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# GCC Demography and Immigration: Challenges and Policies

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### **Introduction**

Beyond important differences with regard to the geography, history and size of the nation, the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – share as a common feature a high dependency on a foreign workforce and a persistently high and, in some cases, growing proportion of non-nationals in the resident population. The Gulf's uniqueness, however, does not lie in the high level of immigration – as various countries from the Americas to Oceania have also experienced large and durable waves of immigration combined with (relatively) scarce local populations at the beginning of mass immigration – as much as in the persistence over time of a high, or extremely high, proportion of non-citizens.

Without downplaying the importance of some unique characteristics deriving both from tradition (patriarchy) and modernity (oil economy), insisting on GCC uniqueness may lead to the wrong notion that the migration it receives is entirely different from migration to other countries in the world with regard to its causes and consequences. The reluctance of GCC governments to use the term 'immigrant,' preferring terms such as 'foreign worker' and 'expatriate,' also facilitates

the classification of the GCC countries as unique. However, the fact that these countries allow foreign workers to enter for a limited amount of time and only if they have a contract is not unique.

As in many other countries with a guest-workers system, the number of non-working foreign nationals has continuously grown in the Gulf, as a result of family reunification leading to immigration of non-national spouses and children as well as the emergence of the phenomenon of foreign nationals retiring in the Gulf countries where they have spent their active life. In other words, the Gulf countries are experiencing that many guest-workers gradually transform into immigrants, but governments do not yet formally acknowledge this fact. In fact, far from being unique the GCC countries are subject to similar economic, social, and political challenges as other countries that experience significant immigration. Furthermore, the GCC countries recently started to sign (generally with reservations) international agreements that have an impact on migrants' rights, thereby implicitly acknowledging that they have a long-term and permanent migrant population and not simply temporary guest-workers.

In this paper it is argued that in explaining population and migration specificities of the GCC states one should look at policies. In fact, we believe that the specific situation of the GCC countries was created because of a mix of failures and successes of core policies which governments of these countries have adopted. First, policies aiming at reducing the dependency on foreign national workers in both relative and absolute terms (indigenization or nationalization of the workforce) have not been successful so far – albeit, in a few sectors and in certain countries, some progress towards this objective has been made. Second, policies of not including immigrants in the citizenry through granting them nationality have worked extremely well. Third and last but not least, policies to limit the length of stay of foreign workers have not been effective. While policies of inclusion, naturalization and integration of newcomers that have been common elsewhere tend to produce new nationals and citizens out of former foreigners and to increase the demographic base of national populations, policies that successfully aim at the exclusion of aliens in the nation combined with unsuccessful policies that aim at making immigrants unnecessary seem to result in narrowing the demographic base of nationals in relative terms. Thus, this paper takes a look at the same time at policies adopted by the GCC countries to increase the share of nationals in the total population, and at non-policies, i.e. choices to not adopt a particular policy, focusing on the impact of both.

The fact that the GCC states are one destination among several other major ones on the routes of global migration (Table 1), that their societies are faced with

a number of immigration-related issues that they share with other large receivers of international migrants in the world, and that they are increasingly admitting that they have immigrants in addition to guest-workers, demand an analytical approach that goes beyond the GCC and is comparative. This would help to: (i) enhance the understanding of the migration dynamics of the GCC countries; (ii) determine what is unique or specific to the GCC countries and what is not; and (iii) understand whether some lessons drawn from others' experience could be useful for the GCC countries. In this paper, we only touch upon the comparative perspective, with a special reference to the European Union (EU). Both the GCC and the EU are major regions of immigration and to a certain extent they compete with each other for highly-skilled migrants. Both GCC and EU members (except for a few countries such as France) have become areas of immigration only recently, starting from the 1960s or later in most cases.

