CHAPTER 6

Labour Markets in the Gulf and South Asian Migration

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The relationship between the six Arabian Gulf countries that have, since 1981, comprised the Gulf Cooperation Council and South Asia is a long standing one. There are various similarities in popular culture and cuisine (mostly from Asia to Arabia) and a considerable number of GCC nationals have Asian heritage, citizenship was occasionally granted in the 1950s most notably to those from Baluchistan and, it is not uncommon for citizens to seek a bride from cities like Hyderabad on the Indian subcontinent (De Bel-Air, 2015). Alongside the geostrategic interdependence centred on energy exports and food imports is the long-run (but 'temporary') migration of Asian labour to the GCC. Since the 1960s, the presence of non-national labour has shaped, in a multitude of ways, the Gulf's economies, infrastructures and workforce compositions (Weiner, 1982). Of note is that, unlike most other countries experiencing such pronounced and protracted labour shortages (e.g., Australia and Canada) those of the GCC do not offer the possibility of citizenship to migrants however upstanding and qualified they may be. Presently, there are approximately 16 million South Asians residing in the GCC which equates to just under a third of the 'total' population and almost two-thirds of the entire expatriate population. The impact of the 'temporary' nature of migrants cannot be understated and it fundamentally effects contemporary modes of production, human resource related investment and organisational commitment levels.

In the other direction remittances from working lives spent on places such as camel farms, construction sites and offshore oilrigs as well as in places such as hospitals, hotels and private homes, have, for several generations, shaped in a multitude of ways households and communities across South Asia. As a mechanism for poverty reduction such flows are seen by some as positive in that they go directly to families as opposed to bureaucratic state entities. At the macro level, remittances are greater in most cases and time periods than foreign direct investment (FDI) and overseas development assistance (ODA) combined. As data presented in this Chapter will show, in the six year period 2010–2015, USD 507bn left the GCC via formal remittance channels (i.e., a conservative estimate of the actual sum).

No geopolitical relationship, even if on balance deemed to be mutually beneficial, is positive in all respects. At a gloss, costs for individual South Asian migrants and their families tend to be social and psychological extending in instances to abuse and exploitation whilst in the Gulf (e.g., Kohli, 2014, p. 133; Winckler, 2012, p. 7). At the macroscale there is a danger that an overreliance on remittances revenues will lessen the imperative for government-led poverty reduction interventions. For the Arabian Gulf, apart from the substantial outflow of remittance capital, there are sociocultural costs—including gender imbalances, marginalisation of the Arabic language and exposure to non-traditional norms and practices—and costs in relation to indigenous human capital development. Indeed, the long-run presence of so many non-national workers, South Asian, Arab, Western and other, has had a huge impact on the average citizen's employability competencies, vocational behaviour and, relationship per se with labour market. Moreover, it is the general contention that GCC society is divided between consumer-oriented nationals and productivity-oriented non-nationals (e.g., Beblawi, 1990; Fasano & Goyal, 2004; Ryan, 2016). Inefficient modes of production and a workforce that is highly segmented along public/private sector and national/non-national lines are widely considered to typify the region's labour markets (Al-Dosary & Rahman, 2005; Al Ali, 2008; Issa, Mustafa, & Al Khoori, 2013; Salih, 2010).

In a speech reiterating his thesis on human capital, the late Nobel laurite Garry Becker, argued that investment in people is an essential and inescapable ingredient for economic growth in the modern world and that the only exceptions to this rule are the "few Arab sheikdoms that make their income off from the high price of oil" (Becker, 2000, p. 3). To this one may add a second 'temporary' exception: the outsourcing of unskilled South Asian labour to the GCC. Acquiescing to and indeed facilitating for the intergenerational flow of largely 'unskilled' labour can hardly be construed as an investment by the source countries. Yet, the argument to be made in this chapter is that neither exception is desirable nor, and more critically, is it sustainable. Not only is the world now transitioning to a post-oil construct but the GCC's 'national' youth bulge will soon morph into a demographic profile in which the largest strata by far will be of working age. Less externally derived oil rent and a larger number of citizens to employ equals an alternate approach to labour market strategies part of which will reduce the extent to which it is currently dependent on 'unskilled' South Asian labour. It is such impending realities that fuel the Gulf region's policy objective of moving toward a more productive and knowledge-based economic construct (e.g., Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008; Government of Qatar, 2008). In the decades after 2030, by necessity if nothing else, the region will become less reliant on externally sourced labour and have little choice but to make better use of its own human resources.

