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Migrant Labor in the Gulf

Summary Report

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Migrant Labor in the Gulf

Working Group Summary Report

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Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar

Summary Report No. 2

Migrant Labor in the Gulf

Working Group Summary Report

This *Summary Report* details the research findings that were presented by the *Migrant Labor in the Gulf* working group participants during their meetings in Doha, Qatar, hosted by the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

CIRS launched the initiative in 2008 and held a total of three working group meetings. The working group is composed of experts in the field of migrant labor who hail from a variety of academic disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, economics, and political science. The working group is also composed of the CIRS research grant recipients: Andrew Gardner from the University of Puget Sound, Arland Thornton, Mansoor Moaddel, Dirgha Ghimirie, Linda Young-DeMarco, and Nathalie Williams from the University of Michigan, Susan Martin from Georgetown University, Mary Breeding from the World Bank, and David Mednicoff from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

The relationship between the citizen and the migrant in the Gulf has traditionally centered around the question of labor. Connections between the Gulf and other parts of the world were built around the pearling industry, trade, kinship relations, and religion. Migrant labor is usually depicted as a transient activity, and although many laborers in the GCC are indeed short-term employees, this masks the long-term and more culturally and socially-integrated forms of labor that exist in the Gulf. Importantly, historicizing migrant labor in the Gulf is useful in pointing out all the actors that are often excluded from such discussions.

The participants focused on the macro trends that drive international migration and that define over-arching labor patterns within the GCC and the sending countries. They also concentrated on highlighting the ethnographies and personal stories regarding the lived experiences of the migrants themselves. Migrant labor in the Gulf tends to be highly gendered, where construction work and public sector work is dominated by males, and domestic work is performed by females. In general, and not just in the Gulf, domestic work falls outside of the purview of a country's labor laws because domestic work is not considered part of the market economy. As such, migrants were not examined solely in terms of labor, but their social relations, political beliefs, and social formations were also examined.

The researchers pointed to the importance of not overlooking nationalization schemes as the development of local human resources is a main target for most Gulf nations. As the GCC states strive toward knowledge based economies, long-term development is regarded as the responsibility of the national workforce. Although the nationalization strategies of the GCC countries differ, nationalization policies are geared towards breaking decades-long dependence on foreign labor in both the public and private sectors. In future, lower illiteracy rates, better global technological connectivity, and more women in leadership roles pave the way for increased diversification of the Gulf economies.

The initiative addresses other significant issues such as the *kefala* system, human trafficking, illegal migration, and regional regulation efforts. The participants relied on a variety of data sources, including in-depth interviews, field observation, survey research, as well as analysis of demographic and statistical data. The following is a collection of synopses describing the chapters that will make up the planned edited volume.

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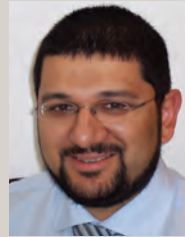
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1. *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*

Mehran Kamrava and Zahra Babar

Hampered by their small local populations and low levels of labor force participation, the six nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council have had to seek alternate, foreign sources of labor to meet the needs of their burgeoning development agenda. Across the Arabian Peninsula, throngs of foreign workers occupy multiple positions in a range of sectors, including construction work and domestic labor, while a smaller but significant number occupy white-collar, skilled positions. This trend does not appear to be abating. In fact, despite attempts across the region at nationalizing the work force, the reliance on foreign labor is expected to increase in the coming years as the region continues to embark upon ambitious plans for further industrial and infrastructural expansion. As the GCC states grow in importance from their humbler beginnings into dynamic members of the global community, further focused study of the emerging trends in regional labor migration are imperative.

Given the nature of a world where demographic and economic disparities are abundant, the movement of people across borders seeking improved financial opportunity is neither new nor unique to the Persian Gulf. Labor migration is a global phenomenon, and offers reciprocal benefits to the economies of countries dependent on external sources of labor as well as the economies of countries sending citizens to work overseas. Host states, such as those of the GCC, require migrant workers to both stimulate and sustain their economic growth. Sending countries rely on labor migration as a safety valve against increasing levels of domestic unemployment, and also depend on the financial remittances that workers send back home.

What is distinctive in the GCC is the extent to which the regional labor force is so highly demographically imbalanced in favor of foreigners over locals. Non-national workers outnumber citizens by large margins in most of the countries and across many sectors. Managing the regional labor force continues to be one of the most complex challenges for governments throughout the region as they try to meet their domestic labor requirements while containing potential socio-cultural and political consequences of hosting such large numbers of non-national workers.

In the GCC labor regulations have primarily been aimed at ensuring that the imported work force remains temporary in nature and strictly managed. The worker sponsorship system has been one tool by which the import of labor has been controlled. This system has come under increasing international scrutiny and criticism. Abuse of the sponsorship system is assumed to be rampant, and unsafe work environments, inadequate accommodation, wage disputes, and general human rights' and workers rights' violations are said to exist in many different sectors. In response to such allegations, which have reflected poorly on both the leadership and the societies of the entire region, several GCC governments have taken steps to determine how the situation for migrant workers can be improved. At a policy level, there is much discussion on revising or repealing the worker sponsorship system, although what exactly it will be replaced with remains unclear.

Despite the pervasiveness of the phenomenon, labor migration across the region remains woefully understudied. The particular economic, social, and political dimensions of Gulf migration raise a host of questions that have yet to be examined in a comprehensive, systematic manner. Some of the more notable areas of study involve explorations of both the financial and the "social remittances" that are disseminated through the migration experience; issues of identity and belonging as shaped by the experience of migrating; and the construction of such notions and identities as citizenship and community. Given that migrant laborers spend most of their adult lives outside of their local communities, how

do their lives in the GCC impact both the societies in which they work and live as well as those they left behind? To what extent, and with what consequences, does the interface between migrant workers and their hosts impact both sides? And what roles do official and private agencies and institutions—international conventions and labor regimes, government ministries, manpower agencies, etc.—play in the migration process?

This volume explores these and other similar questions related to the phenomenon of migrant labor in the Persian Gulf. Some of the key topics discussed in the book include examinations of the concept and phenomenon of “labor” in the context of migration into Persian Gulf states; the creation of socio-spatial boundaries in cities that are major recipients of migrant workers (Abu Dhabi as a case study); the reasons that propel migrants to continue to migrate to the Persian Gulf *despite* prior knowledge of how bad things are, and the cultural and valuative transformations they undergo during the period of their migration; the factors that compel many semi- and low-skilled migrants to move back and forth between the margins of the formal and the informal economies; the kinds of legal and policy frameworks that states adopt in dealing with migrant workers; efforts by recipient states to nationalize their labor force and to replace as much as possible migrant workers with national citizens; and the types of state discourses that evolve, or are encouraged to develop, around issues of labor migration (with Saudi Arabia as a case study). In tackling questions like these, the volume benefits from theoretical and empirical insights drawn from the fields of anthropology, economics, political science, public policy, and sociology.