**Table 1: Immigrant Stocks in the GCC,  
the EU, US, Canada, and Australia, 1990 - 2010**

Region	GCC	EU27	US	Canada	Australia
<b>Total Population (million)</b>					
1990	23,072	471,587	254,865	27,701	17,091
1995	25,688	477,893	270,648	29,302	18,118
2000	29,943	481,181	287,842	30,687	19,171
2005	34,633	489,866	302,741	32,307	20,395
2010	39,224	497,534	317,641	33,890	21,512
<b>Immigrant* Stocks (million)</b>					
1990	8,625	26,660	23,251	4,498	3,581
1995	8,611	31,474	28,522	5,047	3,854
2000	10,257	34,857	34,814	5,555	4,027
2005	12,727	41,597	39,266	6,304	4,336
2010	15,127	46,911	42,813	7,202	4,711

Table 1 (continued)

Proportion of Immigrants (%)					
1990	37.4%	5.7%	9.1%	16.2%	21.0%
1995	33.5%	6.6%	10.5%	17.2%	21.3%
2000	34.3%	7.2%	12.1%	18.1%	21.0%
2005	36.7%	8.5%	13.0%	19.5%	21.3%
2010	38.6%	9.4%	13.5%	21.3%	21.9%

(\*) In the UN database, immigrants are defined differently according to data provided by governments: either as foreign nationals (GCC) or born-abroad residents (other regions). Therefore, numbers are not strictly comparable. However, because acquisitions of nationality are not frequent in GCC countries, most born abroad persons are foreigners. In the EU member states, migrants from other EU member states are, therefore, included.

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009). *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision*.

This paper relies as much as possible upon statistics released by national statistical offices in the Gulf as a result of actual data collection in the population, as opposed to statistics provided by international databases which contain a large part of computer-generated data. Until recently, much of this data was not (easily or not at all) made available to the public. However, in the last few years, all GCC countries have made significant efforts to make data publicly available through the Internet. Among the GCC countries, there are differences in terms of the type of data, the years they refer to, and the user-friendliness of the website. Even more importantly, the quality (accuracy and reliability) and comparability of the data is generally unknown. At the same time, it seems safe to say that when data produced by the GCC countries are made available they should be used, albeit critically, instead of international data.<sup>1</sup>

1. Data used in this paper was obtained from the following sources:

- Bahrain: Central Informatics Organisation (CIS) - [www.cio.gov.bh/cio\\_eng/](http://www.cio.gov.bh/cio_eng/)
- Kuwait: Central Statistical Office (CSO) - [mopweb4.mop.gov.kw/](http://mopweb4.mop.gov.kw/)
- Oman: Ministry of National Economy (MONE) - [www.moneoman.gov.om/Default.aspx](http://www.moneoman.gov.om/Default.aspx)

## 1. The Small Size of National Populations

The “mother of all challenges” of the GCC countries is that they are demographically small in absolute terms and even more so in relative terms.

As shown in Table 2, the national populations of two of the six GCC countries are significantly below 1 million (Bahrain, Qatar), two are around the 1 million threshold (Kuwait, United Arab Emirates), and one has a national population of approximately 2 million (Oman). Only Saudi Arabia has a national population of approximately 18.5 million which is about four times the total of the other five GCC countries combined.

**Table 2: GCC National Populations, Most Recent Years**

Country	Millions
Bahrain 2007	0.5
Kuwait 2005	0.9
Oman 2008	2.0
Qatar 2010	0.2
Saudi Arabia 2010	18.7
UAE 2009	0.9
Total GCC	23.2

Source: National statistical sources (see note 1)

But above all, GCC countries are demographically small in relative terms. First, their populations are small with respect to their national resources. In fact, all GCC countries have oil and gas resources that have generated enormous national income and international financial assets. However, creating strong and sustainable national economies out of these resources requires manpower, a production factor that is scarce in the Gulf.

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- Qatar: Statistics Authority (QSA) - [www.qsa.gov.qa/eng/index.htm](http://www.qsa.gov.qa/eng/index.htm)
  - Saudi Arabia: Central Department of Statistics & Information (CDSI) - [www.cdsi.gov.sa/](http://www.cdsi.gov.sa/)
  - United Arab Emirates: Ministry of Economy – Statistics Reports - [www.uaestatistics.gov.ae/EnglishHome/tabid/96/Default.aspx](http://www.uaestatistics.gov.ae/EnglishHome/tabid/96/Default.aspx)

**Table 3: GDP and GDP/Capita Average Annual Growth for GCC, Euro Area, and USA, Most Extended Period and up to Most Recent Years**

