



Immigration without Inclusion: Non-Nationals in Nation-Building in the Gulf States

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Migrants represent between one-third and four-fifths of the population in the Gulf states. Despite their sizable numbers, migrants can only have temporary residency, they have no access to citizenship, and they have limited membership in society, conditions which are unique to the Gulf states as destination countries. The first section argues that non-nationals have been instrumental in shaping the social link between nationals, and the relationship between them and their rulers. The second section shows how oil-generated wealth has allowed demographic growth through high fertility among nationals, and high immigration among non-nationals. The faster growth among non-nationals has produced societies with a continuously shrinking proportion of nationals. Indeed, while policies of not allowing immigrants' integration in the citizenry have worked well, policies aiming at reducing dependency on foreign workers through indigenizing the workforce and those limiting their duration of stay have not been successful. The exceptional demography of the Gulf states is not explained by an exceptional level of immigration as much as by an exceptional closure of local societies.

Introduction

Migration and the international mobility of labor are commonly believed to have created unique societies in the Gulf states.¹ Nowhere in the world does

¹ 'Gulf states,' as used in this article, is synonymous with the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

the share of the national population comprise such a small proportion of inhabitants, ranging from 18 percent in the United Arab Emirates to 69 percent in Saudi Arabia and Oman, vis-a-vis the foreign population, than in the Gulf Region. Migrants in the region are a significant part of the population, accounting for a third to more than three-quarters of the population. Despite their numbers, migrants have limited rights in the destination countries in the Gulf states: they have temporary residency, they have no access to citizenship, and they have limited membership and participation in society. Although the Gulf states vary in terms of size, history, economy and sociological make-up, collectively they are commonly seen as unique destination countries of global migration. This article addresses, through the lens of demography, the question of whether it is an exceptional level of immigration or, instead, an exceptional closure of local societies that makes the Gulf states unique.

The first section of the article highlights the paradoxical role played by international migrants in nation-building processes across the Gulf states over the last half a century. It argues that non-nationals or non-citizens have been instrumental in shaping the social link between citizens, and the relationship between them and their rulers. It identifies three stages in this process. In the first stage, international migrants have contributed to transforming oil wealth into well-being for the citizens; in the second stage, they laid the foundations of post-oil economies; and in the third stage, citizens came to regard migrants as competitors in the labor market and as an obstacle to achieving cohesive societies with a shared identity.

The second section shows how nationals and non-nationals have grown as two independent populations. It reviews the way oil-generated wealth could support high rates of growth among both nationals (through high fertility) and foreign-nationals (through high immigration) while the lack of naturalization and intermarriages makes the two populations reproduce in isolation. The common characteristics of the Gulf states are considered and, where available, aggregate data are presented. For country data, the paper employed national statistical sources from the Gulf states rather than international databases, which often replace missing data with self-generated data that reflect the statistician's hypotheses rather than the demographic reality.²

² Unless otherwise mentioned, data used in this paper were obtained from the following sources:

Bahrain: Central Informatics Organization (CIS) - www.cio.gov.bh/cio_eng/

Kuwait: Central Statistical Office (CSO)- mopweb4.mop.gov.kw/

Oman: Ministry of National Economy (MONE) - www.moneoman.gov.om/Default.aspx

Qatar: Statistics Authority (QSA) - www.qsa.gov.qa/eng/index.htm

Saudi Arabia: Central Department of Statistics and Information (CDSI) www.cdsi.gov.sa/

United Arab Emirates: Ministry of Economy - Statistics Reports www.economy.ae/English/EconomicAndStatisticReports/StatisticReports/Pages/default.aspx



The paper concludes that the unique combination of high immigration with persistently small national populations in the Gulf states is mainly the result of a mix of failures and successes of their core policies. While policies aiming at reducing dependency on foreign workers (through policies on the indigenization or nationalization of the workforce) and those limiting their duration of stay have not been successful, policies not allowing immigrants' integration in the citizenry have effectively blocked the incorporation of immigrants in local societies. In other destination countries in North America, the European Union and Oceania, policies of inclusion, naturalization and integration of newcomers have produced new nationals and citizens out of former foreign nationals and increased the demographic base of national populations. This has not happened in the Gulf states because they have excluded the settlement of foreigners or non-citizens while they continue to struggle with making immigrants unnecessary. These policies have resulted in the relative narrowing of the demographic base of nationals. Ultimately, this combination of policies will work against the sustainability of the system and will result in reform migration policies in the region.

