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Policies and Politics in the Arab Migration to the Gulf States: Struggling to Keep the Door Open

Françoise De Bel-Air

Chapter in the volume:

Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries

edited by Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah

BOOK CHAPTER

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VIII

Policies and Politics in the Arab Migration to the Gulf States: Struggling to Keep the Door Open

*Françoise De Bel-Air**

Abstract: This chapter focuses on the policies and politics of Arab migration to the Gulf States in the post-Arab uprisings' period. It explores the following question: how do political and economic factors interplay in the policymaking by Arab sending states? The chapter puts forward the argument that, despite the common assumption that migration to the Gulf states is chiefly driven by economics, politics plays a major role in Arab migration patterns and policies, at the domestic, regional, and bilateral levels.

This chapter first reviews the contextual economic and socio-political factors behind the regimes' promotion of emigration. Second, it examines the migration-related tools and policies enacted by Arab governments to encourage the migration of their nationals to the Gulf region. Third, it assesses the outcomes of current policies. Fourth, the chapter analyses the impact of the receiving Gulf countries' socio-political context and regional politics on Arab migration to the region since 2011. The chapter concludes that political consensus and regimes' accountability to their citizens are necessary preconditions for successfully monitoring migration and

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attracting positive returns for sound development planning. However, the current volatility of politics in the region and the Gulf states' involvement in regional conflicts make the future of Arab migration to the region highly unpredictable.

Introduction

For decades, Gulf labour markets have been an important destination for Arab nationals from the Mashreq: among the migrants were Lebanese (37 per cent), Egyptians (58 per cent), and Jordanians (71 per cent) (Table 8.1). Faced with the increasing closure of Europe's borders starting in the early 2000s, Maghreb countries also established links with the Gulf countries to diversify migration venues for their nationals: 35,000 Tunisians resided in the GCC that year, their third destination after France and Italy. However, in the aftermath of the Arab revolts and political turmoil experienced in the Arab world since 2011, the Gulf states have enacted various measures to reverse immigration flows or limit the numbers of selected Arab nationals, amid recent labour nationalisation policies and general economic slowdown due to falling oil prices. The question explored in this chapter is the following: in the changing, post-Arab uprisings' political context of Arab migration to the Gulf, how do political and economic factors interplay in the design and implementation of migration policies by Arab sending states? The chapter's argument is as follows: despite the common assumption that migration to the Gulf states is chiefly driven by economics, politics plays a major role in Arab migration patterns and policies, at the domestic, regional, and bilateral level between Arab sending states and Gulf receiving countries. The chapter focuses on five sending countries, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan, since the 2000s.

The chapter first reviews the contextual economic and socio-political elements spurring nationals' desire to emigrate and regimes' promotion of emigration, before and after the Arab uprisings. Second, the article reviews the migration-related tools and policies (or lack of policies) enacted by Arab governments to encourage the migration of their nationals to the Gulf region, especially since 2011. Third, we assess the outcomes of current policies, in terms of emigrants' stocks and outflows, remittances' inflows, and obstacles to the monitoring of emigrants. Fourth, the chapter analyses the impact of receiving Gulf countries' socio-political context and regional politics on Arab migration to the region since 2011. The chapter concludes that political consensus and regimes' accountability to their citizens and a comprehensive approach to migration patterns at the bi- or multilateral levels are necessary preconditions for successfully monitoring migration and attracting positive returns for sound development planning at the sending end. However,

the current volatility of politics in the region and the Gulf states' involvement in regional conflicts, make the future of Arab migration to the region highly unpredictable. Lebanese Shiites and Egyptians, especially, may have to redirect to other destinations.

Table 8.1: First-generation Arab emigrants by major destination area and their share in the total resident population of origin countries (c. 2013)

Region of emigration	Arab Countries				Europe		North America		Others		Total emigrants
	Gulf countries		All Arab countries		Number	% of total emig.	Number	% of total emig.	Number	% of total emig.	
Country of origin	Number	% of total emig.	Number	% of total emig.							Number
Egypt	2,500,000	57%	3,800,000	86%	205,000	5%	195,000	4%	200,000	5%	4,400,000
Jordan	560,000	71%	660,000	84%	32,000	4%	75,000	10%	20,000	3%	787,000
Lebanon	330,000	37%	360,000	41%	187,000	21%	200,000	23%	140,000	16%	885,000
Morocco	48,000	2%	92,000	3%	2,400,000	86%	125,000	4%	158,100	6%	2,801,100
Tunisia	35,000	6%	43,000	8%	442,000	81%	26,000	5%	32,000	6%	543,000

Source: Author's calculations using receiving countries' statistics (F. De Bel-Air, Migration Profiles 2016 and 2017, <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/publications/>).

Figures do not usually include foreign residents in irregular situation.

Emigration from Arab Countries to the Gulf: “Push” and “Pull” Factors

Young Arab citizens are eager to emigrate, as witnessed in every youth survey conducted over the last two decades. In the Fall 2010 Silatech-Gallup survey, 20 to 44 per cent (in Egypt and Tunisia, respectively) of youth aged 15 to 29 in the MENA countries said they desired to emigrate (Silatech-Gallup 2010, 18). In 2015, 14 per cent (Egypt) to 34 per cent (Tunisia) of young people that age expressed their intention to move abroad within the next five years (Pedersen and Tiltnes 2017, 11-12). This sustained emigration pressure from Arab countries is due to long- and short-term “push” factors, combined with various factors of attraction to the Gulf region.

