narrative of its national imagination, conceptualising port structures as chokepoints of success. The romantic narrative and imagination I will describe as 'fantasies.' My aim is to try and better understand the construction of development fantasies by looking at two ports in the Middle East and South Asia as cases of large scale infrastructure development.

I would here like to introduce two ports for which it has been the case that fantasies of local state actors have affected labour communities through this process of economic development. I will use Gwadar and Jebel Ali Ports as cases within which I focus on labour recruitment as an entry point to juxtapose government fantasies with structural realities. Gwadar, a former fishing town and port in the 1990s, has been transformed into a deep sea port city and a vital choke point in the Belt and Road Initiative. A controversy surrounds the redevelopment of Balochistan while Baloch nationals have not been employed in the project. The Gwadar Port Authority has conceptualised the port as the 'Symbol of Prosperity' and government bodies have supported such a claim through corresponding statements. However Jebel Ali Port is the largest engineered harbour in the world.³ Surrounded by the Jebel Ali Freezone, it has attracted much external attention, including, like Gwadar, Chinese investment. Having said this, the labour situation in Dubai does not differ too much from that of Gwadar. I will therefore examine the strict control of the work environment in conjunction with the exclusion of human capital.

Dubai is well known for having a suppressive attitude towards its migrant workers who form the majority of 85% of the working population in the UAE.⁴ With large projects such as Jebel Ali, large

² Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, (2013) pp.327-343, pp.332.

³ Rafeef Ziadah. 'Transport Infrastructure and Logistics in the making of Dubai,' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 42, Issue 2, (2018), pp.187-197, pp.194.

⁴ Sara Hamza, 'Migrant Labor in the Arabian Gulf: A Case Study of Dubai, UAE' *Journal of Undergraduate Research at the University of Tennessee*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, Article 10, (2015), pp.85.

compounds called ‘labour villages’ have been created in order to house these workers.⁵ Although this is technically supposed to make commuting easier, stringent security measures have been put in place in order to control their work environment. Furthermore there have been limitations on unions and federations in an attempt to minimise the security risk. I would like to investigate the effects of these measures to control the space and its reliance on human capital.

My aim is to compare two ports with similar restrictive labour dynamics with differing political institutions and imaginations. The focus of my research therefore will be the labour relations within port infrastructure projects that have arisen along the Belt and Road Initiative. This thesis looks into the realities of port recruitment, its repercussions within these structures and how their realities differ greatly from the romanticisation of state actors. I hence examine how the labour recruitment destabilises the imagination of national actors.

Keywords: New Silk Road, labour recruitment, geopolitical imagination, community exclusion, infrastructure development

Research Question: How has labour recruitment within port structures impacted the developmental and geopolitical imaginations of state actors that are co-developing with the Chinese BRI?

Sub questions:

How has the BRI inspired development fantasies of local state actors?

How is labour recruitment challenging the imagination of these state actors?

What does the disconnect tell us about the actualities of economic development?

The findings of this research will be beneficial to the academic sphere by encouraging engagement with the changing power relations of West Asia in the neoliberal period and further seek to understand the fantasies that underpin the ambitions of rising nations. These imaginations have materialised in the form of port infrastructure and therefore provide insight into how these infrastructures (both physical and romantic) can be made unstable by the reality of social structures. By analysing the narratives of geopolitical imaginations and its interplay with economic development concepts, I prove how reliant economic development is on the imagined fantasies that create a utopian ideal and therefore unrealistic image of success. Consequentially it demonstrates that the realities of social structures undermine these fantasies by affecting the development processes.

Theoretical Framework

I use the geopolitical theory suggested by Agnew to frame my question which is described as the ‘*overarching global context in which states vie for power outside their boundaries, gain control (formally and informally) over less modern regions (and their resources) and overtake other major states in a worldwide pursuit of global primacy.*’ The theoretical assumption is that local actors are trying to assert their global dominance by co-developing with China through the Belt and Road Initiative. As a result they have formed their own fantasies of themselves on a global platform and assert these visions through such infrastructure projects.

⁵Rafeef Ziadah. ‘Transport Infrastructure and Logistics in the making of Dubai,’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 42, Issue 2, (2018), pp.194.

China's BRI is an illustrative example of an initiative that transcends its territorial boundaries and has produced an imagined space in which to exert its power. Its fantasy of global dominance has been exerted through local state actors looking to establish themselves within the global arena. Although Agnew describes this 'geopolitical imagination' as the defining element of modernity, this theory of modern geopolitical imagination is broken down through the analysis of port infrastructure labour dynamics. This theory best encompasses the way in which port structures have materialised within the confines of the BRI and regional port development. The theory, through the disconnect between the imagination of local state actors and the reality of labour recruitment best explains the displacement of the broader romantic image that state actors project which is what I intend to highlight.

I use this theory as it best encompasses the representation of the Belt and Road initiative as well as the change in global order with a focus on West Asia/Asia. The notion of the 'geopolitical imagination' adumbrates the Belt and Road initiative both in its ambitious plans and the way it overlooks situations on the ground to fulfil a greater vision.

Assumptions and limitations

Based on my readings of both primary and secondary sources I have made the assumption that these port structures have similar effects due to co-development with China. I have made the assumption that China is a strong global actor, evidenced by its FDI outflows and Belt and Road Initiative which has influenced the imaginations of local actors.⁶ Although the BRI initiative is supposedly an apolitical one I assume that non state actors have and continue to use political influence which further serves the exaggerated geopolitical imagination.⁷ I will be declaring that the ambitions of the BRI have been reflected in the imaginations of local state actors through such port developments. I will be unable to conduct local field research so will have to be reliant on local data such as government statistics. I will access state reports through the respective government portals. It is also worth noting that this paper does have linguistic limitations. I will be solely relying on English sources written about the BRI and port development.

1.1 Methodology

I have devised a working definition for 'labour recruitment' which entails the following:
Labour recruitment: recruitment of individuals to make up the work force within, in this case, ports structures. That is '*identifying, selecting and hiring individuals as potential human capital.*' Kapur highlights the relevant elements to consider for the process of hiring, namely : education, experience and abilities of an individual.⁸ These elements will be touched on in reference to the case studies thereafter. I have chosen labour recruitment as an entry point as it is a reliable indicator of economic, social and political stability.

⁶ Jonathan Hillman, 'China's Belt and Road Initiative: Five Years Later,' *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (Washington, 2018), pp.7.

⁷ Xianghong Zeng, 'Geopolitical Imaginations of the Belt and Road Initiative and Regional Cooperation,' *World Economic and Politics*, No.1, (2016), p.48.

⁸Radhika Kapur, 'Recruitment and Selection,' *International Journal of Advancement in Social Science and Humanity*, Vol.9, No.6, (2018), pp.1.

I use discourse analysis to then analyse the envisioned ‘fantasies’ that local state actors have projected both regionally and globally, discussing how port development has been used in this romantic vision. This discourse analysis narrates the fantasies of state actors, how they portray themselves in the media and to the world. I therefore analyse popular discourses through media outlets and political statements regarding their vision. I draw on scholars like Larkin and look at its interplay with media outlets from both Pakistan and the UAE. This will also seek to bring to life the broader vision of the Chinese BRI and how they use the initiative to encourage these state actors to themselves on a regional and global platform.

I subsequently use case study analysis to look into how these labour dynamics are destabilising the geopolitical imagination of these state actors. I therefore use two ports namely Gwadar and Jebel Ali Port. I have chosen these two as they both result in the disenfranchisement of labour communities. Gwadar is a prime example of how local labour recruitment has threatened the geopolitical imagination of two entities namely state and non state actors through the disenfranchisement of the local population. The opposition from Baloch nationals has caused delays to the planning of Gwadar.⁹ Furthermore, the Baloch nationals are being excluded from the labour force, keeping poverty levels at the same level. Balochistan with the introduction of the port has now been considered the ‘symbol of prosperity’ by the Gwadar Port Authority.¹⁰ There is a clear disconnect here between the way in which local actors envision this port and this dichotomy is central to the claim I intend to pursue.

I will therefore proceed to analyse the disenfranchisement and exclusion of a labour community and also illustrate how the repercussions of the situation such as delays or financial mishaps affect the geopolitical imagination of the wider initiative. I will use primary government figures to validate my arguments and secondary literature will include articles, official government information and visions for the CPEC Projects. I plan to use local sources in an attempt to further understand the situation on the ground juxtaposed with its vision. I will also use the grand plan map from the Gwadar Port Authority as a visual representation of China’s geopolitical imagination, how that has fed the fantasy of Pakistan and contrast that with other reports to highlight the situation in Balochistan.

The next case study I examine is the Jebel Ali Port in Dubai which is the largest maritime hub in the Middle East. Dubai’s restrictive labour regime is reliant on migrant labour from South Asia to work within these ports.¹¹ Although Dubai is reliant on this inexpensive labour in order for their economy to function, there lies a sentiment of insecurity as the native population have become a minority which could threaten the security of the state. However migrant labour forces are suppressed by legislative and stringent security measures so as to permanently sit on the periphery of society. Since I cannot interview local labour forces, I rely upon data from local governments and external actors who have written reports on the local situation. I have found secondary literature which analyses the process of labour recruitment and aptly reflects their exclusion from the system. I will therefore gain a more local perspective in order to support my claim.