Country/Area	Period	GDP	GDP/capita
Bahrain	1980-2008	4.4%	+ 1.5%
Kuwait	1963-2007	3.6%	- 2.3%
Oman	1961-2007	9.6%	+ 6.1%
Qatar	2001-2006	8.7%	+ 0.2%
Saudi Arabia	1969-2008	5.2%	+ 1.3%
UAE	1974-2007	5.4%	- 1.6%
Euro Area	1961-2008	3.2%	+ 2.7%
USA	1961-2008	3.3%	+ 2.1%

Source: DataBank, World Bank, <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=12&cid=4&CNO=2#> (accessed September 27, 2010)

The national populations of GCC countries are also small with respect to the size of their territories. All GCC countries have a low or extremely low population density. Bahrain is the only country that ranks high, belonging to the group of 25 most densely populated countries in the world. Kuwait is estimated to rank 150 among a total of 239 countries/territories. The four remaining countries rank above 200, in the order of Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. Extremely low densities are obstacles to the control of territory and therefore national security.

**Table 4: GCC National Population Density, Most Recent Years**

Country	Sq. km	Year	Natl. Pop.	Natl. Pop. / Sq. km	Rank
Bahrain	720	2007	527,433	733	20
Kuwait	17,818	2005	880,774	49	150
Oman	309,500	2008	1,967,000	6	220
Qatar	11,000	2010	202,572	18	200
Saudi Arabia	2,149,690	2010	18,707,576	9	215
UAE	83,600	2009	923,000	11	210

Sources: National statistical sources and UN Data, Population density - <http://data.un.org/Search.aspx?q=population+density> (accessed January 2011)

The national populations of the GCC states are finally small with respect to those of their neighbors (Table 5), a fact that may induce multiple security concerns,

ranging from military threats to terrorism, and could impact their negotiation power. Almost all neighboring countries have larger populations: Yemen 24 million; Iraq 31 million; and Iran 75 million. Some more distant countries that are key partners to the GCC countries are even larger: Egypt (84 million), Bangladesh (164 million), the Philippines (94 million), Pakistan (185 million) and India (1,214 million), all countries of origin of GCC migrant workers.

**Table 5: Population Size of Selected GCC Neighbors and Partners, 2010**

Country	Millions
Geographic neighbors	
Iran	75.1
Iraq	31.5
Yemen	24.3
Source countries of migrants	
India	1,214.5
Pakistan	184.8
Bangladesh	164.4
Philippines	93.6
Egypt	84.5

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision* <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp>

The GCC countries have responded to the population challenge with two major policies: on the one hand, by stimulating national demographic growth and, on the other, by attracting temporary foreign workers.

Stimulating national demographic growth could theoretically be obtained through either increasing the birth rates of the national population or granting nationality to foreign residents. In the Gulf, it was achieved exclusively through pro-natalist policies applying to nationals. As in other parts of the world, in particular Europe, these have consisted in providing financial and social incentives to foster high birth rates. While in Europe such policies are adopted to curb the risk of demographic decline and to counterbalance the consequences of ageing, in the Gulf they are primarily aimed at diminishing dependency on foreign nationals.

## **2. The Support to High Fertility among Nationals**

There are two main strategies available to pro-natalist policies:

- Alleviating the cost of children to families, in particular by providing child allowances, subsidized schooling, subsidized housing, etc.;
- Alleviating the burden of children for women, for example by facilitating the employment of domestic workers. In the case of the Gulf States, these are foreign domestic workers and this strategy results in fostering further migration, therefore creating a vicious circle. In Europe, other policies, such as free enrolment in pre-primary schools or flexible working hours intend to alleviate the opportunity cost of children for women, as educating their children may prevent mothers from joining the labor market.

These policies are long-term ones as it takes 20-25 years to turn a newborn into a participative adult. Indeed, these policies are by essence a gradual response while some demographic needs are considered immediate, especially with respect to labor markets.

It must be noted that pro-natalist policies do not have the same consequences for the status and agency of women in a context of below-replacement fertility (Europe) where procreating an additional child will not prevent the mother to continue to work, and in a context of already high fertility (Gulf) where birthing a large family will keep the woman at home. In the first case, measures aimed at allowing women who have given birth to a child to keep an economic activity outside the household contribute to promote social progress and gender equity, while in the second case these encourage women, a majority of whom are not on the labor market, to procreate more children, contributing to maintain traditional social systems.

