Accumulation by Subordination: Migration-Underdevelopment in the Open Economy

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Introduction

Temporary labour migration has quietly become the cornerstone of Sri Lanka's economy. Although Sri Lanka's economy is more frequently associated with tea, tourism and garment manufacturing, in 2015 the combined net foreign exchange earnings of its three largest industries were eclipsed by workers' remittances amounting to US$ 6.9 billion (CBSL 2016). Equivalent to 66 percent of total export earnings and 8.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) for the same year (CBSL 2016), the prominence of these remittance inflows is commensurate to the volume of domestic and low-skilled workers leaving Sri Lanka to work abroad, overwhelmingly in the oil-economies of West Asia. The last available data indicate that there were 1,932,245 Sri Lankans in foreign employment as of 2010 (SLBFE 2012), approximately 10 percent of the country's total population and equivalent to roughly 25 percent of the domestic workforce. Given that annual departures have increased year-on-year since 2010, and large irregular migration flows remain unaccounted for, these figures can be considered conservative estimates of the true extent of Sri Lanka's migrant workforce.

For Sri Lanka's working poor, this statistical snapshot reflects a more intimate socio-economic reality: The prevalence of temporary labour migration as a dominant livelihood and survival strategy. Since the sweeping 1977 economic reforms deregulated Sri Lanka's immigration policy, foreign employment in West Asia has become an increasingly common means of earning an income in lieu of decent local work and – for the most developmentally marginalized communities – almost a rite of passage as a means of providing for the household. Yet the overlap between Sri Lanka's neoliberal turn and burgeoning migration runs deeper than immigration policy; the open economy has rekindled a colonial logic of accumulation by subordination that has marginalised the poor within an uneven and remittance-led model of development.

Accumulation by Subordination

The modern political-economy of Sri Lanka cannot be understood independently of its history with colonialism. Overlapping waves of colonial invasion by the Portuguese, Dutch and British have altered the structure of Sri Lanka's social and economic institutions: The traditional monarchy was progressively undermined by military incursions and the entrenchment of foreign administration within southern coastal regions; extraction economies arose around the regional trade of cinnamon, gems, and agricultural produce; and, under the British, tea plantations were established as a central feature of the economy. The last and most enduring of these shifts, from exploitation by extraction to exploitation by production, is a defining feature of British imperialism as a more explicitly capitalist form of colonialism (McNally 2006). The logic of imperial capitalism demands a reconfiguration of the social relations of production in order to facilitate the capital accumulation for which it exists. In Sri Lanka this did not entail a comprehensive adoption of capitalist social relations, but rather the strategic assimilation of the existing mode of production – including its ethnic, gender, and caste divisions – into capitalist production.

While capitalist social relations did extend to produce an urban working class in and around Colombo, this nascent proletariat was predominantly Sinhalese, in contrast to the concentration of 'Indian Tamils' performing indentured labour in the plantation sector (Gunasinghe 2011, p. 152). Forcibly brought over from Tamil Nadu by the British while the plantations were being established in the 1820s (De Silva 1948, p. 142), the Indian Tamils were ethnically subordinated as a segregated and exploitable labour force without political representation. The semi-feudal nature of production within the plantations was ensured by the strategic recreation of South Indian caste relations: Indian Tamils of higher castes were given relatively better jobs and lodgings within the plantation, whilst lower castes performed the most labour-intensive work and lived further afield (Jayawardena and Kurian 2015). The subordination of women under traditional patriarchal arrangements was likewise mirrored within the plantation communities, with social order constructed upon the disproportionate concentration of productive and reproductive labour amongst Indian Tamil women, who typically undertook all of the actual coffee and tea picking. The subsumption of ethnicity and gender by capital thus sustained growth and accumulation within the plantation sector, providing a lucrative source of investment for colonialists and the local bourgeoisie alike. Tea soon became Sri Lanka's largest and most valuable export commodity, yet the realization of profit and subsequent economic development it enabled necessarily occurred in local or foreign metropoles and not the plantation communities themselves, where the buttressing of discriminatory social relations to preserve semi-feudal conditions ensured the suppression of labour.