⁹Dipanjan Roy Chaudry, ‘China-Pakistan Gwadar Port Runs into Rough Weather,’ *The Economic Times*, (2019) <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/pakistan-china-gwadar-port-runs-into-rough-weather/articleshow/71041565.cms>

¹⁰ Gwadar Port Authority, ‘Symbol of Prosperity’, Gwadar Port Authority, <http://www.gwadarport.gov.pk/>

¹¹ Rafeef Ziadah. ‘Transport Infrastructure and Logistics in the making of Dubai,’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 42, Issue 2, (2018), pp.187-197, pp.190.

Both ports have contrasting political structures but have restrictive labour regimes - one of exclusion, the other of controlling a work force within a spatial boundary. Through exploring the labour relations in each port structure I uncover some of the answers to these complex affairs. I conclude by looking into what the disconnect tells us about the reality of port development and economic integration. The disconnect refers to the disparity between the ambitions of local state actors and the restrictive reality of labour recruitment. I finally look into how sustainable this disparity is considering the politics of both regions, having reached a conclusion on the former and examine the extent to which these romantic visions can become a true reality.

1.2 Literature Review

This literature review will address two themes which are applicable to port development.

- FDI
- Labour

The traditional concept of Foreign Direct Investment identifies three motivations: resource seeking, market seeking, and efficiency seeking and has been a key factor in the narrative of the Middle East to the lack of it. Preliminary literature suggests that the Middle East has not received much FDI compared to other regions. According to Caccia et al this could be for the following reasons : countries could exploit their resources, investments could displace productive activities.¹²

Aleksynska and Havrylchyk suggest it could be due to a correlation between two things - natural resources which produce higher levels of corruption and non democratic regimes.¹³ The region is an anomaly in its lack of democratic institutions, violence and instability.¹⁴ The instability of the MENA region has been particularly poignant in the literature data from Baleix et al have shown that this region suffered from '69% of the total number of terrorist attacks that took place between 2003 and 2012.'¹⁵ The authoritarian nature of the regimes have been suggested to be the most important reason. Caccia et al highlight that a regime reform could in fact attract more investment. They argue that styles of government are indicative of the local climate and oil producing countries are authoritarian, rentier states. They suggest that a political reform could increase the amount of inflow into the region. Although this has dominated the literature over the last decades, this does not explain the new trends which have appeared. With new developments occurring in East Asia and new markets opening up, FDI into the region is expanding. South - South relations are rising and with projects such as the Belt and Road initiative, countries across South Asia and the Middle East are co-developing with China.

Aleksynska and Havrylchyk have touched on a notion suggested by Habib and Zurawicki that investors usually look to neighbouring markets because they are seemingly more stable than those further afield. This is referred to as a '*psychic distance*' in which the further the distance between the

¹² Federico Carril Caccia, Juliette Milgram Baleix, Jordi Panigua, 'FDI in the MENA: Factors that Hinder or Favour Investments in the Region,' *I.E Med.Mediterranean Yearbook*, (2018), pp.287.

¹³ Mariya Aleksynska, Olena Havrylchyk, 'FDI from the south: The role of institutional distance and natural resources,' *European Journal of Political Economy*, Volume 29, (2013), pp.38-53, pp.39.

¹⁴ Caccia et al, 'FDI in the MENA: Factors that Hinder or Favour Investments in the Region,' pp.287

¹⁵ Juliette Milgram-Baleix, Federico Carril-Caccia, Jordi Paniagua, 'Foreign direct investment in MENA: Impact of Institutional Context,' *Femise, Med Brief*, No.3, (2018), pp.39.

investing vs receiving country is, the weaker the chance of investment.¹⁶ This attributes itself to the fact that the BRI has overlooked this notion of ‘psychic distance’ in order to provide investment to those further away. This has ultimately created a new order of Chinese FDI in developing countries across the world. Literature on FDI from China undermines this theory of ‘psychic distance’ but rather demonstrates the opposite. Wang highlights that the outflow from China has not just been to its neighbouring countries but rather it has ventured beyond its regional boundaries. It has been indicated that there are domestic and international factors affecting this FDI decision making process. They have laid the claim that investment in the Middle East is due to its resource seeking behaviour. On the other hand, it has been argued that protecting China’s security interests lie at the forefront of these investments.¹⁷

In contrast to the trends seen regarding FDI in the MENA region, South Asia has been the recipient of much investment since the 1990s. Existing debates around FDI in South Asia are rooted in the determinants that affect inflows of investment. Some scholars argue that economic freedom is the main factor determining the circumstances of a country which ultimately corresponds to the quantity of FDI.¹⁸ On the other hand Foreman’s findings suggested that the measure of economic freedom generally changed nothing but certain elements within that structure increased the chances of investment (*‘protection of property rights, reducing government intervention, and lowering barriers to capital flows and foreign investment.’*)¹⁹ This does not explain however why China has chosen to invest in Pakistan - they have not shown that they are economically free, nor changed these components in order to invite FDI. However., Gnomblerou argues that China was already investing in Pakistan before the birth of the Belt and Road Initiative - in 1963 they signed a bilateral trade agreement. Since then they have signed further agreements, further strengthening those ties. She argues that these links therefore will only be further deepened through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.²⁰

Labour

Literature on labour in the Gulf states recently has been centred around migrant labour and the conditions under which they work. In the Gulf region, scholars speak of a *‘pre-oil and post-oil’* region and labour trends within those frameworks.²¹ Bel-Air who suggests the same argument highlights the large influx of workers in the UAE after the first oil boom.²² Most of these workers are from South Asian countries (labour sending nations) namely India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. There is a strong recognition of the conditions that the workers endure including confiscation of passports, low wages based on ethnicity, withheld wages and living conditions. This control extends to the ban on

¹⁶ Mariya Aleksynska, Olena Havrylchyk, ‘FDI from the south: The role of institutional distance and natural resources,’ pp.40

¹⁷ Andrew Scobell, Alireza Nader, *‘China in the Middle East.’* RAND Corporation, California, 2016 pp ix

¹⁸ Sadia Imtiaz, Malik Bashir, ‘Economic Freedom and Foreign Direct Investment in South Asia,’ *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, Vol. 24, No. 2, (2011), pp.227-290, pp.285.

¹⁹ Vibha Foreman, ‘Economic Freedom and Foreign Direct Investment in Developing Countries,’ *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 41, No. 1, (2007), pp.155.

²⁰ Edna Gnomblerou, ‘The Incentives for Chinese Investments in Pakistan: An Analysis from the Perspective of the Belt and the Road,’ (2018), pp.189.

²¹ Sara Hamza, ‘Migrant Labor in the Arabian Gulf: A Case Study of Dubai, UAE’ *Journal of Undergraduate Research at the University of Tennessee*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, Article 10, (2015), pp.93.

²² Francoise De Bel-Air, ‘Demography, Migration, and the Labour Market in the UAE,’ *Migration Policy Centre, GLMM*, (2015), pp.4.

unions and federations in order to subjugate the labour force so as to not disturb its national security. Lori's article also acknowledged this threat of national survival through the recurrence of these sentiments found in the studies of the Dubai Police.²³

Hamza further expands on the lengths to which migrant workers are controlled by mentioning a well established system imposed by the authoritarian regimes - kafala system - a sponsor system in the Gulf that ties a worker to a sponsor enabling the government to monitor them. Workers are forced to sign long term contracts and although they are residents the government are able to avoid providing them with the necessary benefits of the state. Hamza asserts that this system excludes migrant workers from society. This literature highlights this system as a mode of exclusion as well as the physical exclusion suggested by Ziyadah. He states that 'Labour Villages' have been created in order to house migrant workers, however this further excludes them from society.²⁴

Labour debates in South Asia differ slightly from that of the Middle East due to the difference in governing bodies. The debates revolve around economic growth, job quality and opportunities which is mainly to do with the fact that South Asian countries are considered to be low income nations. Despite some economic liberalisation Sayeed argues that employment rates have still remained low and there are few women moving into the workforce.²⁵ Dev articulates a similar sentiment about the work force however with an added insight - that although people may be working within the system, the work they do may not be well paid enough so although unemployment rates may be low, poverty rates will remain high. In terms of women in the workforce he suggests that they may have less structured relationships with the work force unlike the male population. This is largely to do with the gender disparity in South Asian countries. A point of contention in this debate is whether or not economic growth is really encouraging women to participate in the workforce. Although the debates have brought up the question of gender, my focus will be unskilled labour communities.

Within the literature there is a lack of literature on labour within ports structures which is perhaps why the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has been widely talked about as a much needed platform for job opportunities.

I continue along the same thread as the pre existing literature about migrant labour in the UAE. I look into the suppression of the workforce with a focus on Jebel Ali Port. I then uncover the restrictive policies in place to exclude the labour force from society, demonstrating the transforming shift the UAE are making from migrant labour so as to protect the security of the state to technology. Next I move away from the literature covering determinants of economic growth in South Asia and look to labour recruitment in Gwadar itself. Furthermore I examine how this FDI, although apolitical, has affected the labour recruitment of Gwadar and the province. I therefore fill the gap in the literature by aiming to look at the exclusion of a community within the confines of port development.

²³Noora Lori, 'National Security and the Management of Migrant Labor: A Case Study of the United Arab Emirates, *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 3-4,(2011), pp.322.

²⁴ Ziyadah, 'Transport Infrastructure and Logistics in the making of Dubai,' pp.9.

²⁵Asad Sayeed, Natasha Ansari, 'Women's experiences of agency and mobility in the megacity of Karachi and their labour force participation,' *International Growth Centre*, (2019), C-37429-PAK-1, pp.2.

