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Shaping Smart Societies: How Migration and Education Policies Meet in the Gulf States

Philippe Fargues

Chapter in the volume:

Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries

edited by Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah

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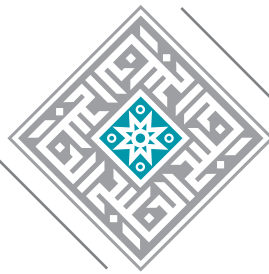
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About the Gulf Research Center



The Gulf Research Center (GRC) is an independent research institute founded in July 2000 by Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, a Saudi businessman, who realised, in a world of rapid political, social and economic change, the importance of pursuing politically neutral and academically sound research about the Gulf region and disseminating the knowledge obtained as widely as possible. The Center is a non-partisan think-tank, education service provider and consultancy specializing in the Gulf region. The GRC seeks to provide a better understanding of the challenges and prospects of the Gulf region.

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Shaping Smart Societies: How Migration and Education Policies Meet in the Gulf States

*Philippe Fargues**

Abstract: The chapter argues that migration and education policies serve the Gulf states' ambition of building post-oil knowledge-based economies. On the one hand, oil wealth and its management by the state have made it possible for Gulf nationals to 1) enjoy an extremely fast development of school education, and 2) free themselves from 3D (Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning) jobs, thereby giving birth to societies in which all (or most) citizens end up belonging to educated middle and upper classes. On the other hand, migration policies, through a clear-cut distinction between low-income contract workers not allowed to bring their families and middle- or high-income expatriates with a right to family reunion, have filtered those eligible to stay on economic criteria de facto linked to education and skills, thereby creating a population of settled non-citizens all (mostly) belonging to educated middle and upper classes. As a result of these processes, a particular segmentation of society has emerged, in which the low-income working class has temporary residence while middle and upper classes (comprising both citizens and foreign citizens) are the only permanent members. The chapter will gather empirical evidence to support the

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above-described mechanisms and discuss the sustainability of the resulting form of social segmentation.

Introduction

Most political actors and observers in the Arab Gulf states share the view that economic and social models that have prevailed since the emergence of modern nations in the second half of the twentieth century are now reaching a historical turning point. There is a strong sense that ever-growing wealth from oil and gas exports and the multiple ways in which states subsidised their citizens will no longer serve as an engine for the social contract. The next generation will not resemble their fathers and grandfathers. While building sustainable post-oil economies and societies has been a much-discussed issue since the first depreciation of oil in the late 1980s, it is becoming the number one issue now that oil prices seem to stabilise at a low level.

Now, at the dawn of a post-oil era, the Gulf rulers are working toward building knowledge-based economies, cross-fertilising the financial, social, and human capital their countries have accumulated in the last half century. Oil money has indeed made it possible to build unique global business networks while, at the same time, putting sustained emphasis on the development of education among citizens. In 2008, precisely when the price of oil reached an all-time peak,¹ the government of Qatar was the first in the region to publish a “National Vision 2030” in which the opening statement reads: “Hitherto, Qatar’s progress has depended primarily on the exploitation of its oil and gas resources. But the country’s hydrocarbon resource will eventually run out. Future economic success will increasingly depend on the ability of the Qatari people to deal with a new international order that is knowledge-based and extremely competitive [...] Qatar aims to build a modern world-class educational system that provides students with a first-rate education.”² One after the other, the GCC governments have placed knowledge at the centre of their economic and social plans.³

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1. \$145 per barrel in May 2008, <http://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>.
 2. Qatar National Vision 2030, https://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/qnv/Documents/QNV2030_English_v2.pdf.
 3. Bahrain: “Education empowers people to reach their full potential in business, government and society” (*From Regional Pioneer to Global Contender: The Economic Vision 2030*); United Arab Emirates: “United in knowledge : Innovation, research, science and technology will form the pillars of a knowledge-based, highly productive and competitive economy” (“UAE

This chapter explores how a unique combination of financial surpluses and labour force shortages in the Arab Gulf states is gradually leading to a unique model of society. More precisely, it argues that two apparently disconnected goals of state policies in oil-rich states of the Gulf—providing citizens with the highest level of welfare and replacing the missing native labour force with migrant workers—create a specific form of social stratification, in which the settled population is comprised of middle and upper classes while lower classes are a population in transit. A fundamental question then arises as to whether societies deprived of an endogenous working class have the socio-political dynamics necessary for social change and progress.

This chapter is about policies and their outcomes. Public policies are usually evaluated from two different viewpoints: implementation and outcomes. Outcomes include both wanted and unwanted effects produced by policies. In most cases, the focus is on those outcomes that specifically pertain to the phenomenon or population targeted by the policy under review. For example, an education policy is assessed looking at levels and trends in indicators such as average number of students per class, enrolment rates at various ages and educational levels, matches and mismatches between skills produced by education and those in demand on the labour market. On the other hand, migration policies are evaluated using data on migrants with a focus on their numbers, situations, integration patterns, access to rights, etc. or a focus on non-migrants in the sending and receiving populations to the extent that they are affected by migration.

