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Demographic Transitions and Imbalances in the GCC: Security Risks, Constraints and Policy Challenges

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في عالم يزداد ترابطا فإن التقدم في حقول التنمية والأمن وحقوق الإنسان يجب أن يكون متشابكا. فلن يكون هناك تنمية بدون أمن ولا أمن بدون تنمية.

المصدر: الأمم المتحدة. 2005. حرية أوسع: نحو تنمية وأمن وحقوق إنسان للجميع. نيويورك: الأمم المتحدة. ص 55

"In an increasingly interconnected world, progress in the areas of development, security and human rights must go hand in hand. There will be no development without security and no security without development."

Source: United Nations. 2005. In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All. New York: United Nations. p. 55

Abstract

While traditional Gulf security formulations only consider the external environment, recent discourse on Gulf security dynamics include both internal and external threats, and even regard the proliferating 'internal threats' as significantly more serious. Above all escalating population growth rates, social change, foreign labor, unemployment and underemployment are considered major threats to long-term stability and security in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states. One of the greatest internal challenges, the Arab Gulf economies face today is the "youth bulge", which affects primarily, but not exclusively, the demographics of these countries. This transition, pushing an ever increasing number of graduates into the local economies, reflects itself in the inability of the Gulf authorities to secure jobs for the new graduates out of the government sector. The issue has proven almost impervious to substantial improvement, while intended policies to "nationalize" various sectors of the workforce should be considered, at best, incomplete successes and at worst absolute failures. As a result, the dependence and existence of large numbers of foreign nationals in most of the GCC states is not only a serious stress factor for the already volatile ecosystems with limited access to natural and strategic resources such as water and food, but in itself present a traditional security risk reinforced by alienation, resentment and occasionally even xenophobia. Rising wealth disparities, inflation and probably declining individual living standards will certainly enhance the simmering discontent and will eventually release a potential challenge to the question of legitimacy. The widening gap in the demographic composition in some of the Gulf countries shows that governments are either unable or unwilling to confront profound social challenges and place their people at the center of development. In pessimistic scenarios, rulers will miscalculate the tradeoffs, will fail to prepare their exploding populations in accordance with the capability approach to participate productively in the global economy and will become even more repressive to maintain their power.

The paper will elucidate particular aspects of the linkages between population dynamics in the GCC and emerging security threats, by both assessing the current situation and taking forward a set of ideas for future policy priorities as well as necessary actions at the regional and country levels. Conclusions aim at highlighting that these strategies are directly subject to a variety of socioeconomic constraints, which vary in significance by the characteristics of the individual Gulf economies and certainly on the capabilities as well as responsiveness of each country's leadership and elites to these emerging challenges.

Thematic Rationale

While rapid economic growth has brought widespread financial prosperity to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states[1], augmentation was achieved at the cost of greater inequity, deteriorating basic civil liberties, human rights and media freedoms (Kaufmann et al., 2009), education & research, demographic disparities, cultural identity and yet unmatched resource degradation (Tolba & Saab, 2008; Al-Zubari, 2007; Elhadj, 2006). No more than a few established foreign scholars have so far offered a careful and comprehensive analysis of the imperatives for societal progress, the current precarious reform impasse, and the immense challenges ahead (see for instance Peterson, 2009; Burke, 2008; Nonneman, 2008; Niblock, 2007; Cordesman, 2003). Since isolated economic advancement does not guarantee sustainable human development on a worldwide scale (Pfaff et al., 2004; Scherr and Gregg, 2006), there has been a consequential paradigm shift to include the concept of human security that is centered above all on the sanctity of the individual. While this emerging school of thought can be clearly delineated in relation to the dominant, neo-realist conception of security, by including a wider range of potential threats, from socio-economic and political conditions, to food, health, environmental, community and personal safety, it often complements and may even be intrinsically linked with traditional security domains. Moreover as a paradigm or even episteme, it emphasizes the social dimension of sustainable development's 'three pillars' that defines environmental protection, social and economic development as fundamental to sustainable development consistent with the agreements of the 2002 Johannesburg Summit (Collins, 2007).

The prevalent characteristics of the current Gulf Arab reality which pose serious obstacles to sustainable progress and the widespread absence of human security as a prerequisite for noteworthy development have already been adequately discussed in several Arab Human Development Reports (UNDP/RBAS, 2002 to 2009). The latest assessment concludes that progress in human development will only be possible in the Arab world, if these sources of insecurity are addressed in a holistic manner (UNEP, 2009). Waleed Khadduri, the former Editor-in-Chief of Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) and a Core Team member for the Arab Human Development Report 2009, reminded that especially the fabled oil wealth presents a misleading picture of the economic situation, which masks the typical structural weaknesses of many Arab economies and the resulting insecurity of countries and citizens alike. This probing, self-critical look on issues such as the knowledge deficit, the weak institutional structures or environmental degradation, engendered a pervasive hostile reaction among Arabs and along these lines highlighted one of the essential deficiencies in the region, ergo a notable amount of widespread ignorance as well as misinformation, due to the identified knowledge deficit and thus disregard for these constraints.

[1] The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a "loose" political and economic alliance formed in 1981 with the main objective to confront their security challenges collectively and strengthen cooperation. Its members include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Accordingly, Hunaidi explicitly warns about this psychological mindset in his forward: *"turning a blind eye to the weaknesses and shortfalls of the region, instead of decisively identifying and overcoming them, can only increase its vulnerability and leave it more exposed"* (UNDP/RBAS, 2003, p. III). Regrettably, his reflections have been extensively ignored in the past seven years and consequently recent discourse on Gulf security dynamics have voiced serious concerns about the ability of the region to be able to cope with those proliferating 'internal threats', which are currently regarded as significantly more serious in comparison with external security concerns. Above all escalating population growth rates, social change, foreign labor, unemployment and underemployment, environmental degradation are considered key threats to long-term stability in the Gulf economies. These new emerging internal destabilization processes with diffuse conflict structures will further be directly and indirectly intensified by projected climate change, other cross-border threats such as international terrorism, transnational organized crime, piracy, pandemics, massive migration movements, global food markets, a struggling global financial system and especially developments in the proximate region (Brown & Crawford, 2009). In his latest publication entitled "Life after Oil: Economic Alternatives for the Arab Gulf States" Peterson unequivocally warns that what he calls the "third transformation" may be the last opportunity to reform for these regimes (Peterson, 2009). Furthermore, it should be accentuated that the GCC states are not as homogenous as often referred to in scholarly work; on the contrary they have a set of wide-ranging socioeconomic and demographic conditions impacting on their development which need to be considered in separate assessments instead of the presently pervasive broad regional generalizations. With this in mind, other analysts provide a much more gloomy projection for the next 15 years claiming that the odds are that one or two countries will end up with civil disorder and conflict because rulers miscalculate the tradeoffs or take gambles that don't pay off. In these pessimistic scenarios, authoritarian leaders will fail to prepare their bulging populations to participate productively in the global economy, regimes will hold tightly to power and become even more repressive, and regional conflicts will remain unresolved as population growth further strains already scarce natural resources (NIC, 2008).

Snapshot of the Region's Demographic Transition and Disequilibrium

The acute demographic transitions and imbalances in the GCC have raised significant debates and questions related to labor and immigration policies, gender issues, and the adequacy of infrastructure and public services. Reminiscent of other regions, discussions of demographic trends in the GCC have been predominantly politically charged. Thus the majority of these elaborations can either be categorized into inept emotional defensive-cultural identity ruminations with disturbing nationalistic and sometimes even xenophobic tendencies that certainly do not contribute to national development or the equally disturbing business as usual profit maximizing approach intentionally ignoring both the contemporary or long term wellbeing of GCC nationals and their descendants.

The latter is especially predominant in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and can be attributed to the continuous politicization of science that is principally fostered by foreigners working in the region to suit their personal or institutional economic interests as well as disreputable Western foreign policy per se. This trend is generally encouraged by Gulf governments that use a mixture of modi operandi to influence the findings of scientific research or the way it is disseminated, reported or interpreted (Heydemann, 2007), albeit to various degrees in the different GCC states ranging from extremely liberal in Kuwait[2] to the extreme in the UAE (for the censorship situation in the UAE see for instance inter alia Al-Roken, 2009; Davidson, 2009; Al-Yousif, 2008).[3] Al-Yousif, a prominent Emirati professor from Abu Dhabi who recently returned from lecturing in the US, voices his concerns in respect to the production of knowledge in the GCC elucidating that foreigners who glorify the achievements of certain Gulf regimes hoping for worldly gains are pursuing an unethical approach characterized by *"injustice and slander"* (Al-Yousif, 2008, p. 639).

By and large it should be noted that the increasingly used terminology "demographic imbalance", while being a relatively under-theorized concept in the literature has so far received insufficient serious scholarly attention in the GCC. It encompasses any disparity in size, structure and distribution of a population, including spatial and/or temporal dynamics. The expression is currently randomly applied by nationals in some of the smaller Gulf states as a propagandistic tool to stir anti-foreign sentiments, while systematically avoiding any discourse about some of the essential development problems that have lead to this unsustainable situation. Notwithstanding, the foremost concern in the region in respect to their population dynamics should be the disequilibrium between the population and the natural resources, in other words that all Gulf populations (including expatriates) have significantly expanded beyond the regions natural carrying capacity (Khan et al., 2002). While the percentage of foreigners has systematically been growing over the last decades in some of GCC member states, the total population in the region has grown more than ten times in 50 years. The increase from 4 million in 1950 to 40 million in 2006 certainly represents the fastest-growing population in the world (Kapiszewski, 2006). By 2020 this population is forecast to increase by another one-third, to 53 million people (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2009). However since the current population is already estimated to stand at almost 45 million (see Table 1), it will certainly increase even more by the end of this decade. There is little use in citing fertility rates, since unfortunately the reported figures in these countries reflect those of the total population, including large for the most part male expatriate populations, and hence fertility rates among the national population are considerably higher than stated in the deliberately distorted statistics.[4]

Secondly, next to unsustainable population growth, the GCC states have predominantly youthful native population structures, with the majority of citizens being under 30 years of age comprising a high share of young adults. In other words while they have made noticeable progress to have significant declines in both mortality and to a certain extent fertility rates, they have not yet reached the point in the demographic transition where lower birthrates have been sustained long enough to offer opportunities for major development improvements. (not by means of "bought foreign expertise", but in this case real "indigenous development") Further advancement along the demographic transition is therefore not guaranteed and requires government intervention in order to be achieved (Leahy et al., 2007). These demographic shifts, often referred to as the "youth bulge" phenomenon in the academic literature, will pose novel policy challenges concentrating on the need to employ the youth cohorts and are projected to be an immense security risk in a region where the national labor force will almost double within the next decade. Numerous studies have concluded that on a global scale countries with a large youth-bulge proportion experience a high risk of intra-state political violence and civil strife (Leahy et al., 2007; Urdal, 2006; Lutz et al., 2004; Heinsohn, G., 2003), especially when this segment of society is confronted with the lack of opportunities and access to resources in systems controlled by entrenched elites and interest groups (Braungart, 1984). The situation will build up social grievances, eventually loosing faith in the system of governance that has failed their aspirations. Just as Hobbes did in the middle of the 17th century, some theorists assume that citizens are willing to relinquish liberties when faced with such imminent security threats. Hence they argue that support for authoritarian regimes would inevitably rise, especially among the commercial elite, when confronted with civil strife caused by a large frustrated youth bulge. As they struggle with idleness, they fail to take on the responsibilities of adulthood and to secure their desired goals of employment and social standing. Furthermore, youth cohorts tend to give rise to cultures that coalesce around distinctive identities and unrestrained ideologies, and find expression through experimentation and risk-taking. Such conditions facilitate the political mobilization and recruitment of particularly young male adults by organizations capable of political or criminal violence. For instance, irresponsible driving falls into the risk-taking domain and studies have shown that casualty and fatality rates in the Gulf countries are already much higher than in other developing countries with comparable vehicle ownership levels. Hence it is not surprising that according to Col. Mohammad Al-Qahtani, director of the Traffic Department in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia is losing 17 people a day as a result of accidents, and most of those fatalities are aged between 18 and 30 years (Al-Jassem, 2010). Reports also indicate that crime is on the rise in all of the GCC states, especially among the youth where drug addiction and trafficking is a grave cause for concern (Habboush, 2010; OSAC, 2009). An old proverb comes into mind that will be valid for all societies on this earth and has the power to exhibit these diffuse conflict

[2] Notably the research funded by the Kuwait Foundation of Science (KFAS) in numerous Western institutions has so far (to our knowledge) not experienced any restrictions or censorship of any kind.