The plantation economy set an influential precedent for *accumulation by subordination*. Accumulation by subordination describes the explicit mobilization of prevailing social and cultural discrimination to legitimize and maintain particular modes of exploitation and capital accumulation. It is a logic of domination in which existing disadvantages are not simply exploited for production, but are intensified and recreated through the social relations of production itself. By fusing subordination with the performance of work that signifies and reaffirms subordinate status, social and cultural hegemony is harnessed to reinforce and give meaning to forms of exploitation whose very extremity would otherwise lack popular justification. This logic of accumulation by subordination is related to, but differs importantly from, its kindred concept of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003). Accumulation by dispossession refers to the manner in which neoliberal economic restructuring – through privatization, financialization, the manipulation of crises and state redistributions – facilitates enhanced capital accumulation (Harvey 2003). Accumulation by subordination, meanwhile, refers to the processes through which such dispossession is social and culturally normalized. In the case of the plantations, the Indian Tamils were already *dispossessed* by economic upheavals in India and their subsequent displacement to Sri Lanka, only to then be *subordinated* within Sri Lanka, culturally and socially, in order to preserve their exploitation within ethnicized semi-feudal production. In leveraging the cultural subjugation of Indian Tamils (and particularly Indian Tamil women) to maintain a semi-feudal workforce whose mistreatment garnered little political traction, the British effectively mapped out a blueprint for wealth creation that has since been reproduced in varying contexts to become the defining dynamic of Sri Lanka's uneven development.

The forging of Sri Lanka's post-independence identity has largely occurred within the ideological parameters of patriarchal ethno-nationalism, through which the Sinhalese majority has applied the logic of accumulation by subordination to construct economic and social advantages over women and ethnic minorities (Withers and Biyanwila 2014). However, the economic ramifications of patriarchal ethno-nationalism have been severely exacerbated by neoliberal restructuring that has mobilized patriarchal rhetoric to subordinate women (particularly of minority ethnic backgrounds) at the lowest tiers of export production in the plantation sector, garment manufacturing, and labour migration. Together, women working in these three spheres of economic activity have been the backbone of Sri Lanka's modern export economy and facilitated processes of development in which (as with the colonial plantation system) their political and economic interests have been conspicuously absent. Meanwhile, economic discrimination along ethnic lines was an underlying cause of Sri Lanka's civil war and remains a salient dynamic in the exploitative post-war reintegration of Tamil majority provinces and recent incidences of ethnic violence targeting Muslim communities and businesses, such as in Aluthgama.

Neoliberalism and the Roots of Temporary Labour Migration

In 1977, utilising additional legislative powers conferred to the newly created presidency, Jayawardene oversaw the implementation of a package of free market policies that rapidly deregulated and privatized the Sri Lankan economy. A floating exchange rate was adopted, import and migration controls were dismantled, the banking system and credit supply were substantially deregulated, and blueprints were laid down for a large export processing zone just north of Colombo in Katunayake (Richardson Jr. 2004, p. 4). This geographic reconfiguration of production was accompanied by the simultaneous abandonment of decentralized state-run industries, curtailing the provision of local employment opportunities for rural populations and particularly for women hitherto working within village workshops established by the national handloom industry (Kottegoda 2004, p. 63). The rural poor were further disadvantaged by the abolition of rice subsidies, on which the country had relied since independence, and the undermining of public healthcare and education by the rise of privatized alternatives (Gunasinghe 2011, p. 179).

Yet these free market reforms were not paired with a typically neoliberal fiscal stance. In a bid to galvanize the economy for export production the new government channelled massive capital expenditure into agriculture, industry, housing, and infrastructure projects (Richardson Jr. 2004, p. 48). Though successful in stimulating short-term growth and causing a marked increase in low value-added industrial exports, government expenditures were largely financed by developmental aid, international loans, and foreign exchange receipts earned from remittances. Together, these sources of capital represented a new web of macroeconomic dependencies and constraints (Richardson Jr. 2004, p. 51). Thus the early boom accompanying Jayawardene's liberalization programme was short-lived. By 1982 government debt had tripled, inflation was high, and trade deficits – no longer cushioned by import restrictions – were increasing rapidly. Debt servicing took up a growing portion of government revenue and precipitated heavy cutbacks to already strained developmental and welfare projects, while spiralling inflation caused ongoing reductions in real wages, and the post-independence trend towards distributional equality began reversing under intensified capital accumulation (Indraratna 1990, p. 3).

The new macroeconomic tensions of Sri Lankan neoliberalism produced and sustained three broad and interrelated trends: Increasing ethnic violence and the wartime economy, internal migration to find work in the urban export economy, and countrywide recourse to international migration as a livelihood strategy. All three structural shifts were fundamentally catalysed by the rationale of centralising economic activity in select urban settings of the Sinhalese-majority Western Province. As Kelegama notes;

> the development of industrialization that emerged after a decade of liberalization was very much lopsided with less diversification and was highly urban-based. Out of the industrial exports nearly 60 percent originated from the textile and garment sector and 70-80 percent of the industry in output terms was concentrated in the Western Province (2006, p. 202).