GCC countries have all adopted pro-natalist policies that include generous family and child-allowances, whether the intention was to foster fertility or to increase welfare. They have maintained these policies until today, even if some governmental agencies, like in Oman, recently started to promote the notion that birth spacing is beneficial for the woman's health<sup>2</sup> and a two-children-family is optimal for social progress.<sup>3</sup>

An interesting paradox is that oil revenues have, to a certain extent, checked in the Gulf the otherwise universal processes of demographic transition. Profound changes

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2. [http://www.moh.gov.om/nv\\_menu.php?fNm=bs.htm](http://www.moh.gov.om/nv_menu.php?fNm=bs.htm).

3. Kerala Hise, "Smarter Mothers, Healthy Children, Smaller Families: A Look at the Impact of Women's Education on Family Planning Decisions in the Sultanate of Oman," *ISP Collection*, Paper 538, 2008.



such as booming urbanization, the advent of a service economy, and generalized access to health and, above all, the spread of school education, in particular among females, were not accompanied in the Gulf by the same demographic changes as everywhere else in the world, i.e. a transition from high to low birth rates. This is mainly because the financial support provided by states to families, by cancelling the cost of children to families, has worked to the opposite effect. In a patriarchal context where large families are valued, the redistribution of some oil revenues to nationals made it unnecessary for them to reduce the number of their children in order to ensure their welfare, or to trade-off the quantity of children for their quality.<sup>4</sup>

Immigration has played a role in deactivating the factors of demographic transition. Oil revenues made it possible to recruit from abroad the female workforce required by social development activities (health, education, etc.), thereby keeping national women outside the labor force. In addition, high revenues allowed local families to employ female migrant domestic workers who would facilitate children's rearing and therefore act as a factor of high fertility (the exact opposite happens in EU contexts, where domestic workers help women to participate in economic activities outside the household, a factor which is itself linked with low birth rates). By both cutting the opportunity costs of fertility and keeping women at home, oil revenues indirectly promoted high fertility. Last but not least, the sponsorship (*kafāla*) system, which has been in force across all the GCC countries until it was formally abolished in Bahrain and diluted in the UAE and Oman and under which every immigrant must pay a national to have proper immigration documents, has contributed to the whole system by increasing the income of the family and thereby making the employment of domestic workers more affordable, which in turn has contributed to keeping birth rates high. This is how oil revenues have generated population.

Patterns of extremely high fertility with regard to GDP per capita levels seem to have prevailed among national populations in the Gulf until the late 1990s before a decrease started in the last decade. However, it is difficult to accurately monitor fertility trends among national populations in the GCC. Data that would be necessary to compute age-specific fertility rates by nationality and by year or period are not provided by GCC statistical offices, which at best provide total fertility rates of the resident population, i.e. nationals and non-nationals together. A first attempt

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4. On the trade-off between child quantity and quality, see Gary J. Becker, *A Treatise on the Family* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). On the trade-off between child quantity and quality being defused by oil economies and patriarchy in the Gulf, see Philippe Fargues, "Women in Arab Countries: Challenging the Patriarchal System?" *Population and Societies* 387, 2003, [http://www.ined.fr/en/resources\\_documentation/publications/pop\\_soc/bdd/publication/695/](http://www.ined.fr/en/resources_documentation/publications/pop_soc/bdd/publication/695/).

to use data that indirectly make an estimate possible is presented in Table 6 (which unfortunately does not allow for strict comparison over time and does not include all the countries). Given that the subsidization mechanisms described earlier did not change dramatically, the recent decline in national birth rates must be interpreted as a sign of women in the Gulf becoming more assertive, as factors that are linked with their empowerment – in particular, education – are now starting to translate in the Gulf as in most societies today, into women diversifying their roles and no longer being content with their traditional status of spouses and mothers. Table 6 also shows that despite a considerable gap between high fertility among nationals and low fertility among foreigners – a sign that many immigrant women are not in the Gulf for family reasons but as workers – there is still some fertility among foreigners, a sign that temporary migration can become more permanent, as we will discuss later in this paper.