Mehran Kamrava is Interim Dean of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar and Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies. In addition to a number of journal articles, he is the author of *Revolution in Iran: The Roots of Turmoil* (1990), *The Political History of Modern Iran: From Tribalism to Theocracy* (1992), *Revolutionary Politics* (1992), *Understanding Comparative Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 2nd ed. (2008), *Democracy in the Balance: Culture and Society in the Middle East* (1998), *Cultural Politics in the Third World* (1999), *Politics and Society in the Developing World*, 2nd ed. (2000), *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War* 2nd ed. (2010), and *Iran's Intellectual Revolution* (2008). He has also edited *The New Voices of Islam: Rethinking Politics and Modernity* (2006) and is the co-editor of the two-volume work *Iran Today: Life in the Islamic Republic* (2008).

Zahra Babar is Project Manager at CIRS. Previously, she worked in the international aid, community development, and poverty alleviation sector. She has served with the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Development Programme, where she managed a programmatic and policy-oriented research center. She also spent several years working in Pakistan with the Sarhad Rural Support Programme, one of Pakistan's large multisectoral rural development organizations. Her interests lie in economic empowerment and development, microfinance, and gender development initiatives. Babar received her BA in Government from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and her MA from the School of International Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

2. *Beyond Labor: Foreign Residents in the Gulf States*

Attiya Ahmad

Drawing on ethnographic research I conducted on migrant domestic workers in the Gulf region, as well as on Hannah Arendt's discussion of *vita activa*, this chapter points to how labor is both necessary to, yet also limits our analyses of foreign residents' experiences in the Gulf states. Non-citizens are a significant part of the Gulf states' population—ranging from 25% in Saudi Arabia to 66% in Kuwait, to over 90% in the UAE and Qatar. Unlike transnational migrants and diasporic groups in other parts of the world, in the Gulf they are unlikely to ever become naturalized citizens. Research on this diverse and dynamic population has expanded in recent years. Today there exists a relatively small yet robust set of studies documenting foreign residents' experiences. By far, “labor” is the predominant theme and analytical category through which policy-makers, human rights workers, and scholars examine this population's status and situation. They conceive of foreign residents as “temporary labor migrants” or “guest workers,” and the working conditions of this population are considered to be determinant of their experiences in the Gulf.

This emphasis is not accidental. With the booming of the Gulf states' petrodollar-driven economies from the early 1970s onwards, a vast and consolidated assemblage of government policies, social and political institutions, and public discourse developed to manage and police the region's foreign resident population. Anchored by the *kefala* or sponsorship and guarantorship system, this assemblage both constructs and disciplines foreign residents into “temporary labor migrants.” While it is important to account for these processes, in this chapter I argue that they should not delimit our analyses of foreign residents in the Gulf. Doing so not only runs the risk of naturalizing foreign residents' disciplining as “temporary labor migrants,” and ironically, unwittingly reinscribes the assemblage that produces them as such. It also elides two other dimensions of foreign residents' experiences in the Gulf, namely the historical interregional relations and contemporary forms of socio-political belonging that connect many to the region, as well as other activities they undertake in the region, such as social reproduction and remunerated domestic work, that do not fit, or fit awkwardly under the rubric of labor.

In pointing to the limitation of “labor,” my discussion draws on the work of Hannah Arendt. In *The Human Condition* (1998) Arendt examines at length three forms of activity she argues are fundamental to the human condition. These activities or *vita activa* are *labor*, activities which correspond to the biological processes of the human body, a realm more conventionally referred to as biological or social reproduction; *work*, activities that provide an ‘artificial’ world of things, distinctly different from natural surroundings, a realm more conventionally referred to as ‘labor’; and *action*, activities that take place among people without the intermediary of things or matter, a realm more conventionally referred to as political activity. Arendt argues that through processes of modernity, labor has come to subsume all other forms of activity, a historical phenomenon her analysis seeks to problematize. Arendt's examination of how “the theoretical glorification of labor” and the “transformation of the whole of society into a laboring society” is a defining feature of the modern age that underscores the historical processes—rather than historical inevitability—by which labor has come to assume such importance in our contemporary world. Arendt's discussion is invaluable to examining foreign residents' experiences in the Gulf. Her work opens up analytical space to not only scrutinize the historical circumstances by which “labor” has gained ascendancy in defining foreign residents' experiences of the Gulf. It also pushes us to consider other activities that they undertake in the Gulf—activities often obfuscated by hegemonic discourses that reduce their presence in the Gulf to their labor.

Attiya Ahmad is an Assistant Professor of Religion and Feminism, Gender & Sexuality Studies at Wesleyan University. In 2009-10, she was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University in Qatar. She has previously studied international development studies at the University of Toronto, and anthropology at Duke University, where she obtained her masters and doctorate. Her work focuses on the interrelation between Islamic piety and reform movements and transnational migration in the Gulf. She is currently revising her book manuscript focusing on Islamic *da'wa*, domestic work, and migrant women in Kuwait.

3. *Why Do They Keep Coming? Labor Migrants in the Gulf States*

Andrew Gardner

While scholarship concerning the large transnational migrant workforce in the Gulf states remains in its nascent stages, over the last two decades a small but substantial collection of studies have examined the lived experiences of migrants in the GCC. Much of this research is ethnographic in nature, and while these works collectively explore a diversity of themes, much of it focused on unskilled and semi-skilled migrants, congeals around an explication of the difficult and often exploitative conditions endured during the migrants' time in the GCC states. These conditions and the relations that underpin them are a product of a complex migration system that includes labor brokers in the sending states, manpower agencies in the receiving states, the policies and procedures collectively referred to as the sponsorship system, and a set of enduring social and cultural practices that normalize these relations. In that complex system, the relatively substantial sums invested by migrants and their families is often at risk, and for some unskilled migrants, the Gulf sojourn leads not to economic security, but instead carries them and their families into a financial cataclysm. The scale of this problem remains unknown, but ethnographic work in the region posits this outcome as a recurring and widespread phenomenon.

The study presented in this chapter is grounded in a two-year ethnographic project conducted in Qatar and begins with these premises. From that beginning point, the chapter addresses a single fundamental question: if these outcomes are widespread, why do low-skill migrants continue to flow to the region? The answer to that question is presented in three sections.