Neoliberal development continued to exclude the Sri Lankan Tamil population clustered in the North and East, but also fostered incendiary ethnic tensions amongst economically disaffected Sinhalese poor, many of whom in turn found military employment as the armed services swelled during the civil war (Shastri 2004, p. 85). For the rural Sinhalese population, diminishing local employment opportunities amidst the feminization of urban export manufacturing dramatically reconfigured the working lives of young women, large numbers of whom began migrating internally to support themselves and their families by labouring in the growing garment industry. Similarly, the pervasive decline of rural livelihoods alongside the relaxation of migration policies engendered growing temporary labour migration to West Asia. Women in particular were departing in large numbers, both deterred by the deepening stigma surrounding garment work and impelled by high demand for migrant domestic workers following India, Pakistan and Bangladesh's prohibition of female migration (Eelens, Mook, and Schampers 1992, p. 5). In path-dependant fashion these broad structural trends have matured since the 1977 turn to become increasingly embedded features of the Sri Lankan economy: Ethnic violence has eventually resolved as a post-war strategy of accumulation by dispossession; feminized (and more recently ethnicized) manufacturing has become entrenched as a key export industry; and the remittances received from labour migration have comprised an ever-greater slice of the foreign exchange earnings financing trade deficits and loan repayments.

Ethnic Violence and the Open Economy

The causality between economic restructuring in 1977 and the outbreak of civil war in 1983 is contested in Sri Lanka, complicated by the existence of competing and highly politicized interpretations of accountability for the conflict. Sri Lanka's macroeconomic problems during the neoliberal period are often attributed to the war, an assessment made particularly compelling when considered in light of post-war investment and the tourism boom along Sri Lanka's south-west coastline. Some have gone so far as to claim that the rapid intensification of mass temporary labour migration to West Asia was itself a response to the war (Sriskandarajah 2002). While the emigration of Tamil refugees has unambiguously been linked to the war, data from the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) clearly demonstrate that large-scale temporary labour migration of Sinhalese and Muslim populations began almost immediately after migration restrictions were lifted in 1977, and increased most rapidly in the early years before the war (SLBFE 2012). In a similar vein, arguments that economic decline only occurred due to the war tend to lose credibility when the causality is reversed by more substantiated evidence that the 1977 economic reforms and non-inclusive development aggravated existing ethnic tensions (Richardson Jr. 2004). While the Tamil population continued to experience discrimination within the open economy, so too did the Sinhalese poor endure material hardships. Living amidst polarising class relations, but without the ethnically-entitled patronage of the state-regulated economy, many working-class Sinhalese developed an acute sense of relative deprivation (Gunasinghe 2011, p. 11). The second JVP insurrection aside, popular discontent was not directed at the state, partially because the state's economic accountability was concealed behind the supposed impartiality of the free market and partially due to violent repression of the labour movement (Biyanwila 2011). Discontent was instead readily lent to ethnic antagonisms stirred by unscrupulous politicians (Manor 1984; Tambiah 1986) and Sinhalese capitalists struggling against Tamil and Muslim businesses benefiting from transnational trade connections after the removal of import restrictions (Gunasinghe 2011, p. 195). Thus, despite only two notable ethnic clashes in the 60 years prior, the 1977 elections preceded six years of incessant ethnic rioting and culminated in the 1983 Black July riots that left up to 3000 Colombo Tamils dead, thousands more internally and internationally displaced, and catalysed the commencement of the civil war (Gunasinghe 2011, p. 176).