The Socio-economic and Political Context of Sending States

Youth cohorts aged 15 to 24 made up 20 per cent, or more, of all Arab populations until the mid-2000s (as compared to around 14 per cent in Europe). These also benefitted from the generalisation of higher education: the proportion of tertiary-educated among the group aged 25-34 ranged from 11 per cent in Morocco to 23 per cent in Egypt and Lebanon around 2010.¹

1. People in the age group 25-34, by education attainment. Source: World Bank <http://data>.

This “demographic dividend,” unfortunately, resulted in demographic pressure on national labour markets. It strengthened the demand for employment, and especially for qualified employment, when economic policies had reduced the opportunities for this. Since the 1980s, with the exception of Lebanon, all SEM countries enacted socio-economic reforms and structural adjustment measures, later reinforced by international treaties, and bilateral and free trade agreements signed during the 2000s. These measures led to privatisation schemes and to massive cutbacks in public sector employment, which used to be the main outlet for graduates in the region. Investment in labour-intensive, low value-added economic sectors, mostly relying on low-skilled workers (e.g., industrial subcontracting, assembly and textile manufacturing), also expanded. The highly-educated are, therefore, the most hard hit by unemployment in the region: as of 2016, 22 and 25 per cent of university graduates were without jobs, respectively in Jordan and Morocco, as opposed to 4 per cent (Morocco) and 13.5 per cent (Jordan) of the population holding no degree.² Lagging living standards and low wages also failed to satisfy the ambitions of highly-skilled young nationals, who had high reservation wages, “based on expectations of obtaining public sector or foreign jobs” (Razzaz and Iqbal 2008, 3). As a matter of fact, the 2010 Jordan Labour Market Panel Survey indicated that 94 per cent of the surveyed expatriate Jordanians were employed before migrating, of whom 79 per cent were working in the private sector (Wahba 2012, 3). Egypt’s Household International Migration Survey conducted in 2013 confirmed the relevance of the origin country’s socioeconomic conditions as a spur for migration (Farid and El-Batrawy 2015). The global economic slowdown induced by the post-uprising political transition period was experienced in all SEM countries. Until today, the levels of economic growth in the region remain tepid and youth unemployment is still very high at around 25 per cent in 2014 for the Arab region as a whole, according to the IMF.³

Economic rationalisation measures did not improve young Arabs’ access to socio-political opportunities. Indeed, regime control over the process of economic liberalisation hampered the dismantling of rentier, clientelist systems and monopolies of power (Catusse 2006, 231-234). Access to a congested labour market

worldbank.org/.

2. Unemployment rates by education degree, total population. See Maroc: <http://www.hcp.ma/attachment/795332/>; Jordan: http://www.dos.gov.jo/owa-user/owa/emp_unemp_y.show_tables1_y?lang=E&year1=2016&xt_no=19.
3. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/855df360-d527-11e3-adec-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3oqXZ7MfX>.

remained difficult, such that personal connections or *wasta* (intermediation) are too often needed to supplement qualifications and merit.

Furthermore, recent political instability and armed conflicts deepened the migration pressure. The July 2006 conflict in Lebanon, for instance, pushed many young Lebanese men and women to emigrate (Hourani and Sensening Dabbous 2007). Following the Israeli war on Gaza during the summer of 2014 and the ensuing destruction, unemployment rates were over 40 per cent in 2015 (World Bank 2015, 4). The large refugee presence as a consequence of the Syrian conflict pushed up the prices of commodities in neighbouring host states and decreased salaries in low-skilled jobs, competed for by refugees and local workers (see, for instance, Hamdan 2016). More generally, fears of spillovers of the wars in Syria and Iraq, sectarian threats, and terrorism, accentuated the feeling of insecurity in the region.

Attraction to the Gulf States

The Gulf states attracted growing numbers of Arab migrants during the 2000s. The events of 9/11 had spurred suspicion towards Muslim populations in Europe, and the financial crisis of 2008 further restricted avenues for Arabs' legal migration to the region. After 2011, conflicts closed other traditional destinations, like Libya, to Egyptian and Tunisian migrants. The search for alternative migration outlets could explain the surge in migration from Egypt to Saudi Arabia pinpointed in 2013 (Farid and El-Batrawy 2015, 34).

Outflows of migrants to the Gulf region took off after the 2003 oil boom, which led to considerable investments in various projects and increased the need for workers at all skill levels. Wage differentials between sending and receiving countries and higher, tax-free salaries granted to professionals in the region spurred migration of Arab citizens to the Gulf. For instance, university professors could earn more than four times their original salaries in the Gulf states (Alami, Bhatti, and Dumalaon 2014). Wage differentials are indeed very high: for instance, Qatar wages, relative to Egypt, stood at 750 per cent in tourism, 859 per cent in transportation, 927 per cent in construction (Awad and Abdel Aziz 2017, 231). Another incentive to come to the Gulf region was its proximity to Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt, which allowed for mobility between home and host states (De Bel-Air 2017).

Furthermore, migrants' remittances to their households back home contribute to alleviating the effects of past and current economic difficulties. These revenues made up between 5.5 per cent (in Egypt) and 16 per cent (in Lebanon and in the West Bank and Gaza) of GDP in 2016, according to the World Bank.

Migration Policies and Measures: the “Open-Door”

For all these reasons, Arab countries have been eager to sustain, or increase, the emigration of their nationals, especially to the labour-poor, yet capital-rich Gulf states. The last restrictions to international mobility were lifted in the early 1970s. Since the 2000s, and more so since the economic slump that followed the Arab uprisings in 2011, institutions and measures pertaining to migration have been revived and/ or reformulated in all sending countries. These aim to facilitate emigration to the Gulf through an “open door” policy without restrictions of age and skills.⁴ Strengthening ties with expatriates is another priority.

Institutions in Charge of Expatriates and Overseas Labour Management

The design and scope of institutions dealing with expatriates highlight the attention given to “the increasingly multidimensional nature of the concerns of the communities: housing, education, social security, customs, personal status, investments and the law” (Brand 2006, 75). In Morocco, like in most Arab migrant-sending countries, government institutions dealing with expatriates’ affairs indeed have a high profile. The Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs provides legal, technical, and administrative services. Two other high-profile bodies hold consultative and advocative tasks. The Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Residing Abroad (MRA) runs the Moroccan Expatriates’ Observatory, a research centre that collects and analyses information about MRA and their situation. The Council for the Moroccan Community Abroad (CMCA) has a consultative role in representing MRA on cultural and legal issues in the host country. Besides, the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Competences (Agence Nationale de Promotion de l’Emploi et des Compétences, ANAPEC) organises the placement of nationals abroad as well as their reintegration upon return and manages expatriates’ labour contracts.