First, there is no doubt that the wages for low-skilled positions remain competitive when compared with the regions from which most unskilled migrants come (typically South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa), and, furthermore, that the wages contractually promised to the potential migrant play a prominent role in the decision to migrate. At the same time, however, the ethnographic framework of this study provided an opportunity to deeply explore these decisions and their context, and these ethnographic data reveal a more complex and nuanced reality behind seemingly straightforward economic decisions. For example, many migrants' decisions to migrate are connected to political and structural violence in their home countries—the recent ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, for example, pushed many Tamil men and women out of Sri Lanka to the Gulf, and the ongoing strife in Nepal is oftentimes a central factor in the decisions that lead Nepalese men from their homes to the Gulf. In essence, the economic variables of migration often coexist with a constellation of other factors of a decidedly non-economic nature. Moreover, the interviews at the foundation of this project also revealed that the decision to migrate is often a product of the family (and, in the South Asian context, the extended family). The migrant is often an emissary of a household livelihood strategy, and more to the point, may have only a cursory understanding of the calculations, arrangements, and vulnerabilities he or she potentially faces when entering this migration system. To answer the question at the center of this chapter, then, many men and women migrate because their parents direct them to do so, and that decision often involves a constellation of extra-economic considerations.

Second, the flow of migrants to the Gulf is buoyed by disinformation and misinformation that inaccurately portrays the Gulf experience to potential migrants. The production of both misinformation and disinformation is distributed throughout this migration system. Labor brokers in the sending states often have poor information about the positions they purvey and the conditions unskilled laborers face in the Gulf. Even when they have good information, it is in their

interest to elide, disguise, or direct attention away from the common challenges and difficulties low skill migrants face in the region. Manpower agencies based in the Gulf, in conjunction with the local sponsors of migrant labor, often collude in this systemic deception: men and women arrive in the Gulf to find themselves working in different positions and for lower wages than they were originally promised. While it is impossible to pin this deception on any particular junction in this migration system, it is nonetheless true that from the perspective of the population of migrants, part of the reason they keep coming to the Gulf is that they are working with imperfect information about the conditions of work and the vulnerability they face in the sponsorship system.

The final analytic section of this chapter explores the role that migrants themselves play in maintaining the image of the Gulf as a land of extraordinary possibility. Migrants in low skill positions often hide their circumstances from family and friends. The photographs they send home are of the iconic Gulf spaces, the green parks, and the waterfront promenades of the Gulf cities, as opposed to the overcrowded and often squalid conditions of the labor camps. Or, when companies cease to pay the labor migrants, they mask their situation by maintaining a steady flow of remittances, often by borrowing substantial sums from other migrants. And migrants often lie about their vocations while abroad, the conditions they face at the workplace, and other significant factors about their employment. The reasons for this deception are entirely understandable, for labor migrants often seek to insulate worried families and friends from concern and stress. Nonetheless, with hundreds of thousands of unskilled labor migrants actively engaged in the production of a sanitized and unrealistic image of labor in the Gulf, the role that their collective elision plays in the reproduction of this migration flow is undeniable.

Altogether, then, these arguments provide a provisional answer to the question posed at the beginning of the chapter: in spite of the difficult circumstances many migrants face in Qatar and the other Gulf states, they continue to flow to the region in part because of the imperfect information that flows back to the sending countries.

Andrew M. Gardner is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. Between 2008 and 2010 he also taught at Qatar University. His newest book, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain* (ILR/Cornell University Press, 2010), examines the large and historic Indian community in Bahrain and their governance by the Bahraini state. He is the author of scholarly articles in *City and Society* (2008), *The Journal of Arabian Studies* (forthcoming, 2011), the *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* (2004), and *Human Organization* (2002, 2003), as well as book chapters in *Political Ecology Across Spaces, Scales and Social Groups* (Rutgers, 2004) and *The Deportation Regime* (Duke 2010). Gardner is currently conducting a large-scale research project amongst the unskilled foreign labor force in Qatar with Silvia Pessoa (Carnegie-Mellon Qatar), Abdoulaye Diop (SESRI/Qatar University), and Kaltham Alghanim (Qatar University).

4. *Socio-spatial Boundaries in Abu Dhabi*

Jane Bristol-Rhys

The Gulf states are characterized by varying degrees of dependence on foreign workers and there are many commonalities – most born of the rapid development of the petrochemical industry and concomitant urbanization. The cities of the Gulf are similar in several ways as well, notably coastal towns with histories of trading. However, Abu Dhabi is rather unique given that it was not a trading emporium and so had relied on fishing and pearling. When the bottom dropped out of the international market in Gulf pearls, Abu Dhabi slid into three decades of grinding poverty that disallowed even the most rudimentary of development. When the promise of oil and the reality of oil wealth came in the 1960s, Abu Dhabi was really starting from scratch. This chapter begins with a review of the socio-historical context of pre-oil Abu Dhabi and then discusses how the immediate influx of the labor, skills, and services needed to extract and export oil shaped the growth of the city in particular ways. Dependency on imported foreign labor has evolved over time and has been a reaction to increasing numbers of migrants, not a proactive strategic management of labor requirements. I then consider how the organic evolution of the city and the reaction to increasing numbers of foreigners has constructed spatial divisions that effectively separate certain classes of migrants from the rest of the urban population. A part of this consideration includes an examination of the different categories of migrants that are in current use and the manner in which “worker” has become qualitatively distinct from “bachelor” and “expat.” This is followed by a description of the spatial divisions that divide Abu Dhabi into “no go zones” for some migrants and have resulted in some public areas, such as parks and beaches, being considered “foreign” areas for Emiratis. Finally, I examine the social and behavioral elements that separate migrants from each other and from Emiratis. The material presented here is the product of ethnographic research conducted from 2001 to 2010. Research encompassed extended and multiple interviews; direct observation of behavior and action in public venues; participant observation in which I engaged with migrants at social clubs, centers, and outings; and when interviews could not be conducted, question and answer periods with migrants on the streets of Abu Dhabi.

Jane Bristol-Rhys is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Zayed University where she has taught social anthropology, Emirati history and heritage, and studies in transnational migration since 2001. Bristol-Rhys received her BA from the American University in Cairo and her Ph.D. from the University of Washington in Seattle. At Zayed she has developed an undergraduate program in Emirati Studies, a master’s program in Museum Studies, and several certificate courses in heritage management. Her publications include articles on Emirati historical narratives, identity issues in the UAE, and Abu Dhabi’s heritage initiatives. Her book, *Emirati Women: Generations of Change* was released October 2010. *Future Perfect: Societies in the Emirates*, an examination of migrants and their hosts in Abu Dhabi is forthcoming.

5. *Informality and Its Discontents: Mapping Migrant Worker Trajectories into Dubai's Informal Economy*

Pardis Mahdavi

This chapter investigates interactions between issues of labor, gender, migration, and statehood through the lens of Dubai's unskilled foreign migrant workers. Using ethnographic research methods (including participant observation and in-depth interviews), the project explores the conflation of discourses on trafficking, migration, and sex work through women's own narratives.

The study is organized around four central questions: 1) what are the social, economic and political circumstances and structures that make Dubai a major migration and trafficking destination? 2) How does a lack of civil society infrastructure affect migrant laborers and trafficked persons and how does the large presence of migrant workers affect Emirati citizens? 3) How do cultural norms about gender, sexuality, morality, and migration influence the implementation of anti-trafficking policy and legal enforcement in Dubai? 4) How do migrant women's narratives about their experiences differ from discourses constructed (using the language of trafficking) about them? The study aims to question and deepen our understandings of labor, migration, and socioeconomic development in a rapidly changing, urbanizing environment while contributing to differing discourses on migration, trafficking, and prostitution in the Gulf countries.