Our goal is different. We want to understand if and how two public policies largely independent from one another—policies on nationals' education on the one side and policies on the entry and stay of foreign nationals on the other—combine to affect a core dimension of Gulf societies, namely their social stratification. We hypothesise that Gulf states have managed oil and gas wealth in such a way as to make it possible for Gulf nationals to 1) enjoy an extremely fast development of school education, and 2) free themselves from the 3D (dirty, dangerous and demeaning) jobs, thereby giving birth to societies in which most citizens end up belonging to the educated middle and upper classes. On the other side, these states

Vision 2021"); Kuwait: "Reform the education system to better prepare youth to become competitive and productive members of the workforce" ("New Kuwait 2035"); Saudi Arabia was the most explicit in setting measurable targets, such as "In the year 2030, we aim to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 universities in international rankings" ("Saudi Vision 2030"); Oman: at the time of writing (January 2018), "Oman Vision 2040" is under preparation.

have designed migration policies that make a clear-cut distinction between low-income contract workers not allowed to bring their families, and middle- or high-income expatriates with a right to family reunion. Such policies have filtered those eligible to stay on economic criteria that are de facto linked to education and skills, thereby creating a division within non-citizens between two populations: one of long-term, settled residents belonging to educated middle and upper classes, and the other of temporary residents to which the entire lower class belongs. In other words, migrants' right to demographic reproduction in the Gulf is limited to the elites and middle classes, while non-national working classes reproduce themselves in their countries of origin.

Contrasting Educational Patterns: Nationals vs. Foreign Nationals

This section will show that nationals and foreign nationals have experienced diverging educational patterns in the last half century. It is based on educational attainments recorded in the most recent population census or survey at the time of writing. Because school education is gained at a young age, there is an age, say 25 years, beyond which the highest educational level reached by most individuals becomes a permanent characteristic that will never change for the rest of their lives.⁴ Figures 13.1 and 13.2 plot two series—the average number of years spent at school⁵ (left panel), and the proportion of individuals with a university education (right panel)—by generation⁶ and sex, respectively for nationals (Figure 13.1) and foreign nationals (Figure 13.2) in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia (only nationals).⁷ Data for Oman and the UAE were not found.

One single census or survey provides indicators spanning some 40-50 generations,⁸ which is sufficient to capture a large part of the development of

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4. Late studies (after 25) and long-life learning play virtually no role on educational attainments at population level. Mortality differentials according to education may introduce a bias—expectedly a higher survival probability of the most educated resulting in their overrepresentation at old ages—but such a bias is probably smaller than educational gaps between generations and can be neglected in the first instance.
 5. Average numbers of years spent at school were computed by the author using the following weighting factors: Illiterate: 0; Reads and writes: 3; Elementary: 5; Intermediate: 9; High school diploma: 12; Diploma: 14; University degree: 15; Postgraduate: 18.
 6. Age groups in the census or survey have been transformed into years of birth, or generation.
 7. In Saudi Arabia, the demographic survey (most recent: 2016) provides the distribution of population by sex, age and educational level for nationals only, not for foreign nationals.
 8. A census conducted in 2010 provides educational attainments of generations born before 1945 (aged 65+ in 2010), say in 1940 on average, to generations born between 1980-85 (aged 25-29

formal education in the Gulf states where modern school does not have a long history. In Saudi Arabia, a precursor in the Peninsula, it was not until the early 1950s that public secular secondary schools were opened. The first university was set up in 1957. In other GCC states, modern secondary school did not exist before the 1960s and universities were established for the first time in 1966 in Kuwait, 1968 in Bahrain, 1973 in Qatar, 1976 in the UAE, and 1986 in Oman. Throughout the Gulf, the same typical pattern is observed. Nationals' level of education has been rising rapidly and steadily as is evident when we compare the people born in the 1940s to those born in the 1970s and 1980s, with girls catching up with boys and even overcoming them among generations born in the last years of the twentieth century (Figure 13.1). By contrast, no progress was observed in foreign nationals' level of education as illustrated by the flat trends in Figure 13.2. Moreover, while foreign nationals belonging to the old generations (born in the 1940s–50s) had received more education than nationals, young generations are characterised by just the opposite with nationals being on average the most educated. As described below, processes at play profoundly differ between nationals and foreign nationals.

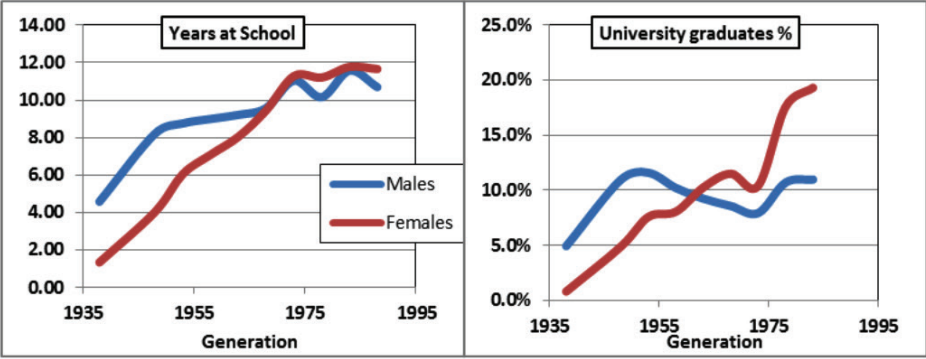
Rising Education among Nationals

Until the second half of the last century, formal, modern education was the privilege of a few in the native populations of the Gulf. Before the appearance of modern, secular education in the Gulf—say, before the 1960s—common people would either go to Islamic schools or remain illiterate. Inequalities were social, as only upper classes would send some of their children to schools and universities abroad. For the bulk of the population, there was equality between generations as well between genders in terms of modern education, for the simple reason that it existed for no one. When modern school started to expand in the 1960s or later, it benefitted only boys. But soon after, public schools were opened for girls as well, and they rapidly caught up with, and actually passed, boys in all Gulf states, in a movement that has been described as a “reverse gender divide” (Ridge 2014). An extremely fast growth in school attainments starting from the 1960s and the complete disappearance of boys' advantage over girls in only two to three decades are outstanding features of the spread of education among national populations in the Gulf, which are among the most educated in the Arab region today.