Foreign Workers and Nation-building in the Gulf

There have been three distinct stages in the short history of contemporary migration to the Gulf. In this history, wars appear to be critical milestones for they had a crucial impact on oil wealth and consequently, on the demand for migrant workers in the region.

Before the Arab-Israeli War of 1973: Transforming Oil into Well-being

From the aftermath of World War II and ending with the October 1973 War with Egypt and Syria against Israel, most Gulf states went through a steady process of wealth accumulation that would transform their economies. WWII had marked the beginning of the end of an international imperial order and the advent of an era of nation-states. In the following decades, independent or newly independent states would recover the ownership of their mineral resources. Growing demand for oil in the world economy matched by abundant supply from the Gulf resulted into rising oil 'rent'³ accumulation in the region.

Oil revenues were generated independently from the labor participation of the local populations. Due to the small size of the local populations,

³ A 'rent' is an income earned from natural resources or trading on strategic resources, as opposed to income earned from capital or from labor.

increased wealth from oil revenues were translated in considerable increases in income per capita. High income was soon transformed into material well-being for citizens through the recruitment of foreign workers that would produce national wealth while allowing nationals to largely stand outside the labor market. Labor statistics were scarce in the Gulf until recently, but the statistics that exist are nevertheless telling. For example, the 1970 population census of Kuwait reveals a 62.9 percent rate of male economic activity among nationals compared with 91.4 percent among foreign nationals; for women, the gap is even bigger with only 2.1 percent of active nationals, compared with 17.4 percent among non-nationals (Fargues, 1987).

The demand for human resources was initially met with the potential supply from within the Arab Middle East, which became typically divided between two types of countries: those with human capital and population surpluses and those with oil and financial capital surpluses (Birks and Sinclair, 1980). Labor migration from Arab population-rich to Arab capital-rich countries was regarded by Pan-Arabism as a providential avenue to merge the two disconnected assets of the Arab world, i.e., population and capital. Migration was viewed as a strategy towards "a single Arab nation in which Arab labor circulates" (Serageldin et al., 1980:626).

From the October 1973 War to the Gulf War of 1990-91: Building the Post-oil Economy

The war of October 1973 between Israel and two of its Arab neighbors, Egypt and Syria, opened a second stage of migration to the Gulf, with source countries extending beyond the Arab world. The military exercise unfolding in the Suez Canal and the Golan heights was to have a considerable impact on the economies of Arab oil countries. Ten days after the beginning of the war, Arab oil-producing countries unilaterally decided to reduce their oil production. The price of oil per barrel significantly jumped to four times its price before the war, which increased the incomes of oil-producing countries and consequently stepped up the demand for imported labor. The oil boom resulted in a migration boom, with foreign populations increasing almost tenfold in just 15 years, and rising 4.5 times faster than the national populations. Between the 1973 Suez Canal War and the 1991 Gulf War, the proportion of foreign population in the Gulf jumped from less than 9.7 percent to 36.6 percent (Table 1).

With oil prices soaring, Gulf rulers could launch ambitious economic construction programs. A new economic culture emerged as governments understood that oil wealth was transient and must be used to build a strong post-oil economy. They started to construct large-scale modern public infrastructures and plants. Because the ultimate goal was to adapt to the local