In this chapter, I show how policy directly affects the lived experiences of migrant workers in the Gulf. Migrant narratives about their trajectories into the potentially abusive space of the informal economy help to highlight the direct impact of policies and discourses on migration. A closer look at migrants' narratives and experiences reveals not only the disjuncture between policy and lived experience, but it can also indicate areas where policies might be reformed to meet their needs. Local labor laws (in the form of the *kefala* system) are in desperate need of reform. However, the global discourse on trafficking has focused the issue on sex trafficking, thus eliding the problems of forced labor. Currently, policies designed to reduce "trafficking" and the irregular flows of migrant workers are having the opposite of their intended effect. While these policies could be used to protect migrants' rights and reduce forced labor, the interpretation and implementation of the policies are hindering the positive application of these laws. The discourse and application of trafficking policies are resulting in larger numbers of people migrating illegally or into the informal economy, while at the same time thwarting civil society efforts and grass roots organizing to meet the needs of migrant workers. Broadly speaking, a re-conceptualization of trafficking within the context of forced labor and migration is needed. Furthermore, current trafficking policies operate under a criminalization framework, and can be re-harnessed within a rights discourse.

Pardis Mahdavi is currently at Pomona College as Assistant Professor of Anthropology after pursuing her doctorate at Columbia University in the departments of Sociomedical Sciences and Anthropology. She received her BA in Diplomacy and World Affairs from Occidental College, and an MA (in Anthropology) and a Masters of International Affairs (MIA) from Columbia University. Her research interests include sexuality, human rights, youth culture, transnational feminism, and public health in the context of changing global and political structures. Her first book

project was on the intersection between sexuality and politics in post-revolutionary Iran, while her current work looks at migration and “trafficking” in the United Arab Emirates.

Mahdavi has published in the *Encyclopedia of Women in Islamic Cultures*; *Culture, Health and Sexuality*; *Anthropology News*; and the *Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World Review*. She has received outstanding research awards from the American Public Health Association, the Society for Medical Anthropology and the Society for Applied Anthropology. She is currently an editor for *Culture, Health and Sexuality* as well as *Rahavard Quarterly*, a journal devoted to contemporary social issues in Iran and amongst the Iranian diaspora. Her book, *Passionate Uprisings: Iran's Sexual Revolution* has recently been published with Stanford University Press.

6. *Migration, Networks and Connectedness Across the Indian Ocean*

Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella

In this chapter, we begin to explore comparison and compatibility between Indian and Arab approaches to making connections. We assert the ubiquity of practices of connectedness in Indian society, from extended family networks through to the well-known figure of the *dalal*, or broker—the go-between; and we discuss favors, obligation, and payments. We show how Indian practices of connectedness extend into the Gulf, such that decisions to migrate, the process of migration, finding housing, learning to be in the Gulf, handling problems during migration, switching jobs or contracts as a migrant, are all processes completely inflected by social networks rather than being either undertaken individually or mediated by state or non-state institutions. We briefly address academic debates about state and civil society, and make a plea for more ethnographic understandings and for research to be more reflexively critical about the accuracy and value of abstracted and idealized models. Calling upon the help of others is both normal and normative in Indian society, and while this is sometimes because of anxieties about competence, expertise, or access, it is more often because of a morality and aesthetics of personhood which would see autonomous individuality—imagining that one could and should make major life decisions and act alone in complex social terrains (such as migration)—as hubristic, unwise, and hence ultimately immature. We question the possibility of identifying networks as positive social capital or as negative perverse phenomena, since the same individuals operate in both types of connection, and commonly play many roles. The person who is helping one migrant may be cheating another; a relative may at one moment offer help and at another obstruct and steal money; the broker who initially cheats a migrant (in strict contractual terms of over-demanding payments or lying about conditions) may years later be evaluated positively, as the person who gave the first step along a pathway to success. We insist upon maintaining the complexity and ambivalence to which ethnography draws our attention, and also note that the continuum of family member-close friend-stranger cannot in any way be assumed to map on to a continuum of trusted positive connection through to untrustworthy stranger.

We also begin here to trace some ways in which Indian networking styles articulate with the Gulf phenomenon of *wasta*. We outline differences, but suggest that there is a comfort and fit between Indian styles of getting things done through personalized social relationships, and Gulf styles. Discussion of ethnographic material drawn from experiences of Kerala Gulf migrants leads us to note how networks can mitigate hierarchy, open access, and circumvent over-regulation. Here, we note the tension between neoliberal rhetorics of openness, freedom, and deregulation, and actual practice, which restricts free labor movement and blocks meritocracy. We agree with other recent work, which argues that contemporary regimes of accumulation deplore illicit practices but actually depend upon and thrive because of them. In the Gulf, the illicit economy underpins the licit, and projects of nation and of capital accumulation are both heavily imbricated within and dependent upon various non-legitimate practices engaged in by workers and sponsors alike. A network focus allows us to think about the interesting ways in which Gulf nationals and migrants come together to do business and make the job markets work, and the moments and spaces in which *wasta* articulates to brokerage.

All of this pushes us to critique the abstraction of much social science literature on social networks and connectedness, and to raise questions about the ways in which issues of normativity, legitimacy, and morality are presented in such literature. Recourse to informal personalized networks rather than impersonal institutions (state or civil society) are to be found in various societies and at various levels, from elite to subaltern. We note the unevenness of the terrain: there

is a substantial comparative literature on networking, and such practices appear (against formal models) to be globally ubiquitous, yet only certain forms of network, or spaces in which networks appear, arouse attention. Exceptionalism in analysis, which is always a risk, is evident in some of the Gulf literature, and is productive of pathologies and singularity where we can instead—via comparison—perceive commonality and banality.

We offer a provocation: If the elite—Kerala's Gulf entrepreneurs, British cabinet ministers and Indian politicians, Gulf sheikhs, and North American industrialists—can all increase their share of renown, respect, advantage, and profit, through their energetic networking practices, then why and with what reason, we ask, should the subaltern be denied similar benefits? Networking practices are not, we argue, necessarily a problem per se. Indeed, from a user's point of view, the problem is one of unequal access to such networks. Indian brokerage is a relatively open system relying upon gifts, favour, tenuous connections, patronage, and money. *Wasta* is a relatively closed and hierarchical upwards system relying heavily upon the cultural capital of lineage, name, and substantial connection. And in the Gulf, both are doing the work of channelling and restricting access to resources, which is also done—more obviously and starkly—by institutions, such as legal restrictions on citizenship and related benefits. In this respect, *wasta*, reliant upon social capital, makes for an interesting comparison with Indian brokerage, which in the end demands only cash: both forms cut out the poor and the poorly connected, but in very different ways. Seen in this light, networks are neither separated from the state and its intent, nor subverting the state, but are working on an informal plane toward the same goals as are worked towards in the formal plane by the institutions: maintenance and protection of privilege for a minority.