The war itself was undeniably harmful for Sri Lanka's economy insofar as it deterred FDI, disrupted the tourist economy and prompted huge swathes of GDP to be earmarked for military expenditure over public investment (Kelegama 2006, p. 136). However, the rapid growth of the armed forces also acted as an economic safety valve providing mass employment for the same economically marginalized Sinhalese men left politicized by their relative deprivation in the wake of neoliberal reforms. Indeed, alongside export manufacturing and migration, the armed services formed (and remain) one of three major avenues of employment in the post-1977 economy (Shastri 2004, p. 85). The wartime economy was thus sustained through the contradiction of its own inception; class antagonisms and unemployment produced under neoliberalism were vented through the conflict they helped create and so obfuscated deep-seated macroeconomic frailties. Acute class inequalities were therefore maintained throughout the conflict, even if the war itself curtailed the extent to which investment and accumulation could be undertaken by local capitalists. In 2009, a bloody and unilateral end to the war eased these constraints and paved the way for 'post-war reconstruction' in the manner of accumulation by dispossession. Unwilling to demilitarize its 200,000 strong army – both for reasons of structural unemployment and the forceful preservation of Tamil subordination – the Sri Lankan government has since overseen investment in retail franchises, tourist developments, and the planned opening of new industrial parks and export processing zones (JDI 2011). Given that capital investment in the North and East is typically sourced from outside these regions, the state appears complicit in preserving ethnic fractures by transitioning military conquest into economic subjugation.

The Gendered Economy of Export Production

The 1977 reforms entailed significant reconfigurations of the nature and extent of women's participation in paid employment (IPS 2013), with female labour force participation rates jumping markedly despite 40,000 job losses associated with the decline of the local handloom industry (Kottegoda 2004, p. 63). This increase is given meaning by the creation of several EPZs that centralized garment manufacturing in urban areas, most prominently the Katunayake and Biyagama EPZs located just outside of Colombo (Sivanthiran 2008), as part of the government's concerted attempt to further integrate the labour of young Sinhalese women into global production networks. The geographical reconfiguration of the economy around urban export production reinforced existing patterns of uneven development by undermining rural employment opportunities and necessitating internal migration to EPZs in order to find work.

Yet the defining feature of this new avenue of accumulation was its specific subordination of a gendered (and more recently ethnicized) workforce. A sexist rhetoric of 'nimble fingers' (Elson and Pearson 1981) was mobilized alongside existing patriarchal parameters to construe garment work as an extension of household care work, and thus the domain of women's work in form and in function. Patriarchal notions of what constitutes 'appropriate' work marginalize a majority of Sri Lankan women from better paid work in high-growth and professional industries, irrespective of qualifications and educational attainment (Gunatilaka 2013, p. 3; Kotikula and Solotaroff 2006, p. 3-4). At the same time, this rhetoric ensures that women remain over-represented in the most labour-intensive, poorly-remunerated occupations that together comprise the backbone of Sri Lanka's export economy (Kotikula and Solotaroff 2006, p. 3). In the post-war period this has been compounded by ethnic discrimination, as Tamil women fleeing poverty in the underdeveloped North – many of whom are internally displaced persons – have been integrated into the garments industry on unequal terms (Fernando 2013). Tamil women working in the Katunayake EPZ have been seen to experience discrimination in terms of employment and working conditions, while their segregation from Sinhalese women is reportedly being used by employers to shore up ethnic tensions and undermine attempts at collective bargaining (Fernando 2013, p. 21).

A contradiction thus emerges, wherein social constructions of women as bastions of reproductive labour are fractured by the reality of a sexual division of labour that situates women as breadwinners working within the most exploitative tiers of production. Women constitute approximately 85 percent of all employees within Sri Lanka's EPZs (Department of Labour 2010), while also comprising the majority of estate workers within tea and rubber plantations (Kotikula and Solotarof 2006) and, until very recently, the majority of temporary labour migrants (DCS 2012). Tea and garments alone account for over half of all of Sri Lanka's trade earnings, while migration brings in remittances equivalent to 66 percent of exports (CBSL 2016). A patriarchal mode of production, formalized under colonialism and restructured through neoliberalism, has curtailed women's economic life to the performance of menial labour in circumscribed spheres of work: Indentured to plantations, exploited in factories or without rights within the private homes of foreign employers (Withers and Biyanwila 2014). While the extent of women's participation in these avenues of employment is substantially tempered by religious background, with notably less participation in the domestic workforce from Muslim and Christian women (Gunatilaka 2013, p. 11), what is fairly universal are the long hours, low-wages, and lack of labour rights typically associated with the feminization of export production as a cheaper, more 'competitive' alternative to unionized male labour (Standing 1989; Standing 1999). Despite the adverse conditions of women's employment and its significance for the export economy, women's increased participation in productive employment has politicized tensions between socially ascribed work and care roles. Young women working in garment factories are pejoratively branded *Juki girls* or *Juki pieces* (in reference to a common brand of sewing machine), connoting disposability and sexual promiscuity with the inference that work and urban life have compromised the chastity and respectability that women are expected to embody as symbols of the nation (Lynch 2007, p. 10). Women are thus subordinated, materially and culturally, as an exploitable mainstay of productive and reproductive labour.