Context

In order to contextualise the visions that have been promoted by the state actors in the UAE and Pakistan, it is necessary to consider the following. Agnew's geopolitical imagination highlights that these imaginations are formed based on ideas and themes from its past.²⁶ This is extremely relevant to both case studies.

In the case of the UAE, the theme of infrastructure projects, financial aid and foreign influence has been prevalent throughout its history. Infrastructure development in Dubai began in the fifties with the help of Britain and other Arab states. Before that it was a small place with a meagre population not to mention very little infrastructure.²⁷ Ramos makes mention of the financial agreements made with the British consultants and how extensively 'ambitious' the projects were. The historical relationship between these two entities I would argue is very poignant due to Britain's colonial expansionist past. The interest heavy relationship meant that institutions like the British Bank of the Middle East were promoted greatly at the time in an attempt to secure oil investments. This relationship was a key factor in the development of the UAE. The initial infrastructure projects involved reconfiguring the geographical space to accommodate oil exploration and conventional infrastructure. There was subsequently a shift in focus to broaden financial potential. Tourist infrastructure projects were then implemented to achieve this and support other commercial functions however the main focus was still extensive trade infrastructure to entice international business owners.

Elessawy confirms that Dubai was a city which developed extremely quickly. He goes on to highlight that the development of the Dubai municipality was the catalyst of the first 'master plan' which generated a road network and town centre. He asserts that it has grown from a mere 54 square kilometres in 1975 to 977 square kilometres in 2015. This rapid turnaround from small to large scale has changed the pace of the city itself, enabling it to have become a global business hub.²⁸ The notion of a 'master plan' even as early as the fifties elucidates the history of ambition in the Emirates. It could be suggested that Britain's former expansionist agenda influenced the geopolitical imagination of Dubai at the time, again through infrastructure. The following is a great example of this.

In terms of infrastructure projects that would connect Dubai to the rest of the world, Sheikh Rashid was looking for bigger and better projects that would include Dubai on a global scale. During the 1960s, he came up with an agenda for an 'open skies policy' in an attempt to put Dubai on the map.²⁹ The multimodal connectivity advertised by the Dubai Port Authority I feel is a further enhancement of these initial sentiments with projects like the airport.

Jebel Ali port followed in the 1980s and was incorporated in this theme of multimodal connectivity. Ziadah confirms that the main feature of the port is this notion of multimodal connectivity and that it has been used as an example within the region and replicated across the GCC. It has been an example of integration within the region and the world. However the integration has been two fold - Ziadah highlights the fact that Jebel Ali port has been a part of regional integration while also being a part of

²⁶ John A. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics*, (New York, Routledge, 2003), pp.86.

²⁷ Fayez M. Elessawy, 'The Boom: Population and Urban Growth of Dubai City,' *Horizons in Humanities and Social Sciences*, (2017), pp.27.

²⁸ Ibid, pp.26.

²⁹ Stephen J. Ramos, 'The Blueprint : A History of Dubai's Spatial Development through Oil Discovery,' *Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs*, Dubai Initiative Working Paper, (2009), pp.1-21, pp.16.

regional competition in terms of the infrastructural replication. The themes of integration and competition have been a great part of the construction of Dubai within the framework of multimodal connectivity.³⁰ I would argue that both competition and integration are components of the notion of ambition. However these differ for developed and developing nations. They arguably differ based on the themes of their past and the way they see themselves on global scale. This allows them to position themselves according to the region/part of the world they are in and anticipate to what extent they can envision development plans that could lead them to joining the global platform significantly.

Flyvbjerg et al describe these types of mega projects and infrastructure power as the elimination of space to enable financial and informatory movement. They go on to describe this as a 'zero-friction' society. This is the idea of removing obstacles in order to ease the operational and logistical system. With this ease of access comes a rise in power, wealth and as a result, status.³¹ This notion of a 'zero-friction' society conceptualises space as a feature that can be transcended and is not a limiting factor in the mobility of goods, concepts culminating in global status. I would argue that that this is what geopolitical imaginations are based on and ultimately how development projects materialise - the notion of a utopian environment in which everything is accessible and will generate financial success.

Pakistan's development differs drastically to that of the UAE. It has been less successful for a start, while also being affected by the political instability of its past. Both these two factors I would like to suggest as themes which play a role in Pakistan's current imagination.

The economic growth after independence seemed satisfactory at the time however it was relative on a more global scale, falling far behind the booming economies of East Asia.³² Since its emergence, it has had economic implementation plans such as three and five year plans as well as undertaking the ISI method. Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) was a policy adopted by developing countries seeking to protect domestic industries and becoming less dependent on developed countries. During the next decade there was a transition in economic growth with an influx of foreign aid and some political stability. Investment was given to various industries in a strong effort to protect domestic industries.³³

Although Pakistan had implemented various plans, economic growth was considered satisfactory at best. Javid highlights that economic growth has rather been declining between the nineteen sixties and 2020. He highlights the fact that although there has been some economic growth, infrastructure growth has been idle. He confirms this has been a result of political instability and lack of reliable investment. Therefore its infrastructure has remained dispersed and structurally poor.³⁴ It could be argued that the initial financial plans were part of an imagination similar to the current one to join the world economy. Although this is the case developing countries in South Asia have had a different

³⁰Rafeef Ziadah, 'Constructing a logistics space: Perspectives from the Gulf Cooperation Council,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 36, Issue 4, (2017), pp.666-682, pp.672.

³¹ Bent Flyvbjerg, Nils Bruzelius, Werner Rothengatter, 'Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition,' (Cambridge University Press, 2017) pp.3.

³² Parvez Hasan, 'Learning from the Past : A Fifty Perspective on Pakistan's Development,' *The Pakistan Development Review*, Vol.36, No.4, (1997), pp.335-402, pp.355.

³³Mohamed Iqbal Anjum, Pasquale Micheal Srgo, 'A Brief History of Pakistan's Economic Development,' *Real World Economics Review*, Issue No.80, (2017), pp.172.

³⁴Muhammed Javid, 'Public and Private Infrastructure Investment and Economic Growth in Pakistan: An Aggregate and Disaggregate Analysis, Sustainability, MDPI, Open Access Journal, Vol. 11, No.12, (2019), pp. 1-22, pp.5.

experience of reconfiguring its geographies. Jamali argues that developing countries like Pakistan have had an internal conflict regarding its infrastructure development. It's narrative incorporates an imagination that emulates western development in an attempt to 'catch up.' Jamali confirms that these plans and projects have been consumed in the imagination of a perfect future, one of success and modernity.

Chapter 2

How has the BRI inspired development fantasies of local actors?

The subject of the BRI has been extensively discussed by both academics (e.g. Zhexin 2018 ; Himaz 2018 ; Khan 2019 ; Flint, Zhu 2018 ; Hillman 2018) and government bodies (e.g. UAE, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) however its effect on local actors has yet to be in such depth. In this chapter I use the qualitative method of discourse analysis to look into how the BRI has affected local development visions. I suggest that the BRI has inspired local development visions through the notion of ‘connectivity.’ This notion has become apparent in the narratives of local actors attributing it to national and regional success.

I will draw on a range of scholars such as Agnew and Flint/Zhu who discuss notions of connectivity within the framework of geopolitical imagination. Both these themes have played into Larkin’s poetics of infrastructure, that envisions an aesthetic or promise that fits the imagination of a nation. It is this interplay that will form the foundation of this analysis.

This chapter will focus on the theme of ‘connectivity’ as an integral factor affecting local actors in their development visions regarding regionalisation and political stability. It has not only inspired unity within the nation but on a regional level also through visions of enhanced trade and communication. This discourse analysis will include the cross analysis between Larkin’s theory, Flint/Zhu’s notion of geopolitical imagination and local narratives represented by national bodies in both Pakistan and Dubai. I will therefore align my assertion with Larkin - that the poetics of infrastructure inspires a vision of that of success for national and individual actors. This vision of success includes financial success and regional integration.

To start, it is essential to introduce the initiative. The Belt and Road initiative was launched in 2013 by President Xiping in Kazakhstan. The two fold plan includes a maritime and overland trade route within six economic corridors. The land based route aims to connect China to Europe through Central Asia and Russia while its maritime counterpart aims to link with Europe via the Middle East but stretching its naval capacity to encompass West Africa and also South East Asia.³⁵ The initiative attempts to revive the qualities of the former Silk Road of harmony and mutual benefit in order to achieve better economic and regional growth.

It’s foci are as follows:

- Policy coordination
- Unimpeded trade
- Financial Integration
- People to people bonds ³⁶

These five types of connectivity are a part of the greater geopolitical imagination of connectivity on both a domestic and regional level and encompasses both the cultural and political realms. I refer to this notion of ‘connectivity’ as the following ‘state of being interconnected’ that has inspired development visions. Some scholars like Sparke support the idea that these imaginations often look

³⁵ ‘Belt and Road Initiative,’ *European Bank for Reconstruction and Development*, (2018), <https://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/belt-and-road/ebd-and-bri.html>

³⁶Zhang Zhexin, ‘The Belt and Road Initiative: China’s New Geopolitical Strategy,’ *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (2018), pp.327-343, pp.329.

towards connectivity and selerity in the hope for economic success. Nations have shifted their focus from an inward looking ‘us’ and ‘them’ fantasy into one that seeks regional integration.³⁷ Allen on the other hand draws attention to connectivity being ‘a relational effect of social interaction.’³⁸ He argues that through this form of social interaction power can be exerted through a number of ways such as domination, manipulation, coercion. Agnew’s geopolitical imagination is centred around the fact that states vie for power outside their own borders in a bid for power.³⁹ States have recently become significant as territorialised entities which seek to exert their power due to their claim to sovereignty over its own and other spaces. He, like Allen, draws attention to the social nature of power and its subtlety in its ability to coerce and manipulate through a number of avenues. One such avenue is infrastructure power, introduced by Mann and its integral role in the social power of the state. This is considered a coercive mode of power through the act of providing goods and services. It could be argued that the BRI is a form of infrastructure power.