Tunisia set up an impressive array of public institutions aiming to provide Tunisian workers with opportunities abroad: the Ministry of Social Affairs and its Office for Tunisians Abroad (Office des Tunisiens à l’Etranger [OTE], with a network of 44 labour attachés); the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment with its Bureau of Foreign Labour and its public employment service (ANETI, with more than 90 regional offices), including an International Employment Department; and the Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation (Agence Tunisienne de Cooperation Technique, ATCT) under the Ministry

4. Despite sporadic announcements, for instance regarding medical personnel.

of Development and International Cooperation, created in 1972. The ATCT is one of the instruments for the implementation of the national policy of technical cooperation, mainly directed towards oil-producing countries.⁵ A Tunisian labour attaché was appointed in Qatar to boost Tunisian professionals' employment opportunities there. Similar appointments were planned in Riyadh (Direct Info 2017) and in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) through ATCT (Awad and Selim 2015, 13).

While Tunisian migration management distinguishes between low- and middle-skilled migrants (mainly to Europe), and highly-skilled, technical manpower (mainly to the Gulf), Law 111 of 1983 in Egypt distinguishes between migration to Western countries, labelled "permanent" in official writings, and migration to Arab countries, deemed "temporary." The former designates an Egyptian naturalised in the host country or holding permanent residency, having stayed abroad for ten years and more, and holding an emigration permit from the then-Ministry of Emigration Affairs (Article 8). A temporary migrant has stayed abroad for at least one year, but did not apply for permanent emigration (Article 13) (Müller-Funk 2017, 55). Within the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM), created in 1996 to replace the Ministry of Emigration Affairs and Egyptians Abroad, "the General Department of External Employment and Representation (GEDEER) has mandate over external employment. It encompasses two departments: External Representation (DER) and External Employment (DEE). Together, these two departments exercise the protection functions of Egyptian labour migration. [...] the DEE has the function of checking the contracts of all workers, including those recruited through their own efforts" (Awad and Abdelaziz 2017, 233-234). Egypt also deploys labour counsellors in each GCC country, except Bahrain, who report to the DER (Awad and Abdelaziz 2017, 234).

In Jordan, expatriates' affairs are handled by the Departments of Expatriates at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (consular matters) and the Ministry of Labour. The public sector indeed acts as a facilitator for connecting Jordanians with job opportunities abroad, through secondments in Gulf States' government sector (in education, health, and security sectors, for instance), and through annual employment forums matching job-seekers with posts in the Gulf. The Ministry of Labour also supervises an array of private recruitment agencies, and in 2004 launched a National Employment Centre, which advertises job opportunities in Jordan as well as abroad. The Ministry also appointed "labour consultants" in Jordanian embassies in the

5. "About ATCT," Last update: 3/25/2015, <http://www.tunisie-competences.nat.tn/default.aspx?id=208&Lg=2>.

Gulf, to organise the training and placement of Jordanians abroad and to defend their rights (Ministry of Labour 2009, 24-26).

Lebanon created a Ministry of Emigrants in 1994, which was later merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to become the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants in 2000. Beyond this, Lebanon's successive governments have not set up strong policies aiming at placing Lebanese workers abroad (Dorai and Hily 2015, 272). Meanwhile, Lebanese universities were found to inform their students about employment opportunities abroad, and especially in the Gulf (De Bel-Air 2017, 189).

Regional and Bilateral Agreements

Since the 1960s, the flourishing Pan-Arab movement sustained initiatives favouring intra-regional mobility, a strategy to link Arab population-rich to Arab capital-rich countries. Intra-regional cooperation in the field of migration in the Arab region started in 1957 with the Agreement on Arab Economic Unity issued by the Arab Economic Council. This and later agreements focused on the freedom of mobility for Arab citizens to live and work throughout the Arab region in addition to giving Arab labour priority over non-Arabs and simplifying recruitment procedures (Zohry 2013, 53-54). Government officials, private entrepreneurs, and migrant networks initiated elements of a regional labour market. This is exemplified, for instance, in the large share of Arabic-speaking Egyptian and Jordanian-Palestinian teachers in the Gulf states' secondary and higher education systems (Thiollet 2016, 11). Yet, the principle of preferential hiring of Arab nationals was never enforced, though it was reaffirmed in the Arab Agreement for the Mobility of Arab Labour (No. 2 for the year 1967, only ratified by seven countries) (Nassar 2010, 17), in Arab League's Agreement No.4 of 1975, and in the Arab Declaration of Principles on the Movement of Manpower, adopted in 1984. The Gulf states, especially, ignored these provisions. The UAE government, for instance, while stipulating until the mid-1980s that a minimum of 30 per cent of all foreign workers be of Arab origin, never implemented the rule (Girgis 2012, 14-15). The reasons for this are political, as "labor movement in the Arab region has been captive to the ups and downs of Arab politics," (Fergany 2001, 12) as well as economic and social. After the 1979 second oil boom, labour-importing Gulf States have been replacing Arab migrants with Asians, less prone to making political claims and able to fill Gulf economies' labour shortages (Choucri 1986, 252). Moreover, Asians migrated on government-supervised schemes, which ensured a rapid turnover of migrants and no family reunion. They also claimed lower wages than Arab labourers (Winckler

2005, 160), an asset given the low oil prices during the years 1985 to 2000. The estimated share of non-Gulf Arabs among foreign nationals in the Gulf states consequently dropped from 72 per cent to 32 per cent between 1975 and 2002-2003 (Kapiszewski 2006, 9).