1. Migration Theory and the Gulf

The key challenge facing labour migration theorists is collating all hypothetically relevant factors into a coherent framework capable of specifying the interaction/s between each factor pairing in an empirically testable way. Likewise, the equation is similarly complex for economists attempting to measure the impact of remittances—be it on the provider or receiver economy. How, for instance is the opportunity cost of being able to access better healthcare and education funded by remittances versus growing up without the day-to-day presence of one's father or mother, assessed and quantified? At an elemental level however, 'economic' migration can be seen in terms of the labour-flow model in that migration is a response to spatial differences in the returns to labour supply. Thus, all other things being equal, the factor that motivates an individual to become a migrant will be to maximise their labour's utility by choosing the most lucrative location in which to work (see, e.g., Borjas, 1991; Sjaastad, 1962). Indeed, according to Bodvarsson and Van den Berg (2013), such economic migration is essentially an "investment decision."

At the macro level, the notion that remittances are something of a "mantra" for development is sometimes advocated. On the one hand they do facilitate for capital inflows which are often well targeted, utilised and free from corruption as they go directly to the given migrant's family as opposed to a state bureaucracy. On the other hand however, it is argued that the idea that some of the most exploited workers in the world can make up for the failure of mainstream development policies should not be portrayed as an acceptable poverty alleviation strategy (see, e.g., Wickramasekara, 2016). As Castles and Delgado-Wise (2008, p. 7) believe that a key issue for policymakers should be assessing whether or not the gains from remittances outweigh potential losses from the departure of these active workers. Various research does suggest that it is often "the best and brightest" that migrate from developing world countries (Doherty, Leung, Lorenze, & Wilmarth, 2014; Wickramasekara, 2016). The implication being that migration overseas results in a loss of human resources, which could be a barrier to economic growth and modernisation—the often written about "brain drain" effect in the popular economic press. Having said this, while the skillsets of migration flows to some regions of the world may fit this general rule, the vast majority of South Asian migrant labour to the GCC is unskilled (Adhikari, 2011; Arunatilake, Priyanka, & Dushni, 2011; Raihan & Al-Helaluddin, 2011).

Until the early 1980s there was a considerable degree of interdependence between the oil-rich, but labour poor Arabian Gulf and the resource-poor but labour rich neighbouring Arab countries. The latter needed employment opportunities for their populaces while the former needed Arabic speaking individuals with professional qualifications to help build institutions of state, establish curriculums and staff educational institutions. Moreover, in the "Arab Nationalist" era, it made strategic sense to favour migrants from such countries as it endeared the Gulf's monarchs to populist Arab rulers. However, by the mid-1980s pan-Arab ambitions had waned and having such a large percentage of non-national Arabs was increasingly considered to be a potential security threat (Shah, 2009). What followed was a gradual and partial replacement of Arab workers with Asian ones. The seeds of today's labour market inefficiencies were here being sown. This is because—political/security considerations aside—not only were Asian workers were much cheaper to hire and easier to lay-off (Kapiszewski, 2016) but also while it was and still is considered socially inappropriate to hire fellow Arabs as domestic helpers there was no such taboo with regard to individuals from South Asia.

As Table 1 shows, the GCC as a whole has more expatriates than it does nationals and that in all six countries, there are substantially more males than females. Such gender imbalances are not without implications—in terms of 'national' female labour force participation and geographic mobility (Rutledge & Al-Shamsi, 2015). The fact that so many of this gender are obligated to be driven around by a male Asian drivers is another aspect of the South Asia-GCC labour supply relationship that is likely to alter radically in the coming decade or so. To illustrate just how significant migration to the Gulf is, globally the top six countries ranked by economic migrant populations in relation to citizens include Qatar and the UAE in first and second places (both have non-national to nation ratios of around 9:1), Kuwait is in fourth place (72 per cent) and, Bahrain with some 55 per cent of its total population comprising of expatriates, is in sixth place (Ratha, Eigen-Zucchi, & Plaza, 2016, p. VI).

Data provided in Tables 2 to 7 show the number of South Asians currently residing in the GCC to be around 16.2 million. Huge increases were witnessed in the first decade of this century propelled by the region-wide construction boom, from 2003 to 2011 (see, e.g., Kelegama, 2011). And, as the figures below indicate, numbers have increased since 2010 also. Factors include Qatar and the UAE's respective preparations to host the 2022 FIFA football world cup and EXPO 2020 and the GCC-wide railway project much of which will be laid in Saudi Arabia. As is shown in Table 8 and Table 9 the GCC transfers a substantial amount of capital to other parts of the world in the form of remittances. While satisfactory bilateral personal remittance data between the countries of the GCC and South Asia is not available, it is known that a significant amount of capital does flow from Arabia to Asia (Adhikari, 2011; Arunatilake et al., 2011; Raihan & Al-Helaluddin, 2011; Ratha et al., 2016). In the six years spanning 2010 and 2015 the remittance outflows from the GCC were USD 506bn. Over the same period remittance inflows to South Asia was USD 630bn.