TABLE 1
NATIONAL AND FOREIGN POPULATIONS IN THE GCC COUNTRIES, 1975-2010

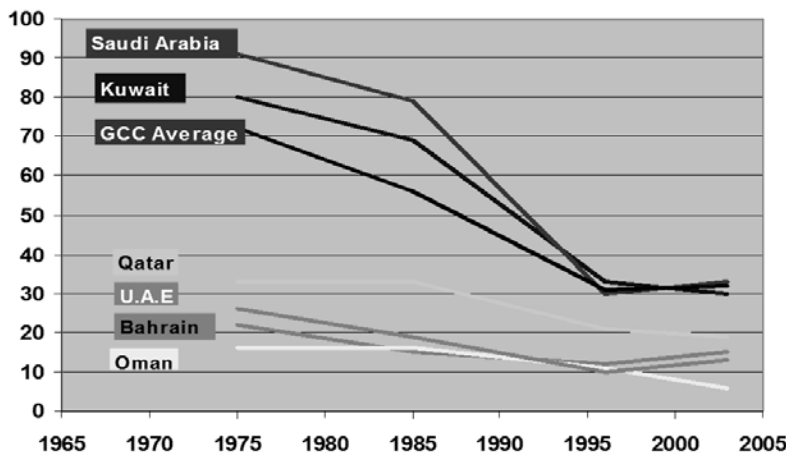
Year	Absolute numbers			Percentage		Annual growth rate	
	Total	National	Foreign	National	Foreign	National	Foreign
1975	9,731,259	8,790,223	941,036	90.3	9.7	3.2	14.5
1990	22,522,620	14,281,239	8,241,381	63.4	36.6	3.3	5.0
2010	41,093,624	23,536,409	17,557,215	57.3	42.7		

SOURCE: National Offices of Statistics – Author’s calculation from data by country presented in Table 3.

reality - a weak demography combined with a strong wish to preserve identity - mobilizing capital rather than creating permanent employment was the objective (Fargues, 1982, 1980) Consequently, capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive industries were chosen.

The construction sector created the largest numbers of short-term jobs for foreign-nationals (Choucri et al., 1978). Gulf governments opted for turnkey plants ordered from foreign societies that would hire their workers abroad. Asian workers started to outnumber Arab workers (Figure 1). It has been said

FIGURE 1
PERCENTAGE OF ARABS AMONG IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS IN GCC COUNTRIES, 1975-2003



SOURCE: Kapiszewski, 2006

that both governments and employers came to prefer Asians over Arabs due to fear that Arabs would be more inclined to settle permanently. Asians were preferred because they were viewed as a more flexible workforce. According to some scholars, substituting Arabs with Asians was also a means to address political concerns: because Arabs share a common language and culture with the local society, they are more likely than Asians to voice and to defend their workers' interests (Longuenesse, 1985). This would have clashed with the Gulf rulers' strategy of importing labor while avoiding the formation of a working class. In retrospect, the strategic alliance of Egypt and Saudi Arabia during the war of 1973 was defeated by the economic choices made by the oil-producing Gulf countries and paradoxically, the solidarity of weapons and oil concluded in wartime was to put an end to the Pan-Arab utopia.

In the Gulf, dual societies were gradually born, in which nationals and foreign nationals were separated *de jure* as well as *de facto*. *De jure* separation is embodied in all the legal provisions that differentiate between nationals' and foreign nationals' rights and duties, the obligation of every foreign national to have a national sponsor (the *kafala* system), the prohibition of intermarriage (with only very few exceptions), and foreign nationals' lack of access to a number of fundamental rights (such as family reunion and access to public education for their children) and labor rights. *De facto* separation is reflected in the lack of or in the severely limited interaction between nationals and non-nationals. The two groups have some interaction in the workplace, but even this is limited because labor markets are highly segmented. Outside of the workplace, interaction between nationals and non-nationals is virtually non-existent due to the separation of national and foreign quarters (Fargues, 1987). Overall, migrants are not supposed to integrate in the local societies – "Migrants are incorporated into the economic structure but are excluded from the social structure: separation, not integration or assimilation, is the goal" (Weiner, 1982:27).

During this second stage, migration was the most popular research topic among Arab social scientists. Conferences and workshops were organized throughout the Arab world on the topic of international migration.⁴ Intellectual debates were raised in the early 1980s, which coincided at a time when international migration was peaking. Among the debated issues were whether migration to Arab oil countries was beneficial or harmful to the economies of sending countries, whether it reduced or accentuated economic disparities within the Arab world, and whether migration was contributing to equitable

⁴ The Center for Arab Unity Studies (based in Beirut, Lebanon) produced many publications on migration in the 1980s. By the 1990s, the center's interest had radically shifted to the then fashionable issue of globalization.



or inequitable development in the region. Also hotly debated were questions surrounding identity and nation, and whether rising Asian migration would make Arabs a minority in the richest part of the Arab Nation and challenge the ideals of Pan-Arabism.

From the Gulf War to the Present Day: Constructing the Social Link

A third stage was characterized by the project of social construction which started in the aftermath of the 1990-1991 Gulf War. It was triggered by the invasion of Kuwait, which was poorly defended and was eventually rescued by an external coalition.