[3] Please note that for obvious reasons the UAE still has not ratified the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UN Convention against Torture).

[4] The fact that only a miniscule number of foreign scholars working in the region have noticed and considered this misleading development indicator should serve as a rational marker of the disturbing quality of socio-economic analysis currently available, which may easily be considered the least eligible on a global scale. This may be founded in the lack of peer review and scholarly collaboration with local academics, also not really found to this scope in the rest of the world.

structures in a figurative way: *"An idle mind is the devil's workshop"*.
The question that instantly arises was highlighted by Prince Turki al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz[5], a member of the Saudi royal family, at a conference on human resources in Abu Dhabi by expressing that it is simply a paradox of having unemployed nationals in one of the world's most rapidly growing economies, while attracting millions of employees from around the world. Fully aware of the security implications, he noted that the GCC countries should build their national economies to benefit its people and not millions of expatriates (AFP, 2009).

Similarly, the Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah[6], recently shed some light in form of a keynote lecture entitled "The GCC in a Turbulent World" at the Middle East Institute in Washington on the long term strategic challenges the GCC region is confronted with by saying: *"by far the foremost challenge to the GCC security and development in the long term is the challenge of demography"*. While highlighting the large difference in the percentage of foreign workers to the total workforce, he stressed that "*these vast discrepancies in the demographic makeup of all the GCC countries represent a warning sign of the serious threats of the social, political and cultural fabric of the GCC society"* (KUNA, 2010a).

Yet how threatening is the situation with the foreign presence in the GCC? Why do the Gulf economies already have the lowest native participation in the labor force in the world and how did the region's unhealthy dependence on expatriate labor evolve in the first place?

Accelerated economic growth as a result of the oil wealth, coupled with the subsequent internalization of a unique subculture (which will be discussed in detail later) have lead to the fact that the majority of those involved in the productive work process are foreign nationals. Thus the presence of and in some cases absolute dependency upon large numbers of expatriates temporarily or permanently residing in the Gulf, constitutes a common long-term obstacle to sustainable development, which is as mentioned above still largely ignored by many experts.[7] Concerned GCC nationals and few outspoken government officials have underscored the potential dangers of the demographic imbalance, however with so far insignificant impact on policies and decision makers in the majority of the GCC region.

Despite insufficient and unreliable data, the UAE as an unprecedented worst case scenario on a global scale should serve as a good example to sufficiently demonstrate this ongoing alienation process. The country is currently experiencing the worldwide highest population growth rate, which constitutes with an annual 3.69 percent change considering 2009 estimates more than double the global average (world average is 1.17 percent), resulting from a surplus of births over deaths and the balance of migrants entering and leaving a country. In comparison, Kuwait occupies rank 5 with a population growth rate of 3.55 percent, Oman is on 10 with 3.14 percent, Saudi Arabia is down to 69th place with 1.85 percent, Bahrain is on 105 with 1.29 percent and Qatar is currently the lowest on 130 with only 0.96 percent (CIA, 2009).[8] To understand the implications of these figures in respect to the population dynamics, it is however important to take a look at the contribution of migration to the overall level of population change which presents itself as the net migration rate. Here the UAE also occupy the first place with an excess net immigration rate of almost 23 migrants / 1,000 overall population[9], while in comparison Saudi Arabia indicates a net emigration rate of -7.60 / 1,000 overall population. In spite of that the accuracy of demographic data is contentious at least this negative trend in some of the Gulf economies may be considered a shift in the right direction. (Please refer to Table 1 for further details)

According to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) the UAE has an estimated current population of 6.7 million consisting of roughly 85 percent expatriate residents. Population increase for the UAE between 2009 and 2050 is estimated to account for an additional 79 percent (PRB, 2009). The United Arab Emirates National Bureau of Statistics however reports a population of 8.19 million for 2009 with 7.24 million or 88 percent foreigners citing a once again inaccessible report (UAE Interact, 2010).[10] By contrast, two recently compiled studies by the Department of Naturalization and Residency of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labor presented a population figure based on visa registration and the number of people employed in the country of 6 million, with a share of 83.5 percent foreign residents. In respect to the ethnic composition, a study that was presented in the local media but could not be traced anywhere in its original form to take a closer look at the methodology, revealed that the largest group currently residing in the Emirates were 1.75

[5] Prince Turki al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz studied at Georgetown University (Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service), Princeton, Cambridge, and the University of London, before he served as Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, the UK and Ireland. He further held the position as the head of Saudi Arabia's General Intelligence Directorate for 25 years and hence is well qualified both academically and practically in security questions.

[6] Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah is a graduate of Harvard University (1985), were he obtained a PhD in Economics and Middle Eastern studies. He is a member of the Kuwaiti royal family and is currently also holding the position as the Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[7] It should be explicitly expressed that the alienation of nationals in some of the Gulf countries is deliberately ignored by many Westerners, who continuously disrespect the local culture with an attitude that has reached disturbing levels. (these are the same people that complain back home about the - in comparison - few migrants that we have in Europe) This has given the incentive to analyze the problem in respect to the UAE in a forthcoming publication entitled "Marginalizing the Self: Social Cohesion, Human Agency and Development in the United Arab Emirates".

[8] Please note that other sources will present opposing figures, especially for Qatar. These will be demonstrated for comparison in the published version of this paper.

[9] This entry includes the figure for the difference between the number of persons entering and leaving a country during the year per 1,000 persons (based on midyear population).

[10] No such figures could be actually verified on the website of the UAE National Bureau of Statistics (English version). However apparently this data is based on the Census 2010 and was also presented without naming a source by A. Al-Khouri, the Director General of Emirates Identity Authority in the United Arab Emirates at a the 2010 Gulf Studies Conference in Exeter (UK). See also "UAE population crosses 8 million", in: BI-ME, May 30, 2010.

million Indian nationals, followed by 1.25 million Pakistanis. Iranians, as well as members from other Asian communities, such as China and Afghanistan, accounted for another 1 million residents. Furthermore next to 500,000 Bangladeshis, there are also an estimated 500,000 other expatriates from Europe, Africa or the Americas (Sambidge, 2009). By contrast, the UAE at a Glance – 2009 edition is presenting a projected mid term 2009 figure published by the Ministry of Economy of 5.066 million (Vine, 2009). None of these figures include non-resident foreigners (e.g. short term consultants), the estimated 10 million tourists in 2008, and any conjecture of the at least 350,000 illegal immigrants[11] currently residing in the Emirates. Moreover, the data presented in the Human Development Report 2009 commissioned by the UNDP that explores the link between human mobility and development and is meant to look at how better policies towards mobility can enhance human development unfortunately relies on completely outdated statistics for the Emirates. Their 2010 projections based on what they define as "long-run tendencies" for the Emirates show a stock of immigrants of merely 3.29 million which account for 70 percent of the total population (UNDP, 2009, p. 143).[12]

The presented data inconsistency is symbolic for the attitude of the UAE government as well as the immense politicization in respect to these issues. Certainly there is little doubt that conducting a census in a country like for instance Nigeria or Egypt will proof to be a demanding task, however to be able to count roughly 800,000 nationals, equivalent to the population of a medium size city (roughly the size of San Francisco, CA) should not present itself as an impossible task for a high income country. Considering that all foreign nationals require resident visas and will be registered meticulously upon arrival and departure, it should be fairly unproblematic to have constantly updated information on the demographic structure.[13] Moreover, detailed statistics on basically any topic seem to be inaccessible and a recent report by a Saudi economic analyst for instance revealed that there is no available data on property ownership by nationality in the UAE. This illustrates opaqueness as well as the unwillingness of the government to adhere to any standards of transparency. In view of this an almost redundant new census was scheduled to be held in April 2010 apparently consuming 65 million AED (app. 17.7 million USD) that will include another 10,000 evidently foreign experts to reveal data that they already retain, but with no intention to share with the public.
Undeniably these are funds that could and should be used with a minimum of political will to send talented young Emiratis abroad to receive the comprehensive education as well as the necessary attitude that they need to be able to make use of all the data that they are currently collecting.

Whereas the demographic composition of these statistics evoke serious concerns from a few international experts and intrepid nationals, public opinion of those currently residing in the Emirates as well as the leadership has still not yet realized or is not responsible enough to care that there is a looming threat with an urgent need to rethink their current strategies. In contrary, there are numerous indications that they are – just as with any other development problem – living in complete denial in respect to these concerns and policies are driven by greed and personal interests of the ruling elites. This is underscored by allegedly official government figures reported in numerous local media articles considered the mouthpiece of the government in order to refute any information suggesting that the global financial crisis and the inability of Dubai to cope with it has triggered a mass exodus of expatriates out of the Emirates, mainly Dubai (Ali, 2010). Under the responsibility of a reputable foreign academic who co-authored several economic GCC assessments in recognized international peer reviewed publications, the Egyptian investment bank EFG-Hermes offered a more reasonable forecast in March 2009 by projecting a reflection of the change in the economic reality resulting in a population contraction by a marked 5.5 percent in 2009. The assessment points out that there will still be an overall population increase and that the decline will be primarily driven by Dubai, where they were forecasting a 17.1 percent decline in the overall population in 2009 (EFG-Hermes, 2009). By contrast the local press has noticeable articles that praise further population increases as the ultimate development goal. There further seems to be a noteworthy competition between the Emirates to have the highest population growth rate (Kawach, 2009).[14] Thus the "Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030" clearly states that as part of the Emirates deliberate approach to growth it aims to attract further expatriates and that there is a national drive to increase tourist numbers alone in Abu Dhabi to around 2.7 million in the next five years (DED, 2008, p. 41 and p. 85). Noteworthy is the disconcerting fact that they call this "sustainable development" (ibid., p. 17), which demonstrates the all too common misuse of this term in the region. A special advertising section in Forbes announced a figure that was distributed by the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council in a presentation called "Plan Abu Dhabi 2030 - Realities and Opportunities" that the city focuses on the logistical growth, as it aims to accommodate estimates of 3.1 million residents by 2030

[11] According to some official estimates reported in a diversity of online news sources not worthy to be cited there are supposed to be between 300,000 to 350,000 illegal immigrants in the UAE. The real figures, especially as a result of human trafficking, are expected to be much higher. A federal decree enacted in 1996 imposed sanctions against illegal immigrants and their employers however the government offers amnesty programs where foreign illegal workers can voluntarily leave the country without facing detention or having to pay charges.

[12] Unfortunately numerous calculations are based on such superfluous figures, rendering them completely inadequate for scholastic interpretation. (for instance projected per capita energy needs, available water resources, etc.) Another worst case scenario is presented in the most recent Bulletin on Population and Vital Statistics in the ESCWA Region (ESCWA, 2009), at times only revealing two thirds of the current population.

[13] Anyone who has ever entered the UAE will have experienced the serious violation of civil liberties in this country and that your data is being collected as well as abused anywhere. This ranges from still harmless iris scans, finger prints, photos, etc. to phone & online surveillance, surveillance of hotel rooms, to the mandatory medical screening bestowed upon non-citizens, with the result that anyone who is found to be positive for HIV, Hepatitis B/C and Tuberculosis will be incarcerated and immediately deported.