[Insert Tables around here]

2. On Balance: South Asia

For all South Asian countries, the value of remittances through 'official' channels alone is far larger than FDI and ODA combined. The implication being that if informal remittances are added, the net value of such externally sourced revenues will be larger still (Ratha et al., 2016). Remittance flows help cover balance of payment deficits and enable these economies to import capital goods and materials for industrial development (see, e.g., Kelegama, 2011). The ability of remittance inflows to reduce poverty and to promote human development is also well documented (Ratha & Shaw, 2007). Raihan and Al-Helaluddin (2011), using a cross-section econometric to investigate the link between remittances and poverty of the households in Bangladesh, found remittances to have a significant impact on poverty reduction. For Nepal remittances have also helped significantly in reducing poverty levels (Adhikari, 2011). Analysis by Cooray (2012, p. 995) for the period1970–2008 found that the impact of migrant remittances on economic growth was significant. Specifically, for each one per cent increase in migrant remittances, as a per cent of GDP, a .02 per cent increase in economic growth (measured as aggregate economic output per capita) was observed.

At the microeconomic level, remittances are said to have reduced levels of poverty and raised standards of living, as they are largely personal transactions from migrants to their families, and these tend to be well targeted and utilised. Utilisation includes covering food and housing costs, paying for children's education, and meeting healthcare needs. According to Arunatilake et al. (2011), who conducted research on the Sri Lankan economy, "on average, migrant households are better off compared to non-migrant households." Remittance-receiving households have a lower school drop-out ratios, spend more on private education and tuition and record higher birthweights than households that do not receive remittances (Arunatilake et al., 2011). The same holds true for Bangladesh (Raihan & Al-Helaluddin, 2011), Nepal (Adhikari, 2011), and parts of India (Azeez & Begum, 2009, p. 60). Remittances have also been associated with increased household investments and entrepreneurship—which typically result in a high longer-run social return (Doherty et al., 2014).

The costs to the South Asian countries are generally considered to be a combination of clear micro level ones and less concrete macro level ones. These include the possibility the children of economic migrants will become used to receiving a steady flow of money without any effort on their part which in term has the potential to adversely affect their incentive to participate in the domestic workforce (Adhikari, 2011). There are also the injustices faced by prospective and actual migrant labour in both the destination country and at home. Some recruitment agencies are said to take advantage of the migrant's lack of knowledge and in consequence overcharge and undercompensate them (Kelegama, 2011, p. 10). Additionally, once abroad, migrants may face lower than promised wages, poor working and substandard living accommodation. It can be even worse, abuse, harassment and even sexual exploitation are documented all too frequently (e.g., ADHRB, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2015). To emphasise, most South Asian migrant workers have come to the Gulf only by way of recruitment agencies: business that essentially make a profit by selling their labour. It is generally the case that migrant workers, once in the Gulf, are "tied" to their given sponsor's whim and will (Winckler, 2012). Nevertheless, they are evidently willing to pay these prices because the money they can earn in the Gulf is still considerably higher than that on offer in their home locations—this then is the essence of the labour flow model in motion.

According to Kelegama (2011), there is an inherent difficulty for South Asian governments in striking the balance between maximising the development potential of remittances while at the same time protecting their citizens from the adverse impacts of migration. The huge numbers of Asian migrants that mover to the Gulf and the money that they send back in return inevitably leads to something of a moral hazard, tempting governments to neglect local economic development efforts and indeed invest in the upskilling of their poorest strata of society (see, e.g., Doherty et al., 2014; UNDP, 2011; Wickramasekara, 2016). Going forward then, the consensus view from the Asian perspective seems to be that only if the skillsets of the migrating labour are enhanced can it be justified as an ethically acceptable (maybe never optimal) mechanism for development. Furthermore, the rights of migrant workers will need to be better monitored and protected whilst in the Gulf and ideally, such safeguards and systems be done collectively through the offices of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (see, e.g., Kohli, 2014). Indeed, quality over quantity might be the best way forward and to the mutual benefit of both South Asian and the Arabian Gulf.