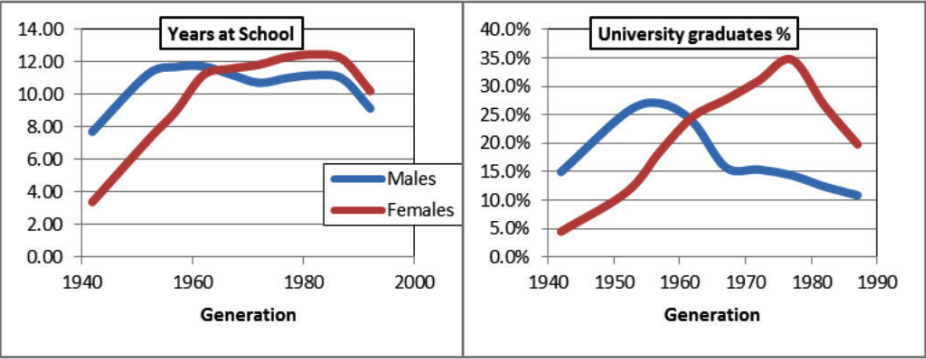
in 2010), say 1983 on average.

Figure 13.1: Nationals' educational attainment by generation in GCC countries

Bahrain



Kuwait



Qatar

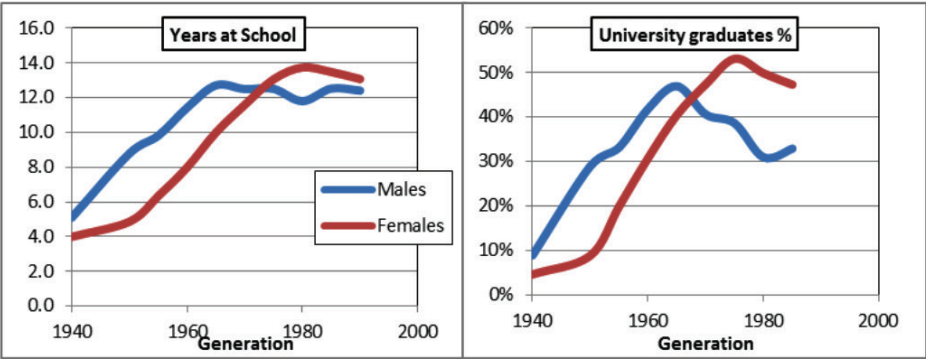
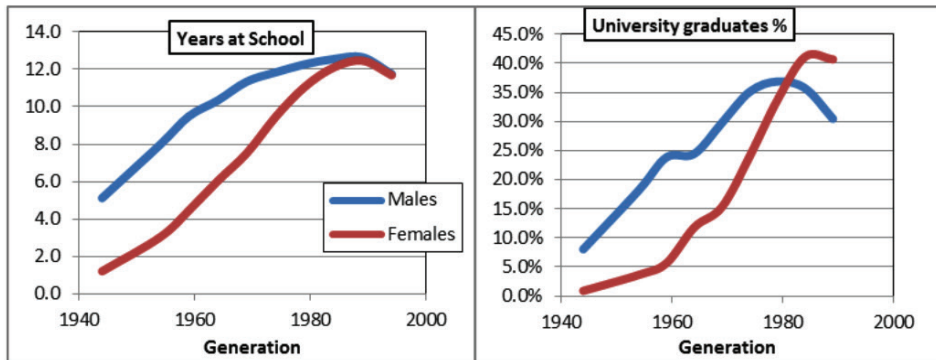


Figure 13.1 (contd.)**Saudi Arabia**

Two remarks must be made at this stage. First, the fact that school and university education provided by states to their citizens has increased in quantity does not necessarily mean that its quality meets the expectations of employers. Actually throughout the Gulf states, the fast rising levels of education among citizens has been paralleled by their equally fast rising unemployment.⁹ This phenomenon has been abundantly described in the literature on GCC labour markets over the last twenty years: while state administrations have gradually become unable to provide jobs to growing numbers of graduate nationals, private companies have continuously shown a marked preference for cheaper and better qualified foreign workers. Second, the rapid increase in educational attainments of Gulf nationals is not irreversible. Looking at Kuwait (Figure 13.1), one has to understand why the progress of education—notably at university level—culminated in generations born around 1960 and then started to sharply decline. Was it because higher education became less attractive for young Kuwaitis at a time when highly paid positions in the public sector were getting scarce, leaving Kuwaiti graduates no choice but to compete with foreign workers for less-paid jobs in the private sector or face unemployment? Was it instead more specifically because generations born in Kuwait in the 1960s and later reached university ages in the 1990s when the country was struggling to restart its economy which had been seriously damaged by the Iraqi invasion?¹⁰

9. This trend is not new. Surveys conducted in the early 2000s already showed that despite universal primary education, and widespread secondary and university education, many young Saudis seemed ill-equipped for the labour market (Mohammed Bosbait and Wilson 2005), a phenomenon that some authors have attributed to the place of religion in the curricula (Prokop 2003).

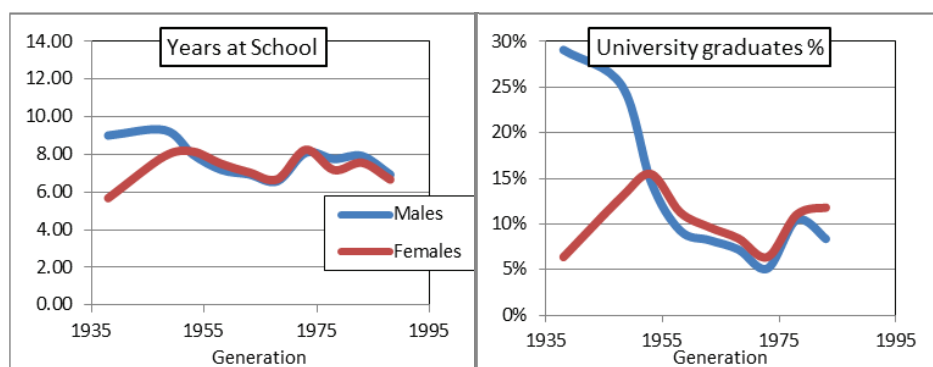
10. War damages were estimated at \$65 billion at 1991 prices (Sadowski 1997).