[14] A 7.8 percent growth was reported for Dubai. Sharjah serving basically as a commuter town for Dubai is projected to have the second-highest growth rate of 7.5 percent. Population growth in Fujairah was 6.2 percent, around 5.6 percent in Umm Al Quwain, 5.4 percent in Ajman and 4.3 percent in Ras Al Khaimah.

(The Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council, 2008, p. 17; Forbes Special Advertising Section, 2008). An even more perilous tendency was expressed by an Emirati official, who declared that the UAE is planning to import a million Chinese to serve as a counterbalance to the Indian community (Al-Kuwari, 2008). Likewise emblematic for the official leadership position in the UAE on this topic may be the response that was given by Lubna Al-Qasimi[15] in summer 2006, when the distressing results of the General Census for Population, Housing and Establishments 2005 were finally revealed and media inquired about the projections in view of the proportional mismatch in the population structure: *"We do not look at it as imbalance. The UAE has been smart in attracting economic and human capital in terms of intelligence and creativity. It is in our interest to continue our strong economic growth"* (Salama, 2006). It is exactly this orientation towards maximum economic growth that leads to the continuous alienation of Emirati society as well as the absence of any reasonable social cohesion. Apparently the statistics of the 2005 census were meant to be used to introduce development strategies in recognition of the results of the project and to sponsor legislations, bylaws and programs in consistence with the current status and various inherent changes in the demographic, economic and social characteristics (BI-ME, 2006). So far none of this has materialized and the demographic divide is drifting apart even further, progressively marginalizing the Emirati society into an alienated minority (Ali, 2010; Davidson, 2008; Al-Mezel, 2007).

In an op-ed piece, Ali Khalifa Al-Kuwari, an economics professor emeritus at the University of Qatar, describes the situation as a premeditated infringement of the rights of citizens and questions if the government of the United Arab Emirates respects the rights of their peoples as citizens and human beings. In line with non politicized scholarly discourse, he highlights the construction expansion that spearheads the so-called development, as a nationally unjustified choice and "the development of loss"; the loss of the precious native land, the disintegration of the national communities, and the endangerment of the livelihood of future generations (Al-Kuwari, 2008). He further acknowledges that the situation in his own country is similar to that of the UAE, since Qatar is showing similar demographic trends. Unfortunately, according to a lecture given by a Qatari official at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR), the Vision of Qatar 2030 equally underscores the desire to attract further expatriate workforce and hence displays the same irresponsible and unsustainable development plans as the UAE (Al-Imadi, 2010). However the document itself does display a much more reasonable approach and points out that Qatar must balance the size and the quality of the expatriate labor force and the selected path of development. Evidently, Qatar is planning to weigh the consequences of recruiting expatriate workers in terms of their cultural rights, housing and public service needs, as well as the potential negative impact on national identity, against the anticipated economic benefits that accrue from an increase in the numbers of foreign workers in the total labor force (GSDP, 2008). This is obviously a question of interpretation and by contrast, two years after the publication of this document, foreign workers comprise as much as 85 percent of the total population and make up about 90 percent of the labor force (US Department of State, 2010c). When it comes to Kuwait there is a high discrepancy between the data presented by the CIA World Factbook and other sources like the Kuwaiti Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) or the United States Department of State - Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. According to the official government statistics the population reached 3.48 million at the end of 2009, while Kuwaitis make up 32 percent of the total population (PACI, 2010). By contrast, the CIA presents a population of 2,789,132 for Kuwait of which based on July 2010 estimates there are 1,291,354 foreigners (CIA, 2010). This would represent a share of only 46 percent of foreigners in the total population, while the government statistics calculate a share of 68 percent. Moreover, both Rafiq (Rafiq, 2006) and Shah[16] (Shah, 2007) estimate that non-Kuwaitis comprise more than 80 percent of the labor force, while the CIA claims that non-Kuwaitis represent about 60 percent of the labor force in 2009 (CIA, 2010). Estimates for Bahrain's national contribution to the labor force were equally inconclusive and lie between 32 percent (CIA, 2010) and 49 percent (US Department of State, 2010a). Oman and Saudi Arabia have foreign populations of 17 and 19 percent respectively. The situation in Oman appears vague and according to Shah recent data indicates that Oman's foreign work force has declined (Shah, 2008).[17] According to the US Department of State the estimated expatriate workforce in Saudi Arabia for 2005 was 35 percent, however other sources reveal completely different data sets which sometimes may even reach up to 60 percent (CIA, 2009). In a critical assessment, Cordesman acknowledged that the persistent unwillingness to develop realistic data in Saudi Arabia to be a deliberate failure to come to grips with some of the critical problems with demographics. He labeled this strategy as a crippling deficiency from the viewpoint of development planning and said that the problems created were further compounded by a recent tendency to politicize other aspects of econometric data (Cordesman, 2003).[18]

[15] Lubna Al-Qasimi is a member of the ruling family of Sharjah and is currently the Minister for Foreign Trade of the UAE. When she gave this interview in 2006, she held the ministerial post of Economic and Planning.

[16] A detailed analysis of the demographic composition of Kuwait has been provided by Nasra Shah in "Migration to Kuwait: Trends, Patterns and Policies" (Shah, 2007). The latest comprehensive breakup can also be found in a recent economic brief entitled "Kuwait's Population and Labor Force" published by the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) (KUNA, 2010b).

[17] For a recent comprehensive assessment of Oman please refer to Oman - Politics and Society in the Qaboos State by Marc Valeri. The author does not seem to be quite pessimistic when it comes to sustainable development in Oman and projects future "rebellions" as well (Valeri, 2009).

[18] The situation has significantly improved in the past seven years and now it seems that it is more a question of suspicion that keeps the Kingdom from sharing their now available realistic data with the academic community.

Table 1: Some basic demographic indicators in the GCC

	Population Total of Nationals and Non-nationals	**Foreigners** [Percentage of Total population]	**Foreign Labor** Percentage of non – nationals in total labor force	**Population Growth Rate** [World Ranking]	**Net Migration Rate** migrant(s)/ 1000 population [World Ranking]	**Projected Population Increase** (2009 to 2050)	**GDP at PPP** purchasing power parity per capita in USD
Bahrain	1046814	517368 [49%]	32–49 %	1.29% [105]	0.00 [87]	61%	37,300
Kuwait*	3520000	2460000 [70%]	82%	3.55% [5]	15.65 [3]	76%	54,100
Oman	3418085	577293 [17%]	Insufficient data (≈35%)	3.14% [10]	-0.48 [109]	71%	23,900
Qatar	1448446	1231179 [85%]	90%	0.96% [130]	-4.41 [159]	64%	121,700
Saudi Arabia	28686633	5576076 [19%]	35- 60%	1.85% [69]	-8.26 [170]	74%	20,400
United Arab Emirates	6700000	5695000 [85%]	>90%	3.69% [1]	21.71 [1]	79%	42,000
Total GCC	**44819978**	**16056916**					

Sources: Population Reference Bureau (PRB); United States Department of State - Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (esp. for Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar); CIA World Fact Book for Net Migration Rate (2010 est.) and GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP) per capita (World Bank and IMF differ, but do not include all the GCC countries for comparison); Rafiq, 2006 for percentage of foreign labor force.

Note: The Net migration rate of the PRB differs significantly (apparently based on older data) Kuwait: 8; Qatar: 94; Oman: 32; Saudi Arabia: -7; United Arab Emirates: 48; Bahrain: 51 (The rates and figures are primarily compiled from official country statistical yearbooks and UN statistics, since these in respect to the GCC are unreliable and outdated it would explain the distortion

*__Note Kuwait__: Foreigners include an estimated 100,000 stateless persons. (Bidoon)

Finally, the foreign workforce in the UAE is estimated to be around 93 percent and is as high as 98 percent when looking at the private sector alone (DED, 2008; Rafiq, 2006). As indicated in a paper by Al-Ali, an official at the Human Resources Department of Dubai Municipality, and colleagues from Victoria University in Melbourne presented at the Eighth International Business Research Conference expatriates workers even occupy 99 percent of jobs in the private sector and 91 percent in the public sector (Al-Ali et al., 2008, p. 2).

Dr. Jamal Al-Suwaidi[19], the Director General of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) in Abu Dhabi and a Professor of Political Science at the United Arab Emirates University in Al-Ain emphasized that foreigners now constitute almost 90 percent of the population as a stark contrast with the officially announced statistics and accentuated this figure by saying *"sometimes we feel like strangers in our own country"* (Al-Mezel, 2007). This means that the UAE already has the highest share of permanent foreign nationals in the entire GCC region (without tourists) and this has led to the first signs of intra–regional disputes (especially with Saudi Arabia, who has a more far sighted security approach and views the UAE model with increasing skepticism).

Some scholars correlate the degree to which expatriate labor is used in the region with per capita GDP. In other words, those nations with lower per-capita GDP rely more on their national workforce, while Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates manifest a greater expatriate presence in their respective societies. However this explanation may be a little too pragmatic and maybe the situation would be better attributed to sensible leadership – a theory that still needs to be verified.

The former prime minister of New Zealand and director-general of the World Trade Organization (WTO) told Arabian Business on the sidelines of the QFinance Global Debates in Doha that the extensive expatriate workforce residing in the Gulf economies was potentially the biggest issue facing the region today, since it was basically tantamount to colonization. Acknowledging that there was no ready solution to the demographic imbalance, he emphasized that the region's leadership acted as a shock absorber against the foreign workforce by disempowering the people (Bladd, 2009).

[19] Dr. Jamal Suwaidi received his PhD from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (US) and is further a political adviser of the UAE government.

Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah[20], the Secretary-General of the GCC, also warned about the possible risks incurred by the extraordinarily large population of transmigrant laborers in the region. During the opening of a two-day GCC meeting of labor ministers in Manama in November 2005, he declared: "*The GCC countries need to look at the massive presence of expatriates basically as a national security issue, and not merely as an economic matter, particularly in light of global changes and international conventions"* (Toumi, 2005).

Likewise, the recent NATO Parliamentary Assembly in spring 2010 came to the conclusion that the *"ongoing dependence on expatriate labor when suffering from rising domestic unemployment can only lead to significant tension in the future"* (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2010).

Consequently there is some sort of common consensus among scholars, politicians and practitioners alike that population growth and the presence of a large number of expatriates in the region constitutes a major security dilemma to the stability of the GCC countries; it endangers the culture, increases crime, promotes hatred, causes civil unrest, influences the structure of society and, furthermore, has an impact on the foreign policy (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2010; Pradhan, 2010; Ulrichsen, 2009; Roper, 2009; Al-Mani, 2007; Harry, 2007; Kapiszewski, 2006). Urdal reminds us that researchers in general should pay more attention to the often-neglected relationship between migration and conflict (Urdal, 2005). Moreover sound socioeconomic development is a critical prerequisite for security (human and traditional) as well as a key aspect of counterterrorism. Indicative of this, Cordesman argues that population growth in the region will continue to be a major problem through 2050, and the anticipated "youth bulge" will present major problems for job creation through at least 2030 (Cordesman, 2008).

All these problem spheres are not novel and can be traced back to statements made over a decade ago. In this respect, the closing statement of the 18th session of the GCC Supreme Council in 1997, stressed *"the importance of pursuing demographic policies that enhance social coherence, stability and security for the peoples of the region"*, followed by the ratification of "The General Framework of the Population Strategy for the GCC States" in 1998. At the beginning of the new millennium the definition of the Supreme Council became more precise and emphasized *"the need for the concerned authorities in the private and the public sectors to continue with increasing the work opportunities for the citizens"* (GCC, 2000). Furthermore, the Council approved the recommendations and mechanisms which were laid down by the Joint Committee for Studying the Demographic Structure and the effects of immigrant workers and stressed upon the need for the GCC member states to take necessary steps to implement those recommendations and mechanisms. Thereafter the topic disappeared from the closing statements of the GCC Supreme Council[21], however according to press statements the status of immigrant workers and their effects *"on sovereignty and national identity, as well as the negative economic and social effects they have on Gulf societies"* have been discussed in further sessions (Al-Daihani, 2004).