3. On Balance: the Arabian Gulf

While pivotal to the impressive and rapid transformation of the region's infrastructure, from the 1960s onward, because the bulk of migrant labour, accepted wages at levels far below the average national citizen's reservation wage level (the latter inflated by well-paid government jobs) a highly segmented and distorted labour market emerged (Fasano & Goyal, 2004; Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2010). As noted by Al-Dosary and Rahman (2005, p. 500), many consider the Arabian Gulf's public sector to have become "a vast social welfare system." Positions in the classic public sector are much better paid and far less onerous across the GCC economies and have much more prestige attached to them (Harry, 2007; Salih, 2010). Alongside the default job-for-life security it is reported that government employees in the UAE earn three times as much as their private sector counterparts and have as many as 60 days of additional annual leave (Issa et al., 2013). By the late 1990s, pronounced segmentation along public/private and national/non-national lines and an array of human resource development and management issues not to mention work-related sociocultural ones were in clear evidence (Al Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2010; Ryan, 2016). Yet for the economies of the GCC countries to function and perform as they currently do, and even if they were to function much more efficiently and productively in the coming period, the presence of a significant amount of non-national labour will remain essential. Labour from all regions of the globe help build, manage and maintain various sectors of these economies at all pay grades and, among other things, are pivotal to the transferring of knowledge to the region.

Hanieh (2011) argues that the configuration of temporary labour migration and the denial of citizenship and other political and social rights to migrant workers enabled the Gulf's ruling elites to construct a powerful system of control over the vast majority of the resident population, while consolidating and binding the support of local citizenries. The provision of tax-free and state-subsidised migrants to citizens, not only enables a consumption-based lifestyle but also facilitated for an unstressful job where migrant labour would be employed alongside nationals to do much of the actual work. Almost all labour migration to the GCC is regulated by way of the "Kafala system"—the mechanism for the 'system of control'—which is structurally and functionally similar in all Gulf countries. Migrant workers, usually referred to as 'guest workers', can only enter the labour market if they have a national to sponsor/employer them. In most GCC countries—and especially for non-professional individuals—migrant workers require the permission of their sponsor to transfer from one employer to another and can only reside in the country for a limited and fixed period, yet after existing the region can return more or less immediately (De Bel-Air, 2015). The 'temporary' nature of employment contracts and residency visas must inevitably favour short-term profit over long-term investment in, among other things, labour saving technologies. In addition, because policymakers across the Gulf periodically announce plans to reduce radically the number of migrants by way of amplifying (the largely imagined) threat they pose to the indigenous sociocultural fabric (e.g., Toumi, 2014), employees are less likely to invest their efforts fully at the given organisation for which they work, nor is the organisation itself likely to spend large sums on professional development of their 'temporary' staff. This is how the region's labour market can be described as 'highly elastic' and ‘inelastic’ at the same time, such a lack of internal mobility certainly helps to depress wages in the productive/private sectors of the economy.

It is important to underscore the point that the “demographic imbalance” while in part an economic necessity, is in no small part “a lifestyle choice” (Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2011, p. 26). According to Winckler (2012), the GCC countries are the only ones worldwide in which public sector administrators are able to employ fulltime domestic workers. The ‘dependency’ on South Asian labour in terms of maintaining a luxury lifestyle mostly manifests as follows: the practice of utilising cooks, drivers, gardeners and housemaids in the private sphere and, for instance, petrol pump attendants and supermarket shopping bag packers in the public sphere combined with pursuing a narrow range of bureaucratic-style public sector jobs occupations. Taken together these practices necessitate the continued presence of a large number of expatriates.

This points towards one tenet of the oil-rent being a mixed blessing thesis: for as long as salaries offered by such “classic” public sector positions are several factors higher than those in the private sector, it will be these positions that have the most pride and prestige attached to them and by “shunning” the private sector nationals themselves perpetuate the need large number of foreign labour to be imported. Understandably this state of affairs is seen as increasingly untenable and there is in fact evidence to suggest that the economic and societal transformation now taking place in the GCC is systemic in nature (e.g., Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2010; Gray, 2011; Hertog, 2010). As Ramady (2012) points out, that there is now an unambiguous shift to convert hydrocarbon resources into value-added manufactured products. This being said, it remains unclear whether the entities producing such goods will be mostly staffed by national labour or continue to be largely staffed by non-national of whom South Asians make up a substantial fraction.