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7. *Nepali Migrants to the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Values, Behaviors, and Plans*

Dirgha J. Ghimire, Mansoor Moaddel, Arland Thornton, Nathalie E. Williams, and Linda C. Young-DeMarco

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—have large migrant populations which in some countries comprise the majority of the workforce. Migrant populations have significant implications for the GCC host countries, which have huge, but not infinite, natural resources and relatively small locally-born populations. Migrants are essential for their thriving economies but raise an array of important issues as well, including infrastructure, recruitment and monitoring of migrants, turnover of the population, intermarriage, and the socialization and identities of the children of migrants. Such large foreign populations also raise issues of national identity, security, and the long-run population composition of these countries. Similar to migrants in other areas of the world, these foreign populations may also form transnational communities that have relationships with citizens of the host countries, with their countries of origin, and among immigrants from different places. Furthermore, migrants influence the functioning of the economy, including the flow of remittances out of the Persian Gulf to other countries. The culture, behaviors, and values of migrants can also influence the native populations. These issues are relevant in the present day, and with changes in the global economy, they may become even more pertinent in the future. Yet scholars and policy-makers know very little about these migrants and their behaviors, values, and future plans.

This chapter provides insight into some of these issues in an effort to address this knowledge gap. The broad aim is to establish ways in which the economic and social character of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries is influenced by their migrant populations. Specifically, this article focuses on Nepali migrants and four dimensions of their lives in the GCC countries, including 1) key demographic characteristics of migrants; 2) work, income, and remittances; 3) plans of the migrants concerning return to Nepal or to migrate elsewhere; and 4) values and beliefs of the migrants. This chapter addresses these issues for the GCC region as a whole and provides comparisons of migrants and their impact across different countries in this region.

Our analysis is based on a unique data set collected from a sample of Nepali migrants in GCC countries. This sample is based on a large representative sample from the Chitwan Valley of south-central Nepal. During a survey with households in the Chitwan Valley, we collected contact information on household members who were currently living in the GCC and then interviewed these migrants by telephone or face-to-face. Our innovative contact and data collection methods resulted in an exceptional 87% response rate. This representative sample of migrants at destination is relatively rare in the migration literature which often relies on non-random sampling procedures, which are widely acknowledged to provide unrepresentative samples.

Although Nepal is a small country of 26 million, a study of Nepali migrants to the Persian Gulf is important for examining the influence of migrants on GCC countries. First, South Asia is currently the dominant source of migrants into the GCC countries, with South Asians comprising about 59% of migrants to the GCC countries. Nepal has economic and social conditions similar to other South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Consequently, this analysis of migrants from Nepal to the GCC countries provides many insights into the nature and impact of migrants from the South Asian subcontinent in general.

Second, Nepal has substantial out-migration, with the GCC countries being an especially important destination.

Between 100,000 and 200,000 Nepali migrants are living in these countries. Migrants are an important component of the Nepali economy, as one-quarter of all households in Nepal receive remittances from abroad and the value of remittances has been estimated at 15-25 percent of the Nepali gross domestic product. This substantial flow of remittances is an important link between the economies of the GCC countries and Nepal.

Results from this study show that Nepali migrants in the GCC countries were relatively similar to their non-migrant counterparts in Nepal, relative to age, marital status, childbearing, education, religion, and ethnicity. Furthermore, there was very little variance on demographic, social, and economic characteristics of migrants living across different GCC countries. Most sample migrants were male and working as laborers. Remittances to Nepal were common and large, averaging about 58% of each person's yearly salary.

This study also addressed migrants' future intentions. Contrary to the classic theoretical target-earner migrants who will immediately return back to their country of origin, results show that amongst this group of Nepali migrants, most intended to migrate again. GCC countries were high on the list of intended future destinations. These results highlight the need for further enhancements to migration theory that consider likelihoods of second, third, and higher order migrations, and the possibility of migrant intentions changing over time. Because much of migration research considers single migration trips, we might be missing key dynamics of intrapersonal change as well as patterns of the development of transnational relationships and a peripatetic international labor force.

Our measures of the values of Nepali migrants to the GCC countries indicate that most migrants endorse various material aspects of "modernity" in that they believe that such things as hospitals, doctors, television, and working outside the home are good. These attributes probably help to fuel the desires of these migrants to seek employment in the Persian Gulf. At the same time, the great bulk of migrants retain most of their historical Nepali values centered on marriage, family, and the restriction of sex and cohabitation to marriage.

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8. *The Legal Regulation of Migrant Workers, Politics and Identity in Qatar and the UAE*

David Mednicoff

How do the unusual extent and nature of the labor force in contemporary Gulf societies shape governmental postures and policies towards rights and benefits for the non-citizen population? How has the unusual level of migrant labor in Gulf countries with small populations influenced legal reforms in these societies? What strategies for legal regulation are suggested by a globalized labor force that far outnumbers the native population?

I address these questions in the comparative context of the rapidly globalized small states of Qatar and the UAE. The two cases are similar in their levels of wealth and dependence on a demographically dominant foreign labor population. Their main cities, Doha and Dubai, also share patterns of enormous growth and increasing global influence. Yet, the cities also differ, most obviously in Doha's development as a regional center of education, sports, and media along conservative social lines, as compared with Dubai's status as a more cosmopolitan center of finance, entertainment, and tourism. They also diverge in their recent short-term economic performance, where Dubai's bust and construction overextension stands in contrast to Qatar's ongoing, if somewhat slowed, pattern of growth.

At the same time, both cities' similar basic choice to invest in long-term, globally-oriented development entails large-scale permeation by transnational forces, such as international law and great power politics. This makes city and national officials sensitive to conforming their economies to the expectations of international law, which in turn may help to explain their high performance on comparative measures of legalism, like the World Bank's.

This question of whether and how the large migrant labor population of two leading cities of the Arab world has framed legal change and regulation links three important areas of sociolegal studies and social science, namely, the politics of development in the Persian Gulf, how law is understood and connects to politics in Arab countries generally, and how globalized law and labor markets link to local identity and politics in particular non-Western societies. My basic argument is that the varied pressures and high stakes involved in places like Doha and Dubai with respect to regulating non-citizen workers favor *ad hoc* accommodations and informal regulation over more general legal policies. Nonetheless, the presence of significant recent legal reform, especially in Dubai, suggests a need to look closely at the comparative politics of law and development across my two cases, and the GCC more generally.