In theory, these internal threats should have been a matter of serious concern for planners and policymakers in the Gulf economies, yet an opposing trend has been observed in the past decade in several GCC states. Next to bringing in further cohorts of foreigners, they have even promoting pro-natalist policies (Winckler, 2010) in order to maintain high fertility rates to add to the already critical population pressure and the anticipated future conflict scenarios.

Déjà vu - The Internalized "Rentier Mentality" as a Constraint to Sustainable Development

To answer the question why noteworthy sustainable progress face formidable political, socio-cultural and institutional constraints to the adaptation of the necessary far reaching and multisectoral approach, which will incontestably take account of a comprehensive labor reform, we need to take a look at some of the peculiarities of the Gulf economies and how a certain unique mentality evolved in the past decades. What has really caused this psychological mindset is undeniably a question for further research, which may touch some inconvenient questions such as culture. It would be preferable, if our colleagues from sociology, anthropology or psychology would finally provide us some new theories, but until then we will just have to use the same elucidations over and over again to explain the development deficiencies in the Gulf region. How much of this unhealthy attitude can really be pragmatically attributed to the 'rentier mentality', how much to lack of human development per se and how much to the promotion of ethnic nationalism with the resulting collective narcissism shall be open to debate. Yet, there should be little doubt that certain components of ethnic nationalism, namely idealization of the nation, rejection of criticism, the blind attachment to certain national cultural values, a feeling of national superiority, uncritical conformity with the prevailing lifestyle, a cognitive and emotional overemphasis of national affiliation in the individual's concept of self, the rejection of 'others' as out-groups and a high degree of relevance of socially derogating comparison with groups not considered to be part of the nation (De Zavala, 2007) are well established in contemporary Gulf societies.

One of the factors that shaped Gulf economies in the past and continuously seem to impede reform and political liberalization efforts is the lack of government dependence on citizen support, since the state is relying directly on oil revenues. The major function of the authorities in this so called 'rentier' or allocation state (Beblawi, 1990) is the distribution of revenues to society, whilst the distinction between public service and private

[20] The Qatari national Abdulrahman Al-Attiyah has served as the Secretary General of the GCC since 2002 and will stay in office for his third term until March 2011. He has a degree in political science and geography (1972) from the University of Miami.

[21] The closing statements of the sessions of the GCC Supreme Council until 2006 are available online http://library.gcc-sg.org/English/Books/sessions/index.html

interest becomes increasingly vague. Consequently this arrangement cultivates a 'rentier mentality', essentially characterized by a disjunction between position and reward from their causal relationship with talent and work (Pool, 2008; Moore & Salloukh, 2007; Beblawi & Luciani, 1987) and has therefore led to the emergence and prevalence of an unhealthy perception towards the acquisition and exercise of authority, the rightful representation based on merit, toward the ethical superiority of work, fairness and equity, as well as responsibility and freedom (Amuzegar, 2001; Ayubi, 1999; Noreng, 1997). In recent years, there has been intensive criticism in response to the overuse of the rentier paradigm, presenting numerous arguments while often stereotyping the entire GCC region. Conversely, Hazem Beblawi gave a very clear set of distinctive definitions in his original work, one of those saying that an "open economy" with high foreign trade is not a rentier state, *"as far as the majority of the society is engaged in the process of wealth generation"* (Beblawi, 1987, p. 52). When reconsidering the figures given above some of the Gulf economies like Saudi Arabia or Bahrain do no longer perfectly match the rentier model, but when it comes to the UAE or Qatar there could be not better contemporary description. Regardless of changing modern realities, this special mindset created a condition of "negative consent", in other words the decline of participation on the part of the people at large, thus resulting in a situation where citizens are sinking into a morass of individual interests at the expense of collective welfare (Noland and Pack, 2007). Consequently social and political mobility become extremely limited and society turns from production to consumption (or even "hyper-consumption" in some cases).

Thus rent seeking tends to result in misguided policies in the form of an intense competition aimed at gaining short term access to revenues and benefits, as compared to political opposition over what policies might be in the long term public interest. Prince El Hassan bin Talal, a member of the Jordanian royal family, emphasizes that these politics stimulate greed and grievance while replacing more far-sighted policies and points out that *"The lessons learnt, or rather not learnt, are many in our region"* (Bin Talal, 2009). Next to a pervasive tendency towards tribalism, contracts are commonly being awarded as an expression of gratitude rather than as a reflection of economic or environmental rationale and civil servants see their principal duty as being available in their offices during working hours. Income is habitually derived simply from citizenship and in this respect a study from the Economic and Policy Research Unit at Zayed University has revealed that a male Emirati is receiving an average of 55,000 USD per year as benefits from the government (Brown, 2007). The sponsorship system (*kafala*[22]) which was until recently customary in all the GCC states represents another unique example in which nationals could earn money strictly by virtue of their nationality and accentuates yet again the strategic arrangement by which the state insulates citizens from the global and neoliberal flows that, paradoxically, are central to the region's intended path to the future (Gardner, 2010). The phenomenon was first studied by political scientist Fareed Zakaria, who described that rentier states frequently create a new bargain in which access to extensive social welfare programs is exchanged for the political submission of its citizenry (Smith, 2004; Basedau and Lacher, 2006). A perfect description of the contemporary mindset has been contributed by Tim Niblock as:

"primarily living in a cocoon created by apparently unearned income, divorced from the problems facing other peoples, sets a population apart from the global community — creating attitudes and mentalities out of touch with international realities" (Niblock, 2007, p. 1).

Likewise the majority of Gulf nationals live in a bubble of what could be described as "complete denial", characterized as already mentioned in the AHDRs by the inability to identify their shortcomings or their elusive state of development. How this "imagined achievement" has in its own manner transposed itself into their mentality has not yet been sufficiently studied, however the outcome is omnipresent. In the UAE, for instance, it is easy to encounter nationals that express how their progress fills them with pride. One media article cited an Emirati professor, who describes the situation of the demographic imbalance as a *"deeply buried sentiment — it is not alienation, but rather fear that we may lose everything that we have built"* (Witter, 2008). The obvious question that comes instantly into everyone's mind would be: "Who exactly build all of this and how much national contribution to this achievement can be presented to be actually proud of?" The answer in this particular case is unpretentious: absolutely none, unless one would classify material purchase, exploitation of the less privileged, political postings, white elephant projects or totally unsustainable development as some type of "achievement". When we take the question further and ask how much respect was given to those that actually were responsible for this alleged progress, from the exploited South Asian laborer for the most part, topped with Western design, expertise as well as technology, we will end up exactly with what constitutes the problem of social cohesion in the UAE and how difficult it will be to transform this unique collective delusional disorder. What may be even more worrisome is the fact that this comes along with an immense indifference to the plight of others[23], especially a decipherable lack of compassion among women who will eventually socialize future generations (for the plight of female domestic workers see for instance Kelly & Breslin, 2010; Migrant Forum in Asia, 2010; Manseau, 2006; Sabban, 2004). This unique condensed phenomenon to the Gulf states urgently needs further research and the title of one infamous Human Rights Watch Report "as if I were not

[22] The "kafala" sponsorship system organizes the flow of labor migrants to the Gulf states and contractually links each laborer to a specific citizen or institution (kafil). In theory, the system assures that once the employment relationship is broken, guest workers become illegal residents, and should immediately leave the country.

[23] The situation of trafficked children (as in child jockeys or trafficking of children for prostitution), domestic workers, laborers, employees in the service industries, etc. has been well researched in an abundance of reports, scholarly articles, documentaries, however there is basically no analysis on what has lead to this disturbing inhumane conditions. Alone 330 domestic maids from Sri Lanka died in the region in 2009 (Baxter, 2010b). For violations committed against the tens of thousands of women trafficked into these countries see for instance Krause: "Gender and Participation in the Arab Gulf" (Krause, 2009).

human" should be representative for the most urgent moral changes that need to be implemented first. The realization of a labor reform that would utilize nationals for these unskilled professions would with certainty reduce the present immeasurable human suffering in the region.

The other GCC states show less extreme uncritical idolization hypes and out of fairness it should be mentioned that for instance Oman opted for much healthier development pathways, while both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have reached a development level that does not only show *"pockets of efficiency and excellence"* (Burke, 2008; Niblock, 2007; Wilson et al., 2004), but also has produced some "national" human agency that is often underestimated by foreign analysts. This is not implying that "yes, we can" will instantly result in some type of positive action, but at least the intellectual capacity is available. Hence it should not be surprising that the two outstanding personalities in the GCC that had the courage to vigorously approach these urgent issues, despite polarizing with their straightforward and realistic insights, come from these two countries.

The prominent intellectual Dr. Ghazi Al-Gosaibi[24], who has been appointed the Minister of Labor in Saudi Arabia since 2004, has positioned himself as an intrepid pioneer in the Gulf to tackle salient issues such as unemployment rates, gender related issues, human rights violations, sponsorship system and reducing the number of low-skilled expatriate workers while training Saudis to take over. His political agenda, which may sound like normal routine in respect to labor policies in the rest of the world, can only be considered an impressive step forward in the GCC invigorated by sound knowledge, responsibility, leadership and the courage to take on the conservative majority for a better future. To deliver the "inconvenient truth" while attempting to implement such fundamental necessary changes has never been easy in development history and it certainly does not win a popularity contest. In this respect Al-Gosaibi was unquestionably aware following his appointment that it would be unrealistic that these challenges would be deciphered in the short term (SAMIRAD, 2004).

Nevertheless, there have been noteworthy changes in attitude in Saudi Arabia (Shah, 2008) as the country moves beyond rentierism, the percentage of foreigners in the workforce and especially the liberal way these issues are being discussed in public and in the media.[25] For instance to bring attention to the inhumane treatment of foreigners, a Saudi advertisement agency launched a series of television and newspaper advertisements, entitled Al Rahma (Mercy), encouraging Saudi society to show mercy to foreign workers. The TV campaign, consisting of several high quality spots, appeared on the Saudi-owned satellite channels MBC and Rotana. One of the print version adverts illustrated a foreign chauffeur harnessed like a horse with a local woman holding the reins, yet another featured a female domestic servant crouching on the floor with a dog bowl in front of her and a woman's shoe heal dangling near her face.[26] The confrontation with so much realism certainly sparked controversy by some in the Kingdom, especially after the topic was reinforced by the words of Al-Gosaibi: *"It is disappointing that we have been infiltrated by some arrogance and even more racism. We have started to picture ourselves better than those who come to participate with us in our development"* (Al-Saadi, 2009). He further continuously reminded the Saudi youth that they need to comprehend that all type of jobs are dignified and warned them against considering certain occupations as menial and unfit for Saudis.

The capacity of the public sector to implement any given policy is often conceptualized as the structural, functional and cultural ability to implement the objectives of the government, in other words the ability to deliver those public services aimed at raising the quality of life of citizens in a sustainable way, which the government has set out to deliver, effectively as planned over time. Therefore no single agency can manage the policy implementation effort, since implementation is not only influenced by multiple actors, it operates at multiple levels. Hence, Al-Gosaibi, made efforts to involve the concerted actions of multiple agencies and groups, from religious scholars to harnessing partnerships with non-state sectors. Fully aware that policy implementation has often suffered from the absence of a people driven process in other countries, he further made attempts to seek public support for his new policies by encouraging Saudi citizens to voice their views (Al-Gosaibi, 2008). While addressing the participants of the seventh national dialogue forum in Buraidah he noted: *"The ministry alone cannot change the work culture in society, neither could it change the customs and traditions that underlie the issue"* (Arab News, 2008).