3.1 Business Models & Labour Laws

Many citizens, especially those who operate local businesses, have a vested interest in the status quo as they benefit financial from migrant labour both managing and staffing their commercial interests. With such an abundance of cheap and easy to source labour, GCC businesses, especially those catering to the domestic market, have little motive to invest in productive technologies and little desire to employ nationals, whose wage demands are ‘uncompetitively’ high and, put frankly, are not willing to endure the hardships that many South Asians, by economic necessity, are (Al Ali, 2008; Harry, 2007; Salih, 2010). Indeed, the private sector business culture has been institutionalised to the freedom of hiring foreign workers at a much lower cost (Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2010). The region’s labour laws and regulations play a major role in institutionalising the pronounced labour market segmentation. There are significant differences between labour laws governing the public and private sector in areas such as compensation rates, working hours, days of holiday and maternity leave. Generally speaking, the labour law that governs the private sectors, where up to 98 per cent of the workers are non-nationals, are far less detailed, much more laissez faire and basically, favour employees over employers (Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2011).

3.2 Participation Rates & Productivity Levels

One of the prominent characteristics of the Arabian Gulf economies is its extremely low ‘national’ labour force participation rates (Kapiszewski, 2016). It happens to be the case, as Rutledge and Al-Shamsi (2015) point out, that female labour force participation rates in the Gulf are the lowest globally and this is particularly unfortunate as it is female nationals who have proportionally more tertiary-level qualifications than their male counterparts and especially so in subjects which are conventionally considered to be ‘market-orientated’. In 2010, when Saudi Arabia’s working age population was estimated to be around 8.5 million, the number of Saudis actually employed was less than half that amount (3.3 million males and around half a million females nationals only) (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2017). To give another example, in 2010, of Qatar's 'national' working age population less than 50 per cent were listed in national statistics as being employed (Government of Qatar, 2017). A second reason for such low participation rates is the option of taking early retirement in most public sector areas. In Saudi Arabia for example, the official retirement age in the public sector is 55 years; In Kuwait, male nationals are able to retire after 20 years service and females after just 15 years (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2017; Salih, 2010).

Productivity levels are low across the Gulf. This is said to be another consequence of unskilled and semi-skilled migrant labour (Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2010). The government of Saudi Arabia for example recognises and acknowledges this, it was noted in the country's previous Five-Year Plan (2010–2014) that, "despite the efforts made to promote productivity of Saudi workers, it is still low." Policy measures aimed at addressing such low levels of labour productivity also feature prominently in the strategic transformation plans of Qatar and the UAE (Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008; Government of Qatar, 2008). Here though is the crux of the problem: until now, moves by the GCC governments to impose labour nationalisation quotas and/or impose extra charges for employing high ratios if non-nationals have yet to deter the incumbent practices (Ryan, 2016; The Economist, 2016). Ultimately, there needs to be a substantial and systemic reduction in reliance on unskilled non-national labour undertaking nonessential roles (e.g., "office boys" employed simply to make tea).

3.3 Investments in Human Capital

In terms of employability, there are long run concerns over quality control and accountability of Higher Education provision in the GCC; with a commonly voiced criticism being its failure to produce graduates capable of and willing to work in non-conventional sectors of the economy (e.g., Al-Dosary & Rahman, 2005; Al Ali, 2008; Salih, 2010). It is said that few systemic attempts to use technology to replace unskilled cheap foreign labour with fewer but more skilled and better trained workers (see, e.g., Muysken & Nour, 2006; Salih, 2010). In other words, human resources are still seen as 'costs' to the employer not valued assets of capital to be invested in. So while the desire to shift to knowledge-based economies is said to have influenced policymaker rhetoric, at the level of the classroom, lecture theatre and workplace, little has actually changed (e.g., Al Ali, 2008; Beblawi, 1990; Ryan, 2016). Rote learning and traditional lectures are thought to continue apace regardless of what program objectives and course syllabi submitted to international accreditation agencies may say about offering seminar-based teaching and facilitating for 'free' and 'critical' thinking (Davidson & Mackenzie, 2012).

According to Dada (2013, pp. 243-244) although "streams of foreign consultants" have studied and reported their findings and have made recommendations for paths forward to systemically overhaul the region's education sectors but these reports are "simply being stored for future reference." It is clear, to varying degrees of intensity, that all GCC governments are seeking to encourage more nationals to take up 'productive' (i.e. private sector) employment, and a core component of this is said to be policy measures that encourage 'genuine' employability skills at both tertiary and secondary level. Nonetheless, the lack of, and need for, vocationally-related interventions at both secondary and tertiary level is touched upon in various ways in much of the literature that assesses and critiques the region's labour nationalisation and economic diversification strategies (e.g., McKinsey, 2015; OECD, 2014).