The war itself, which was the first large-scale military conflict to have taken place in a major crossroads of international labor migration, had an immediate impact on migration trends. Some three million (Van Hear, 1995) legal immigrants were forced to leave their host countries, mostly Arab citizens who had suddenly become traitors because of their nationality,⁵ and others fleeing a war which was no concern of theirs.⁶ It would also have an indirect, long-term, impact on migration. Political lessons were drawn by states that possess the most strategic resources, but with neither the demography nor the social systems to defend themselves. The war was an occasion for them to reassess their vision of labor and to adopt nationalization policies of their workforce. These concerns were heightened by the economic crisis that followed in the wake of the Gulf War. Oil prices did not escalate the way they did in October 1973 and astronomical reconstruction bills had to be paid for with cheap oil. For the first time, young nationals in the Gulf found themselves confronted with a drop in purchasing power and the emergence of unemployment. Immigrants started to be viewed as competitors and indigenizing employment became a stake. One after another, the Gulf states adopted nationalization policies along two lines: on the one hand, reducing the supply of migrant workforce by reinforcing barriers at entry and stay, and, on the other, by limiting the demand for migrant workers by expanding the list of jobs kept for nationals and taxing employers who hire non-nationals (Shah, 2005). Nationalization policies have had limited results and labor-market dependency on migrant workers is still at its peak.

⁵ Three communities were particularly targeted – Palestinians in Kuwait, Egyptians in Iraq, and Yemenis in Saudi Arabia – for the reason that they bore the wrong nationality and found themselves residing in what had overnight become the opposite camp.

⁶ In addition to the expulsion or flight of three million expatriates, two million Iraqis were forced to seek asylum across borders (Kurds in Turkey, and Shias in Iran) to escape repression by the Iraqi regime.

More importantly, the whole conception of labor was altered by the crisis of 1990-1991. At the time of the first oil boom in the 1970s, labor was intended as a way of transforming oil revenues into welfare and wealth for their nationals; work itself was left to non-nationals and its benefits were transferred to nationals through welfare packages and the sponsorship system (Beblawi, 1990). Labor imports were responding to a strategy of capital accumulation. With the crisis of 1990-1991, the vulnerability of societies dependent upon labor imports became self-evident and a process of political reappraisal of labor started. The Gulf states had since reconsidered that the labor force should be nationalized and oil revenues must be transformed into jobs and wealth creation for the benefit of nationals in order to serve the social contract and tighten political cohesiveness.

Separate Demographics: Nationals and Foreign Nationals

Two decades after the nationalization or indigenization policies were implemented across the Gulf, the proportion of non-nationals continues to grow in each state. In 2010, non-nationals represented 31.1 percent of the resident population in Saudi Arabia and 82.2 percent in the United Arab Emirates, or on average 42.7 percent in the six GCC states, compared with 36.6 percent in 1990. Indeed, the presence of foreign nationals in the Gulf has persistently exceeded their return migration and migration that was initially planned as temporary has often turned into *de facto* permanent or permanently temporary settlement.

Temporary and permanent immigration produce contrasted demographic outcomes. The former produces only a temporary change in the volume and composition of the population, with no impact on its long-term reproduction. The latter results in the incorporation of migrants and their descendants into the receiving population and has long-term effects on its demographic reproduction. It has been noted that migration often starts as a temporary move then becomes permanent, making the second model a continuation of the first one. This general trend does not apply well to the Gulf. Decades of intense, but temporary, migration have resulted in citizens and non-nationals growing as two separate entities without a new, mixed, population emerging from their coexistence.

Oil Wealth Sustains the Growth of National Populations

Gulf countries have small national populations. Four of them have fewer than one million nationals: Qatar with only 0.2 million (2010); Bahrain, 0.5 million (2007); the United Arab Emirates, 0.9 million (2009) and Kuwait, 0.9 million (2005). Oman has two million nationals (2008) and Saudi Arabia is the only



state with a sizeable national population of 18.7 million (2010), representing 80 percent of Gulf nationals.