Likewise, Dr. Majeed Al-Alawi, his outspoken counterpart from Bahrain, who has carried out intrepid wide-ranging reforms in the face of stiff opposition since his initial appointment in 2002.[27] While addressing the

[24] Dr. Ghazi Al-Gosaibi studied at the University of Southern California, where he completed his MA in international relations and received his PhD in political science/law from the University of London. After being the dean of the Faculty of Commerce and head of the Department of Political Science at King Saud University, he became the ambassador to United Kingdom and Ireland. Furthermore he held an endless list of important positions in the Kingdom, especially Minister of Health and Minister of Water & Electricity, before becoming the Minister of Labor in 2004.

[25] In the absence of reliable scholarly analysis, there is unfortunately only the option to borrow from our colleagues from anthropology and use their ethnographic methodologies to derive to some sort of "educated guess". In other words this means a combination of participant observation and some sort of open ended in-depth conversation, while throwing your own presumptions and assumptions about a group of people away in order to effectively learn anything about them. We are certainly aware that this is anything from representative, but since Western political scientists will usually speak to the same segment in Gulf societies (namely highly educated colleagues or government officials) it should be reasonable to draw comparative conclusions from these interactions.

[26] Several spots are available on YouTube under http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Al3UQYV8Mvk&feature=related. The pictures of the print campaign can be reviewed online for instance at http://adnationme.com/index.php?option=com_joomgallery&Itemid=22&func=detail&id=1440. According to rumors the campaign has been initiated by a moderate religious group.

[27] Dr. Majeed Al-Alawi also studied international relations and achieved his PhD in the UK. He was appointed Minister of

same key issues as soft-spoken Dr. Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, who has already been described as an aristocrat, a bureaucrat, an essayist, a diplomat and a poet as far as two decades ago by the Los Angeles Times (Murphy, 1991), Al-Alawi represents a generational shift and opted for a progressive forthright style yet unheard of in this region. His far sighted methodology based on scientific analysis, audacity and reforms earned him sympathy and admiration from the majority of Western scholars and international observers including Human Rights Watch and the International Labor Organization. At the same time his indefatigable efforts engrossed immense condemnation from those whose current interests are at stake in exchange for the future sustainable wellbeing of Bahraini as well as Gulf societies. Next to guest workers, who tend to label him as xenophobic, opposition also comes from nationals who prefer to maintain medieval practices, while Al-Alawi insists that *"we cannot allow that; we cannot allow that kind of master-slave relationship"* (White, 2009). Even stronger vociferous antagonism comes from the business community in Bahrain and the wider Gulf, who argue that his proposals to conform more closely to international labor standards and respect human dignity would impact the regions' competitiveness. Consequently, his reform suggestions received a lot of criticism and were initially not followed up by the GCC council (Bowman, 2008). Noteworthy is the fact that as far back as 2004 Al-Alawi was one of the first officials to overtly voice that the presence of millions of expatriates in the Gulf may pose a serious future threat to the region and recently repeated his concerns at the sidelines of the 15th annual conference of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR). While again highlighting the dichotomy of the GCC labor market, in other words employing an estimated 17 million foreigners while having more than one million jobless citizens, he also stressed on the immense threat to future Gulf generations by saying: *"Whoever thinks this foreign manpower in the region comes for a project and leaves on its completion is wrong"* (Sambidge, A., 2010; Al-Arabiya, 2010). The fact that foreign migrants, attracted exclusively by the economic wealth of this region, will usually make an effort to settle permanently is still another underestimated security threat, the goes beyond the mere presence of and reliance on expatriate labor. Unfortunately to go into depth is beyond the scope of this paper, however it should be self evident that the most talented migrants from the developing world, will use the region only as a facilitator to eventually migrate to the West. The huge surplus of economic migrants driven by expectations of improving their financial position, in other words those that do neither care about political freedom, respecting the local culture or anything else that may add to the sustainable development of the region (for instance environment, heritage, knowledge, arts, etc.) are not at all a desirable addition to the social fabric of Gulf societies.[28]

Eventually this will be one of the main drivers of the anticipated profound political, social and cultural consequences for the GCC.

Even more contentious is the fact that a large proportion of the foreigners currently residing in the Gulf are not even essential for running the economy and are merely an outcome of the prevailing institutionalized mentality or as El-Haddad explains: *"Excessive economic abundance gave rise to a culture that attributed great social significance to symbols of material differentiation"* (El-Haddad, 2003, p. 5). According to Shah based on government statistics the number of domestic workers has been steadily increasing and in Kuwait for example housemaids alone comprised of 7.1 percent of the total population in 2005 (Shah, 2008). In the case of the UAE, for instance, domestic servants represent a proportional population share of 5 percent and in many cases their number is higher than the number of the family members (Winckler, 2010; Fakkar, 2009). Saudi Arabia sponsored over 1.5 million foreign maids in 2008, the majority from Southeast Asia (Qusti, 2008). Besides not enhancing the productivity of the economy and with female domestic workers being the most vulnerable group to violence and exploitation, as they are often denied basic protections under the law, they are further held responsible for the some of the changing characteristics of society which are putting increased pressure on traditional values. Next to taking the preposterous blame for soaring divorce rates[29] in the Gulf (with a focus on maids in Saudi Arabia and foreigners in general in the rest of the Gulf), genuine scholarly discourse tends to highlight the negative direct impact of foreign labor, especially of foreign domestic maids, on Gulf Arab families (El-Haddad, 2003). Among the already mentioned consequences is the tendency of displaying disrespectful behavior patterns to foreigners (for instance children being socialized as seeing the expatriate worker or domestic servant as less equal), loss of values, Islamic norms, public health and especially the reduction of Arabic language capabilities of younger nationals (Partrick, 2009). From an outside observer point of view, the question here should however be why instead of blaming societal ills on foreigners, don't Gulf nationals start to take a critical look at their own society and here especially question the current role and responsibilities of motherhood in these societies? Why do other nationalities, in societies where mothers (and more frequently fathers) comprehend the value and importance of learning the mother tongue, do not suffer from this problem?[30] From an academic standpoint, bilingualism

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Labor in 2005, following his assignment as Minister of Labor and Social Affairs from 2002 to 2005.

[28] The problem sphere become self evident, when looking at the available literature that is mainly concerned with this "permanent impermanence" of foreigners in the Gulf and very seldom takes a look at the situation from a Gulf national point of view. Instead of pragmatically accepting that the GCC nations have no desire to become immigrant countries or give citizenship and share their already volatile social contracts with foreigners, there is an endless disturbing discourse - usually initiated by foreigners - on this topic. It seems that the region is regarded as a self service entity and there is little respect for the sovereignty or the local inhabitants of these nations, hence it is not surprising that the majority of foreigners currently residing in the GCC are neither aware of the unsustainable damage that they cause, nor do they care.

[29] Escalating divorce rates in the absence of secularization and individualization of Gulf societies may certainly present a characteristic of a society in trouble, yet to blame the maids or other foreigners is simply a result of discrimination in order not to confront the deficiencies of their social systems. The most recent figures for divorce in the UAE showed that 46 percent of marriages fail, which constitutes the highest rate in the GCC (Kakande, 2008).

[30] Personal observation: So far I have personally not yet met someone from for instance Latin America in an international

has positive effects on children's linguistic and educational development. In this respect, the level of development of a child's mother tongue is a resilient predictor of English development (or any other additional language) because skills transfer across languages, regardless of how different the family language may be from the language of instruction. (This may be a suitable explanation for the dearth of English language skills among nationals) Studies have further revealed that the loss or failure to develop the mother tongue has potential negative long-term consequences on emotional development, as well as on the dynamics of the family per se. However this may not only represent the foreign observers perception, since according to an analysis made by Sabban, academic writings from a local and Arab Gulf perspective equally place the main responsibility for this problem on the mothers themselves, portraying in this case specifically Emirati women *"as careless and superficial in their preference for a luxurious life over the well being of their children"* (Sabban, 2004, p. 91).

The assumption that outsourcing a child to a foreign servant may have economic utility, as it facilitates women's participation in the labor force is unfounded in light of the overwhelming evidence from the developed nations where women tend to manage both. (Sometimes even as single mothers). Next to the fact that the Gulf economies would be able to provide the needed extensive public child-care system run by nationals (including full-day early learning-kindergartens, transport, child care at the workplace, etc.), the simple shift of employing female Gulf nationals as domestic aids would already solve the problem and hopefully the abuse.[31] The vanguard, being once again Al-Gosaibi, criticized explicitly those who reject the idea of Arab and Saudi women working as maids in Saudi households (Qusti, 2008). The BBC reported in 2009 that apparently the first group of Saudi housemaids has begun work under a government scheme (BBC News, 2008), which would symbolize a great step forward to counteract some of the social ills in the region. However, there has been an unprecedented outrage in the beginning of 2010 over a news report that a very few Saudi women were working as domestic aids in Qatar for a salary of 400 USD per month. To add some perspective, this salary would be roughly equivalent to the monthly German subsistence allowance, which is a fixed amount of app. 350 Euro (app. 426 USD) per month for those requiring social assistance. Furthermore the claimants of these funds in Germany must attend training courses, and be ready to step into any job offered them by the employment office, irrelevant of their education and hence even a very low paid one. This certainly justifies the question of a Jeddah based Saudi journalist in an exceptional opinion piece in the Saudi Gazette: *"Sometimes I wonder whether we as a nation will ever get over ourselves"* (Jawhar, 2010). There is hope on the horizon for changing attitudes, but then again, according to another news report the initial information was inaccurate and the Qatari Embassy in Riyadh has officially denied that Saudi women are working as maids in Qatar specifically highlighting that *"women from Gulf countries are not accepted as maids according to social norms"* (Arab News, 2010b).

Al-Alawi polarized on this topic in his typical outspoken genre referring to Gulf nationals as "lazy" and "spoilt", while explaining to Asharq Al-Awsat *"A lord with billions in Great Britain cleans his own car on a Sunday morning, whereas people of the Gulf look for someone to hand them a glass of water from just a couple of meters away"* (AFP, 2008a). To underscore his argument, a recent study conducted in Saudi Arabia by the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) revealed that 97 percent of nationals refused to work in hotels and restaurants, while the Ministry of Labor is currently pushing toward nationalizing the hospitality sector. Khaled Al-Harithy, chairman of the hospitality committee at the chamber, disclosed that alone in Jeddah there are 30,000 employment opportunities in this sector, with foreigners currently retaining 99 percent of these jobs. Al-Gosaibi tried to encourage young Saudis to consider working in this vital sector by wearing a waiter's uniform and said: *"We should be ready to take up any jobs in order to have a brighter future"* (Fakkar, 2009).

Addressing the bigger picture, Al-Sabah highlighted, *"the main cause of this major dislocation in the demographic profile can be found in the fundamental disequilibrium in the labor market,"* saying that the *"continuous inflow of cheap foreign labor, reinforces the distorted structure of incentives in favor of an outdated and inefficient economic mode of production"* (KUNA, 2010a).

Analogous concepts were put forward by Bahraini and Saudi colleagues who indicated that technology transfer had an important role and could provide alternative means for excessive growth and sustaining long term development by substituting capital for labor (Al-Roubaie & Al-Zayer; 2006). However, they did not fail to mention that political will along with vigorous policy measures were prerequisites for any successful implementation. The challenge is certainly not insurmountable and a recent example from Saudi Arabia shows that with a little political will and the responsiveness of responsible leadership sustainable solutions to these emerging challenges can be found. Following a cooperation between Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Alfaisal University, Prince Sultan bin Salman[32] launched the first ever MIT OpenCourseWare (MIT

environment who is not fully proficient in Spanish, a Nigerian who does not speak his tribal language (for instance Hausa or Ibo), or a German that grew up abroad who does not know his mother tongue.