4. Future Projections

In the shorter-term—the next decade at least—the status quo is likely to remain (a key caveat being a further and substantial reduction in oil prices). In the longer term though—say from 2030 onwards—the South Asia-GCC labour flow relationship is likely to radically alter. A repeat of the 2003 to 2013 oil-boom fuelled speculative construction bubble is unlikely, the move to post-oil energy solutions is, albeit haltingly, likely reach critical mass in a decade or so from now. Thus, while oil prices may rebound for a period of time, a glut in luxury apartments, ostentatious resorts and overly spacious malls makes any prospect of megaprojects post 2030 unlikely. This is the point in time when Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's strategic transformations to post-oil economic constructs are slated for completion (Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008; Government of Qatar, 2008; Government of Saudi Arabia, 2016).

Nevertheless, the extent to which the GCC's ruling elite will be willing to modify and then recommunicate their respective social contracts—key aspects of which are in one way of another linked to the presence of migrant labour—remains open to question. First of all because the benefits from migrant labour accruing to Gulf citizens is a key aspect of the region's incumbent social contract. Secondly, history suggests that plans and policies designed to reduce the numbers of migrant workers residing in the Gulf are rather hard to actualise. For instance, back in 1985 Saudi Arabia set out to reduce by a fifth its migrant labour over a five-year period yet instead of witnessing a half-million reduction there was in fact a quarter-million increase (Kapiszewski, 2016). Fully aware of these realities it does not seem that change is taking place. For example, in 2016 the GCC collectively decided to introduce VAT by 2018; in the same year Saudi Arabia announced intentions to part-privatise Saudi Aramco its state-owned oil and gas producer and the UAE has been gradually lifting domestic fuel subsidies and stream-lining ADNOC, its own state oil company (Kerr & Clark, 2015; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2016; The Economist, 2016). All of these moves go against the Gulf's supposed rent/resource-cursed nature and do imply that labour market reform is set to follow.

5. Summary

As this Chapter has sought to emphasis, the relationship in terms of South Asian labour for Arabian Gulf remittances is a mixed blessing. Both sides benefit in various ways, yet both have incurred costs also. Therefore, both parties should undertake a critical appraisal of the following: can it be optimal in any real socioeconomic sense to perpetuate a relationship that defies Becker's rule of investment in human capital being the ultimate driver of economic prosperity? In sum it can be said that historically the provision of well-paid government jobs based on citizenship and not merit has resulted in a satisfied society but an unproductive workforce; a society that is provided with free education but has little incentive (vocationally speaking) to opt for the more challenging ('market-orientated') specialisations.

Referring once more to Table 1 it is clear that migrant labour plays a dominant role in shaping the Gulf's workforces but also its cultural and socioeconomic fabric; non-nationals are roughly 50 per cent of the total population. Looking at Tables 2 to 7, the Gulf has accommodated for several generations now very large number of South Asian citizens. Unwittingly and in ways quite beyond their individualistic control this body of migrant labour has helped create world-class infrastructure (roads, towns, ports and airports and the associated utilities), man-made palm tree shaped islands that are visible from space, the world's tallest building and ski-slopes in the desert. Yet, it also perpetuates an ultimately unsustainable labour market and way of life. The large sums of capital that have been repatriated from Arabia to Asia (indicated to in Tables 8 and 9) have clearly afforded many benefits to households and communities across Asia, this revenue stream would be better considered as a springboard to fostering sustainable and 'alternative' income streams as opposed to a long-term revenue source.

Table 1. GCC Demographics, 2015 (national/non-national and gender)[a]