Against this backdrop, Arab sending states retain little agency to enhance the emigration of their nationals to the Gulf. As a matter of fact, bilateral agreements and labour protocols have been the formula favoured by Gulf receiving states to establish labour relations with targeted “labour-rich” Arab counterparts. The agreements are signed by Gulf labour officials and their counterparts in sending states and usually emphasise the decision-making power of Gulf receiving states’ employers and labour laws provisions.⁶ Nonetheless, in the tense aftermath of the Arab uprisings, Arab governments stepped up labour relations with the Gulf states. For instance, the Tunisian Ministry of Professional Training and Economy passed labour placement bilateral agreements with Qatar in 2012. Bilateral agreements for technical cooperation were also signed between Tunisia’s ACTC and Saudi Arabia, and with Qatar and the UAE (Kriaa 2015). In Jordan, bilateral agreements in targeted professional fields were renewed in 2009 with Qatar, the UAE and Bahrain, while the Ministry of Labour increased bilateral cooperation agreements pertaining to labour.⁷

Diaspora Policies

As described by Alan Gamlen, “diaspora policies” are state institutions or measures which aim at integrating expatriates socially, culturally, politically, as well as economically (through state-sponsored national celebrations abroad, portability of social rights, and distance voting, for instance) as well as policies “extracting” obligations from expatriates (taxes, development schemes) (Gamlen 2008, 840-856). Tunisia and Morocco, which send most of their nationals to Europe, have been setting up strong diaspora policies (Brand 2006). By contrast, countries sending labourers primarily to the Gulf States have been less proactive. Even in Egypt where Law 111 of 1983 can be seen as the onset of “diaspora building,” i.e., making the state accountable for maintaining ties with expatriates (Müller-Funk 2017, 56), the state has been essentially courting those in the West, who were perceived both as potential political challenges and as a potential source of

6. As shown in the case of the 1997 technical cooperation agreement between Kuwait and Egypt (Art. 3 and 4) http://gulfmigration.eu/database/legal_module/Kuwait/Bilateral%20Agreements/1.1%20KW%20EGYPT%20AGR_EN.pdf.

7. <http://www.mol.gov.jo/Pages/viewpage.aspx?pageID=242>.

investments to Egypt, due to their being mostly highly-skilled. This distinction is linked, firstly, to the prevention of political activism, especially foreign, in the Gulf States. Secondly, migration there being labelled “temporary,” in line with receiving countries’ policies, and these migrants being mostly semi- to skilled professionals, heavily male-dominated, incentive measures to attract investments from Egyptians in Gulf States were not actively pursued (Müller-Funk 2017, 59-60). Policies directed at Egyptians in the Arab world (including the Gulf States) were thus “minimal and reactive. [...] and] emigrants’ human rights were not adequately protected [...]” (Tsourapas 2015). Following the revolution in 2011, the short-lived new 2012 Constitution, amended in 2014, introduced rights and protections for Egyptians living abroad. Among these were the right to vote from abroad (art. 208) and the right of expatriates to be represented in the House of Representatives (art. 244). This attempt at a policy of “diaspora integration,” however, remained weak (Müller-Funk 2017, 58).

Policies specifically targeting Jordanian expatriates, most of them residing in the GCC and holding a high socio-economic background and skills, are also essentially geared towards attracting their investment to Jordan. Annual conferences organised by the Labour Ministry for this purpose in the 1980s resumed in the 2000s. They were placed under royal patronage and involve high-ranking political and economic actors including the Royal Court, various government ministries, the Jordan Investment Board and the Jordanian Businessmen Association.⁸ In general, economic concerns dominate Jordan’s state policy towards its expatriates as well as established ties between the country and migrant professionals.⁹ Indeed, politics remain a no-go area: despite repeated calls on the part of some prominent Jordanian figures during the election law debate, Jordanian expatriates did not gain the right to vote from abroad prior to the 23 January 2013 legislative elections. The government pleaded organisational difficulties. Yet, other interpretations focussed on the supposed Palestinian origin of most expatriates (Brand and Hammad 2013).

In Lebanon, only recently did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants launch an array of initiatives, such as organising yearly national diaspora conferences, mostly to attract expatriates’ investments.¹⁰ Yet, so far, the channelling of investments to the country and local development actions have been left to private initiative and to confession-based, transnational networks (Tabar 2009).

8. <http://www.mopds.gov.jo/en/NewsCenter/Pages/news113.aspx>.

9. The Jordanian Engineers Association, for instance, maintains liaison committees with expatriate Jordanian engineers, <http://www.jea.org.jo/en/index.php/liaisons>.

10. <http://www.lde-leb.com/#>.

Internationally-sponsored initiatives also exist, such as Live Lebanon UNDP,¹¹ and an EU-Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL) partnership project aiming to enhance Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI), entrepreneurship, and overall engagement in Lebanon.¹²

Outcomes of the Policies: An Assessment

Numbers and Flows

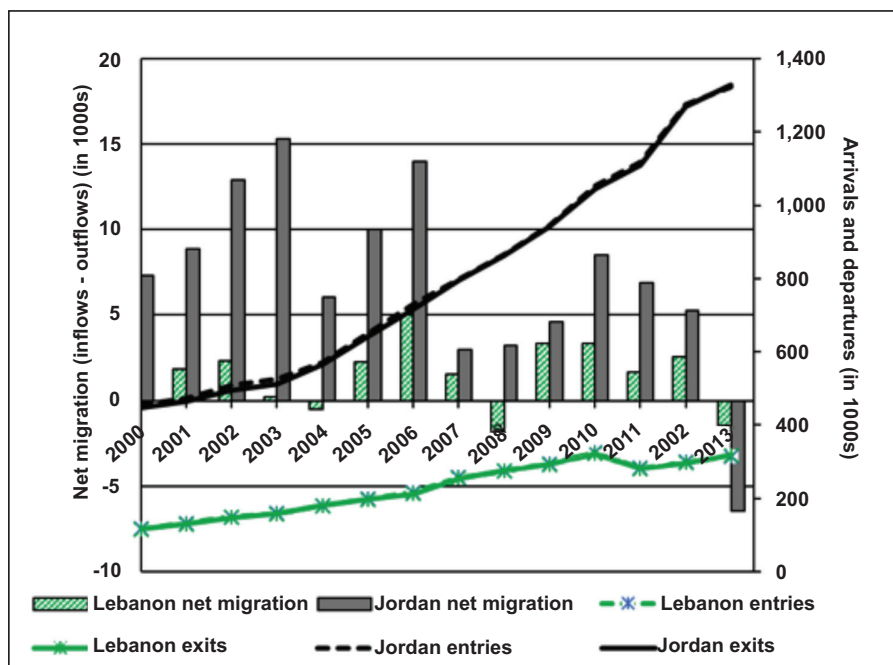
In view of the many measures taken in the Gulf States to reduce reliance on foreign workers, and diversify labour source countries, retaining a sizeable number of expatriates in the Gulf States may be considered a success. Partly within the framework of bilateral schemes, an estimated 30,000-35,000 Tunisians resided in the Gulf as of 2012-2014, mostly in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Since the mid-2000s, the number of technical experts sent by the Tunisia Agency for Technical Cooperation (ATCT), for instance, has been rising by 4.6 per cent annually. Of the 3,379 Tunisians recruited by the ATCT in 2014, 78 per cent were in the Gulf region, more than a quarter (27 per cent) of them in Saudi Arabia alone. There, most (45 per cent) were recruited in education and higher education. Qatar mostly recruited health specialists and military personnel that year, while positions offered in the UAE were mainly in sales and commerce (ATCT Statistical Records 2014).