[31] We do not undermine the fact, that the social cost that the absence of those foreign domestic workers to their own families back home is extremely high. Women are left to dispense maternal love through letters, cash and cassettes, while the unwanted separation from their children hurts them emotionally. Other negative social impacts of the women's absence are characterized by divorce, children leaving school, alcoholism, and child sexual abuse – all of these totally ignored in the general discussions concerned foreign labor. However, a serious analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.

[32] Soft spoken Prince Sultan bin Salman is currently considered (at least by foreign analysts) to be among the most promising well educated, highly intelligent new generation princes that the future pathways of Saudi development and nation building will depend on. He has among numerous other qualifications a Masters degree in Social and Political Science from Syracuse University, US. (Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs)

OCW)[33] mirror website in December 2009, which will make these vast and top-quality educational materials from MIT undergraduate- and graduate-level courses online, openly available and accessible inside Saudi Arabia and all over the region, including the initiative in Arabizing some of the course materials on the website to increase its accessibility for less educated Gulf users (Rasooldeen, 2009). With e-learning in place (such as entire lectures from Yale, Harvard, etc.) and the necessary infrastructure available, the Gulf economies should reconsider their approach to invest in massive showcase universities (instead of fixing the exiting ones) that will import even more expatriates. With this in mind, it was encouraging news that most GCC firms are starting to outsource their IT process (Saudi Gazette, 2009) and hopefully in the future more work that unfortunately, but undeniably still needs to be done by foreign experts should urgently be considered to be done by virtual teaming as much as possible from overseas to reduce the foreign inflow and the unnecessary environmental stress on this volatile region (Leahy, 2008).

It should be noted, that the above mentioned political "rentier" reality elucidates the motives for some of the nonconformist policies in the region, which are entangled with supporting different sections of society. Hence there is the assumption that the Gulf economies may be specifically implementing immigration policies that, by importing a foreign workforce, strengthen political power. In other words, while the steady increase of the foreign workforce may be considered the result of a combination of liberal labor immigration policies and lax enforcement of labor regulations, this leeway given to the private sector was and still is one of the cornerstones of the social contract between the GCC rulers and the national business elite (who exchanged their political influence for economic benefits). In respect to the growing dependence on household domestics, the situation is directly linked to political and social stability, since it is again part of an unspoken 'bargain', by which the state provides a leisure life in exchange for complete political control. It should therefore not be a surprise that even today in view of the immense internal security threat some elements in the GCC prefer the status quo and seem impervious to change. Al-Gosaibi substantiated this by explaining the dilemma faced by his ministry, which stood between the demands of economic expansion on one side and socio-economic obligation to employ the huge number of unemployed youths on the other. Therefore to some extent, he had to concede to pressures from some quarters that objected to the policy of restricting labor import and issue another record 1.7 million new working visas in 2007 (Arab News, 2008). Disapproval of such actions came prompt from the quarter of concerned national intellectuals and Saudi economist Dr. Ihsan Bu Hulaiga[34] noted that the current policy "contradicts all economic concepts" (AFP, 2008b). He argued in a presentation at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies in August 2009 that the relevant strategy should be participative, adaptive, global-oriented, resilient and proactive, but he is also conscious that in the end the real challenge will be the implementation, thus in his words *"the name of the game is execution"* (Klaus, 2010). These monolithic constraints are common features in Gulf politics and can be seen for instance in the water or agricultural sectors as well. Contradicting with any logic and even with serious implications for the future human security of society, it seems to be unattainable to correct some of those irresponsible policies in the short term (water tariffs, agriculture, etc.).

Along these lines, Abdelbast Abdelmohsen, a senior official at the Ministry of Labor in Bahrain, ruled out the introduction of a minimum wage for expatriate workers, since apparently this initiative would damage the kingdom's economy and harm its competitiveness. Indirectly praising the ongoing exploitation as a comparative advantage he concludes: "Businesses will be reluctant to invest in Bahrain because the advantage that we have, which is cheap labor, will not be an option anymore" (Baxter, E., 2010a).

Likewise, the Kuwaiti parliament passed a novel labor law, which replaced a 45-year-old text that was criticized as being highly oppressive and favorable to employers, in February 2009. While its enforcement is still highly questioned, it grants in theory seriously improved rights and conditions for the millions of foreign workers in the private sector, but does neither scrap the controversial sponsor system or grants any rights to the large number of domestic workers in Kuwait. The passing of the law was preceded by resistance from business elites through the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), who reportedly urged government officials to make amendments to bring it in line with the laws of other Gulf countries (Sambidge, 2009c).

While Dr. Ghazi Al-Gosaibi sadly passed away in August 2010, the struggle in Saudi Arabia continues but unfortunately with similar disappointing news. When recently questioned about a proposal made by the National Society for Human Rights, demanding the cancellation of the sponsorship system, Deputy Labor Minister Abdul Wahid Al-Humaid announced that he feared the cancellation would harm the interests of Saudi employers and hence it will stay in place for sometime in order to prevent foul play until alternative solutions are found (Arab News, 2010a). This may certainly be considered a major setback in reforms, after the president of the Saudi National Society of Human Rights (NSHR), Bandar Al-Hajjar, revealed in mid 2008 that they had presented a proposal to establish a government commission to look after guest workers and called for the abolition of the sponsorship system. At the same time Al-Gosaibi told a Shoura Council session that his ministry had presented its viewpoints regarding cancellation of the sponsorship rules and that the law would be issued very soon. The initial plan of the Ministry of Labor was to establish specialized companies to organize foreign human resources and supervise the signing of contracts between employers and the labor force (Ghafour, 2008).

[33] MIT OCW is a free and open educational resource for educators, students and self-learners, and supports MIT's mission to advance knowledge and education on a global scale. Evaluation data from past experiences show that these mirror sites are having a significant positive impact on teaching and learning in regions where these mirror sites are set up.

[34] Dr. Ihsan Bu Hulaiga holds a Ph.D. in Business Administration from Wisconsin University, Milwaukee, USA and published numerous articles, next to a book entitled "Reforming the Saudi Economy" (unfortunately only in Arabic). He is also a former member of the country's Majlis Al Shura, the consultative council that advises the government.

The Capability Dimension
Education, Unemployment, and Labor Markets

There is little doubt that sound education would help to alleviate some of those above mentioned attitudes, since it incontestably plays a pivotal role in shaping the values, attitudes and behavior of young adults which is a determining aspect for the future of societies, their approach to tolerance and justice. In return this paradigm raises questions about what sort of societies and systems of government are wanted by those in power formulating educational policy, especially when it comes to the tertiary sector. So far the attempts to "nationalize" various sectors of the workforce should be considered, at best, incomplete successes and at worst absolute failures. At the same time unemployment especially among the youth is on the rise in all of the GCC states. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Economy indicated that the unemployment rate among UAE citizens was as high as 12.7 percent (Tzannatos, 2009, p. 27). A survey conducted by Zogby International for McKinsey in January 2007 suggests that while overall unemployment is low, youth unemployment may be significantly higher than 30 percent and that 80 percent of the young unemployed never held a job before (MFNCA, 2007). Conversely, unemployment appears to be still largely 'by choice' due to unmet expectations on salaries and working conditions. Prevailing patriarchal structures and the redistributive policies in the region, permit youth to spend extended periods of time searching or waiting for a preferred civil service and public-sector enterprises job (Yousef, 2003). GCC nationals predilection for the public sector is based on customarily high wages, job security, generous social allowances and retirement benefits, short working hours and lack of work discipline. Kuwait, for instance, has more than 90 percent of its national work force on the public-sector payroll. Yet, half of the employees in the public sector represent what leading Kuwaiti economist Dr. Jassem Al-Saadoun terms as "*masked unemployment"*. While warning that such policies will not be effective in the long term, he recaps that the government subsidizing the creation of such obscure posts *"is a way to distribute oil dividends"* (AFP, 2008b).

As already mentioned above, in comparison the private sector for instance in the UAE is building its success and attractiveness of the location predominantly on the workforce exploitation that takes place in many segments (construction and catering industries being the worst culprits). Employees are required to work very long hours with a salary comparatively less than what employees in the public sector earn. What is often a reported attitude of nationals is that working from 8 to 5 does not "*fit into their values and way of life"*, also there is an emphasis on a surplus free time and family orientation, holidays and even people's different values. Another Emirati opinion cited in the media claims that: "*The corporate culture imposes its own values that may be acceptable to others, but not for us, UAE nationals, who have a different local culture that upholds family and human relations"* (Gulf News Report, 2009). This reflects a lot of attitudes in the GCC and in most cases, nationals will only consider occupations that are culturally acceptable, high in social status, and connected with the white-collar environment. Unfortunately these high expectations do usually not correlate with their dearth of skills among even the educated segment, driven by the absence of a dynamic training and re-training system for life-long education. Despite all the rhetoric, a fundamental gap still exists between the available national human resources and the needs of the labor market. Furthermore, the GCC governments are currently missing the local expertise that they can draw upon and the resources required to develop and maintain an efficient state bureaucracy based on effective management.

Despite its enormous wealth, the indigenous knowledge deficit in the GCC, in terms of acquisition, production, promotion or diffusion, is still considered as one of the major constraints to the implementation of sustainable development initiatives and the ability to generate the urgently needed human capital (The World Bank, 2008; Lord, 2008; UNDP, 2003). In this respect, the common misperception that comes along with high ranking HDI positions assigned to several Gulf economies should urgently be reconsidered, since these are merely a consequence of procured foreign skills and give little insight into the reality. The distinguished éminence grise Arab economist, Yusuf Sayigh elaborated while analyzing the Gulf economies in 1991 that development cannot be bought and warned that it must instead be soundly oriented and sought with tenacity by society's leadership and by a people enjoying a large measure of freedom and political participation (Sayigh, 1991). This aspect is even more imperative, since the ability to generate adaptive capacity to cope with future threat multipliers such as climate change is associated with levels of national development, including political stability, economic wellbeing, human and social capital as well as effective institutional and regulatory frameworks (Stern, 2007). Despite progressively increasing budgets for education coupled with improved enrollment which is merely a characteristic of "quantity not quality", the region is continuously falling behind other regions in absolute terms (Nour, 2005) and the insufficient qualification and skills of GCC youth needed in market-oriented economies is just one distressing outcome (Yousef, 2003). When one is willing to look beyond the numerous highly politicized assessments, distorted statistics, or the prestige showcase projects of pretence[35], the dearth of the situation becomes self evident. Subsequent to correlating "indigenous research output with the quality to appear in reputable academic journals" with per capita GDP, the situation would become even more dubious and nothing discloses their "real development" status more conspicuously, in other words openly visible to anyone who is willing to acknowledge the truth.
Seriously regretting the lack of scientific research conducted in the Gulf countries, Al-Suwaidi comments with the boldness that is usually characteristic of all his

[35] A random best practice example of such irresponsible and highly politicized output can be found in form of a statement made at a conference organized by the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce and hosted by the London Middle East Institute (SOAS) entitled "Higher Education in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States: Approaches to Building Economies, Societies and Nations" which can be found online and claims: *"In two generations the region has gone from having the Middle East's least well-educated population to having a younger generation whose educational achievements are approaching those of Western countries.*" Similar negligent statements that deliberately distort a serious development deficiency in the GCC in order to make profit can unfortunately be found from many EU and US sources.

conversations: *"The Arabs claim they understand everything but they do not read; if they do read, they do not understand; if they understand, they plan but do not implement"* (Shamseddin, M., 2009).