There is an assumption that infrastructure development is a durable investment, certainly upheld by the BRI. It is these infrastructures that will connect host countries internally and integrate them with the region. It can therefore be argued that these infrastructures are an integral part of the coercive nature of the BRI which could extend to ‘coercing’ countries in which they’ve invested to adopt a similar vision of connectivity and success. It could be argued that the BRI is using the duality of the infrastructure to evoke a similar sentiment.

The visions of local actors are evoked by the ‘poetics’ of infrastructure, the emotional sentiment inspired by the physical object of infrastructure. He states that these physical structures create a sense awe and fascination and emotional investment. The emotional investment inspired by the physicality of the infrastructure has caused both Pakistan and Dubai to take on different fantasies. The ports of Gwadar and Jebel Ali will be the infrastructure projects evoking these fantasies. I will suggest that Pakistan has taken on the vision of becoming a politically stable nation, with a strong position within the global economy. In the case of Dubai, I suggest that its expansion of Jebel Ali with BRI investment has inspired the vision of global success.

The outcome of these fantasies differ based on the political structures of each place. It is therefore important to identify and look into the political systems that run in Pakistan and the UAE in order to gauge how these fantasies have come together and how they have been projected. Pakistan, a democratic nation has been questioned in its structural characteristics. Scholars like Qazi have asserted that Pakistan is a weak state with a complex relationship with modernisation. It has therefore led to a complicated political structure which arguably swings between an authoritarian state and democracy.⁴⁰ Husain argues that its current position has been a result of political instability, lack of effective leadership which has indeed been an obstacle to it truly solidifying itself as a democracy.⁴¹ Anwar et al confirm Husain’s arguments which have also affected the local economy. They suggest

³⁷ Matthew Sparke, ‘Geopolitical Fears, Geoeconomic Hopes and Responsibility of Geography,’ *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 97, Issue 2, (2008), pp.340.

³⁸ John Allen, *‘Lost Geographies of Power,’* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2003), pp.2

³⁹ John A. Agnew, *‘Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics,’* (New York, Routledge, 2003), pp.26.

⁴⁰ Wajahat Qazi, ‘The State of Democracy in Pakistan,’ *International Journal of Education and Research*, Vol 1, No. 1, (2013), pp.5.

⁴¹ Ishrat Husain, ‘Pakistan’s Economy and Regional Challenges,’ *Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 55, No.3 (2018), pp 253-27, pp.254.

that the economic situation is hindered by the political situation so much so that the only way it could be rectified is through the integration of a social, political and economic structure.⁴²

Conversely Dubai, in the UAE forms one of the two wealthiest emirates. The UAE follows a differing political system composed of patrimonial monarchs. Considered a rentier state, oil wealth makes up the majority of the economy and has the largest economic growth rates in the region. This has resulted in a large influx of foreign direct investment.⁴³

The effect therefore of the BRI differs in terms of how they have inspired development projects and local actors. I use the following media outlets to examine the localised perspective on how the BRI has indeed affected local actors. To examine Pakistan, I use the following English newspapers and the CPEC website to delve into this chapter. The Dawn, The Tribune, The News are all well established media outlets all of which have been publishing since 1947. I will also be looking at the CPEC online outlet and the Gwadar Port Authority which will cement the vision that Pakistan has for itself. Regarding the UAE I will use the Dubai Port Authority online outlet and Gulf News to represent the vision of Dubai's local actors.

In reference to Husain's belief that some kind of social, political and economic cohesion needs to take place in order to aid its economic recovery, BRI investment I will argue has served this purpose. Local actors in Pakistan have taken on the vision of economic success that the BRI promises. Reports from The Dawn echo these views. For instance, during his first official visit to China in a meeting between Pakistani Prime minister Imran Khan and President Xi Jinping, Xi said the BRI investment would be a '*new era of China-Pakistan destiny.*'⁴⁴ This supports Larkin's notion that infrastructures provoke '*deep, affectual commitments, particularly for developing countries.*' It is strongly connected to the feelings of promise that this relationship provides Pakistan - the promise of economic success and regional integration.

These feelings of promise are echoed in statements from local government actors as a result. At the Belt and Road Initiative Forum, Prime minister Imran Khan called the BRI '*a model of collaboration, partnership, connectivity and shared prosperity.*' There is a sense of promise in the idea that the two parties will both benefit from the infrastructure projects like Gwadar. This vision of shared prosperity is held in the promise of connectivity.

The prime minister has also made statements directly about the port development in Gwadar such as the following : '*Our critical infrastructure gaps are being plugged. Gwadar, once a small fishing village, is transforming rapidly into a commercial hub. The Gwadar airport will be the largest in the country.*'⁴⁵ It is worth noting the mention of the infrastructural disparities that Pakistan continues to suffer from. This is reminiscent of Larkin's suggestion that developing countries particularly feel '*deep affectual commitments.*' Gwadar has been used here as a symbol of something greater than itself which has emerged from a small entity. The mention of an airport reinforces the idea that This is a

⁴² Sofia Anwar, Qaiser Abbas, Muhammed Ashfaq, 'Introduction to the Pakistani Economy, University of Agriculture,' (Pakistan, 2017)

⁴³ Christopher M. Davidson, 'The United Arab Emirates: Prospects for Political Reform.' *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (2009), pp.117.

⁴⁴ 'Pakistan wants to learn from China.' *The Dawn*, 11/2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1443081>

⁴⁵ Baqir Sajjad Syed, 'Imran calls for tackling poverty, climate change, *The Dawn*, (27/04/2019), <https://www.dawn.com/news/1478639>

long term project, aligning itself with the ‘commitment’ of which Larkin speaks and it becoming a ‘commercial hub’ emphasises it as the facilitator of connectivity and economic growth.

This notion of Pakistan becoming a significant actor is further emphasised by campaign slogans. Pakistani business owner made note of one of which read ‘*Emerging Pakistan,*’ on London buses. This is aimed to promote Pakistan’s safe and secure economy in an investment opportunity of a lifetime in Gwadar. The fact that these campaigns about Gwadar have surpassed Pakistani borders is resonant of the fact that Gwadar is a symbol of national success and that Pakistan as a whole has the potential to become a significant global actor.⁴⁶

Former prime minister described the BRI as ‘*positive development for Pakistan.*’ His statement goes on to emphasise multimodal connectivity, which brings together other modes of transport. Making mention of the digital world as well adds a new dimension to the connectivity in the initiative.⁴⁷ The tone of these statements show a strong air of certainty in this partnership and BRI investment. It brings out a sense of promise and modernity. The narrative of unity, sharing and togetherness arise time and again, continuing to echo the BRI core points. The poetics of infrastructure development have been brought out in these statements through these news outlets with the poetic hyperbolic style of language. Gwadar has been the focal point of this fantasy. The mere idea of this BRI investment and partnership with China has elevated the vision of Pakistan almost to match their own.

Next, the CPEC online outlet will be analysed. Pakistan falls under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The aim of CPEC is to ‘promote bilateral connectivity’⁴⁸ through a variety of infrastructural and social projects. It not only advocates for international connectivity but specifies regional connectivity for Pakistan. This notion of ‘connectivity’ is central to the CPEC vision and it seeks to ‘promote’ not both global and domestic connectivity for Pakistan. Infrastructure potential therefore lays the foundation for Pakistan's development and security plans. The official messages of the CPEC initiative represent corresponding narratives, including rhetoric of ‘*regional integration, harmonized development*’ from the Minister of Planning, Development and Reform and ‘*development of Gwadar Port will greatly benefit the region, greater connectivity*’ from the Pakistani Ambassador to China.⁴⁹ These statements embody the potential of economic development and connectivity.

⁴⁶ Murtaza Ali Shah, ‘CPEC vital for China’s One Belt One Road Initiative: expert,’ *The News International*, Pakistan, (26/04/2018),

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/309128-cpec-vital-for-china-s-one-belt-one-road-initiative-expert>.