In the GCC, Saudi Arabia stood out as the leading destination for Egyptians as of 2013 (40 per cent of total emigrants; UAE: 4 per cent) (Farid and El-Batrawy 2015, 34). According to the Saudi labour department, these labourers are often employed in white-collar, skilled, and semi-skilled technical fields such as accountancy and marketing, for instance, in addition to agriculture and husbandry. Egyptians made up about 40 per cent of the total Arab expatriate documented workforce there, numbering around 968,000 at the end of 2013 (MEMO 2014).

11. <http://livelebanon.org/Page/13/5/Mission>.

12. <https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/capacity-building/multi-thematic-programmes/mieux-iii/middle-east-north-africa/>.

Figure 8.1: Net migration flows, arrivals and departures of Jordanians and Lebanese to Saudi Arabia (2000-2013)



Source: Saudi General Authority for Statistics, *Statistical Yearbooks 2000-2014*.

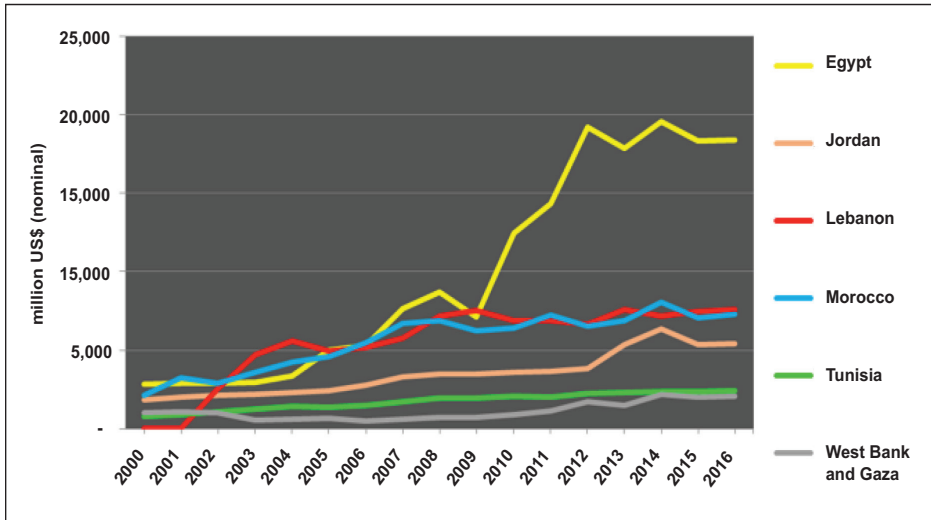
Jordanians and Lebanese in the Gulf are most often highly-skilled (De Bel-Air 2017). As indicated in Figure 8.1, entries to and exits from Saudi Arabia, the major destination for Jordanian migrants and the major host of Lebanese in the Gulf, has gone up steadily since 2000, but started decreasing after 2011 for the Lebanese. Net flows have decreased for the Jordanians since 2006 and became negative for both nationalities in 2013 (more migrants leaving than entering). The lagging net migration and increase in entries and exits suggests a growing turnover of these nationals in the Gulf, and perhaps a redirection of some of these migrants to more politically-stable environments, in the West for instance.

Remittances, Aid, and Development

As a matter of fact, remittances to Arab States have been increasing over the 2000s, especially in Egypt, but have been stalling since the turn of the 2010s (Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon), or even slightly declining (Jordan, Egypt) (Figure 8.2). Their share in the origin countries' GDP has been increasing in Egypt over the 2000s, to a high of 7.3 per cent of the country's GDP in 2012, but decreased markedly

in Jordan (from 19 per cent of the GDP in 2005 to 11 per cent in 2013), and in Lebanon (from 23 per cent to 16 per cent). This remains, however, a valuable source of income for households.

Figure 8.2: Migrants’ remittances inflows (nominal) (2000-2016)



Source: World Bank staff estimates based on IMF balance of payments data.

The investment input of expatriates in their home state is not disclosed in sending countries’ statistical publications. However, as indicated earlier for Egypt, expatriates in the Gulf were not a major source of investments. In Jordan, despite the high-profile expatriates’ conferences held in the country, the emigrants were called an “untapped source of investments in the Kingdom” by the head of the Jordan Investment Board (Oxford Business Group 2011, 37). This suggests some reluctance on behalf of the many Jordanian businesspeople in the Gulf to engage in the country’s development process. A recent World Bank study reported Arab expatriates’ strong desire to engage, “despite worries about the weak legal framework, political and macroeconomic instability, and lack of trust in governments and institutions in MENA countries” (Malouche, Plaza, Salsac, and Sophie 2016, 14).

Regarding knowledge and skills transfers, data are also missing. In Jordan, nonetheless, some specific fields such as the ICT sector were said to have benefited from Gulf returnees’ know-how (Oxford Business Group 2005, 132). Jordan is now a regional hub for start-ups in that sector.¹³

13. “The Jordanian Silicon Wadi,” *The Jordan Times*, May 15, 2014, <http://www.jordantimes.com/opinion/editorial/jordanian-silicon-wadi>.