Stagnating Education among Foreign Nationals

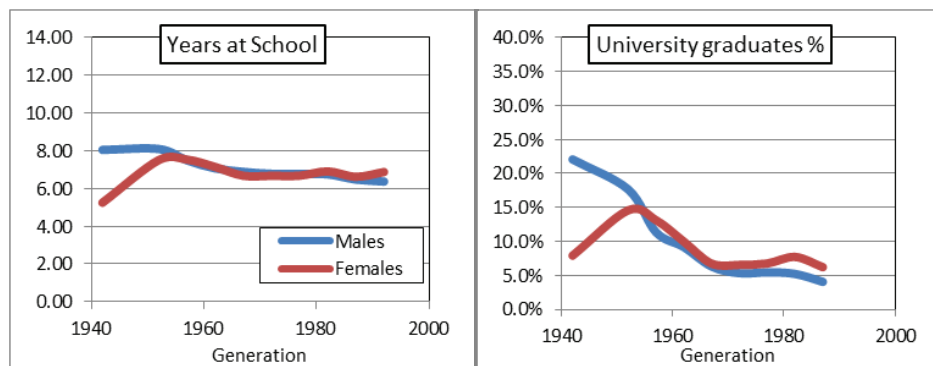
As illustrated by Figure 13.2, patterns of educational change from one generation to the next as well as gender differentials among foreign nationals differ radically from those found among nationals. Instead of a continuous increase in the level of education from one generation to the next, a decrease is observed from the generations born in the 1940s to those born in the 1960s, followed by a flat trend for younger generations (born between the 1960s and the late 1980s).

Figure 13.2: Legislation on family reunion in the Gulf states

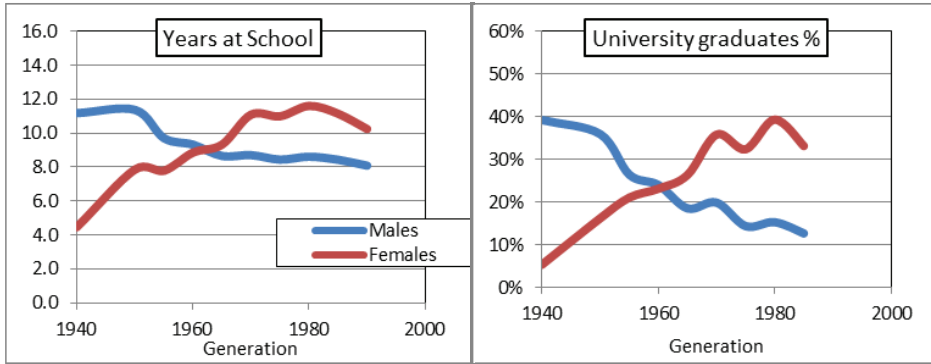
Bahrain



Kuwait



Qatar



A noteworthy feature of foreign nationals' average level of education is that older migrant men (55+, i.e. generations born before 1960) are more educated than any other age group. In other terms, educational levels are declining from one generation to the next.¹¹ This of course does not reflect a trend in migrants' origin countries (where young generations are more educated than old generations) but a selection process operating in the destination countries: the more educated the migrants, the higher their probability to stay at destination for a long period or even a lifetime. In the absence of data on educational level by duration of stay, we must assume that these old foreign nationals migrated long ago and occupation, which is linked to education, has filtered those entitled to stay. The important point for our argument is the correspondence that exists between having a high level of education and being part of the quasi-permanent population.

The flat trend observed at younger ages is instead a reflection of the rapid turnover of migrant workers admitted with short-term contracts. Arriving migrants replacing departing migrants at the same (low) level of skills and education is indeed a typical pattern in the sectors employing the largest numbers of migrants (e.g. construction, low-skilled services). The bulk of the migrant population is primarily reproduced by migration (as opposed to natural reproduction of nationals) and the whole process is determined by demand in the labour market. Unchanged skills and education from one generation of migrants to the next are therefore a mere reflection of unchanged demand for unskilled blue collar workers (men) and domestic workers (women).

11. It must be noted that migrant workers' educational level may not be adequately measured as it could be that it is not the worker but his or her employer that reports to the census taker. This applies in particular to domestic workers whose educational attainments might be understated by the respondent of the household in which they stay.

Qatar is an apparently puzzling case. In this country, foreign women belonging to young generations have the highest level of education, with between 30 per cent to 40 per cent university-educated women in generations born in the 1980s. Is this because of a higher proportion of migrant women employed outside the domestic services or higher education of those employed in that sector? Or is this a mere reflection of a growing second generation of foreign nationals, highly educated but not (yet) on the labour market? A similar trend would then exist for men but the mass of recent, young and low-educated migrants employed in the construction sector would overshadow the emergence of a highly educated second generation of migrants.¹²

Table 13.1 provides a quantified picture of these changes in terms of educational gaps by generation, gender and nationality.