The diverse actors relevant to the legal regulation of non-citizen workers operate within two significant symbolic narratives of development that I term a "clash of developmental narratives." An internal Gulf narrative focuses on the national pride in rapid growth, the increasing importance of Gulf Arab societies to the world generally, and the fealty to internal cultural and religious norms of the developmental path. This narrative contrasts with a global legalist one, largely found in Western societies. The second narrative, of progress through global harmonization around common economic and legal norms, tends to cast doubt on the success of the internal cultural legitimacy of Gulf nationalism. Instead, it highlights the imperative for Qatar, the UAE and their neighbors to learn from and accept Western-grown syntheses of formal legal equality and secularism, as opposed to *shari'a*, and with particular emphasis on universal rights.

The chapter describes these narratives as at odds, explicitly without endorsing or commenting on the legitimacy of either one. It is precisely the point and poignancy of the narrative clash that each can be highly compelling in its own terms. And this helps contextualize the diverse actors that create pressures for officials around the legal regulation of non-citizen workers in Doha and Dubai. These actors include the native citizen population, foreign governments and international organizations, and the non-citizen foreign workers themselves. While a simple reading of these three

broad pressure points suggests diverging interests, a more accurate breakdown of these actors underscores their ability to work in diverse coalitions in complex ways.

The strong counteracting pressures in favor of either foreign workers' rights and natives' privileges make direct legislation or consistent legal enforcement unappealing for officials in the UAE and Qatar while, at the same time, requiring some sort of public response in either direction based on particular combinations of domestic and global actors in a specific situation. As an example from the UAE shows, an official public response is especially likely in the face of global media involvement or action on the issue elsewhere in the Gulf. Yet, even such a response tends to reinforce the basic economic contractual basis of the *kefala* system, and leave intact and unresolved the contending discourses around development and law that often separate Western rule-of-law advocates and advisors from Gulf citizens.

With the above in mind, the chapter turns to discuss major examples of legal reforms and legal enforcement relevant to non-citizen workers in Doha and Dubai in recent years. Official responses can fall under the categories of direct legislation, legal enforcement, and, thirdly, legislation that relates to the relative status of foreign workers and citizens more indirectly, such as regulations for whether, how, and where non-citizens can buy property. The chapter considers all three types of regulation, and includes analysis of Qatar's 2009 and the UAE's 2010 changes to the basic legal framework of the labor law. I then proceed to compare the possible causes for a tendency of the UAE to engage in relatively more sweeping, formal legal change than Qatar, despite officials' preferences for more informal regulation in both countries.

Doha, Dubai, and other major Gulf cities may represent intriguing models of rapid development and global integration. Yet, as the chapter shows, they need to master innovative ways to balance the labor needs of rapid growth, the concerns of a citizen population that is a tiny minority within its own country, and the demands of global and local rights advocates.

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among other places. Medicoff's teaching honors include a university-wide Lilly Teaching Fellowship for promising junior faculty, the U. Mass. College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Outstanding Teacher Award, and a national prize for innovative teaching related to the U.S. after 9/11/01. Medicoff was a Fulbright Senior Scholar in law in Qatar in 2006-7, where he taught international relations at Qatar University. In 2010-11, he is a Research Fellow in the Dubai Initiative at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

9. *India–Gulf Migration: Corruption and Capacity in Regulating Recruitment Agencies*

Mary Breeding

The recruitment of workers in India for the purpose of fulfilling construction and other low-skilled occupations in the Persian Gulf region has gained considerable attention in recent years. Thousands of Indians emigrate to Gulf countries annually as contracted workers. In 2007, the number of low-skilled Indian migrants acquiring emigration clearance to work in the Gulf topped 800,000 (809,453) from 466,456 in 2003. These migrants were individually recruited by one of 1835 registered recruitment agencies in India and gained work clearance in Gulf Countries. The overall stock of Indian migrants currently residing in the Gulf is unknown, but recent estimates suggest that 19 percent of all Non-resident Indians and Persons of Indian Origin living outside India are estimated to be located in the Gulf.

What are the processes for recruitment of low-skilled labor from India to the Gulf? While a substantial body of research exists across different economic, political, and cultural dimensions assessing India-Gulf migration, there has been little research to track the formal and informal processes of recruitment and the steps involved in migrating from India to the Gulf. This research documents the process by which recruitment of low-skilled labor occurs in India.

It is estimated that there are approximately five million low-skilled workers in GCC countries, but how did they get there? A recent document released by the Indian Council of Overseas Employment outlines three phases of a job candidate's India-Gulf migration process: pre-departure, the employment phase, and the capacity building phase. One, the pre-departure phase, includes recruitment, obtaining a passport, the job search, insurance procurement, travel booking, and emigration clearance from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) to travel abroad. A recruitment agent facilitates these tasks. Two, the employment phase, is the period in which a migrant works for an employer in the foreign country. Three, the final phase is the return of the migrant to his/her home country. The Indian government positively refers to this period as the capacity building phase where the migrant worker carries the skills learned abroad back to India.

To date, little is known about recruitment agencies. I present an analytic narrative outlining the procedures of contract brokering between recruitment agencies, job candidates, and Gulf-based employers—including abuses and corruption. This chapter is based on three months of fieldwork in India and Qatar, during which time I conducted in-depth interviews with recruitment agencies based in four cities of India, employers in Qatar, and government officials in both countries to better understand recent trends in India-Gulf migration.

Findings highlight three informal practices common in contract brokering for India-Gulf migration. These informal practices potentially undermine formal institutions and allow for abuses of contract brokering. They include: recruitment agencies working with sub-agents; fishing for candidates in rural areas; and information asymmetries between recruiters and job candidates regarding wages.

First, an obvious disconnect between the MOIA's recruitment framework and what I observed in my fieldwork is the use of unregistered recruitment agents, or "sub-agents." The Ministry keeps a list of 1835 registered agents. In reality, there are thousands of agencies, mostly illegal. Sub-agents operate out of travel agencies, teashops and their private homes. These agents illegally recruit job candidates on behalf of registered agencies. Many registered agencies I interviewed openly admitted to working with sub-agents. For instance, one sub-agent I interviewed, doubling as a travel agent in Goa, noted that he prefers to call himself a consultant so that he does not encounter hassle by the Ministry.

Sub-agents create an additional principal between the recruitment agency and job candidates. This is where many candidates end up facing fees exceeding the Rs. 10,000 maximum charge set by the Ministry. Sub-agents result from the failure to regulate recruitment. While there is a fine for sub-agents who are caught, the reality is that very few agencies are caught. In March of 2009 the Ministry had only listed six such agencies on its website. Strengthening the capacity for regulation of sub-agents is needed to curtail corrupt practices and illegal contract brokering in India-Gulf migration.

Two additional observations of the India-Gulf recruitment process are interconnected and result from information asymmetries between agents and job candidates. The two practices I observed in interviews—fishing for candidates and not disclosing full information to candidates—are based on deception and call ethics of the recruitment process into question. In fact, recruitment agents have an incentive to supply as much labor as they can to Gulf employers. Fishing for candidates, for example, occurs when agents seek pockets of candidates in remote rural areas. This process often occurs with the help of sub-agents who work from villages to attain qualified candidates, who, in many cases, are illiterate. Agents create a picture of Gulf countries as wealthy and often fail to provide full information about the working and living conditions migrants will be entering—working long hours outdoors in high temperatures and living in labor camps.