Their population size is small in two respects. First, national populations are not sufficient to provide the labor force that the economies of the Gulf need in order to fully take advantage of the considerable financial resources generated by oil, therefore explaining large-scale labor importation. Second, they are demographically small in relation to their neighbors (Iraq has 31 million nationals and Iran, 75 million) and, perhaps more importantly, as compared with the origin countries from where they source migrant workers (Egypt has 84 million nationals; Bangladesh, 164 million; the Philippines, 94 million; Pakistan, 185 million; and India, 1.214 billion).

Governments have regarded the small size of their national population as a challenge to both security (neighbors and partners are much bigger) and identity (foreign nationals are too many). In response, they have adopted policies designed to enhance the demographic growth of national populations while, at the same time, maintaining migrants in a temporary status. In order to enhance the growth of national populations, two complementary strategies may be considered: fostering the birth rates of the national population; and naturalizing foreign residents. While all the Gulf states adopted pro-natalist policies to boost their national populations, no one resorted to naturalization, except for very specific strategies of 'demographic engineering' (Bookman, 1997), i.e., with a view at modifying the distribution of the national population by religious membership.

The Gulf states have simultaneously implemented two kinds of pro-natalist policies. First, they have designed social security schemes for their nationals that would facilitate early marriage and alleviate the cost of children for families. Family allowances there are among the most generous in the world. In Kuwait, for example, the state provides a marriage allowance of KWD4,000 (US\$12,000) that makes it possible for young couples to marry before earning an income that would be sufficient to cover the cost of setting up their own household. The state also provides for a monthly child allowance of KWD80 KWD (US\$240) for each boy under 21 years of age and for each unmarried girl (Safar, 2011). Governments continue to have pro-natalist policies even if some agencies, as in Oman, have recently started to promote the notion that birth spacing is beneficial for the woman's health and a two-child-family is optimal for social progress (Hise, 2008; Sultanate of Oman, 2011).

Second, the Gulf states have allowed migration schemes that facilitate the large-scale employment of foreign domestic workers (Shah and al., 1991; Sabban, 2004) thereby alleviating the burden of child care for national women. While in low-fertility contexts the employment of domestic workers allows national women to take up paid economic activity outside the home, in the

high-fertility, patriarchal context of the Gulf where the vast majority of married native women are not in the labor market, it allows them to have more children. As presented in Table 2, despite the decline, the nationals of GCC continue to have high fertility, and have consistently had more children compared to the foreign population.

A striking paradox is that the oil revenues, which allowed the dramatic modernization of Gulf economies in the period from the October 1973 war, are also behind explaining the delay in the process of demographic transition. Profound changes produced by booming wealth, including extremely fast urbanization, the advent of a service economy, and increased access to health and education, particularly among women, were not accompanied in the Gulf – as they did elsewhere – by rapid transition from high to low birth rates.

On the contrary, the birth rates of national populations in the Gulf remained at high pre-transitional level until the early 1990s (Table 2). Indeed, the financial support provided by states to families, in reducing the cost of children to families, has had the opposite effect. In a patriarchal context where large families are valued, the redistribution of some oil revenues to nationals made it unnecessary for them to reduce the number of their children in order to ensure their welfare, to trade-off the quantity of children for their quality, or to mobilize the economic potential of the family, including women, to face the rising cost of raising children (Fargues, 2003).

Immigration was instrumental in inhibiting the usual drivers of demographic transition. Oil revenues made it possible to recruit female workers from abroad, which kept national women outside the labor force and to bypass a key trigger of birth control. Moreover, high revenues allowed local families to employ foreign domestic workers who would assume responsibility for child care, which contributed to high fertility. Finally, the sponsorship system in force across all the Gulf states, by which immigrants transfer part of their income to nationals, has contributed to the whole system by increasing the income of the family. By cutting the opportunity costs of fertility and keeping women at home, the oil boom has promoted high fertility and, literally, engendered population.