Table 13.1: Educational generation, gender and nationality gaps in GCC countries (most recent data in 2017)

Country	Generation gap* (25-29) / (55-59)		Gender gap* at 25-29 M / F	Nationality gap (Nationals / Foreigners)			
	Males	Females		At 25-29		At 65+	
				Males	Females	Males	Females
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Gap in the mean numbers of years at school							
Bahrain	1.32	1.95	0.98	1.46	1.56	0.51	0.24
Kuwait	0.94	1.36	0.90	1.69	1.84	1.39	0.96
Oman	...		...	...	...
Qatar	1.28	2.13	0.93	1.48	1.21	0.46	0.89
Saudi Arabia	1.33	2.79	1.01	...	...	...	...
UAE	...		...	...	...	...	...
Gap in the proportion with university education (USCED 5+)							
Bahrain	0.95	2.54	0.57	1.31	1.64	0.17	0.13
Kuwait	0.40	1.07	0.55	2.68	3.19	0.68	0.56
Oman	...	...	...	...	...		0.56
Qatar	0.99	2.39	0.70	2.59	1.43	0.23	0.85
Saudi Arabia	1.28	7.19	0.75	...	...	...	...
UAE	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Source: Author's calculation using the most recent population censuses/demographic surveys.

*: Index for nationals only

...: Not available

12. Indeed, in the non-Qatari population aged between 25 and 35, in the population census of 2010 (generations born between 1975 and 1985) the following was found: out of 95,382 women, 27,638 had a university education (29 per cent of all women); on the other hand, 63,217 were employed, mostly in elementary occupations (42,298, i.e., 67 per cent of the employed). For men, the numbers were as follows: out of 418,531, 44,096 (11 per cent) had a university education and 416,178 were employed, a majority of them (322,224, that is 77 per cent) in elementary occupations.

Generation gap (columns 1 and 2): Index is greater than 1 when young generations of nationals (aged 25-29) have a higher level of education than older generations (55-59). This is the most frequent case among nationals when education is measured in number of years spent at school (upper panel of Table 13.1), in particular for women whose average level of education has increased much faster than men's. Kuwaiti males are the only exception with a gap below 1, meaning that young nationals have received less education than their elders, a fact that has already been discussed. If we measure education by the proportion of individuals with a university degree (lower panel of Table 13.1), the picture becomes quite different: women have, in all cases, a generation gap index greater than 1, but not men. In Kuwait and Bahrain, the proportion of men with a university degree has decreased from old to young generations, a fact for which no explanation was found in the literature on these two countries.¹³

Gender gap (column 3): Index is greater than 1 when men have received more education than women in the young generation of nationals (aged 25-29). This happens nowhere. Gender differences among Gulf nationals are systematically in favour of women. This applies to the average number of years spent at school (only exception being Saudi Arabia where women and men have the same number) and even more so to the proportion with university education, with only between 55 and 75 men for a 100 women. The rapid development of female education at all levels, and particularly university, is an outstanding achievement of all Gulf states.

Nationality gap (columns 4 to 7): Index is greater than 1 when nationals have received more education than foreign nationals in two groups of generations: young (aged 25-29) and old (55+). A neat pattern with only one exception (men aged 55 and over in Kuwait) emerges: in each country, for males as well as for females, nationals have a higher level of education than foreign nationals among young generations but a lower level among old generations. This nationality gap reversal combines two processes: educational attainments of nationals rising from one generation to the next and educational attainments of foreign nationals determining their duration of stay.¹⁴ The next section is dedicated to this phenomenon.

13. The fact that university education is not always fully completed at 25-29 does not provide an explanation as the proportion with a USCED 5+ level of education includes all those who have continued after the secondary level whether they have graduated or not.

14. Data on migrants' duration of stay by educational level that would be necessary to support this argument are not available in GCC population statistics.

Differentiated Rights to Stay: Highly-Skilled vs. Low-Skilled Foreign Nationals

The distinction demography makes between two components of population growth, between natural increase (births minus deaths) and migratory increase (entries minus exits), suggests a related distinction between settled and circulating segments of the population. The settled population has access to demographic reproduction in the country while the circulating population is reproduced in migrants' origin countries. Migrants can belong either to the first population if they bring or found a family in the host country with an intention to durably settle, or to the second population if they have a family left behind in their home country or no family but at the same time no opportunity and/or no wish to settle in the host country. This distinction must be expected to have sociological implications as settlers can enjoy a certain form of inclusion in the host society while those who are bound to return after a few years to their origin country are integrated solely in the labour market, but not in the society.

In the GCC states, governments share the vision that all migrants belong to the circulating population as they are admitted on a temporary basis and must leave the country once their contracts end. There is a gap, however, between this vision and the reality. Indeed, a number of migrants stay long enough to build a family in their destination country to such an extent that a sizeable generation of sons and daughters of migrants has now been born throughout the Gulf (Fargues and Brouwer 2012; Shah 2013). These locally born individuals commonly called "second-generation migrants" are not themselves migrants but not citizens either. They are simply part of the long-term, or permanent, resident population, though not of the citizenry.

Not every migrant has an opportunity to become a settler. Gulf legislations limit the right to family reunification, and therefore the possibility of demographic reproduction in the host country, to migrants belonging to the upper range of income and highly-skilled occupations (Table 13.2). In Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, a minimum income is required for a migrant to be entitled to bring in his or her family. In Saudi Arabia, applicants for family reunification must belong to a list of eligible occupations, all of them to be found in the three upper strata of the International Standard Classification of Occupations.

Because income and occupational skills are positively correlated with education,¹⁵ one can reasonably assume that legislations on family reunification

15. Though we lack statistical data to measure this correlation in migrant populations in the GCC

in force in the GCC states over-select migrants eligible to family reunification among individuals with a higher than average level of education. Moreover, the development of institutions delivering higher education to second-generation students makes it possible for them to stay longer as family dependents (until the age of 21 for boys and until they get married for girls) and then as employed foreign nationals if they enter the local labour market. As a result, the pool of highly educated foreign nationals is continuously growing through the combined effect of migration and the emergence of a second generation. This phenomenon challenges “Gulfisation” policies by which states intend to replace foreigners by nationals in the private sector.