⁴⁷News Desk, ‘Shaukat Aziz shares insights on the Belt and Road Initiative,’ *The Express Tribune*, (28/04/2019), <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1961192/1-shaukat-aziz-shares-insights-belt-road-initiative/>

⁴⁸ CPEC, Vision and Mission, <http://cpec.gov.pk/vision-mission/3>

⁴⁹ CPEC, Official Messages - Asad Umer/Ms.Naghmana Alamghir Hashmi, <http://cpec.gov.pk/official-messages>

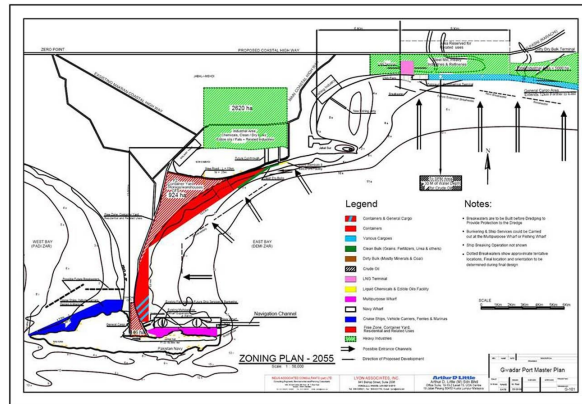


Figure 1 - Grand Plan Map of Pakistan, Gwadar Port Authority 2055⁵⁰

The lived fantasy or romanticisation of the port is embodied by the above Grand Plan Map of Gwadar Port. This blueprint is composed of not only a city but an airport, which brings to light the fantasy Pakistan has for itself. The following interprets the map in order to further detail Pakistan's vision. The duration of time that this plan includes (up to 2055) is demonstrative of the long term vision of the project and that Pakistan envisages itself becoming a vital commercial hub. The area of land covered is estimated at around 10,000 hectares and the fantasy of being a regional hub is detailed in the 924 hectares which is due to handle containers and general cargo. The volume of cargo expected to be received is highlighted by the estimated 50 million tonnes per annum and the 8 potential entry points due to receive it. Furthermore, they have planned a naval base to oversee the goods moving in and out of the port. Both ground area and cargo volume that the port expects to manage is emphatic of Pakistan's expectation to be a powerful regional actor through strengthening its alliances with neighbouring countries and those further afield.

The port's conceptualisation as the 'Symbol of Prosperity' encapsulates well the fantasy of Pakistan's future image. This infrastructure potential and notion of Gwadar as a 'symbol' could be tied also to Pakistan's image of becoming more modern. Larkin highlights that infrastructures are duplicates of others so that cities and nations alike can participate in what we know as 'modernity'.⁵¹ The development of Gwadar has the potential to make Pakistan a 'symbol' of modernity and an example of pioneering infrastructure that could be copied by other nations in the future. However, at present Pakistan battles with the internal conflict of whether Islam and modernity are compatible. That being said, this port structure is 'symbolising' its modernity and economic progress. Khan supports the notion that Pakistan is attempting to become a better version of itself, a 'new' Pakistan by discussing the Pakistan Vision 2025 which comprises regional connectivity and modern infrastructure development.⁵²

The Pakistan Vision 2025 has been put together by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform in Pakistan in consultation with other local actors. The slogan reads 'One nation, One Vision' which is reminiscent of the BRI slogan 'One Belt One Road.' The vision is for 2025 and promotes a 'shared vision' through which to become 'one of the ten largest economies by 2047.' This 27 year

⁵⁰ Gwadar Port Authority, Grand Plan Map 2055 - <http://www.gwadarport.gov.pk/masterplan.aspx>

⁵¹ Larkin, 'The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure,' pp.333.

⁵² Zahid Khan, 'The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Economic Rationale and Key Challenges,' *Chinese Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol. 5, No.2, (2019), pp.252.

timespan emphasises the desire to level itself with other leading economies in the world. It initially acknowledges the challenges that Pakistan faces but I would argue that it does not acknowledge the severity of them as it seeks to inspire its audience to receive this fantasy as a legitimate ‘roadmap’ to its ultimate destination. This vision is described as a return to the roots of the foundation of the country. It conceptualises this vision as the ‘*Pakistani Dream : a national vision to provide a shared destination, a motivation for synergising efforts, and a structure to enable leap-frogging on the development pathway.*’⁵³ Concurrent with the bestial imagery promoting fast pace development is the idea of wanting to turn Pakistan into the next ‘Asian Tiger’ which is particularly poignant. This animal imagery not only gives the vision a sense of ferocity but also being higher up on the food chain. It seeks to be on the same level as one of the Four Asian Tigers - Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan. They have indicated similar trends other successful South Asia nations have displayed and that have become successful according to the following, namely: political stability, education, investment in science, strategic investment. As a result they plan to rectify these obstacles in order to fulfil the ‘dream’ of being a ‘high income economy.’

The national vision is the ultimate manifestation of all that Pakistan hopes to achieve. These fantasies of economic success and regional integration have been co created by local state actors and the exponents of the BRI which resonate fantasies of the latter. As a result, local actors in Pakistan have therefore created an exaggerated vision that exceeds their borders in alignment with the vision of the initiative.

Although the development of Jebel Ali Port precedes the BRI, I would like to argue that the BRI investment and goals have still had an effect on the development vision. Unlike Gwadar which is still being developed, Jebel Ali Port is the world’s largest port harbour. This allows me to see the impact of the BRI on various stages of port development and change in geopolitical imagination. It is also an indicator of how the developmental strength of different actors interacts with the coercive nature of the BRI.

The Dubai Port Authority has been responsible for issuing publications, offering information on the port and its development. Its publications also include the vision of the port and its growth. The vision report put out by the DPA uses similar narratives to the BRI and the theme of ‘connectivity’ is extremely present throughout, ranking them fourth in the ‘Global Connectedness Index, 2016.’ A strong component is ‘multimodal connectivity,’ displaying plans for sea, air and land connectivity. This exceeds the multilateral notion of the BRI’s connectivity which includes a cultural component also. This is a more physical connectivity with a focus on efficiency and financial benefit. According to Notteboom and Rodrigue, ‘multimodal connectivity’ makes up a large part of port expansion. Port expansion here is part of a wider concept of regionalisation and modernisation. This notion of expansion in the movement of matter through infrastructure is well represented by the poetic element of Larkin’s theory.

The Dubai Port Authority has conceptualised the port as a development with a sizable expansion plan.⁵⁴ Notteboom and Rodrigue also assert that the port authorities, compared to other local actors, potentially play a larger facilitating role within port development expansion.

⁵³ Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, ‘Pakistan 2025 : One Nation, One Vision,’ Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan, (2014), pp.6.

⁵⁴ Dubai Port World, <http://dpworld.ae/>

It is also worth looking into the vision, created by the DPA. The following is the ‘multimodal connectivity’ model the port authorities have in their vision in order to facilitate a greater movement of goods. The maritime connections include: 80 plus weekly services, 140 plus direct ports of call, 180 plus shipping lanes indicative of the volume that the port hopes to attract, which also includes the following:

- Air customs bonded corridor, connecting a sea-air box within 45 minutes of the discharge
- Road network with 2-3 days road.
- Transit anywhere in the GCC ⁵⁵

This further implies the efficiency they hope to achieve by cutting down travel time by increasing infrastructure development. This falls in line with the notion of ‘system building’ of which Larkin speaks which forms a complex system of networks which I would suggest inspires this sense of being connected with something greater than just the nation. This notion of multimodal connectivity and the process of transition has enabled local actors to see and envision something greater than what already exists. Kos et al go on to discuss the port structure entity as an object which brings together other modes of transport, enabling a spatial shift to accommodate this new structure, again further inspiring the sentiment of elaboration.⁵⁶

In line with the theme of elaboration and building networks, CEO of the investment company Aquachemie made the following statement ‘*The project will facilitate the manufacture and distribution mode that will see certain products being processed or manufactured regionally and sold globally.*’⁵⁷ Coupled with the sentiments of elaboration, it implies that local actors see this port as a structure that allows them to surpass physical boundaries and enter a global market on a larger scale. Similar to the CPEC message of economic success the port is advertised by the DPA online outlet that the port is ‘*playing a vital role in the UAE economy.*’ In light of this, their media outlet announced last month that a Chinese company, key investors in the BRI will be funding the e-commerce side of this port development focusing on ‘*communication and exchange related activities.*’⁵⁸ A comment from the Managing director CEO and Managing Director, DP World, UAE Region and CEO of Jafza : ‘*This company is an integral part of the vision of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council, to make Dubai a global hub for e-commerce.*’⁵⁹ Expansion for local actors surpasses just the physical infrastructure and adds a new dimension to it. Although the physical infrastructure inspires these visions it could be argued that digital infrastructure does the same. It seems that the UAE seeks to be connected through multiple platforms.

The narrative of expansion and connectivity are similar from both sets of local actors. From the above examples, it is clear that the fantasies of local actors have been affected by the BRI and its investment.

⁵⁵ DP World UAE Region October, 2017, <http://dpworld.ae/media-centre/publications/>

⁵⁶ Kos, Samija, Brcic, ‘Multimodal Transport in the Function of Port System Containerisation Development.’ pp.5.

⁵⁷ Manoj Nair, ‘Jebel Ali is still an investment magnet at 40.’ *The Gulf News*, (2019), <https://gulfnews.com/business/jebel-ali-port-still-an-investment-magnet-at-40-1.68331830>

⁵⁸ News and Press Release, ‘*DP World, UAE and China’s Zhidi Company to explore next generation global logistics hub in Dubai,*’ (02/2020), <http://dpworld.ae/news/dp-world-uae-region-and-chinas-zhidi-company-to-explore-next-generation-global-logistics-hub-in-dubai/>

⁵⁹ Ibid

Pakistan, being a developing country, envisions itself as a global actor with fantasies of economic success. The UAE on the other hand sees itself as further adding to the success it has already had envisioning itself as truly connected with the rest of the world on multiple platforms.

Chapter 3

How is labour recruitment challenging the imagination of these state actors?

Having established that both Pakistan and the UAE have created exaggerated narrative, and visions influenced by the Belt and Road initiative, I would now like to move onto how these positive visions are challenged by local labour recruitment, highlighting the disparity between the visions of local actors and the reality of these mega projects.

It is first essential to discuss recruitment as a concept and how this plays into the vision.