In the midst of the economic crisis, India's economy continues to grow while many countries in the Gulf have made cuts, including cuts in wages to migrant laborers. Nine out of ten employers I interviewed in Qatar noted that they had either stopped hiring or let labor go. Three out of ten noted that they had lowered wages. At present, recruitment agencies are not required to provide any information about workers' rights, their working and living conditions abroad, or return migration to job candidates. Empowering job candidates about their rights by requiring this information in a format that reaches all candidates, including illiterates, is greatly needed.

In sum, there is a disconnect between the Indian government's documented policy framework on the recruitment process and the actual operations of recruitment. Notably as a result of failure to regulate recruitment agencies and information asymmetries between recruitment agencies and job candidates, several opportunities for corruption and abuse in the process of recruitment arise. Building capacity for regulation with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and requiring information be disseminated to migrants about their rights in India and in their destination country are two potential steps towards limiting instances of corruption and abuse.

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10. *Labor Migration in the GCC Countries: New Measures for Cooperation in Improving the Rights of Migrant Workers*
Susan Martin

Promoting the rights of migrants and improving working and living conditions are development issues, as well as fundamental human rights issues. As the UN Development Programme explains, “Human development and human rights are mutually reinforcing, helping to secure the well-being and dignity of all people, building self-respect and the respect of others.” Limitations on basic human rights constrains choice, prompting migration of those who are unable to develop their full potential and lead productive lives at home. Denying migrants the ability to exercise their rights constrains their contribution to the development of their home countries and their countries of destination.

During the past four years, governments have gathered at the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) to discuss how best to reinforce the benefits of migration for development of source countries, destination countries, and the migrants themselves. Prominent on the agenda has been examination of best practices in promoting the rights of migrants and increasing the payoffs they receive from the migration experience. The United Arab Emirates has been particularly influential in setting the agenda and tone of the discussions, both through UAE’s assumption of the chair of several working groups within the Global Forum context and through its leadership in establishing the related Abu Dhabi process for consultation between the GCC countries and the principal source countries of migration to the Gulf.

This chapter reviews progress made to date in addressing the situation of migrant workers in the Gulf countries and suggests some ways forward in using the GFMD and Abu Dhabi processes to enhance migrant rights. The chapter begins with a discussion of the international migrant rights framework and discusses some recent initiatives at the national level to improve migrant rights. It then describes the GFMD and Abu Dhabi processes and concludes with recommendations for the future.

While international legal norms by themselves will not prevent abuses, they can serve as a basis for advocating implementation of policies and programs to achieve these goals. In emphasizing the importance of a strong normative framework, this chapter follows Martha Finnemore’s understanding of the interplay between international norms and state behavior where state interests must be aligned with internationally held norms, which in turn influence decision-makers and other members of the public.

Within the context of the GFMD and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, the GCC members and the principal source countries of immigration have explored ways in which they can collaborate in protecting migrant rights while still recognizing the sovereign authority of states to promulgate laws and policies governing migration. Qatar and the UAE are members of the Steering Group of the GFMD. In this context, the UAE funded “A Market-based Approach to Reduce the Cost of Migration: A Bangladeshi Feasibility Study,” to determine the best ways to lower the recruitment, travel, and other transaction costs faced by very poor Bangladeshis seeking to migrate to the GCC countries. The UAE also served as co-Chair of roundtables on migrant integration, reintegration and circulation for development and reducing migration costs as well as maximizing human development.

The principal goal of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue is to promote properly managed temporary contractual labour mobility. A ministerial level meeting, held in January 2008, set out four areas in which partnerships between source and destination countries could improve policy and practice. Framed as partnerships, these areas include:

Partnership 1: Enhancing knowledge in the areas of: labor market trends, skills profiles, temporary contractual workers and remittances policies, and flows and their interplay with development in the region;

Partnership 2: Building capacity for effective matching of labor demand and supply;

Partnership 3: Preventing illegal recruitment practices and promoting welfare and protection measures for contractual workers, supportive of their well being and preventing their exploitation at origin and destination;

Partnership 4: Developing a framework for a comprehensive approach to managing the cycle of temporary contractual mobility that fosters the mutual interests of countries of origin and destination.

It is too soon to know whether the GFMD or Abu Dhabi Dialogue will lead to concrete changes that significantly improve the rights, working conditions, and living situation of migrant workers in the GCC. To date, the UAE has taken the principal leadership in the international and regional forums in which migrant rights issues are discussed. While other GCC countries participate in both the GFMD and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, they have not yet demonstrated that they see these processes as significant ones. Some are taking unilateral steps to improve migrant rights while others appear to be less motivated to make serious changes in their policies or practices. The extent to which officials with on-the-ground knowledge of the issues debated are fully engaged in preparations for the discussions is also questionable. My own discussions with source country embassy staff in Doha revealed that they knew little about the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.

How sustainable the Abu Dhabi Dialogue will be is an open question. If its website is any indication, there appears to have been little follow-up since the January 2008 Declaration, except in terms of the UAE's activities outlined in reference to the GFMD. The planned 2010 meeting did not take place although officials note that it will occur in 2011. By contrast, the Colombo Process brought together the eleven source countries of migration to the GCC in a senior officials meeting in October 2010. While the GCC countries often attend the Colombo Process as observers, such participation will not substitute for the type of consultation that takes place when both source and destination countries meet as full partners.

The agenda set out in the Abu Dhabi Dialogue remains a useful one for consideration. In particular, there continues to be need for discussion of ways to prevent illegal recruitment practices and promote welfare and protection measures for contractual workers—the theme of third partnership outlined in the declaration. The GFMD conclusions in Mexico, and the UAE's commitment to fund pilot programs and a workshop on recruitment practices, should be helpful in generating potential models for accomplishing this aim, but it is more likely that tangible progress in developing strategies that address the full lifecycle of migration—from pre-migration to return or settlement—will be reached more readily in direct consultations between source and destination countries of migrants coming to the GCC.

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11. *The Ambivalence of Immigration Policy in Saudi Arabia: Public and Private Actors in Migration Management* Hélène Thiollet

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) shares with other GCC countries a strong reluctance to use words like “migrant” or “migration.” But with around 30% of its population made of foreign workers and their families, Saudi Arabia is the largest of the 6 major labor-importing countries of Western Asia counting approximately 7.3 million expatriates. According to international statistics, Saudi Arabia ranks among the largest recipient of international migrants after the U.S., the Russian Federation, and Germany. Smaller Gulf monarchies have even more impressive ratios of foreigners in their national censuses including the highest proportion of international migrants in the world for Qatar (87%), the United Arab Emirates (70%), and Kuwait (69%). In Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, migration is invariably presented as “temporary,” and “contract workers” are described as mostly short-term “guest workers” in countries where residence and citizenship rights are tied to lineage and ethnicity. In fact, since immigration is not deemed to be a permanent feature of the region’s demography, economy, and sociology, migration is not considered permanent and foreign workers will always have to leave. The settlement of some categories of foreign workers is considered a danger to the ethnic state.