Table 13.2: Legislation on family reunion in the Gulf states

Country	Legislation	Income condition
Bahrain	Decision No. 121 of 2007 Regarding the Entry Visa and Residence Permit of Dependents of Foreign Workers and Business Owners	The monthly income of the foreigner is no less than BD 250; the work permit must not be temporary
Kuwait	Ministerial Order No. 2 of 1992 Concerning Dependents Joining Foreigners in the Country	The employee's salary is no less than KD 450 (government sector) or KD 650 (private sector)
Oman	n/a	n/a
Qatar	Ministerial Decision No. 45 of 2001 Setting the Conditions for Bringing in Family Members of Residents Working in the State	Monthly salary is no less than QR 4,000
Saudi Arabia		List of 200 occupations eligible for family visa (all in ISCO 1, 2 and 3)
UAE	Article 31(D), Ministerial Decision No. 360/1997	Monthly salary is Dh 3,000 or more and accommodation is provided by the employer, or monthly salary is Dh 4,000 (excluding accommodation)

states, we might assume that it is as strong as elsewhere.

From Social to Political Tensions

The two trends described previously—rapid spread of education at all levels among nationals and preferential treatment of foreign nationals with a high level of income (and education)—are susceptible to generate tensions between power and knowledge among citizens, and between citizens and foreign citizens among the most educated workers.

Patriarchy Challenged by Education

The rapid development of school education for both sexes among nationals could gradually undermine the two pillars of the patriarchal order that organises Gulf societies in all spheres, from the family to the state: the domination of the old over the young and of men over women. Before the establishment of the first secular, modern schools between the 1950s and 1970s, the masses were doomed to illiteracy and inequalities in formal knowledge were limited to very small segments of the society. When modern schools started to expand, only the young enrolled and most of the students were boys as had been the case with traditional Islamic schools. As a result, generation inequalities started to widen to the advantage of the young over the old, and gender inequalities furthered boys over girls. The first pillar of the patriarchal order was challenged, but the second temporarily reinforced. Soon after, however, girls caught up with boys in educational terms and gender inequalities in education disappeared. Girls gradually acquired as much modern education as boys (and often more than them) and both boys and girls more than their parents.

In brief, modern school has generated a hierarchy in terms of knowledge—with women and young now more knowledgeable than men and old persons, respectively—that contradicts the patriarchal model of power that had been ruling from times immemorial. The resulting disconnection between knowledge (to the advantage of young generations and women) and power (still in the hands of older men) is susceptible to foster social and political tensions. Rising education has indeed raised economic expectations among women and young people disregarding gender. But these are now met by high unemployment, i.e., low rewards for education in the labour market (Table 13.3, Figure 13.3). Unemployment affects young people with some university education more than any other category today. The frustrated aspirations of young generations can produce various outcomes from resignation (loyalty) to emigration (exit) and/or rebellion (voice). It must be noted that, so far, loyalty has prevailed, in relation to states' capacity to keep granting their citizens a number of material benefits.

Table 13.3: Inactivity and unemployment among Saudi nationals in 2015

Sub-population		Out of the labour force rate	Unemployment rate
Youth (20-29)	M	39%	15%
	F	77%	62%
Secondary education	M	32%	6%
	F	88%	32%
Tertiary education	M	8%	5%
		34%	35%

The outstanding development of female education may become a powerful driver of social change in the Gulf. Not only have girls overtaken boys in terms of school enrolment but also in terms of performance at school. Scores in math obtained by eighth grade students in 2011 are telling: in Saudi Arabia, girls scored 401 compared to 387 for boys; in Oman, 397 compared to 334; in Qatar, 415 compared to 404; in the UAE, 464 compared to 447; in Bahrain, 431 compared to 388; and in Kuwait (2007), 364 compared to 342 (Ridge 2014).¹⁶ In spite of girls performing better than boys in terms of formal education, tertiary educated women are the most severely hit by unemployment. Considering that foreign women holding university degrees are present in Gulf labour markets while national women are almost invisible, one has to conclude that the barrier to employment is not being a woman as much as being a national woman (Young 2017). Mainstream conservative values deter their presence in the public space. The emerging tension between the two facets of the status of women—their persisting subordination to men in family and society, and their equality with (or superiority to) men in terms of formal knowledge—potentially challenges the old social order, however. In Saudi Arabia, a top-down approach is currently responding to the challenge.¹⁷ But how long will it be sufficient?

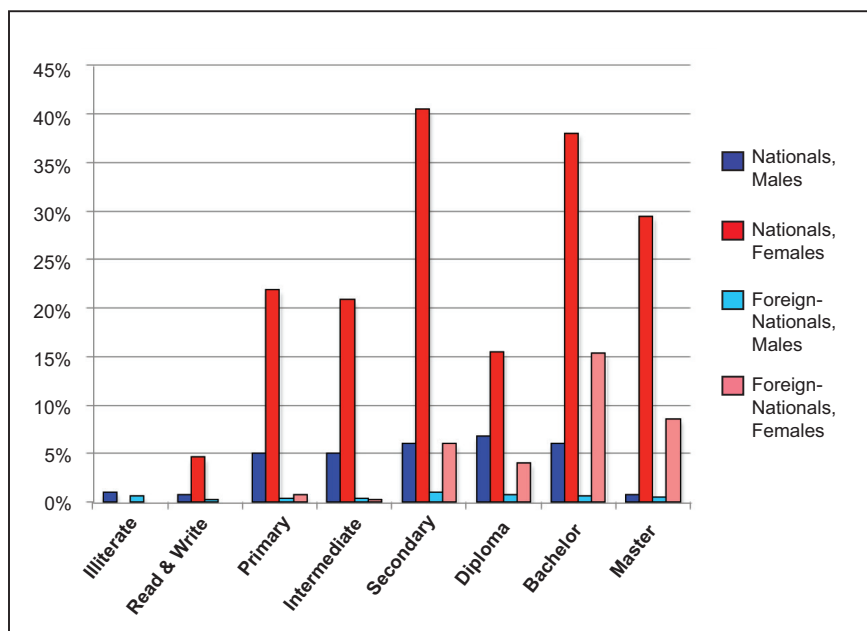
16. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) surveys conducted in Qatar and the UAE show the same advantage of foreign national over national students (Fargues 2017).