Emigrants, Sending States, and Politics

In general, sending countries retain little knowledge and monitoring power over their nationals' migration movements. Most expatriates resort to personal networks, especially among the skilled and highly-skilled. In 2015, only a quarter of Jordanian expatriates, most of whom emigrate to the Gulf region, reported having used state bodies or private recruitment agencies to find their job abroad. Fifty-five per cent of them had relied on informal contacts and diaspora networks (ETF 2017, 5). A survey on highly-skilled Lebanese expatriates in the Gulf came up with similar figures for 2012 (De Bel-Air 2017, 189). To the exception of state secondments and technical cooperation, migration to the Gulf is most often left to the initiative of individuals who mobilise all sorts of information sources and mechanisms in their decision to leave, including word of mouth, recruiting agencies collecting CVs or hiring specific professionals, and spontaneous applications to companies abroad. The skill level of Arab migrants gives them better agency throughout the migration process and they can successfully face international competition on Gulf labour markets. Yet, personal networks (friends and family) remain the main support for recruitment in the GCC region. The Egyptian Labour Market Panel Survey (ELMPS 2012) also highlighted the role of a large network of past emigrants from the same community in offsetting migrants' selection on the basis of wealth, hence increasing the propensity to migrate among poorer households (David and Jarreau 2017, 6).

Another indication of the low levels of control that sending states have over expatriates' migration patterns is the general absence of data. Besides technical and administrative inefficiency, expatriate citizens may distrust, or ignore, their diplomatic representation abroad, which hampers the process of setting up accurate records of nationals abroad. If collected, information on expatriates can also be politically sensitive (i.e., touching upon emigrants' sectarian background, for instance, or regimes' inability to counter "brain drain"), hence may be concealed from the public. Ignoring such migration movements saves governments being held responsible for it or from having to expect future claims on behalf of these social groups. Moreover, keeping records on expatriates means acknowledging that they are a part of the citizenry: one "counts" (i.e., matters) if one "is counted" (i.e., enumerated).¹⁴ The lack of data on expatriates thus reveals the existence of domestic political issues surrounding nationals' emigration. Moreover, the Gulf receiving states usually conceal their own statistics on foreign residents, which

14. Adapted from Bookman 1997, 71.

would highlight the extent of the “demographic imbalance” between nationals and expatriates in the region.

Domestic politics, in general, adds to the difficulty of formulating, let alone implementing, comprehensive national migration strategies. It was said, for instance, that “Jordan would benefit from a common approach towards the emigration of its nationals abroad, covering pre-departure, diaspora and post-return, in which all actors work together to implement a shared vision” (ETF 2017, 7). However, this seems unlikely in the context of today’s politically-divided Jordan, or any other Arab country, where social cohesion, fair political representation and consensus, as well as state accountability are generally lacking.

Politics and the Future of Arab Migration to the GCC

Politics at home does play a role as a spur for emigration; it also contributes to the selection of migrants, influences the patterns of emigration, and shapes the nature of migrants’ links with the home states. However, migration remains highly selective and the policies run by destination countries have a great impact (Di Bartolomeo and Fargues 2015). Institutions and politics in the receiving state also influence immigrants’ stocks, flows, nationality breakdown, and socio-economic profile.

Gulf States’ No-rights Migration Policies

In the Gulf states, migrants are considered temporary contractual labourers, expected to leave upon the termination of their employment contracts. The *kafala* (sponsorship) system governs the employment and residency of all foreigners in the six GCC countries. The system delegates to citizens, and to certain categories of foreign employers, the responsibility of controlling and regulating the presence and activities of foreigners on the national territory, which is everywhere else a state prerogative (Beaugé 1986, 109). The sponsor issues the employment contract and is expected to bear full economic, social, and legal responsibility for the employee during the contract period. In return, the *kafeel* has the upper hand on salary and work conditions and movements within and outside the country. Besides creating “dual societies” (Fargues 2011) by enforcing a “structural dependence” (Longva 1999) between the local *kafeels* and foreign workers, the system also underlies the formation of “dual labour markets” that characterise the Gulf countries. Until recently, governmental sectors were mainly staffed with nationals, while foreigners (still) make up most of the private sector’s workforce. In both sectors, nationals receive better salaries and working conditions than foreigners. This, firstly, disconnects local workers’ professional mobility from their economic productivity,

hence increasing the cost of their employment. Second, the impossibility to switch *kafeel* constrains foreign employees' upscale mobility. There is, therefore, no professional competition between nationals and foreigners.

Besides granting citizens and business classes the upper hand on migrants' employment and living conditions, sponsorship also enhanced migrant numbers. Only in the 1990s did local governments significantly strengthen the enforcement of administrative laws and regulations pertaining to the entry, exit, employment and registration of foreign residents (Loori 2012, 14). Moreover, concerns over domestic security, not management of the workforce, underpinned such moves. As governments facilitated the process of importing manpower to respond to business classes' cheap labour demands, the trade of visas (nationals sponsor foreign workers in return for money) permitted under the *kafala* contributed to swelling the numbers of foreign labourers and limiting their costs. The institution of sponsorship is indeed at the core of a "number-vs-rights tradeoff." In a liberal democracy where rights apply to all residents, such vast numbers would have incurred huge labour costs to employers. In the Gulf states, the costs were alleviated by depriving the foreigners of socio-political rights: "More rights for migrants typically means higher costs [thus,] more migrants tend to be associated with fewer rights for migrants" (Ruhs and Martin 2008, 251). Advantages such as family reunion and social packages, if any, are negotiated with employers and would increase with the worker's comparative value on the international labour market.

The sponsorship system, therefore, leaves little leeway to sending states to protect their nationals, once in the Gulf. Moreover, until recently, informality was common among foreign workers, especially the less skilled ones.¹⁵ More so, the increasing diversification of migrants' source countries aims to attract ever cheaper and more docile workforce (Malit and Al-Youha 2016). Egyptian workers, especially, the most numerous among Arabs, regularly report sponsorship-linked conflicts and abuses (Awad and Abdelaziz 2017, 235; Sakr 2016). Their involvement in low- to middle-skilled professions makes them more "disposable," hence, more vulnerable to the abuses of the *kafeel*, than other, more often skilled and highly-skilled labourers, such as Jordanians and Lebanese. Economic and socio-political dependency on Gulf markets and fear of their closure to Egyptian migrants may thus explain the passivity of Egyptian authorities regarding abuses of Egyptian workers (El-Aswany 2016).