In conclusion, with regard to the first policy response to demographic scarcity, i.e., stimulating national demographic growth through incentives to high fertility, one has to acknowledge that Gulf States have been apparently successful. As shown in Table 7, annual rates of growth of national populations in the Gulf are still among the highest in the world. However, it has still to be established whether the persistence of high fertility must be interpreted as a direct result of pro-natalist policies or rather as a strong resilience of patriarchal traditions in the Gulf, supported by oil revenues as suggested previously.

**Table 6: Total Fertility Rates of GCC National Populations (children per woman), 1990 - 2010**

Country/Year	Citizens	Foreigners	Total
<b>Bahrain</b>			
1998-99	3.35	2.25	2.85
2000-02	3.03	2.07	2.60
2003-05	2.87	1.70	2.27
2006-07	2.65	1.30	2.00
<b>Kuwait</b>			
2002	4.75	1.50	2.65
2005	4.80	1.76	2.81
2008	4.53	1.77	2.73

**Table 6 (continued)**

<b>Oman</b>			
2006	3.13	1.03	2.66
2007	3.30	0.82	2.59
2008	3.19	1.03	2.61
<b>Qatar</b>			
1985	5.26	3.59	3.95
1990	5.21	4.49	4.58
1995	4.98	3.02	3.64
2000	4.42	2.51	3.11
2005	4.23	1.97	2.62
2006	4.29	1.82	2.48
2007	4.56	1.77	2.45
2008	3.90	2.03	2.43

Source: Authors' calculation using national vital statistics and census data (see note 1), except Qatar: Qatar Statistics Authority (QSA)

**Table 7: Annual Rate of Growth  
of National Populations in GCC Countries, 1975 - 2010**

Period*	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	S. Arabia	UAE	
1975 - 1980	2.24%	3.61%	3.65%			5.28%	
1980 - 1985	2.95%	3.72%	3.74%				
1985 - 1990		-3.77%	3.63%			5.10%	
1990 - 1995	2.54%	2.94%	3.29%	4.23%	3.15%		
1995 - 2000	2.42%	2.98%	2.65%	3.94%	2.35%	3.61%	
2000 - 2005	3.94%		1.26%		3.26%	1.46%	3.52%
2005 - 2010	4.21%				3.26%	2.07%	2.81%

(\*) Exact periods are the following:

Bahrain: 1976-81; 1981-90; 1990; 1995-2000; 2000-05; 2005-07;

Kuwait: 1975-80; 1980-85; 1985-90; 1990; 1995-2005;

Oman: 1977-80; 1980-85; 1985-90; 1990-95; 1995-2000; 2000-05; 2005-08;

Qatar: 1990-95; 1995-2000; 2000-05; 2005-10;

Saudi Arabia: 1992-98; 1998-2000; 2000-04; 2004-10;

UAE: 1975; 1985; 1996; 2000; 2005; 2009.

Source: National statistical sources (see note 1)

However, the high rates of population growth among nationals generated by persistently high fertility rates have not produced – with a 20-year time lag – national labor forces of a size that would respond to the needs of the local labor market (a topic which is not dealt with here), hence not diminishing the demand for foreign workers.

**Table 8: National and Foreign Populations  
in GCC Countries, Selected Years from 1975 to 2010**

Year	Absolute numbers			Percentage		Annual rate of growth	
	Total	National	Foreign	National	Foreign	National	Foreign
<b>Bahrain</b>							
1976	281,560	213,170	68,390	76%	24%	2.2%	9.9%
1981	350,798	238,420	112,378	68%	32%	2.9%	4.8%
1990	484,006	310,794	173,212	64%	36%	2.5%	3.5%
1995	558,879	352,900	205,979	63%	37%	2.4%	3.0%
2000	637,582	398,221	239,361	62%	38%	3.9%	10.5%
2005	888,824	484,811	404,013	55%	45%	4.2%	11.8%
2007	1,039,297	527,433	511,864	51%	49%		
<b>Kuwait</b>							
1975	994,837	472,088	522,749	47%	53%	3.6%	8.3%
1980	1,357,952	565,613	792,339	42%	58%	3.7%	5.0%
1985	1,697,301	681,288	1,016,013	40%	60%	-3.8%	8.6%
1990	2,125,053	564,262	1,560,791	27%	73%	2.9%	-10.5%
1995	1,575,570	653,616	921,954	41%	59%	3.0%	3.7%
2005	2,213,403	880,774	1,332,629	40%	60%		
<b>Oman</b>							
1977	901,000	820,000	81,000	91%	9%	3.6%	19.6%
1980	1,060,000	914,000	146,000	86%	14%	3.8%	21.5%
1981	1,130,000	949,000	181,000	84%	16%	3.7%	13.8%
1985	1,416,000	1,102,000	314,000	78%	22%	3.6%	-0.6%