I will use the working definition of labour recruitment mentioned earlier for the process that I would like to discuss in this chapter. Labour organisation is a vital aspect of infrastructure development in order for results to be successful. The labour market is an integral part of the economy as it responds to supply and demand. According to Hussmanns, the labour supply is referred to as the economically active population or labour force and comprises two elements : employed and unemployed. These two are also an assessment for government programmes aimed at achieving national goals such as opening up opportunities for more people to enter the workforce and reducing poverty. When measured these two factors are key in determining the economic situation of a nation, especially the unemployment rate. The connection between socio-economic factors and employment highlight details about employment within subsets of the population or community. It also details how much economic activity generates financially as well as whether or not individuals are able to sustain themselves based on job opportunities.⁶⁰

Kanwal et al have made the observation that there is a link between employment and income. It is the employment ratio that determines the income of a community.⁶¹ Dev confirms this and adds that in order to consistently lower poverty, the expansion of labour opportunities is an important part of the process. However accessibility to jobs is based on educational skill which is often dictated by social background. This is therefore indicative of earning capacity and financial security.⁶²

On the other hand, Enrico et al note the change in development of port cities from labour based organisation to capital based investment, generating issues for native communities. The direct and indirect effects of this attribute to the reduced benefits they receive from accomodating a port structure. Although their case study is in relation to Italy it could be argued that this situation is applicable to other port structures, both Gwadar and Jebel Ali for instance.⁶³ In the UAE it could be suggested that advertising their capital investment further enhances the expansionist visions they have while continuing to limit and subordinate labour organisations. In the case of Gwadar, the adjustment of labour organisation by excluding a race from the recruitment process is causing tension and opposition within Pakistan.

⁶⁰ Ralf Hussmanns, 'Measurement of employment, unemployment and underemployment - current international standards and issues in their application,' *ILO Bureau of Statistics*, (2007), pp.1.

⁶¹ Shamsa Kanwal, Ren Chong, Abdul Hameed Pitaf. 'China-Pakistan economic corridor projects development in Pakistan: Local citizens benefits perspective,' *Journal of Public affairs*, Vol. 19, Issue 1,(November 2018)

⁶²S. Mahendra Dev, 'Economic Liberalisation and Employment in South Asia,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, Issue No. 3, (2000), pp.135-146, pp.136.

⁶³ Enrico Musso, Hilda Ghiara, Alessio Tei 'Port cities and Labour Opportunities,' *Revista de Evaluacion de Programmas y Politicas Publicas*, No.4, (2014), pp.5-20, pp.7.

Both the social factors of employment and poverty are affecting labour recruitment within these mega projects regarding unskilled labour. It is worth noting that in Gwadar it is native communities that are affected whereas in the UAE they are non native communities who will never have the right to citizenship.

The BRI not only inspires a positive vision taken on by local actors but also advocates new job opportunities for local populations. In Pakistan, port development has promised over 700,000 new jobs which in turn will boost the national economy.⁶⁴ However since the inception of the initiative, Baloch nationals have felt marginalised within the recruitment process. I will discuss the relationship that Baloch nationals have with the state and subsequently argue that this has led to the disenfranchisement of the Baloch community, causing a threat to port development and therefore the vision of local actors in Pakistan.

In the case of Jebel Ali, the vision is only to become bigger and better which means increasing its workforce. Dubai's workforce currently consists of migrant workers and restrictive labour laws have been employed which limit the movement and rights of workers. However the percentage of migrant workers far outweighs that of local workers which, despite having the potential to threaten national security has been kept at bay. Similar to Pakistan, labour forces have a complex power dynamic with the state which will also be discussed after which I will argue that the exclusion and physical isolation of the workforce undermines the UAE's vision for further connectivity and expansion.

In the recruitment process of the Gwadar Port it has been clear that there has been a disparity in the selection of the workforce and this disparity is challenging the vision for Pakistan as a secure nation. Provincial tension is overlooked as Pakistan has been more concerned with its regional integration. This continual discourse of connectivity, peace and ultimate economic success with respect to the Gwadar port falls foul of the reality of the politics of the port itself which brings me to my next point about the disenfranchisement of the Baloch community. Baloch insurgents have shown visible opposition towards various installations in particular Gwadar port which is located in the state of Balochistan.

Balochistan mainly constitutes a tribal community of nomadic pastoralists who have been battling Pakistani authority in a post colonial struggle. The Baloch have a complicated relationship with the central state. There is an overt and dynamic power struggle between the two due to Balochistan's rich resources. Larkin argues that infrastructure can be used as a physical manifestation of state power which can cause complex emotional reactions and responses.⁶⁵ In this case it could be argued that the port structure is being used as a visible representative of state presence within the province. I would argue that this could be the way in which the state could be attempting to 'coerce' and impose its vision on this part of the country which has sparked an abundance of emotions within the local community.

Yigit speculates that the central authority is plundering local natural resources and excluding the people from the potential benefits. The current Baloch struggle stems from these post colonial struggles of identity and dispossession within the larger context of the invasion of large infrastructure

⁶⁴ Shahid Rashid, 'Employment Outlook of China Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Meta Analysis,' *Centre of Excellence: China - Pakistan Economic Corridor*, Working Paper 28, Issue 2, (2018), pp.3.

⁶⁵ Larkin, 'The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure,' pp.334.

projects. These sentiments are echoed in the violent insurgencies that have taken place over the last decades. Yigit agrees that there has been much tension between Baloch nationals and the Pakistani central authority, the reason being that they have been excluded from the decision making processes regarding CPEC. He confirms the sentiments of labour exclusion but I would argue that the former is the root cause for the Balochi backlash.⁶⁶ Larkin also notes that infrastructure matter 'enables the movement of other matter'⁶⁷ which plays into the concerns of Baloch nationals. In this case it could be argued that the Gwadar infrastructure project is encouraging the social 'movement' of opposition. This opposition has arisen as a result of the effect these new infrastructures are predicted to have.

As mentioned above, there are two social factors which indicate how this is to be the case - poverty and employment. Balochistan is the poorest province in the country and only has very basic amenities which means the majority of the population live under the poverty line. The Multidimensional Poverty Index opposes the promise of 'rapid' economic growth with their figures showing between 2004-2015 poverty has decreased by a mere estimate of 17%. Balochistan is still the second highest poverty stricken region after the FATA areas. The Gwadar port project began in 2002 and since then there has been minimal change to the lifestyle of the locals.⁶⁸ This is a clear marker of the fact that the CPEC project plays into concerns that as the poorest province but rich in natural resources, these infrastructure projects have overlooked more than half of the population who still live under the poverty line.

Furthermore, since the deal was signed, the promise of new job opportunities has paved the way for the development of this project as Pakistan has always struggled with its high unemployment rates. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics - Labour Force Statistics for 2017-2018 show that 45% of Balochistan's population is illiterate. The CPEC project is estimated to need a million workers both skilled and unskilled which leaves a disparity in employment. External employment has therefore been necessary and according to a 2018 report over five million Chinese nationals are due to be employed and will be residents of Gwadar.⁶⁹ However Adeel points out that a lot of Punjabis have been contracted to carry out menial labour tasks as opposed to Baloch nationals who could qualify for this type of labour. The fact that Baloch nationals have not been included in the employment for the project continues to set apart the so-called 'development' of their province and Pakistan as a whole. Both these social factors have caused unrest within the province and therefore the country, which has enabled the 'movement' of opposition, risking the element of connectivity within the country. It may be confirmed therefore that this state of tension has caused Balochis to be not only disenfranchised but also excluded and ignored from the processes taking place around them.

This exclusion directly subverts the vision of Pakistani local actors of connectivity and economic success. With Balochistan being the poorest province, one would have thought that Gwadar Port could have eased regional tension and put them on the map, so to speak, however the history of the province's relationship with the state coupled with a new foreign influence has made the local population insecure about their position and therefore excluded the labour recruitment process and

⁶⁶ Dilek Yigit, 'Baloch Nationalism and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor,' *Journal of Politics and International Studies*, Vol. 5, No.1,(2019), pp 11-24, pp.13.

⁶⁷ Larkin, 'The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure,' pp.329.

⁶⁸ Adeel Khan, 'Renewed Ethnonationalist Insurgency in Balochistan, Pakistan: The Militarized State and Continuing Economic Deprivation,' pp.9.

⁶⁹Dipanjana Roy Chaudry, 'China-Pakistan Gwadar Port Runs into Rough Weather,' *The Economic Times*,(2019)

other decision making processes.

In the UAE, it is well known that about 90% the labour force is made up of migrant workers, while Emiratis only form about 5%.⁷⁰ An industrialisation wave took over during the early 2000s and the demand for inexpensive labour rose considerably, aided by the foreign direct investment and oil prices. In the UAE there are over 1,300 construction projects and both Dubai and Abu Dhabi have received \$418 billion in investment.⁷¹ Ziadah highlights that Dubai has emerged as a significant actor on a global platform thanks to its infrastructural development however this has been completely dependent upon migrant labour. Although this is the case the Dubai Center for statistics provides basic figures of those participating in the workforce based on gender and citizenship nothing more.⁷² This is evidence that there is a significant lack of insightful information about the restrictive system in place provided by local actors. The global significance that has been highlighted has been founded on the stringent 'ethnoracial' class divide between skilled and inexpensive, unskilled labour. The repressive labour regime within the UAE I would argue has destabilised the vision for connectivity, expansion and prosperity for state actors.

In the Gulf states labour recruitment for both skilled and unskilled labour falls under the kafala system. This refers to the sponsorship system that applies to migrant workers looking to work in GCC states. It also applies to foreign investors however recent changes in the law have allowed foreign investors to access local markets without having a sponsor. However for migrant workers, the situation has remained mostly the same.