15. On Egyptians: Awad and Abdel Aziz 2017; on Moroccans: Khachani 2009.

The 2010s: Overhaul of Policies

The onset of the Arab uprisings in 2011 and the fall of oil prices late 2014 underlined the urgency of socio-economic reforms in the Gulf states. Faced with massive local youth unemployment in the 2000s, the Gulf governments had attempted to revive the decades-old policies of workforce nationalisation (Saudisation, Kuwaitisation, etc.) aiming to increase nationals' private sector employment by narrowing the labour price gap between nationals and expatriates and to gain more control on the monitoring of flows by weakening the *kafuels* (Hertog 2014). Despite the passing of some reform measures, the sponsorship rule was not formally eliminated (Zahra 2015). Yet, the costs of employing foreign labourers have greatly increased, especially in Saudi Arabia, the largest employment market in the region.

Added to the current low oil prices and ensuing economic slowdown in the region, these several measures have already had an impact on the inflow of skilled Arab labourers, as highlighted in the previous section (Figure 8.1). Yet, this impact could be felt more deeply for two sets of reasons. First, as employers seek to reduce the costs of hiring a foreign workforce, many Western expats, who dominate the salary scale, are being laid off by their employers since 2016 (AFP 2017). The distribution of salaries by nationality group highlights the "ethnic" hierarchisation of foreign populations in the Gulf: Arab and Western CEOs, for example, earn more on average than Asian CEOs everywhere save Oman in 2015 (Anderson 2015). Arab highly-skilled professionals may thus increasingly feel the pinch of labour diversification to "cheaper" nationals, as they are second on the wage scale. Second, other, usually less skilled workers such as the Egyptians in Saudi Arabia often occupy some professions that are likely to be increasingly reserved for Saudi nationals. As said earlier, they are often employed in white-collar, skilled and semi-skilled technical fields. Yet, these are particularly targeted by Saudi students on state scholarships abroad, who receive incentives to come back to the country.

Selective Deportations and Entry Restrictions

Furthermore, deteriorating bilateral or regional relations between selected Gulf states and migrant-sending countries is bound to have a strong impact on Arab workers' future migration patterns. The Gulf states have a record of large-scale deportation of selected nationalities, in retaliation for their governments' policies and foreign relations decisions. The expulsion of some 350,000 Palestinian residents of Kuwait and the deportation of some 800,000 Yemenis from Saudi Arabia in 1990 are two examples of the Gulf states' drastic responses to the positions of migrants' home governments. The decision to expel Palestinians was indeed justified by the PLO

and Jordanian leaders' alleged support to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq that ignited the First Gulf War in August 1990. Yet, deportation was also a way to eradicate political activism among certain expatriates (Van Hear 1998, 93), whose long-term presence was increasingly viewed as a security issue. Palestinians in Kuwait, for instance, were accused of spreading ideologies directly challenging the ruling monarchies such as Arab nationalism, Marxist and later Islamist propaganda. Mass expulsion can thus be seen as another expression of the migrants' diversification policy (the replacement of Arabs by Asians), ongoing since the 1980s (Chalcraft 2010, 22).

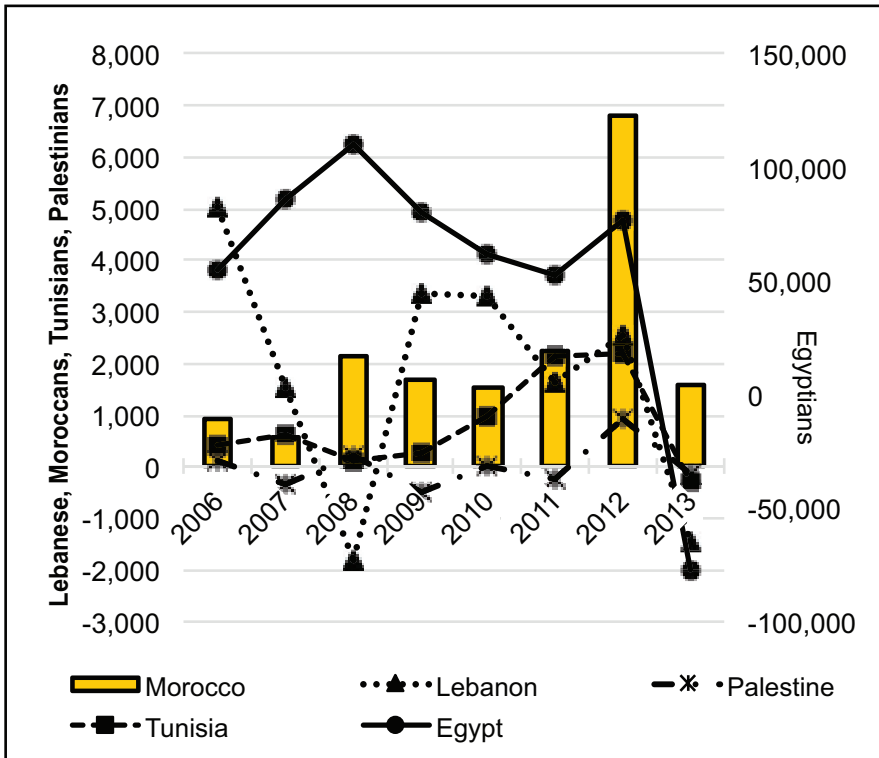
The conflicts and regime changes which happened in Yemen, Syria, Tunisia and Egypt since 2011 spurred security concerns vis-à-vis the nationals of these countries. The risks of spillover of regional conflicts and of infiltration of activists undertaking terrorist attacks are taken very seriously in the Gulf. The Gulf states (save Oman) are indeed militarily and/or financially involved in regional conflicts, and Gulf regimes accuse Iran of interfering in regional affairs, and in the Syrian crisis especially, through Hizbollah. Relations between Lebanon and the Gulf states have thus been deteriorating since 2009 (Alami 2016). Consequently, Lebanese families, most often Shiites, were expelled from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Bahrain starting 2011, accused of connections with Hizbollah (Hourani 2014, 645-647). Hiring bans also targeted Tunisians, Syrians, and Egyptians in several Gulf countries (Thomas 2012).