Hence there is no surprise that one of the principal findings of the recently conducted World Bank report was that there is a need to overhaul their education systems, if they are to tackle the future challenges of their large and growing youth population (The World Bank, 2008). The comprehensive assessment calls attention to the central role of incentives and public accountability to meet these sector objectives and argues that today's world of intense global competition and rapid technological transformation demands problem-solving, complex communication as well as language skills, currently either not being emphasized in the region or in the case of the Emirates even being suppressed by a "back to Arabic" campaign (propagated by for instance Al-Kitbi, 2008). While the deficient language skills of Gulf nationals are a constant component of every labor marked related analysis such policy initiatives are certainly counterproductive to meet the necessary demands (Al-Ali, 2008).[36] Among the most welcomed changes to observers was the decision to change the language of instruction in the social sciences and humanities to English in the some Gulf universities. Unfortunately many local students lack the required proficiency and the necessary attitude to learn and adapt (at a university level!), not even realizing that what is being circumvented here, is just the normal process that millions of students go through around the globe[37]. Noteworthy is the fact that the majority of these students does manage to adapt to a foreign language in only a few months, if they are given the chance to successfully integrate into their university environments. Certainly the dearth of these skills among GCC nationals should be viewed in a very skeptical way and it could be argued that the absence of English (as the lingua franca of science) still serves a means to intentionally control and suppress university students. In other words to separate them from critical thought processes, since it is known that education systems do not merely transfer knowledge or build skills, but are transformative and transmit a cultural footprint. Irrefutably, Western education changes a person's attitude and this should have been more than obvious in those worldviews of those highly educated Gulf nationals that were cited in this paper. However, even though a number of high-profile US colleges have started to set up satellite campuses in the region in recent years, the quality as well as their nominal value to GCC nationals remains debatable in comparison to a real education abroad. There is still no visible research outcome or the free intellectual environment conducive to novel ideas and one should question what image purpose these establishments should ultimately serve. The prompt failure of George Mason University branch campus in the UAE however made even the most ignorant realize that the higher-education scene in the region is quickly gaining a reputation for being as hazardous due to censorship as it may be lucrative. Next to perilous academic oversight, such ventures will even endanger accreditation and reputation in the West (Beatty et al., 2009). As a best practice example, statistics reveal that the enrollments from Saudi Arabia in US institutions, fueled by political will and a large government scholarship program, increased by 28.2 percent in 2009 allowing 12,661 young Saudis to receive the best possible education on a worldwide scale (IIE, 2009). As an outcome of the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program many more qualified Saudi male and female students were allowed to continue their studies in the best universities around the world at all academic levels, for instance 600 of them ended up in Germany (German Federal Foreign Office, 2010)[38]. By contrast, Gulf institution building is thoroughly politicized and education still places an emphasis on memorization, subordination and compliance, and not enough on developing students' cognitive and analytical skills (UNDP, 2003; Lord, 2008; The World Bank, 2008). Educational systems under authoritarian rule rarely give sufficient encouragement to initiative, discovery or the development of creative and critical faculties or personal aptitudes. In other words, the current paternalistic social system, based on submission to authority would not function, if educational reforms on a broad scale would be seriously considered as an option by the ruling elites (Fergany, 2006; Giles, 2006) and this may be the only explanation why the knowledge base is so outrageously lacking behind in these affluent economies. Obviously progressive education policies would eventually support critical thought and hence the transition to more liberal societies, while the current and restrictive strategy reflects a desire of the leadership to perpetuate existing traditional norms (see Vision 2030 of Qatar for instance). Paradoxically, this fosters the insufficient work ethics that later hinder the employment of nationals who are unable to fit into the required standards and never learned that sometimes it takes personal efforts and sacrifices to meet the required demands. For instance the concept that young people learn life skills and gain valuable experience through volunteer work, extracurricular activities and summer employment is almost completely absent in the region. To conclude, Al-Alawi pointed out that education in the region does not satisfy the requirements of development, build active citizenship, or have any relation with making the future of the nation (Al-Alawi, 2010).

Future Outlook

The global economic downturn and lower crude prices showed the Gulf monarchies that their current capacities to meet the rising demands of their fast growing populations at the same time as investing in their development initiatives can easily be overstretched. The massive state-organized welfare polity of the past has

[36] Similar constraints can be found in the academic community, where scholastic cooperation with Gulf nationals often becomes problematical because of insufficient written English language proficiency, which is common even among those that have acquired PhDs from English-speaking countries (especially the UK).

[37] These are simple realities of our modern mobility and data from the annual "Open Doors" report published by the Institute of International Education highlighted that alone in the 2008/2009 academic year 671,616 international students attended U.S. institutions, the majority of those being from China as well as numerous other countries that do not speak English (IIE, 2009).

[38] In return one can actually study Arabic at 50 German universities.

unintentionally expanded the expectations of citizens on consumption, concurrently with a low personal level of commitment toward the welfare state. Any reformulation of the social contract through the introduction of complex and context-specific social and economic reforms will especially effect the younger generation who internalized the above discussed "rentier mentality" and hence take the current redistributive mechanisms and generous provision of public services for granted (Valeri, 2009; Longva, 2004). With an average estimate population of roughly 50 percent under the age of 30 years in 2025 (NIC, 2008) who lack any experience with the pre-oil hardships, rising income distortions, inflation and declining individual living standards will certainly trigger frustrations and set off a potential challenge to regime legitimacy. In the absence of employment opportunities that suit the prevailing unrealistic demands of GCC nationals, other growing socio-economic strains and legal means for expression, conditions will be ripe for disaffection, growing dogmatic religiosity and eventually even a shift to radicalism. There is little doubt that meeting the future expectations of growing populations will prove to be increasingly difficult, but the fear of the possible social tensions and instability that might result from implementing urgently needed rigid reforms and scaling back of handouts is even higher. In other words, domestic cures are well known and prosaic in some of the GCC states, but also politically unpopular, so there never seemed to be an appropriate moment to take the kind of bold and painful action required.

Yet, what does it really require to implement such reforms in a developing region, next to the availability of and access to concrete or tangible assets, such as inter alia financial, technological, logistical and human resources? According to Harvard professor Merilee Grindle the framework conditions play a vital role. Hence, the political, administrative, economic, technological, cultural and social environments within which action is taken must also be sympathetic or conducive to successful policy implementation (Grindle, 1980). Admittedly, this is already wishing for a miracle and will require the extended time frame that the Gulf economies may not even have left. Yet the human capacity needed to transform rhetoric into action will certainly include intangible requirements, such as leadership, willingness, motivation, courage, commitment and endurance. The paper demonstrated that this type of leadership is available in some of the Gulf countries and hence there is room to be cautiously optimistic for some of these nations, while voicing disquieting concerns for others. Next to Oman, both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have been more insightful and have initiated various reforms to genuinely address the labor issue and the precarious threat of an exploding foreign population. Experts even believe that the current economic slowdown may just offer the government in Saudi Arabia a faster way of achieving some of those ambitious targets it has set itself for achieving "Saudization" of the local workforce in the years to come (Hakimian, 2009).

While in Bahrain these objectives may proof to be more problematic simply as a result of fiscal limitations there is sufficient evidence of sincerity, especially after the decision to become the first GCC state to officially repeal the existing sponsorship program (HRW, 2009). The country will increasingly look to Qatar to combat the socio-economic pressures it is facing as a result of unemployment and poor liquidity for key sections of Bahraini society. In view of this, the construction of the Qatar Bahrain Causeway (also referred to as the Qatar Bahrain Friendship Bridge) will serve as a key initiative for some regional cooperation and it is reasonable to assume that the scale of the Qatari economy will accommodate a sizable proportion of the Bahraini labor force (Wright, 2008).

Even Kuwait has recently shown some progress in formulating restrictive policies to curb future migration and to train its own national workforce (Al-Sayed, 2010). One initiative that received a lot of praise among nationals was the agreement of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) with the German GTZ for technological and scientific cooperation, especially to develop teaching concepts and materials for vocations that are geared to the future and meet the demands of the domestic market.[39] It will however be difficult to either measure the effectiveness of these efforts or predict if they have any worthwhile effect on the prevailing attitude.

When it comes to the UAE, there are indications that the primary objective is to rhetorically address social anxieties related to expatriates rather than the actual economic dependence. Beyond doubt, the UAE must carry out reforms at both the governmental and societal levels for any lasting development to take root. By contrast, there are so far no serious signs to adjust the long-term missing sustainability of the current system and governmental decisions seem to be impervious to the prevailing demographic imbalance. Instead we have already seen the previously anticipated "fierce deterioration of the freedom of expression" (RWB, 2009; ANHRI, 2007). This repression comes along with further intimidations of anyone that will voice concerns, tries to improve the conditions of the foreign workers and criticize the current short sighted policies of excessive greed (Al-Farhan, 2008).

Al-Yousif, describes the current situation as follows: *"… the government has not ceased to impede its own, where there are groups among the citizens of the nation possessed of sufficient qualifications who are barred from teaching or writing in local newspapers or from discussion with local and regional media and subject to other than these among the means of pressure and terrorizing that the rest of the world has left behind"* (Al-Yousif, 2008, p. 636). In her Prospect (a UK based intelligent current affairs and cultural debate magazine) article, Katharine Quarmby reinforces his words by stating the obvious that is by now well known among Western security experts*: "All the intellectuals and activists I interviewed in Dubai had been arrested or threatened with arrest for daring to voice dissent"* (Quarmby, 2008).

[39] The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) reports to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and is responsible for vocational and technical training in Kuwait. It currently encompasses five training institutions that offer full-time vocational training to young Kuwaitis in a wide variety of professions. As part of the joint agreement, thirteen GTZ experts are working at four of these institutes in the fields of metal-work, electrical engineering, construction engineering, hospitality and hairdressing training. (Thirteen more foreigners in Kuwait, but hopefully with a sustainable effect to reduce the dependence on foreign labor)

Among the copious victims of the UAE persecution tactics to a degree that has been condemned by international rights groups and Western universities is soft-spoken and eloquent humanist Dr. Mohamed Al-Roken[40], who is considered by many as one of the most outstanding intellectuals in the entire GCC region. The professor of constitutional law is deeply concerned about the ongoing alienation in the most contradiction-laden society in the Middle East and enunciates that sensitivities of locals should be recognized (Shadid, 2007). While audacious enough to question one of the tacit social contracts underpinning the modern UAE that explicitly caters for foreigners at the expense of nationals to achieve maximum economic growth, he is trying to conceptualize how to safeguard Emirati identities from an overpowering encroachment of a globalized culture by recapitulating: *"We have exiled ourselves from our own land"* (Quarmby, 2008, p. 60). Being further perhaps the most prominent human rights advocate in the UAE that goes beyond rhetoric and is willing to represent impoverished migrant workers pro bono, he does not propose to expel the foreign population, but is asking for solutions based on meaningful and sustainable development with an emphasis on the respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings residing in the country. Concurring with his position, Madawi Al-Rasheed, a Saudi professor of religious anthropology at King's College in London, reminds us: *"The civil state ruled by laws that respect human rights is the best guarantor of human security. In the Arab region, states are far from this ideal"* (UNDP, 2009). Al-Roken is however also aware of the security implications that political analysts warn about and admits that especially the frustration of the migrant laborers could escalate by emphasizing *"There is a fear among citizens that someday this could all explode in violence"* (Walt, 2008).