Table 8 (continued)

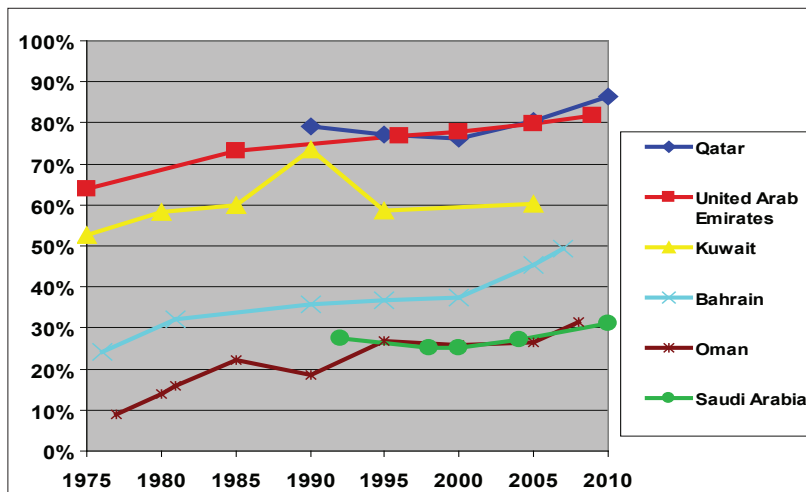
1990	1,625,000	1,321,000	304,000	81%	19%	3.3%	12.7%
1995	2,131,000	1,557,000	574,000	73%	27%	2.7%	1.7%
2000	2,402,000	1,778,000	624,000	74%	26%	0.7%	1.3%
2005	2,509,000	1,843,000	666,000	73%	27%	2.2%	10.0%
2008	2,867,000	1,967,000	900,000	69%	31%		
<b>Qatar</b>							
1990	467,000	97,184	369,816	21%	79%	4.20%	1.90%
1995	526,000	120,085	405,915	23%	77%	3.90%	3.00%
2000	617,000	146,269	470,731	24%	76%	3.30%	8.30%
2005	885,000	172,139	712,861	19%	81%	3.30%	12.10%
2010	1,508,000	202,572	1,305,428	13%	87%		
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>							
1992	16,948,388	12,310,053	4,638,335	73%	27%	3.2%	1.3%
1998	19,895,232	14,872,804	5,022,428	75%	25%	2.4%	2.3%
2000	20,846,884	15,588,805	5,258,079	75%	25%	1.5%	3.9%
2004	22,678,262	16,527,340	6,150,922	73%	27%	2.1%	5.3%
2010	27,136,977	18,707,576	8,429,401	69%	31%		
<b>United Arab Emirates</b>							
1975	557,887	201,544	356,343	36%	64%	5.3%	9.7%
1985	1,277,280	341,822	935,458	27%	73%	5.1%	6.8%
1996	2,567,000	599,000	1,968,000	23%	77%	3.6%	5.5%
2000	3,142,000	692,000	2,450,000	22%	78%	3.5%	5.8%
2005	4,106,000	825,000	3,281,000	20%	80%	2.8%	5.8%
2009	5,066,000	923,000	4,143,000	18%	82%		

Source: National statistical sources (see note 1)

On the contrary, as shown in Table 8 as well as in Figure 1, the foreign populations in the Gulf States have continuously increased over the last decades in absolute numbers – with the only exception of Kuwait during the Gulf War of 1990–91 and its immediate aftermath, when exits exceeded entries (another exception, Oman between 1985 and 1990, is most probably an artefact due to bad statistics).