Temporary Labour Migration: Foundations of the Remittance Economy

The third reconfiguration of economic life under neoliberalism is found in the beginnings of temporary labour migration to West Asia. In addition to liberalising labour migration itself, the Jayawardene government privatized the role of the Foreign Employment Unit (established by Sirimavo Bandaranaike just a year earlier), allowing recruitment agencies to proliferate within a loosely regulated system of migration practices (Gamburd 2000, p. 51). Local and regional contexts conspired to make recruitment a lucrative business. Oil-driven accumulation in the Persian Gulf had created huge surpluses and the attendant demand for migrant labour to perform the manual work necessitated by infrastructural expansion and the domestic labour sought by increasingly wealthy Arab households (Eelens, Mook, and Schampers 1992, p. 5). Meanwhile, declining rural livelihoods and the lack of decent work generated under neoliberal patterns of accumulation left much of the Sri Lankan population predisposed to meet such demand – particularly women, whose opportunities were greater due to the excess demand created by the prohibition of female migration amongst other labour-sending countries (Eelens, Mook, and Schampers 1992, p. 5). While foreign incomes for both sexes could notably outstrip local wages, the increasing costs of recruitment fees meant that agencies, sub agents and brokers – the merchants of labour – were accumulating significant wealth while migrants themselves faced difficulty financing their placements abroad (Eelens and Speckmann 1992). These escalating financial obstacles, paired with the well-documented physical and psychological hardships of indentured employment in West Asia (ILO 2010), speaks to temporary labour migration's emergence as a survival strategy pursued less by choice than by necessity. Meanwhile, the state itself benefitted greatly from increasing departures. Temporary labour migration circumvented pressure to generate employment locally, stymieing potentially destabilising political and economic tensions, while remittances brought in foreign exchange "urgently needed to sustain the economic policies of the UNP government" (Eelens, Mook, and Schampers 1992, p. 4). By effectively deferring the contradictions of uneven development, the structural dynamics of temporary labour migration have safeguarded the continuation of accumulation by subordination elsewhere in the economy.

It is against the backdrop of this neoliberal restructuring that temporary labour migration has taken root as an increasingly common survival strategy for populations geographically and demographically excluded from development. The accompanying growth of remittances – as a unique form of capital – has since informed a migration-driven model of underdevelopment that warrants further scrutiny.

Migration-Underdevelopment

Throughout the migration literature there is a tendency to portray the foreign exchange earnings provided by remittances as axiomatically beneficial to the migrant-sending economy. This assumption is frequently held by authors otherwise critical of temporary labour migration practices, positioning foreign exchange receipts as a silver lining to an exploitative and risk-laden survival strategy. The Sri Lankan corner of the literature is no different, with several studies highlighting important constraints and challenges faced by migrant households while treating the macroeconomic benefit of aggregate foreign exchange earnings as self-evident (Athukorala 1992; Kageyama 2008; Karunaratne 2008; Eversole and Shaw 2010; Gunatilleke, Colombage, and Perera 2010).

The implicit logic is that remittances are vital in providing the foreign exchange earnings necessary to prop-up the current account against countervailing trade deficits, thereby keeping the rupee strong and stable. A stronger rupee, in turn, keeps imports affordable and allows the government to accrue foreign reserves, which ease existing loan repayments and enhance creditworthiness for further international borrowing needed to finance ongoing developmental projects. With remittances comprising the single largest source of export earnings for Sri Lanka, and the principal cushion in the Balance of Payments since the early 1990s, it is easy to understand why this stability might be construed as positive. The major problem with this reasoning is that any potential for developmental benefit is highly contingent on how the government utilizes the money it borrows.

While select rural extremities have experienced some large infrastructural projects that leverage the interests of capital, Sri Lanka's development policy has been emphatically urban in its concentration on Colombo. With Colombo having long held Singapore as a template for its idealized self, both the Rajapaksa and Sirisena governments have invested heavily in urban development that – through their respective 'port city' and 'megapolis' projects – aspire to 'modernize' in the image of the South-East Asian city-state. The recently resuscitated port city project intends to create an offshore section of the city built on reclaimed land, providing more landmass earmarked for business, hotels, and a Formula One circuit. Meanwhile, the megapolis project is a US$ 20 billion undertaking that entails a more long-term restructuring of Colombo into distinct zones, with dedicated shopping, entertainment, and cultural districts situated in areas that were until recently slum housing occupied by Colombo's poor (David 2011; Dissanayake 2016). Described by the Urban Development Authority (UDA) as 'city beautification', development-induced displacement has resulted in involuntary urban resettlement programmes that, although usually accompanied by upgraded facilities, often disrupt the lives of the poor as communities, and livelihoods endemic to the heart of the city are reassembled on its outskirts (Stenholm 2015).