By contrast, while also acknowledging "the danger" of the country's demographic dilemma, Al-Suwaidi expresses that in his opinion it is "too late" to find feasible solutions (Al-Mezel, 2007). However, "doing nothing" is not considered an attractive policy option given the security implications and this does come as a surprise from strategic expert who normally has daring views symbolic for his depth of experience and analytic skills. His proximity to decision-makers in the UAE may be a reasonable explanation for this unexpected response from an intellectual, but since the citation is from 2007 there should be the slight hope that he may have reconsidered his position by now. Yet unfortunately in the same interview, Al-Suwaidi is questioning why people suffer from self censorship in the UAE and never exercise freedom of expression. Faced with the option of being deported, detained, tortured, charged with some fictional crime, having yourself and your dependants being threatened or finding your name on either the website of Amnesty International or UAEPrison most people that are not close to the elites or have some exceptionally powerful institutional support (being a journalist for a reputable media outlet, the interim director general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, a Fulbright scholar or associated with a Western university will certainly not suffice) would re-evaluate the suicidal option to express some critical thoughts while being in the country.

Sustainability in general will most likely be achieved by actions that address immediate challenges while focusing on longer-term goals through a series of intermediate range 'sustainability' transitions. Undeniably human security serves as a useful lens for viewing challenges to and envisioning solutions for, human development in the region by mitigating threats to the insecurity of individuals, especially GCC nationals and hence should become a central objective of policy formulations and implementations. However thus far, in the absence of sound scholarly assessments the level of understanding people's vulnerability as well as their own perception of this situation is still somewhat sufficiently uncertain for the purposes of designing effective response strategies. Hitherto there is a tendency in the Gulf economies to ignore or correlate the warning indicators that are the indisputable first signs of a distressed society (e.g. youth unemployment, divorce rates, crime, pollution, public health, xenophobia, etc.), while at the same time as a paradox scholars or independent organizations that should produce essential social research are still regarded as antagonists to the government rather than useful collaborators. Most studies are thus made by usually foreign economists that either support the maximum growth orientations of the elites as a result of business interests or are trying to promote the positive aspects of migration and its significance to development. From this myopic viewpoint the International Labor Organization (ILO) for instance does not portray migrant workers as potential security risks, but as vital economic partners whose contributions are often underappreciated and insufficiently compensated. Such generalizing assumptions (while undeniably true to some extent for many regions in the world), only see the world from a pragmatic economic point of view and ignore socio-cultural peculiarities, especially environmental impacts and diminishing scarce resources in the receiving countries. Especially, they avoid both analyzing the capacity of certain countries to responsibly deal with immigration challenges or the future threat multiplier of climate change. Consequently, most of these studies highlight the contributions of those millions of expatriates to the Gulf economies, but hardly ever mention the sometimes even irreversible inflicted impairments that came along with these cohorts. One obvious example of these environmental, social, cultural and aesthetical damages is the pollution and the dilemma of *zahma* or (for all the expatriates) the extreme congestion in Gulf cities. Dubai which actually overtook Cairo in traffic congestion and is now considered the most (of course!) congested city in the Middle East (Reuters, 2007). The general air quality in the UAE was in 2007 already 10.5 and 11 percent worse than in the American states of Virginia and Michigan, respectively, and thus constantly exceeding accepted standard WHO critical levels (Corder, 2008; El-Sayed, 2004). No need to mention the rest of those chronically jam-packed urban agglomerations and the involved social implications, since everyone studying the region should be aware of this. So maybe it would be about time to reconsider, if all this migration can only be measured in terms of growth or if there should be alternative considerations? Is it really something to be ignored, if disheartened nationals have to make the decision to move their family home to a different location for their children to be able to reach the university without spending hours in traffic, surrounded

[40] Dr. Mohamed Al-Roken has a PhD in Law (Constitutional Law) from the University of Warwick, UK. He was the Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Law at UAEU and is the current president of the UAE Jurist Association.

by an accumulation of really outmoded cars owned by foreigners from other developing nations emitting toxic pollutants? (a depressing real life story recently heard from a senior Saudi official) Of course in theory there are many feasible options to ease congestion, from building a sincere public transport system (not the PR showcase version) to instituting traffic calming measures, but how will you implement these measures to persuade motorists from mostly developing nations who are used to highly subsidized fuel to voluntarily preserve and protect a country along with its inhabitants that only serves as a source of income? You do not, unless you resort to the urgently needed combination of rigid measures in forms of regulations and tariffs, which is of course fortunately much easier in an authoritarian regime than in a democracy. Other countries have managed to tackle such issues in rigid ways and sometimes even resorted to sometimes amusing policy options that however undeniably served the purpose at the time being.[41] Since the current situation already has serious impacts on the wellbeing of GCC nationals, a strategy of "maintaining the status quo" is simply unacceptable. While there are already numerous recommendations in respect to novel labor market strategies in the GCC available, there must be an urgent shift away from this solely economic point in the direction of sustainable progress. Some of those recommendable suggestions highlight for instance the urgent need to build up arsenals of statistical data to develop effective labor policies for the future and emphasize that the GCC's oversaturated public sector must give way to a healthier, more robust labor market structures (Shediac et al., 2009) and should hence be implemented into a comprehensive reform that equally considers social, political, environmental and security consequences.

Al-Attiyah clearly summarized the challenge: *"The GCC countries should resort to expatriate labor only when there is a deep need for them and there are no local or regional alternatives"* (Toumi, 2005). This should be supplemented by a serious social as well as environmental impact assessment (EIA) and of course should apply on a regional basis.

In accordance with Al-Attiyah's warnings and from a security point of view there should be an instant ban for foreign domestic labor to release the population stress on the region without placing pressure on the immediate performance of the local economies. Such services ought to be nationalized or regionalized (including Yemen) with an adequate minimum wage (protected by law) and vocational training that will upgrade this type of employment. There would be many positive indirect side effects, including the upgrading of the current negative image of these economies for their persistent human rights violations and may also relieve the emerging public health crisis, since the prevalence of obesity and obesity-related chronic diseases among female adults particularly in urban areas is exceedingly high (Galal, 2003). Furthermore, since such a rigid reform would help to adjust the GCC instantly to global realities and in this respect will allow only a small segment of society to afford the upgraded domestic assistance, it will also have a positive impact on either the development of appropriate "national" services or on the child-rearing practices and socialization of future generations per se. This strict ban should be supplemented with an immediate shift to restructure the economy and substitute away from labor. One example is the inefficient bureaucracy still evident everywhere in the region, instead of using the advantages of the digital age. From banks, travel agencies, accounting, etc. – with a little political will, it would be easy to either nationalize these sectors or to outsource the work abroad. (Indians are doing the accounting for US or German firms while staying with their families in their home country, so why not for the GCC?) Such work can also be done from home and hence would open up employment opportunities for women with children that otherwise would prefer not to work or out of traditional reason wish to not work in a public place. You can easily outsource almost any university operation, from grading papers to lectures that will be transmitted via satellite directly to the students home – hence there is neither a need for massive construction or bringing masses of foreigners into the region (which does still have a few local professors to attend to the students in case there is a serious need) Drivers can be substituted with implementing a public transport system (Singapore style), accompanied by tariffs and fuel prices that will make private car usage simply too expensive (see London or New York for instance) This would also stimulate the need for "local" taxi drivers, a great job prospect for students and those that simply do not have the ability to attain a higher education. Almost every other operation can be seriously examined to assess if there is an incontestable need for expatriates and if those economic choices that make their physical presence viable are really the preferred options in the long term. In consideration of the fact that the GCC economies are currently loosing an annual estimated 50 billion USD in form of remittances, there ought to be reasonable doubt if investing this money into developing national capacities to secure the future well being in a post oil era will not result in a preferential long term choice. Certain diversification decisions do not have massive labor requirements or bring heaps of third class Western tourists into the region to waste away some of those precious non renewable resources. One example would be to become the worlds leading solar energy supplier, but there are certainly other feasible options that comply with sustainability.[42]

[41] A good example would be Lagos, the former capital of Nigeria that basically in the absence of infrastructure suffered a complete traffic collapse in the seventies. The government at the time made a spirited move to check the menace by introducing a policy that would work miracles in contemporary Dubai or Riyadh, forcing people to find more sustainable options (car sharing, school buses, seriously considering mass transit, etc.) The ingenious Nigerian solution was to reduce the traffic by 50 percent, by allowing vehicles with even registration numbers to utilize the roads on Tuesdays and Thursdays while the odd number plates were permitted to ply the roads on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Commercial vehicles and weekends were exempted from these regulations. Albeit this was not a long term solution, it was enforced rigidly and worked miracles at the time being. The unusual "even and odd" number directive allowed the country some breathing space to consider new options, until migration and overpopulation caught up with them again and they decided to build an entirely new capital in the middle of nowhere.

[42] Other feasible options would be to follow the Rotterdam example and switch to fully automated container terminals and port operations.

As soon as there is a resolute reduction of foreigners in the GCC, housing problems, traffic, etc. will ease and maybe a new form of integration instead of the current social segregation and structural violence can be attained between nationals and those carefully selected foreigners that are highly skilled and have the frame of mind to respect traditional Gulf Arab culture with its Islamic values.[43] This however implies that in order to achieve human security, the expatriate workforce that will remain after those rigid immigration reforms should receive more rights, protection, and equal wages (Cordesman, 2008).

Certainly the transition from what exists at present to what is required by ethics, moral duty and social responsibility is going to be anything from easy. Yet it is the internalized mentality among GCC nationals that needs to be urgently altered, since change will only transpire if ethical and normative standards are revived and respected (Chourou, 2005; El-Sayed, 2004).

Transforming cultures is with certainty not a challenge to be underestimated and the task will normally require long term efforts in which selected cultural pioneers, usually those that studied abroad with the ability to step out of their cultural realities enough to critically examine them and perform diligently to redirect those strategic culture-shaping institutions. Next to social movements and long-standing traditions, these are namely education, government, business and the media. Undeniably there have been groundbreaking initiatives in the GCC, for instance in respect to the media landscape spearheaded by Saudi national and MBC chairman Waleed Al-Ibrahim with the determined objective to stimulate awareness in the region and hence any carefully expressed optimism will ultimately depend on the capabilities as well as responsiveness of each country's leadership and elites to these emerging challenges. The situation reminds of a famous quote from cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

However, when looking at those new challenging security dynamics, the Gulf monarchies do not have the luxury to wait a few decades until finally a future generation will realize their deficiencies, since with a business as usual scenario internal instability or even worse will solve this problem already in the next generation. Novel phenomena such as climate change are likely to exacerbate the already existing threat potential, with effects that are much more difficult to predict.[44] In should hence not only be the responsibility, but a serious strategic decision of the respective GCC governments to practice some "choice editing" where they encourage sustainable alternatives while discouraging bad ones and replacing them with better solutions.

This should include questioning perverse diversification choices or subsidies, to the outright rigid ban of something that is creating an unhealthy attitude that may act as a major constraint to some of those ambitious nationalization targets and to the future well being as a society in general. Moreover, as sovereign states the Gulf economies have the legitimate right to protect their own societies and this choice has nothing to do with being xenophobic. For instance, Japan has in the past also treated labor immigration as a threat to its basic cultural-religious traditions and thus prevented it with rigid policies, so this position is really not all that uncommon.

It must be emphasized that "real change" needs to be endemic and consequently Gulf Arabs must build their future with their own commitment and talents, supportive of each other in form of regional cooperation, and engaged with the world. This will require the promotion of culture of transparency, capacity-building in research and development and improving the above mentioned linkage between research and policies based on evidence. Finally, while achieving human security as part of comprehensive sustainable development agenda involves resources, ability and rights to adapt, the deficient performance in governance, especially in the 'voice & accountability' component, continuously afflicting the region and especially the UAE will certainly not be conducive to encouraging an open dialogue to confront such sensitive security scenarios or to adopt the urgently needed 'no regret' policy.

[43] For instance, we Europeans also expect foreigners to integrate to a certain extent into our societies, hence a minimum of cultural adaptation and respect for indigenous values or laws can be easily expected of those that come as temporary guests.

[44] There is for instance almost common consensus that deteriorating environmental conditions, such as water and food shortages or human-induced climate change, will spur large population movements across borders in the Middle East, which will further lead to population pressure in the GCC.

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