Foreign Populations Continue to Grow

Table 2 provides the best of what the limited statistics available in the Gulf reveal concerning recent fertility trends and differentials. It draws attention to two general observations. First, fertility among national women started to significantly decline during the third stage of the nation-building process, which was described in the first section of this paper, as a new step in the construction of the social link triggered by the first Gulf war and its aftermath. It is worth noting that this happened even though the subsidy mechanisms

TABLE 2
TOTAL FERTILITY RATES OF SELECTED GCC COUNTRIES, 1990-2010

Country/Year	Citizens	Foreigners	Total
Bahrain			
1998-99	3.35	2.25	2.85
2000-02	3.03	2.07	2.60
2003-05	2.87	1.70	2.27
2006-07	2.65	1.30	2.00
Kuwait			
2002	4.75	1.50	2.65
2005	4.80	1.76	2.81
2008	4.53	1.77	2.73
Oman			
2006	3.13	1.03	2.66
2007	3.30	0.82	2.59
2008	3.19	1.03	2.61
Qatar			
1985	5.26	3.59	3.95
1990	5.21	4.49	4.58
1995	4.98	3.02	3.64
2000	4.42	2.51	3.11
2005	4.23	1.97	2.62
2006	4.29	1.82	2.48
2007	4.56	1.77	2.45
2008	3.90	2.03	2.43

SOURCE: Author's calculation using national vital statistics and census data, except for Qatar. The source for Qatar is the Qatar Statistics Authority.

NOTE: Data necessary to compute age-specific fertility rates by nationality and year or period are not provided by the statistical offices of the Gulf states, which, at best, provide the total fertility rates of the resident population, i.e. nationals and non-nationals together. Table 2 presents a first attempt to use data that indirectly make an estimate possible, which unfortunately does not allow for strict comparison over time and does not include all countries.

mentioned above remained unchanged, a fact which can be interpreted as women becoming more assertive in Gulf societies, as more women are able to acquire higher education.

Second, as expected, foreign women have much lower fertility rates than nationals. And, indeed, many of them are unaccompanied temporary unskilled workers employed in domestic services, whose fertility is either delayed or accounted for in the origin country where their children were born and reside. However, despite the Gulf states' policy of opening their borders exclusively to temporary migrants, skilled workers are entitled to family

reunion and there is some fertility among foreign women. In the Gulf as everywhere else in the world, temporary migration may turn into long-term settlement so that a second generation is eventually born.

As a result of temporary migration increasing over time and partly transforming into long-term immigration, the foreign populations in the Gulf have continuously grown from the first oil boom of 1973 until the present day. This is true of every single Gulf state over the years, with the exception of Kuwait during the Gulf War of 1990-1991 and its immediate aftermath. There was also a reduction in Oman's foreign population between 1985 and 1990. The reasons are unknown, and most likely, the change reflects some deficiency in population statistics (Table 3). Foreign populations have not only increased in absolute numbers, but also in relative numbers as a proportion of total populations; their average growth rate has been 6.5 percent annually, compared with 3.0 percent for nationals (Table 3).

Foreign populations growing at a high rate are certainly not unique to the Gulf. For instance, over the 12 years between 1999 and 2010, foreign populations have grown at an annual rate of eight percent in Spain and 5.3 percent in Italy, two countries where the rate of natural population growth among natives is close to zero (at +0.06 and -0.07 percent, respectively). Instead, what is unique to the Gulf is the fact that huge differentials between non-nationals' and nationals' rates of growth have lasted long enough for foreign nationals to grow dramatically as a percentage of total population. Persistently large-scale immigration would have produced national populations growing faster than non-national populations, had the Gulf states adopted strong policies of naturalization as in most other immigration countries in the world.

On the contrary, the Gulf states have never pursued any policy of granting nationality to foreign nationals, except on a very restrictive basis, limiting naturalizations to a few individual cases each year. An exception is the example of Bahrain when large-scale naturalization was allowed in the early 2000s. The process, however, was criticized for not being transparent. In this incident, possibly significant numbers of foreign nationals – nationality unknown – obtained Bahraini citizenship⁷ on the grounds that they were Sunnis and their naturalization would contribute to curb the Shias' demographic predominance (Hamada, 2008).