This disruption to the urban landscape has been justified on the basis of the intention to transform "the whole Western Region as the most vibrant and liveable cosmopolitan Smart City Region in South Asia – creating opportunities for all its inhabitants and investors, achieving the highest environmental standard and quality of life, ensuring sociocultural harmony, and expanding its position as the preferred location for business and industry" (MMWD 2016, p. 130).

The Ministry of Megapolis and Western Development (MMWD) candidly states, "The low-income community regeneration programs are urgent; especially to release the economic corridors occupied by them" (MMWD 2016, p. 105). Such intentions clearly benefit local and foreign capital, which is clustered in and around Colombo and largely invested in the services sector the plan intends to promote, but does little to accommodate the urban poor – let alone the majority of the population that lives outside the city or even the Western Province. By concentrating development so acutely on Colombo as a city-state in waiting, Sri Lanka is perpetuating a historical pattern of uneven development that marginalizes the vast rural economy. None of the loans taken to finance these projects would be possible without the foreign exchange earnings provisioned by migrant remittances, as Sirisena well knows, having returned to less-stringent Chinese borrowing after dwindling foreign reserves undermined the viability of obtaining Western finance.[1] At the same time, those remittances – essential in financing long-term commitments and debt obligations – depend on the continuation of structural pressures to migrate arising from uneven development. The arc of Sri Lanka's developmental vision attests to the reality of this growing contradiction.

This observation returns attention to the historical processes of accumulation by subordination that have shaped Sri Lanka's economy, repeatedly restructuring the relations of production by stoking existing class, gender, and racial tensions in order to disempower labour and accumulate capital. Sri Lanka's otherwise unsustainable path of remittance-led development signals a more sophisticated embodiment of this same logic. By marginalising rural populations from development, Sri Lanka's current developmental policy subordinates migrants and would-be migrants, shifting the relations of production not by facilitating their involvement in local production, but by 'loaning' their labour to foreign employers. Remittances, representative of the wage component of that labour, represent the return on that loan: At once actual income sufficient to reproduce migrant populations in lieu of development, and also an abstraction of that income in the form of foreign exchange earnings. It represents, in essence, an exchange of unwanted poverty for much-needed loans.

The use of those loans to finance development projects that cater to the urban economy and the interests of local capital therein is, along with the redistributive effects of household remittance expenditure, the central mechanism through which accumulation is facilitated. Macroeconomically, this amounts to a fragile paradox, whereby local capital accumulation occurs independently of export growth and dependent upon migrant remittances, which can only occur insofar as uneven development persists. It further accounts for the relative inaction of Sri Lanka, and other labour-sending countries, in addressing the rights and conditions of migrant workers in West Asia; the risk of disturbing the countervailing inflow of remittances poses too great a threat to a precariously balanced the economy. As Gibson-Graham have argued, the degree of political control exerted by both migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries to 'manage' migration is in this instance a manifestation of the close relationship between state and the interests of capital (Kottegoda 2004, p. 176).

Conclusion

The 'open economy' story is one of intensified uneven development processes that exploit and exclude along and across class, ethnic and gendered divisions. These processes are evident in economic expressions of ethnic violence bookending the civil war, the reorientation of capital accumulation within export processing zones and the garment industry, and the steady growth of temporary labour migration. All three trends reproduce the same mechanics of accumulation by subordination enshrined in the plantation economy: the calculated exploitation of disempowered populations to underpin capital accumulation for an insular bourgeois minority. Sri Lanka's promotion of foreign employment thus emerges as a logically consistent outgrowth of historical structures of uneven development rekindled under neoliberalism. An escalating macroeconomic dependence on remittance capital is an integral aspect of this story, as the 'outsourcing' of unemployment via migration has generated foreign exchange necessary to finance urban development projects undertaken in the interests of local and foreign capital. This invokes a profound contradiction, wherein the poor indirectly finance and uphold a vision of development that they themselves are resolutely excluded from.

Notes

1 "The stance on China has completely changed," cabinet spokesman Rajitha Senaratne told Reuters. "Who else is going to bring us money, given tight conditions in the West?" (Aneez 2016).

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