		Population (in '000s)		Population (as%)	
	Total	**Nationals**	**Non-nationals**	**Nationals**	**Non-nationals**
GCC	**51,938,647**	**25,407,448**	**26,531,199**	**48.9**	**51.1**
– male	*32,559,631*	*12,896,367*	*19,587,047*	*50.7*	*73.8*
– female	*19,379,015*	*12,500,552*	*6,944,152*	*49.3*	*26.2*
Bahrain	**1,314,562**	**606,013**	**708,549**	**46.1**	**53.9**
– male	*818,201*	*306,037*	*511,572*	*50.5*	*72.2*
– female	*496,360*	*299,976*	*196,977*	*49.5*	*27.8*
Kuwait	**4,294,171**	**1,316,147**	**2,978,024**	**30.6**	**69.4**
– male	*2,619,444*	*646,228*	*1,965,496*	*49.9*	*66.0*
– female	*1,674,727*	*659,390*	*1,012,528*	*50.1*	*34.0*
Oman	**3,992,893**	**2,260,705**	**1,732,188**	**56.6**	**43.4**
– male	*2,579,811*	*1,143,579*	*1,436,232*	*50.5*	*83.1*
– female	*1,413,082*	*1,117,126*	*295,956*	*49.5*	*16.9*
Qatar	**2,330,371**	**195,004**	**2,135,367**	**8.3**	**91.7**
– male	*1,861,481*	*95,160*	*1,766,321*	*48.7*	*82.7*
– female	*468,890*	*99,844*	*369,046*	*51.3*	*17.3*
Saudi Arabia	**31,742,580**	**20,081,582**	**11,660,998**	**63.2**	**32.8**
– male	*18,234,719*	*10,231,364*	*8,003,355*	*50.1*	*68.6*
– female	*13,507,861*	*9,850,218*	*3,657,643*	*49.9*	*31.4*
UAE	**8,264,070**	**947,997**	**7,316,073**	**11.5**	**88.5**
– male	*6,445,975*	*473,999*	*5,904,071*	*50.0*	*80.7*
– female	*1,818,095*	*473,998*	*1,412,002*	*50.0*	*19.3*

Note: [a] The data presented is from a multitude of sources and is in part based on author projections (Government of Bahrain, 2017; Government of Kuwait, 2017; Government of Oman, 2017; Government of Qatar, 2017; Government of Saudi Arabia, 2017; Government of the UAE, 2017; IMF, 2017; World Bank, 2017). It is the case that (a) not all GCC countries produce consistent data especially with regard to gender and (b) some publish "estimates/projections" as opposed to specific numbers (see e.g., Government of Saudi Arabia, 2017; Government of the UAE, 2017).

Table 2. Afghan labour, 1970–2015

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
GCC	**3,407**	**29,137**	**220,327**	**198,535**	**568,500**	**742,189**
Bahrain	**61**	**13,384**	**22,519**	**34,419**	**..**	**..**
Kuwait	**1,323**	**1,164**	**93,561**	**88,350**	**15,000**	**13,689**
Oman	**116**	**269**	**780**	**1,148**	**..**	**..**
Qatar	**261**	**1,508**	**76,302**	**35,442**	**3,500**	**3,500**
Saudi Arabia	**887**	**4,522**	**11,782**	**12,746**	**400,000**	**500,000**
UAE	**759**	**8,290**	**15,383**	**26,430**	**150,000**	**225,000**

Note: [a] The data presented is from the sources cited in the note for Table 1, above.

Table 3. Bangladeshi labour, 1970–2015

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
GCC	**38,127**	**179,943**	**495,580**	**592,626**	**2,477,797**	**3,252,823**
Bahrain	**22**	**4,743**	**7,980**	**12,198**	**90,590**	**110,000**
Kuwait	**467**	**613**	**33,157**	**31,310**	**199,111**	**190,171**
Oman	**10,309**	**23,972**	**69,525**	**102,360**	**473,879**	**522,652**
Qatar	**92**	**1,428**	**10,724**	**19,135**	**137,000**	**280,000**
Saudi Arabia	**25,466**	**129,860**	**338,332**	**366,007**	**1,200,000**	**1,400,000**
UAE	**1,771**	**19,327**	**35,862**	**61,616**	**377,217**	**750,000**

Note: [a] The data presented is from the sources cited in the note for Table 1, above.

Table 4. Indian labour, 1970–2015

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
GCC	**153,380**	**757,220**	**1,751,730**	**2,263,846**	**4,868,576**	**6,451,317**
Bahrain	**6,668**	**15,286**	**30,533**	**39,310**	**137,402**	**255,343**
Kuwait	**21,896**	**59,060**	**106,856**	**100,904**	**513,301**	**692,525**
Oman	**31,427**	**73,080**	**211,955**	**312,053**	**447,824**	**603,465**
Qatar	**1,696**	**16,667**	**33,750**	**52,788**	**250,649**	**545,000**
Saudi Arabia	**70,109**	**357,516**	**931,457**	**1,007,649**	**1,452,927**	**2,000,000**
UAE	**21,584**	**235,611**	**437,179**	**751,142**	**1,523,472**	**2,568,200**

Note: [a] The data presented is from the sources cited in the note for Table 1, above. It should be noted that the 2015 figures reported here – a total of 6.4 million – are broadly in line with the "about 6 million" reported on by Kohli (2014, p. 117) which are based on 2012 Indian government figures.