As immigration and immigrants settlement represents an issue of national security and national identity, public discourse are strangely shaped by an economic description of labor import and migration management. The idea that Saudi Arabia engineered immigration trends over time contradicts the vision of immigration “as a commodity” regulated by the international labor market. The paradox of the alleged political neutrality of migration management reveals the historical ambivalence of the relationship between public and private actors in Saudi politics.

During *tafra* (the period of high oil income from 1973 to 1986-7), growth, social state building, and massive inflows of immigrants, both Arab and Asian, shaped the country’s economic and social development. The Saudi state has consistently presented the regulation of immigration as a domain of public policies where public actors were secondary in spite of diplomatic strategies in the selection of migrants according to their country of origin. Saudi “migration diplomacy” has for instance demonstrated the use of migration as a tool for regional politics in the Arab world from the 1960s to the 1990s as leverage on Arab countries that depend on remittances from the Gulf.

In fact, the relationship between the state, foreign powers, and the private sector was constructed partly through a joint management of labor migration fluxes. Early immigration trends were first managed through the US-owned Aramco. Recruitment was handled by the company which developed policies of manpower management based on racial hierarchies and spatial separation between nationals and expatriates that had a tremendous impact on Saudi society. Segregation was enforced to serve economic efficiency and prevent or tame political uprising and strikes in the 1950s and 1960s. The Aramco as a private actor linking Saudi and American state interests, implemented a “migration policy” that profoundly shaped the society, urban planning, and economic interdependence between communities.

After the nationalization of Aramco between 1973 and 1980, administrative practices at the ministerial and local level were connected to several private actors of immigration management: firms, recruitment agencies, chambers of commerce, various brokers, and *kufala*’ (sponsors). This public/private partnership is the key scheme of migration management in a shifting institutional environment. From the 1960s to the 1990s, public administrations were in charge of registering labor demand. The main part in migration management was played by firms and recruitment agencies, overlooked by chambers of commerce. The sponsorship system known as *kafala* embodied the importance of private actors in migration management where the state externalizes control over foreign workers to their employer or their recruiter and immigrants

are tied to Saudi counterparts who are their legal sponsors (*kafil*, plural: *kufala*). Far from being a public instrument of control over immigration trends and immigrants' residence, the sponsorship system can be seen as a system of brokerage that institutionalized a delegation of State prerogatives to civil society.

In the early 1990s, the issue of unemployment in a context of economic recession became a national priority that led to “bringing the state back” in migration management. The Ministry of Interior under Prince Nayef actively promoted “Saudization policies” through the Council of Manpower, created by King Fahd in 1990. The Ministry imposed restrictions on the employment of migrant workers in the public sector and extended them to the private sector. It required that firms reduce their foreign labor force by 5% annually and closed some occupations to non-Saudis. The Ministry tried to put the *kafala* system under tighter control. Local and national administration broke down on immigration brokers particularly in the service and small business sector, where the *kafil* could shun the restriction immigration and bypass legal processes of migration management implemented in large-scale labor import. The business sector and migration brokers resisted state initiatives. Firms continued to import and employ foreign workers who were cheaper and deemed more qualified than nationals. Sponsors continued to serve as intermediaries.

Policies enforcing the indigenization of the labor force served as a framework to redesign the Saudi job market and lower the share of immigrant labour in the economy. Saudization policies failed to meet their objectives and most nationals in 2011 are still employed in the public sector, a protected and poorly productive one. Saudization nevertheless revealed the tension between the state and private institutions in immigration processes and procedures. State control over the foreign labour force is often presented as a means to enforce labour law and the rights of foreign workers, as private or even informal processes allow exploitation and abuses. But the efficiency of migration policies is limited by the interest of private actors and private interests within the state apparatus benefiting from the “rent” that migration represents.

Hélène Thiollet teaches at the Paris School of International Affairs. She holds a PhD in political science from Sciences Po Paris (2007) and was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Department of Politics and International Relations (Oxford) in 2009-2010. Her research focuses on the politics of migration and asylum in the Middle East, focusing on Yemen, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. She is author of *Guerilla et diaspora* (forthcoming, 2012), *Le Moyen Orient* [atlas of the Middle East] (2009) and “Migration as Diplomacy: Labor migrants, refugees and Arab regional politics in the oil rich countries” in *International Labor and Working-Class History* (2011) “Nationalisme ordinaire et nationalisme d’Etat en Arabie Saoudite: la Nation saoudienne et ses immigrés” [State nationalism vs Banal Nationalism in Saudi Arabia] in *Raisons politiques*, (2010).

12. *Workforce Nationalization in Gulf Cooperation Council States*

Kasim Randeree

In recent decades, GCC countries have become over reliant on a large foreign workforce, to the extent that in many countries, foreign workers form the majority of their inhabitants. Consequently, nationalization of human resources, the concept of reducing expatriate employment by bringing more indigenous citizens into the workplace, has become the desired and articulated policy of all rulers of countries that form the GCC. Building on earlier extensive research focused on the UAE, this work is the first attempt to review all six GCC nations, with the view to shedding light on the catalysts for success as well as examining the difficulties in workforce nationalization. In conducting the research, the role of Gulf citizenry in economic development within their nation states was explored. Prior to this work, the UAE remained the only country among the six GCC nations to have had any serious studies on migrant labor and national workforce imbalance carried out. This has led to the realization that understanding the GCC more broadly was required. This study thus evaluates the challenges and progress of the UAE in more detail before examining the remaining five GCC countries.

In this exploratory-cum-constructivist approach to the problem, the argument that emerges is that closer cooperation and unified policy structures on nationalization are needed among all GCC countries. Central to this is that education, training, the transfer of knowledge from expatriate to citizen, better approaches to encouraging citizens into the private sector, and the greater inclusion of women, are all significant and universal issues which need to be tackled to achieve the desired aim of a (mainly) nationalized labor force across all GCC countries in the coming decades. The notion of structural reform encompassing these problems thus emerges to be a valid one, where a clear and unified policy across GCC countries could be strategically defined, though methods of implementation may need to be more tailored and distinctive. The research further demonstrated that continued economic potency alongside a structured reduction and eventual elimination of the need for hydrocarbon industries would be needed to impact future nationalization policy, though global economic trends have negatively impacted areas of the Gulf in recent years.

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Randeree's current research at Oxford includes work in the examination of global Muslim markets; Islamic branding and marketing; the global Halal industry; Waqf; entrepreneurship and innovation in the Muslim world; sport and Islam; and other contemporary issues in Islamic studies.



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