The Gulf states all have an exclusive system of paternal *jus sanguinis* with elements of *jus soli*. Only sons and daughters of a national father can be nationals and those born in the Gulf from foreign parents will always remain

⁷ Suad Hamada, "Bahrain Grants Citizenship to 7,102 People," *Khaleej Times*, 3 December 2008); Bahrain Center for Human Rights, March 2004, *Discrimination in Granting Citizenship in Bahrain*, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/30>

TABLE 3
NATIONAL AND FOREIGN POPULATIONS IN THE GCC COUNTRIES, SELECTED YEARS
1975- 2010

Year	Absolute numbers			Percentage		Annual growth rate (%)	
	Total	National	Foreign	National	Foreign	National	Foreign
Bahrain							
1976	281,560	213,170	68,390	76	24	2.2	9.9
1981	350,798	238,420	112,378	68	32	2.9	4.8
1990	484,006	310,794	173,212	64	36	2.5	3.5
1995	558,879	352,900	205,979	63	37	2.4	3.0
2000	637,582	398,221	239,361	62	38	3.9	10.5
2005	888,824	484,811	404,013	55	45	4.2	11.8
2007	1,039,297	527,433	511,864	51	49	-	-
Kuwait							
1975	994,837	472,088	522,749	47	53	3.6	8.3
1980	1,357,952	565,613	792,339	42	58	3.7	5.0
1985	1,697,301	681,288	1,016,013	40	60	-3.8	8.6
1990	2,125,053	564,262	1,560,791	27	73	2.9	-10.5
1995	1,575,570	653,616	921,954	41	59	3.0	3.7
2005	2,213,403	880,774	1,332,629	40	60	-	-
Oman							
1977	901,000	820,000	81,000	91	9	3.6	19.6
1980	1,060,000	914,000	146,000	86	14	3.8	21.5
1981	1,130,000	949,000	181,000	84	16	3.7	13.8
1985	1,416,000	1,102,000	314,000	78	22	3.6	-0.6
1990	1,625,000	1,321,000	304,000	81	19	3.3	12.7
1995	2,131,000	1,557,000	574,000	73	27	2.7	1.7
2000	2,402,000	1,778,000	624,000	74	26	0.7	1.3
2005	2,509,000	1,843,000	666,000	73	27	2.2	10.0
2008	2,867,000	1,967,000	900,000	69	31	-	-
Qatar							
1990	467,000	97,184	369,816	21	79	4.20	1.90
1995	526,000	120,085	405,915	23	77	3.90	3.00
2000	617,000	146,269	470,731	24	76	3.30	8.30
2005	885,000	172,139	712,861	19	81	3.30	12.10
2010	1,508,000	202,572	1,305,428	13	87	-	-

TABLE 3 continued
 NATIONAL AND FOREIGN POPULATIONS IN THE GCC COUNTRIES, SELECTED YEARS
 1975- 2010

Year	Absolute numbers			Percentage		Annual growth rate (%)	
	Total	National	Foreign	National	Foreign	National	Foreign
Saudi Arabia							
1992	16,948,388	12,310,053	4,638,335	73	27	3.2	1.3
1998	19,895,232	14,872,804	5,022,428	75	25	2.4	2.3
2000	20,846,884	15,588,805	5,258,079	75	25	1.5	3.9
2004	22,678,262	16,527,340	6,150,922	73	27	2.1	5.3
2010	27,136,977	18,707,576	8,429,401	69	31	-	-
United Arab Emirates							
1975	557,887	201,544	356,343	36	64	5.3	9.7
1985	1,277,280	341,822	935,458	27	73	5.1	6.8
1996	2,567,000	599,000	1,968,000	23	77	3.6	5.5
2000	3,142,000	692,000	2,450,000	22	78	3.5	5.8
2005	4,106,000	825,000	3,281,000	20	80	2.8	5.8
2009	5,066,000	923,000	4,143,000	18	82	-	-

SOURCES: National Offices of Statistics

foreigners. The rule admits almost no exception (Parolin, 2009). Governments have persistently opposed the naturalization of foreign nationals in which they see a triple threat: to the cultural identity of the nation, as it is assumed that new nationals would not share the same values as natives; to social stability, as it is assumed that foreign nationals would bring a working class and its potential for protest that would threaten the social fabric; to the economy where, as nationals, they would have access to all the benefits of the welfare state. Nowhere in the Gulf – other than the exceptional example of Bahrain noted above – was naturalization employed as a strategy to increase the size of the national population and citizenry.

Despite policies against settlement, a significant number of guest workers establish themselves in the Gulf states and sojourners become settlers (Sabbagh, 1990). Families reunite, a second generation is born (or joins their parents), and return is not the preferred option for many migrants who, instead, will stay until their old days. Demographic normalization takes place in the Gulf as in all major countries of immigration. While the age structure of the foreign



population in the GCC countries (Table 4) remains strongly skewed towards the working ages (the age group 15-65 represents between 80 percent, in Saudi Arabia, and 90 percent, in Bahrain), there are unmistakable signs that some migrants will not return to their origin countries.