Another event illustrates the relevance of international relations and politics in migration policy design. Since the late 2000s, and especially since 2011, the Gulf states have been conducting large-scale campaigns of regularisations and/ or deportations of foreign labourers in irregular situation. Authorities justified these measures as necessary to restoring sound labour force management and redirecting employment opportunities to jobless nationals.

The largest of these operations was conducted in Saudi Arabia in November 2013. It led to more than one million foreign nationals exiting the Kingdom, by force (deportation) or voluntarily. The criminalisation of administrative irregularity and ensuing widely-publicised large-scale clampdowns and deportations serve several political purposes. They are “border spectacles,” a display of sovereignty enforcement addressed to nationals (De Genova 2013). Second, deportations target selected nationalities and not all irregulars equally. Among the deported from Saudi Arabia were 300,000 Egyptians. The scale of the operation and the focus on Egyptians, as well as Lebanese and Tunisians, is visible in the drop of net migration rates to Saudi Arabia (Figure 8.3), emphasising the comparatively higher surplus of

exits over entries of these nationals that year, if compared, for instance, to Moroccan nationals.¹⁶ Interestingly, other, more numerous nationalities were less affected by the deportations than the Egyptians: Indians, for instance, who make up the largest foreign community in Saudi Arabia (around 2.8 million), only experienced 130,000 deportations.

**Figure 8.3: Net migration to Saudi Arabia
(selected Arab countries, 2006-2013)**



Source: CDSI/ GAS Statistical Yearbooks, 2007-2014.

Intense state communication on the deportation campaigns, and, especially, the disclosure of figures disaggregated by nationality in the Ministry of Interior’s communications in the press was a primer, in a country where statistics on the nationality breakdown of expatriates are usually concealed. This suggests that the reasons behind this deportation campaign were not of a managerial nature (rationalising and organising the labour market) but specifically targeted certain nationalities among Arab expatriates: nationals from countries affected by regime

16. Yemenis were also targeted in widely publicised operations.

change, hence suspect for importing political sedition. Moreover, the deportations started after July 2013 after the overthrow of Mohammed Morsi by the Egyptian Army, a move strongly supported by Saudi Arabia (Farouk 2014, 9). It is thus tempting to suggest that some supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood could be among those deported to Egypt. This hypothesis could not be verified.¹⁷

More recently, tensions in Saudi-Egyptian relations during 2016 sparked fears among the Egyptian workforce in Saudi Arabia of nationalisation of Saudi jobs or of discriminatory measures against Egyptian expats due to the political unrest (Hassan 2016). The severing of diplomatic ties with Qatar by several Gulf states and Egypt also spurred anxieties over the fate of the 200,000 Egyptians in the Emirate (Zaki 2017). It is worth noting, too, that regional crises can benefit certain categories of migrants. Lebanese, for instance, can now obtain their visa upon arrival in Qatar.¹⁸

Conclusion

As aptly summed up by Geiger and Pécoud, “in the ideal world of ‘migration management’, governments in sending and transit countries cooperate with destination states, [...] ‘good’ migrants are well informed, respectful of the law, flexible to market needs, ready to circulate and eager to contribute to the development of their home country; [...]; NGOs contribute to migrants’ rights and well-being through properly steered activities; diasporas take ‘development-friendly’ initiatives with the help of intergovernmental and governmental agencies” (Geiger and Pécoud 2010, 17). We have seen that, in the case of the Arab migrants in the Gulf, the ideal was missing, for reasons essentially of a structural nature.

Despite Arab youth’s high education level, local economies are unable to absorb them, mostly due to the impetus given to structural adjustment measures since the 2000s. Unemployment rates, especially of educated youth, went up in most countries after political instability led to general economic downturn from 2011. Domestic tensions and regional conflicts also acted as a spur for emigration from Arab countries. Providing job opportunities overseas, facilitating the “exit” of potential dissent through labour emigration, and attracting remittances and investments from expatriates were imperative.

17. Despite some arrests of Egyptian nationals in Saudi Arabia obviously made on political grounds. See, for instance, El-Bey 2012.

18. “Qatar Announces Visa Free Travel for Lebanese Citizens,” +961 Blog, June 22, 2017, <http://www.plus961.com/2017/06/qatar-announces-visa-free-travel-for-lebanese-citizens/>.

The five countries studied here have dedicated institutions and schemes, passed bilateral agreements with host states, and set up “diaspora policies” aimed at strengthening ties with expatriates, yet, of varying ambitions and scope. Sending states’ policies may be seen as successful, given the high shares of their nationals in the Gulf. Yet, recent inflows of Arab nationals to the region are stalling or even decreasing, in line with the levels of remittances. Moreover, the input of expatriates in terms of investment from the GCC has been disappointing to sending states. Most migrants from major Arab sending countries—skilled and low-skilled, wealthy and not—were found to have resorted to their own means to migrate to the Gulf. This explains Arab states’ low level of monitoring and knowledge regarding their expatriates. Political distrust between regimes and expatriates, political selectivity of migration, states’ unaccountability to their citizens abroad, and domestic political divisions were other explanations found to cause disaffection among expatriates in the Gulf vis-à-vis their home countries. Such a context obviously hampers possibilities for comprehensive monitoring of migration flows.

The last section emphasised the importance of the receiving states’ institutional and political context, as well as bilateral relations’ issues, in the policy-making process. Sending states’ dependency on Gulf labour emigration, and the resilience of sponsorship, among other factors, were seen to limit host countries’ agency to protect their expatriates. However, recent deportations of Shiite Lebanese and Egyptians from several Gulf states, for instance, pinpointed the growing distrust towards Arab nationals in the Gulf. Given the economic input of the Egyptian diaspora to Egyptian households, and the political imperative to guarantee emigration outlets to these vast numbers of workers of all skill levels with no prospects at home, the evolution of the bilateral relations between the country and the Gulf receiving states (Saudi Arabia especially) is of utmost importance for the future stability of Egypt.

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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.