Table 5. Nepali labour, 1970–2015

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
GCC	967	5,060	13,977	15,807	745,320	1,229,635
Bahrain	0	141	237	362	15,000	20,000
Kuwait	14	14	983	929	56,135	55,486
Oman	1	3	8	12	13,123	13,149
Qatar	3	16	83	700	280,000	341,000
Saudi Arabia	941	4,799	12,504	13,526	300,000	500,000
UAE	8	87	162	278	81,062	300,000

Note: [a] The data presented is from the sources cited in the note for Table 1, above.

Table 6. Pakistani labour, 1970–2015

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
GCC	92,639	485,834	1,069,309	1,400,984	1,819,000	3,547,014
Bahrain	5,386	9,390	19,249	24,149	57,251	87,892
Kuwait	18,261	42,340	65,643	61,987	100,579	120,040
Oman	7,352	17,096	49,584	73,001	94,993	223,014
Qatar	842	11,777	13,021	33,685	90,000	175,000
Saudi Arabia	44,432	226,578	590,319	638,606	1,000,873	1,500,000
UAE	16,366	178,653	331,493	569,556	486,609	1,346,984

Note: [a] The data presented is from the sources cited in the note for Table 1, above.

Table 7. Sri Lankan labour, 1970–2015

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
GCC	10,884	48,911	141,224	163,127	637,599	941,569
Bahrain	7	1,545	2,599	3,973	6,289	7,492
Kuwait	153	147	10,799	10,198	96,325	109,860
Oman	2,883	6,705	19,447	28,630	12,377	13,149
Qatar	30	174	3,996	6,274	87,727	100,000
Saudi Arabia	7,723	39,383	102,608	111,001	391,173	550,000
UAE	88	957	1,775	3,051	43,708	161,068

Note: [a] The data presented is from the sources cited in the note for Table 1, above.

Table 8. Remittance outflows (GCC to the world)

Remittance outflows	1980–89		1990–99		2000–09		2010–15		Share of GDP
	$ [a]	% [b]	$	%	$	%	$	%	%
GCC	**99,438**		**231,695**		**349,613**		**506,963**		
– Bahrain	*5,330*	*5*	*5,139*	*2*	*12,774*	*4*	*12,661*	*3*	00.0
– Kuwait	*9,764*	*10*	*12,035*	*5*	*47,656*	*12*	*94,304*	*19*	00.0
– Oman	*7,304*	*7*	*13,096*	*6*	*27,292*	*7*	*50,711*	*10*	00.0
– Qatar	*7,545*	*8*	*18,394*	*8*	*31,783*	*8*	*62,740*	*13*	00.0
– Saudi Arabia	*55,270*	*56*	*148,100*	*64*	*169,691*	*51*	*193,869*	*39*	00.0
– UAE	*14,225*	*14*	*34,931*	*15*	*60,416*	*17*	*92,678*	*18*	00.0

Note: [a] 2015. [b] In $US millions. [c] Percentage of total South Asian remittances. The data presented is author calculations based on IMF (2017) and World Bank (2017). See also data collected by Ratha et al. (2016, pp. XVI-XVII)

Table 9. Remittance inflows (South Asia from the world)

Remittance inflows	1980–89		1990–99		2000–09		2010–15		Share of GDP [a]
	$ [b]	% [c]	$	%	$	%	$	%	%
South Asia	**59,682**		**103,415**		**400,430**		**630,569**		
– Afghanistan	*142*	*0.2*	*248*	*0.2*	*890*	*0.2*	*1,662*	*0.3*	1.6
– Bangladesh	*5,739*	*9.6*	*12,117*	*12.1*	*49,797*	*12.1*	*81,283*	*12.9*	7.9
– India	*24,946*	*41.9*	*63,875*	*58.4*	*269,406*	*67.4*	*394,068*	*62.7*	3.3
– Nepal	*2,614*	*4.4*	*4,547*	*4.4*	*15,594*	*4.0*	*30,682*	*4.8*	32.2
– Pakistan	*23,290*	*38.9*	*15,196*	*17.5*	*45,148*	*11.1*	*87,139*	*13.7*	7.2
– Sri Lanka	*2,951*	*4.9*	*7,433*	*7.4*	*19,595*	*5.2*	*35,734*	*5.6*	8.5

Note: [a] 2015. [b] In $US millions. [c] Percentage of total South Asian remittances. The data presented is author calculations based on IMF (2017) and (World Bank (2017)).

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