The state permits employers to wield almost unconditional power over their employees. They have control over the following:

- *entry/exit of the migrant*
- *renewal of stay in the country*
- *cancellation of the work permit*
- *control of the migrant's ability to move to another employer*⁷³

This system is one of a few restrictive measures existent in Dubai that keep labourers in a class strata of their own so as to not revolt or protest which would affect national security.⁷⁴ It bans migrants joining labour unions or any other trade group. These legal codes tacitly subordinate the unskilled labour force creating an atmosphere that if the workforce cannot be heard, there cannot be any issues. Having said this, there have been very large protests regarding lack of and withheld wages but the government responded by threatening workers with deportation.⁷⁵ I would argue that this system is the defining feature of the UAE labour market.

⁷⁰ Froilan T. Malit Jr. and Ali Al Youha, 'Labor Migration in the United Arab Emirates: Challenges and Responses,' *Migration Policy Institute*, (2013)

⁷¹ Sevil Sonmez, Yorghos Apostopoulos, Diane Tran, Shantiana Rentrop, 'Human Rights and Health Disparities for Migrant Workers in the UAE,' *Journal of Health and Human Rights*, Vol. 13, No.2, (2011), pp. 1-19, pp.4

⁷² Dubai Centre for Statistics, <https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us>

⁷³ Abd Al-Hadi Khalaf, Omar Shehabi and Adam Hanieh, '*Kafala: Foundations of Migrant Exclusion in GCC Labour Markets*,' Transit States, (Pluto Press, London, 2015), pp.82-83

⁷⁴ Ibid, pp.82.

⁷⁵ Sara Hamza, 'Migrant Labour in the Gulf: A Case Study of Dubai, UAE,' pp.91.

Khalaf et al highlight that the kafala system, although it conveys a sentiment of ‘care or good deed’ it still signified an imbalance in power relations within the state.⁷⁶ It makes sure that labour is kept temporary which confirms Dev’s idea that the outcome of labour flexibility is reduced cost of labour coupled with lack of welfare. It is ingrained in the psyche of the state that these workers are heavily reliant on them and that they can control contracts, duration of work and everything in between. It creates a sense of instability for workers as they are at the mercy of their employers and regardless of the time they have spent working have no rights to citizenship. ILO reports suggest that this has created a negative social impact however I would go further to say that it has created a sense of vulnerability for the workforce within the current structure.

Hanieh confirms that these class segments have been formed due to the influxes of migrant labour however he debunks the assertion that Kanwal et al make about the employment ratio determining the income of labourers. He rather points out that in the Gulf states income of labourers is actually a key indicator of their exploitation. He highlights the divide between the ‘*value of labour power a worker expends in the day vs the value of the commodity he produces.*’ This disparity has proven to become much wider when the value of the commodity that workers produce becomes greater, the value of the commodity it would take to produce does also, therefore proving the greater levels of exploitation.⁷⁷ It can therefore be assumed that with the growth in new industrial mega projects, there is a higher chance of exploitation. This exploitation does not only include the financial aspect but has been further enhanced by the spatial restrictions imposed on the labour force en masse. Ziadah refers to the labour villages that have arisen as a result of the new industrial mega projects like Jebel Ali which has restricted mobility and confined workers to new spatial boundaries. These smaller but substantial infrastructures confirm Larkin’s assertion that infrastructure can be considered a form of state power. Although advertised as giving workers ‘a sense of community’ the villages have been built in isolation, away from the city. The state has added a new spatial dimension to this subordination by exercising their infrastructural prowess by physically isolating the workforce. Furthermore, it is not just the villages that are isolated, it’s the infrastructure projects themselves which perpetuate this sense of exclusion and isolation.

The UAE is portraying narratives of expansion and connectivity which also affect social relations however the sense of vulnerability faced by the workforce and its heightened state exacerbated further by spatial exclusion undermines the former vision. Unlike Gwadar, the laws around labour in the UAE does not allow the workforce to fight back against the system. Rather the poetics of infrastructure here keeps the workforce in an oppressive state, isolating them from the infrastructure projects and ultimately the rest of society.

I have used Pakistan, specifically the province of Balochistan as an example of the struggle with social exclusion. The social exclusion to which I refer is that of the exclusion of the Baloch community. I have demonstrated the two social factors that the CPEC projects are affecting. I would therefore like to infer that the BRI ambitions are encouraging countries with ‘separatist’ issues to pursue larger dreams through local actors while avoiding situations on the ground and therefore threatening the security of the nation and regional integration. The provincial divisions that Pakistan faces already have caused an issue for the infrastructure projects that have been ongoing in the last

⁷⁶ Ibid pp.79.

⁷⁷ Adam Hanieh ‘*The Regional Scale: Bringing the Gulf States Back In,*’ Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East, (Haymarket Books, Chicago 2013), pp.126.

few decades. There is also a risk that if the country is reliant on external labour sources rather than its own that there are further cracks in national security.

I have used the UAE as an example of a state with a well established restrictive labour regime. This could be considered another dimension of separatism in that there is a large disparity between the state-labour force relationship. The restrictive nature of these labour laws have excluded the workforce from society - placing them both physically and otherwise on the periphery of not only the infrastructure projects but the nation.

Chapter 4

What does the disconnect between the reality and the imagination of state actors tell us about actualities of economic development?

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the disparity between the imaginations of local actors and the reality of labour recruitment within port structures has been investigated. It is clear that the realities for labour communities do not fit with the imagination of connectivity, expansion and success that these nations put out and the consequences do not align with the state vision. In this chapter I would like to examine the how roots of the geopolitical imagination regarding development serves as a foundation for economic development.

Having examined historical themes and narratives of the UAE and Pakistan's geopolitical imagination, I suggest that these sentiments are the primary focus of economic development plans. My study has shown that these sentiments are constructed and extended by state actors. Therefore economic development plans and megaprojects themselves could be described as a 'configuration of political power.'⁷⁸ They not only reconfigure physical spaces but are physical representatives of state fantasies and fundamentally represent the relationship between state power with other communities. This has been seen in the case of Dubai as it has had a substantial history with reconfiguring space and megaprojects which is arguably demonstrated by the sheer scope and pace of development it has seen. However, it is Gwadar's first time being the centre focus of a master plan. Other cities like Karachi were chosen but projects were unsuccessful in their planning and manifestation. Therefore within its imagination is embedded a sense of insecurity that these plans do not materialise properly. Jamali suggests there is a sense of anxiety in Pakistan's development plans as a result. There is not only a sense of financial insecurity but also social insecurity.

Reconfiguring spaces affects those who live in the area, changing its pace and movement. Although mega projects provide opportunities within a newly configured space such as access to social mobility, it also causes destabilisation and a sense of confusion, resulting in the dispossession of communities. Navigating new landscapes can be difficult and in some cases there has been a renewed military presence in these areas.⁷⁹

Flyvberg et al talks about the 'performance paradox' which relates to the disparity between the imagination of these infrastructure projects and the costs that come with them. They argue that the cost to produce these mega projects far exceed the predictions and often end up with a 'cost overrun' which was not a part of the planning.⁸⁰ They highlight that some consider these overruns an irrelevance because this has occurred with all the largest projects. Its irrelevance lies in that these new projects excite the imagination of local and global actors so the decision making process is less significant. I think this proves that the imaginations of a project supersede the realities of it such as overruns and I would note that the decision making process is ever evolving throughout the construction process.

⁷⁸ Gerardo del Cerro Santamaria, 'Megaprojects, Development and Competitiveness: Building Infrastructure for Globalisation and Neoliberalism' *Athens Journal of Social Science*, Vol.6, Issue 4, (2019), pp.264.

⁷⁹Hafeez Jamali. 'The Anxiety of Development Megaprojects and the Politics of Gwadar, Pakistan,' *Crossroads of Asia Working Paper Series*, (2019), pp.7.

⁸⁰ Bent Flyvbjerg, Nils Bruzelius, Werner Rothengatter, 'Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition,' pp.4.

New agreements are made continuously to expand the vision based on the infrastructure. Priemus et al confirms this by highlighting that these infrastructural visions are promoted due to the public investment it receives, its high profile image penetrating the psyche of the masses. However although people are being caught up with the vision itself, Flyvbjerg indicates that the entire nations are affected by the economic outcome of a singular project, whether it be success or failure. That said, Priemus asserts that mega projects differ in each country based on their existing infrastructural landscapes. In countries where the infrastructural landscape is sound, these would for the most part be developed countries, designing mega projects that would shift the imagination or physical geography substantially is quite a task. However for developing countries, mega projects could attract much needed investment, generate revenue, all of which could significantly change the infrastructural terrain as well as the way it sees itself.⁸¹ Oyedele confirms that these infrastructure developments are the key markers of the progressive leaders and their authority.⁸² The success or failure of them also changes the internal vision of a nation.

Regardless of what mega projects mean for different countries, national actors themselves are arguably being caught up in an unrealistic utopian vision. 'Zero-friction' may come with ease of access and better connectivity but I would argue that the reality of development itself is its inequality. Drucker highlights that 'economic development' was a phenomena which started in the fifties and was expected to rapidly grow economies across the world. However he confirms that the reality of this notion was very uneven. Economic development was predicted to pull the world out of poverty and redefine it. It was supposed to eliminate things like corruption and enable growth across a plethora of industries. He goes on to mention that foreign aid was a part of US policy which was supposed to counter Soviet style growth. However, the recipients of that aid were governments which meant that much of it was used to support other state led institutions. He suggests that foreign aid was used to gain the popularity of the people by spending it on attractions. Although this type of investment attracted support for governments and their institutions, economic growth was stagnant due to lack of job opportunities which could have been created by initiatives such as mega projects.⁸³ He goes on to point out that the development plans backed by advisors and academics were not the plans which generated much growth. He uses the example of the appearance of Britain, thrust onto a world platform through its specialisation in manufacturing and infrastructure development. The latter was a key component of internationalising business.