First, there are already significant numbers of child non-nationals: out of 10 million children under 15 years of age who presently live in the Gulf, 2.1 million (21 percent) are non-nationals. They still represent a minority of children in Saudi Arabia's and Oman's resident populations (12-16 percent), but they are already the majority in the United Arab Emirates' (61 percent). Part of them came as immigrants with their parents, but others were born in the Gulf. For the latter, return migration is meaningless because they never migrated. This second generation of non-nationals represents a unique opportunity to enlarge the demographic base of citizenries in the Gulf states.

Second, elderly non-nationals are also present in the GCC. Out of 2.8 million elderly persons in the Gulf, 750,000 (27 percent) percent are non-nationals (Table 4). Strikingly, the proportion of non-nationals among persons aged 65 and over is almost as high in Saudi Arabia as in Kuwait and the UAE, where foreign nationals comprise the majority of their total population. There could be several reasons behind this – perhaps the first waves of migration to the kingdom started more than half a century ago or they brought more Arabs who were better able to merge into local society than subsequent waves. Saudi Arabia is characterized by a high propensity of migrants to settle.

Conclusion

The national populations of the Gulf states are small by world demographic standards, in sharp contrast with their economies and strategic position in world affairs. Migrants have been instrumental in transforming their oil resources into wealth that enhanced the welfare of their citizens and in building more diversified and sustainable economies.

The fact that natives form a minority of the total population in most countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates), or only a narrow majority in some countries (Oman, Saudi Arabia) however, does not, provide the latter with more power. While most major receiving countries have opted for incorporating migrants and their offspring into their citizenry, the Gulf states have chosen to keep the foreign population separate. They have developed three policies in the name of preserving the identity and promoting the well-being of their nationals: non-naturalization of foreign nationals to maintain the national/non-national separation and the privileges of the former; pro-natalism applied to nationals in order to maximize their demographic potential; and the indigenization of the workforce in order to reduce the number of non-nationals.

TABLE 4
AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION BY NATIONALITY IN THE GCC COUNTRIES
(MOST RECENT DATA)

Age group	Age Distribution (%)			Sex ratio (males per 100 females)		
	Nationals	Foreigners	Total	Nationals	Foreigners	Total
Bahrain 2007						
Below 15	32.1	9.9	21.1	104	103	104
15-65	63.4	89.7	76.3	102	281	177
Above 65	4.5	0.5	2.5	90	147	94
Kuwait 2005						
Below 15	40.0	15.8	25.3	107	109	107
15-65	57.0	83.3	73.0	91	216	164
Above 65	2.9	0.9	1.7	102	153	116
Oman 2007						
Below 15	36.2	11.5	28.8	103	147	108
15-65	61.7	87.9	69.5	101	458	165
Above 65	2.2	0.6	1.7	109	205	116
Qatar 2008						
Below 15	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	105
15-65	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	402
Above 65	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	174
Saudi Arabia 2007						
Below 15	37.2	19.6	32.5	101	104	102
15-65	59.3	79.4	64.7	102	279	139
Above 65	3.5	1.0	2.8	102	161	107
UAE 2007						
Below 15	38.1	14.8	19.5	106	110	108
15-65	59.3	84.8	79.7	99	324	263
Above 65	2.6	0.4	0.8	142	148	144

SOURCES: National Statistical Institutes

Only the first policy has fully worked. The second policy was successful until it clashed with another objective pursued by Gulf states, that of providing their nationals with full access to education, which eventually produced a

new generation of women who did not subscribe to early marriage and high fertility. The third policy simply failed. The efforts of the Gulf states to indigenize the workforce collide with the interest of private employers to minimize the cost of labor and maximize efficiency, and the interest of nationals who profit from the *kafala* or sponsorship system.

The contradiction between the open labor markets that brought in foreign workers and the closed societies that exclude them may sooner or later come up against internal and international developments. Internally, the status of foreign nationals may become a matter of political debate and action when the regimes start to liberalize. Internationally, the Gulf states may no longer resist the pressure to grant qualified foreigners in their midst with citizen-like obligations and rights.

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