17. The royal decree of September 2017 lifting the driving ban for women in Saudi Arabia is an example.

Protection Challenged by Competition

Not only have Gulf states supported greater access of their nationals to all levels of education, but for decades they have also protected them on the labour market by hiring, almost exclusively, nationals in the public sector at higher wages than those paid by private employers. For reasons that will not be developed here, policies aimed at nationalising the workforce—by limiting the recruitment of foreign nationals and replacing them by nationals—have not been very successful so far. At the same time, these countries have lost the capacity (or the will) to hire growing numbers of young educated nationals, whose employment they now entrust to the private sector.

Figure 13.3: Unemployment rate by nationality and sex in Saudi Arabia - 2016



Source: Labour Force Survey 2016 - General Authority for Statistics.

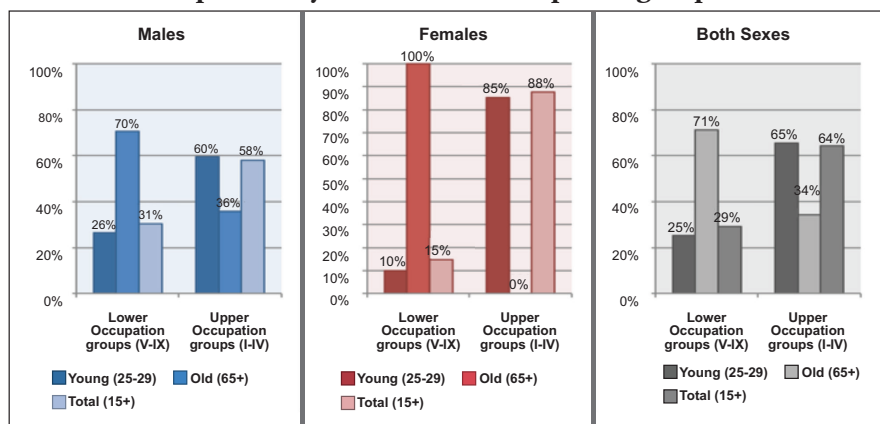
But in the private employment market, Gulf nationals are competing with cheaper (and often better qualified) foreign nationals. As evidenced by Figure 13.3, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the resulting unemployment among educated nationals sharply contrasts with the full employment of foreign nationals at the same level of education. This is even truer for men than for women: indeed, having a work contract is a condition for foreign national men to be admitted or renewed as residents (so their unemployment is statistically negligible), while family reunification without

employment opens another door for women. In brief, there is sharp contrast in the employment status between foreigners and nationals, between those who are in the country because they have employment and those who seek employment in their own country. A feeling of unfair competition may soon grow among educated but unemployed Gulf nationals.

On the other side, there is a clear-cut divide between two groups of occupations: between low-skilled occupations that have been increasingly abandoned by nationals and left to migrant workers and highly-skilled occupations where nationals tend to concentrate. Figure 13.4a shows that in Saudi Arabia, where the total workforce is equally divided between nationals and foreign nationals, nationals represent a minority among low-skilled workers (29 per cent for both sexes) and a majority among highly-skilled workers (64 per cent). Age and sex make a difference, however. While low-skilled occupations are truly neglected by young Saudi nationals, they are still the main domain of employment for older people in connection with the low average level of education in their generation. Gender differences are marked: while both young and old Saudi men are found at all levels of the skill ladder, Saudi women represent an overwhelming share of highly-skilled occupations at young ages and of low-skilled occupations at old ages, a phenomenon that reflects the particularly quick increase in female education in the country.

In GCC states with small native populations and large foreign majorities in the workforce, the previously-described contrasts are accentuated by acute demographic imbalances. In Kuwait (Figure 13.4b) almost all employed nationals (95 per cent for men and 97.3 per cent for women) are found in the four upper steps of the occupational ladder, working as: legislators, senior officials, managers; professionals; technicians and associates; and clerks. Though a significant proportion of foreign nationals is also found in these occupations (12.4 per cent for men and 29.3 per cent for women), the bulk of the migrant workforce is occupied at the lower levels of the ladder as: service, shop and market workers; skilled agricultural & fishery workers; craft and related trade workers; plant & machine operators and assemblers; and primary occupations.