Abramovitz and David affirm that the key factor which affected the changes at this time was capital. It was at the heart of development plans and foreign aid. - the entire conceptualisation of economic development revolved around it.⁸⁴ However Drucker draws attention to the emergence of Britain as a combination of good leadership, technology and innovation which not only secured better infrastructure but job opportunities among many other things. Waits et al confirm a similar narrative of infrastructure development and assert that 80 percent of jobs came as a result of internationalising

⁸¹ Hugo Priemus, Bert van Wee, 'Megaprojects: high ambitions, complex decision making, different actors, multiple impacts,' *International Handbook of Megaprojects*, (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013), pp.1-8, pp.2.

⁸² Olufemi Ademola Oyedele, 'Infrastructure Problems of Developing Nations and Sustainable Development, (2016), pp.2.

⁸³ Peter Drucker, 'Economic Development Paradoxes,' *The New Realities*, (London, Routledge, 1989), pp.135.

⁸⁴ M. Abramovitz, P.A. David, 'Reinterpreting Economic Growth : Parables and Realities,' *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2, (1973), pp.428-39, pp.429.

local business. This is visible both in the UAE and in Pakistan as they pursue mega projects like Gwadar and Jebel Ali port.

Waits et al also talk about reorganising economic development which is a rather interesting notion. It looks more like the example of Britain given earlier. As shown above, there is an unspoken assumption that growth comes from the economy first and that capital is at the heart of it. Waits et al give a differing perspective, one that shows a more broad picture and connects multiple elements of a society to ultimate economic growth. They suggest that it may not be a singular element that gives rise to it but rather a way of connecting various industries together in order to achieve it. They highlight that it surpasses the 'locality' of growth and rather seeks to enhance itself through harnessing resources and forming alliances with other institutions. Rather than taking on economic development as a solo activity states are looking to form coalitions which are mutually beneficial. This change in outlook has shifted the way nation states see economic development. Not only are they attempting to reconfigure local spaces, they are also looking to reconfigure global spaces by merging with other global actors. They suggest that nation states have looked to other states with economic and governmental similarities in their quest for economic development.⁸⁵ I would argue that this extends to themes as well which could explain the BRI focus points and how they advertise and make it relatable to all host countries. It could therefore be suggested that bringing together states of the same mindset could form powerful coalitions and have the potential to reorganise global space, restructuring world order.

Prior to this new notion of reorganisation and economic development, outcomes were also measured differently. Waits et al describe its singularity through financial results however taking into account the suggestion of its multifunctionality, its goals and outcomes are measured differently. They use the example of education here - rather than measuring its outcome by the amount of financial aid put into it, one could measure the changes in levels of literacy so that local actors have a better idea of what they need to be doing. It is also important to note it is not just the state that should be held accountable for the input and output of initiatives but rather many other actors.

I would like to suggest here that the BRI fits half of this new organisational mould. It is an ambitious example of foreign actors coming together based on a set of core values in order to achieve financial success through infrastructure. The plan to reorganise space is very much a part of the initiative as it attempts to revive an ancient structure and create economic corridors throughout the world. It is a multidimensional initiative that not only seeks to tackle the financial integration of nations but emphasises social aspects also such as 'people to people bonds.' It has provided non state actors to invest and manage various projects, exemplifying its shared responsibility. However although all these themes seem to fit into a new reality of economic development, the measure of these initiatives is still not as broad as we would like to see. The initiative I would argue is still based on this large imagination, it lacks proof on how to measure these successes. Pakistan for example has just been caught up in the vision of itself which is visible in its vision 2030. The vision is almost solely financial and itself as becoming a financial stable nation. The UAE has also put forward a vision but it seeks to diversify its economy and reach targets which not only include financial gain. The former therefore still looks a lot like the old economic development plan while the latter seeks to include the new style of economic development.

⁸⁵Mary Jo Waits, Karol Kahalley and Rick Heffernon, 'Organising for Economic Development: New Realities Call for New Rules,' *Public Administration Review* 52, No.6, (1990), pp.617.

It is quite clear that infrastructure development has been at the forefront of Dubai's history not to mention the sense of ambition that comes with it. Financial plans have enabled the UAE to generate infrastructure successfully over an extended period of time. I would argue that the themes of development and expansion have meant that its geopolitical imagination has been centred around feelings of ambition and expansion. The notion of multimodal connectivity early on suggests that it understood the multifaceted nature of economic development hence why it has become a financial success. However the dispossession of its labour population is a visible example of how development itself is an uneven process. Although it has been financially successful it has been socially unsuccessful. With the UAE seeking to diversify its economy, its imagination to stay a prominent global actor remains; however this disparity seems to be becoming larger. Tightening labour regimes seems to undermine the work the nation is doing on a more public level.

However Pakistan has had a completely different experience with its infrastructure development. Its past has included a lot of insecurity in its plans both financially and socially. Therefore its geopolitical imagination have not been centred around themes like expansion. Rather its focus has been development on a scale to reach a 'normal' level, in keeping with other 'developed' nations. Its focus still resonates with that of its previous development plans and centres around capital which is understandable as its economy is so weak. With this in mind, I would like to align myself with Drucker's view that disenfranchisement is one of the side effects of mega projects in which case the situation previously mentioned regarding the Baloch community is actually not surprising. In fact, this is a visible example of reconfiguring space which emphasises the reality that economic development is not as one dimensional as it has been portrayed. These disparities between imaginations and realities is a clear indicator that the imagination of local actors is more important than its reality. Realities can often be largely ignored because there is so much hope and expectation which comes from infrastructure development, especially in the case of developing countries. In Pakistan's case I would argue that due to its former failings and insecurity regarding development, the BRI has offered it a plan that seems much more stable, providing it with investment and other actors to help it succeed. Most importantly for Pakistan it has provided vital investment which has the potential to enable Pakistan to become not only a strong regional actor but maybe even a global actor. It has also given Pakistan access to other non governmental actors with whom they can collaborate. These elements all make up the process of economic development. However it is essential to note that it is still the element of promise that has blown Pakistan away. This means that Pakistan's geopolitical imagination of becoming a regional and global success is still insubstantial.

It is clear from my arguments above that the BRI is still largely based on its ambitious imagination. Geopolitical imaginations are important in order to keep nations focused on their progress within a regional and global framework. However I think there is a tendency to be blindsided by them alone. In both cases of the UAE and Pakistan, this is applicable. Disparities are still very much visible within economic development and these seem like residual effects from the former style economic development plans. Plans like the BRI, although it seems to have planned the financial aspect of the initiative well, it's actors have not provided concrete plans with which to measure social progress which is key to overall economic development.

The overarching message of economic development is there is no such utopian world in which there is success without failure. Concepts like the 'zero-friction' society create mirages that there is in ideal

that can be reached in order to make everything more accessible. In doing so, one would gain a higher profile and therefore be more successful. Every nation has similar experiences with success and failure however the narrative seems to overlook failure in order to exemplify economic success with an equal and easy process to reach it. It seems that imaginations actually dominate the way in which state actors see economic development. The downside to this is that delays and failure of such projects could be the result of overlooking labour exclusion. Success is not based on imagination, but rather social cohesion in order to fulfil development plans.

Conclusion

This research aimed to answer how labour recruitment has impacted the developmental and geopolitical imaginations of state actors co-developing with the BRI. It analysed the way in which media outlets portray fantasies and create narratives through the promise of infrastructure projects. Within the construct of these narratives and depicted fantasies, it sought to examine labour recruitment in port structures which highlighted the exclusion of unskilled labour communities in both South Asian and the Middle East. This exclusion has led to a warped notion of the positives of infrastructure and economic development.

The framework of the geopolitical imagination allowed me to demonstrate current and past narratives that have been constructed by state powers. The main sentiments constructed by state powers were the sentiments of expansion and connectivity. The theory of infrastructure allowed me to investigate the meanings of physical and social networks and explore the complex relationships different actors have with them. The focus on port infrastructure created an abstract space in which to examine the intimacy of power structures and its realities.

While using local media outlets and government reports limits the scope of research, this approach has provided new insights into state narratives specific to Pakistan and the UAE. It brought to light how similar state narratives are to that of their investors as well as its own visionary history. Furthermore, it raised the exaggerated nature of government imaginations through the formation of both physical and digital infrastructure networks. Labour recruitment formed a large part of the vision of infrastructure with the promise of jobs which was a successful entry point to examine. However, this research has shown that the reality of labour recruitment differs drastically from state constructed narratives. Evidence in both cases, Pakistan and the UAE, demonstrate trends of the exclusion and separation of the unskilled labour force. Although my focus was minority workforce communities, it also raised the question of gender disparities in the workforce and their participation.

By analysing the history and themes of infrastructure development, it became evident that the exclusion of such communities were a side effect of economic development. My research demonstrated that economic development is highly reliant upon the visions and fantasies of state actors, so much so that these social challenges are overlooked. In allowing the process of exclusion to continue to take place and ignoring such realities, countries are risking their development process, the repercussions of which could include the failure of such projects.

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