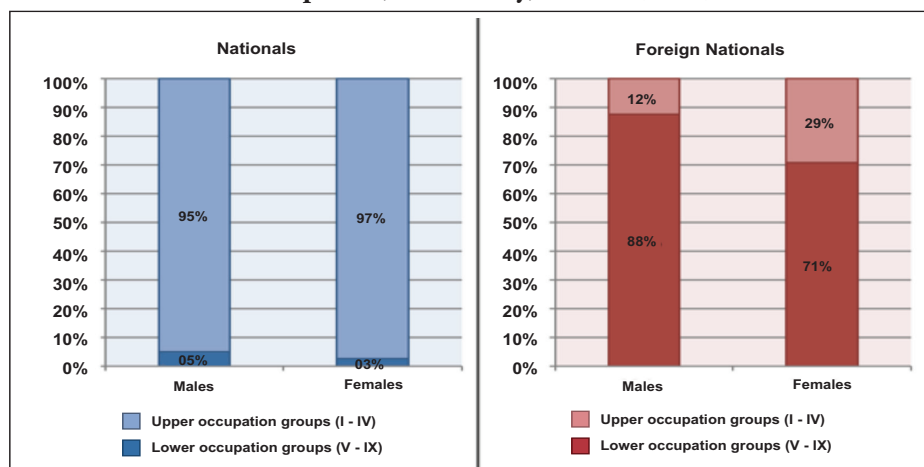
Figure 13.4a: Percentage of Saudi nationals among employed persons by sex and main occupation group



Main occupation groups: I = Lawmakers, Directors and Business Managers; II = Specialists in Professional, Technical and Humanitarian Fields; III = Technicians in Professional, Technical and Humanitarian Fields; IV = Clerical Occupations; V = Sales Occupations; VI = Services Occupations; VII = Agriculture, Animal Husbandry & Fishing Occupations; VIII = Industrial, Chemical Operations and Food Industries Occupations; IX = Occupations Supporting Basic Engineering

Source: Labour Force Survey 2016 - General Authority for Statistics.

Figure 13.4b: Kuwait – Percentage distribution of employed persons by occupation, nationality, and sex (2015)



Main occupation groups: I: Legislators, senior officials & managers; II: Professionals; III: Technicians & associates; IV: Clerks; V: Service, shop & market workers; VI: Skilled agricultural & fishery workers; VII: Craft and related trade workers; VIII: Plant & machine operators & assemblers; IX: Primary occupations

Source: Labour Force Survey 2015 - Central Statistical Bureau.

Conclusion: What Will Drive Social Change in the Gulf States?

This chapter has reviewed state policies and their remote outcomes in two apparently disconnected domains: education and migration. On the one side, oil wealth and its management by the state have made it possible for Gulf nationals to enjoy an extremely fast development of school education, and free themselves from 3D (dirty, dangerous and demeaning) jobs, thereby giving birth to societies in which the bulk of the citizenry ends up belonging to educated middle and upper classes. On the other side, migration policies, through a clear-cut distinction between low-income contract workers not allowed to bring their families and middle- or high-income expatriates with a right to family reunion, have filtered those eligible to stay on economic criteria that are de facto linked to education and skills, thereby creating a population of settled non-citizens mostly belonging to educated middle and upper classes. As a result, a very particular kind of social stratification has emerged, in which the low-income working class are temporary residents while middle and upper classes (comprising both citizens and foreign nationals) are the only permanent (or established) members. This unique pattern is schematised in Table 13.4.

**Table 13.4: Emerging stratification of Gulf societies
by education and nationality**

Nationality / Education	Low-educated	High-educated
Nationals	<i>(Residual category)</i>	Normal status among citizens
Foreigners	Short-term migrants	Long-term and second generation migrants

What could the social and political implications of such a pattern be and what would it mean for the future in the GCC states? A primary question relates to the sort of tensions that the widening gap between, on the one hand, young citizens' expectations fostered by education and, on the other hand, their lack of opportunities on the labour market, will generate. Will the frustration felt by the new generation of nationals place citizens in opposition to states, as the latter can

no longer deliver employment and the social status that goes with it? Or will it instead place citizens in opposition to non-citizens, who would be held responsible for creating unfair competition in employment? The answer depends upon which of the ruling class or nascent civil societies will contribute more to shaping young citizens' opinions and their commitment to their society and nation.

A second question is about what the drivers of change will be in societies in which the working or lower classes are transient as most of their members are migrants bound to return to their countries of origin. GCC societies, in which labour conflicts can be outsourced to origin countries of the migrant workers, lack a key work-related source of social and political change. From Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels ("bourgeoisie and proletariat: the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles") to Alexis de Tocqueville ("I speak of classes, they alone should concern the historians") in the nineteenth century to George Sorel ("conflict prevents the ossification of society and creates pressure for innovation in the social domain"), and Ralph Dahrendorf or Lewis Coser ("The emergence of technological change in Western societies was made possible with the emergence of pluralistic and hence conflict-charged structure of human relations") in the twentieth century, there is a wealth of literature on how conflict between social classes is a powerful driver of the evolution of societies. Will top-down reforms substitute bottom-up dynamics? That is the question that needs an answer.

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Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries

International migration is a ubiquitous reality in the Gulf states where foreign citizens are a majority in the workforce as well as in the total population of several states. Migration is instrumental in the Gulf nations' prosperity and at the same time regarded as a challenge to their identity. For many countries of origin in Asia, the Arab world and East Africa, migration to the Gulf is an integral part of the daily lives of tens of millions and a constitutive element of economies and societies.

On the sending side, there is a widespread view that emigrants serve the prosperity of their nation, through financial remittances, enhanced skills, and enlarged business networks, and that they must be protected in the countries where they live. State institutions have been created to look for migration opportunities and to defend the rights of their expatriate nationals in terms of living and working conditions. Fair recruitment and decent work have become an integral part of their agenda. Emigration is now regarded as a resource for national economies in the same way as trade, and a matter for external policies and politics.

On the receiving side, Gulf policies must address the challenge of admitting contract workers needed by ambitious development programmes and welfare goals, while tackling a number of migration-related imbalances: too much dependency on foreign labour; too few women in the labour force; too much unused education and wasted skills among nationals; too much money flooding out of the country in the form of workers' remittances; and too rigid regulations ending up in high levels of irregularity.

This book is about policies designed to regulate migration and protect the migrants and enable them to contribute to the prosperity of the Gulf and the development of their home countries. It brings unique knowledge to all those striving to improve current systems, from a state's as well as a migrant's perspective.