Besides, foreign populations in the Gulf have also increased as a proportion of the total populations – including in Saudi Arabia where the preliminary results of the 2010 population census have revealed a significant increase of the proportion of non-nationals between 2004 and 2010 from 27 percent to 31 percent. When all years and countries are put together, the average rate of population growth is approximately 6.5 percent among foreigners, to be compared with approximately 3 percent among nationals. Foreign populations growing at a high pace, however, are not unique to the Gulf. For instance, over the 12 years between 1999 and 2010, foreign populations have grown at an annual rate of 8 percent in Spain (INE) and 5.3 percent in Italy (ISTAT).

Figure 1: Percentage of Foreign Population in GCC Countries 1975-2010



Source: National statistical sources (see note 1)

### 3. The Road Not Travelled: Naturalization of Foreigners

Large foreign populations in the Gulf would have offered an opportunity for expanding the national demographic base of Gulf States, had their governments adopted strong policies of naturalization, as in major countries of immigration in North America, Europe and Oceania. As the title of a Saudi newspaper article reads: “It’s Another Kind of Saudization.”<sup>5</sup>

However, none of the GCC states has opted for this solution – to the contrary,

5. <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&article=124999&d=30&m=7&y=2009> (accessed October 21, 2010).

GCC countries try to limit naturalization as much as possible. Opposition to naturalization is generally explained by at least three reasons. First, it would be a threat to the cultural (or “national”) identity because it is assumed that the (vast) majority of new nationals would not share the same values as local populations.<sup>6</sup> Second, new nationals are considered to be a threat to social and political stability.<sup>7</sup> Third, new nationals are perceived as an economic threat because once they have become a national they are entitled to benefit from the services of the generally extensive GCC welfare states.<sup>8</sup>

Regulations and practices of naturalization are country specific, but at the same time they reflect shared principles and a certain degree of learning from other countries. Increasingly, imitation takes place and therefore convergence can be observed not only among GCC countries but also to some extent between GCC countries and other major receivers of immigration, notably in Europe. There are two processes taking place. On the one hand, GCC countries are exposed to international pressures to modify their legislations and bring them in line with international standards. And on the other hand, some European countries are becoming much more restrictive concerning immigration and acquisition of nationality (including the possibility to withdraw nationality from naturalized foreign citizens).

Nationality is a relatively recent attribute in the GCC states. In some cases, the definition of who is a national precedes independence by at least three decades (Bahrain: nationality law 1937, independence 1971) while in other cases it took at least two decades into independence to (re)define who was a national (Saudi Arabia: independence 1932, nationality law 1954). In all GCC countries, paternal *jus sanguinis* prevails while maternal *jus sanguinis* has only relevance in cases where the father is either unknown, stateless, or illegitimate, while *jus soli* is exclusively

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6. Recently, the Dubai Police Chief Lt General Dhahi Khalfan Tamim was reported to have “warned that expatriates may endanger the identity of the UAE nationals in a way that they could influence the culture and the language of the local children, noting that expatriates have brought with them many things that are today misunderstood to be the traditional elements of Emirati culture.” See “Dhahi for Expat Quota to Preserve Identities: UAE,” December 27, 2010, [http://www.gulfthemediamedia.com/index.php?id=548189&news\\_type=Top&lang=en](http://www.gulfthemediamedia.com/index.php?id=548189&news_type=Top&lang=en) (accessed January 24, 2011).
  7. Instead, in Western countries of immigration it has been argued that naturalization and not non-naturalization serves stability – however, the views on this matter are changing.
  8. At the same time, however, some GCC countries are extending limited welfare provisions to long-term foreign residents (in other words their expenditures are going up anyway) which seems to indicate that economic considerations are less relevant to restrict naturalization, at least in some cases.

relevant in the cases of abandoned newborn children.<sup>9</sup> Naturalization legislation and practices have changed over time in relation to economic, political and social concerns. On average, before and even at the time of independence,<sup>10</sup> the GCC states had a relatively open, inclusive approach to naturalization. With the arrival of massive numbers of foreign workers due to oil revenues,<sup>11</sup> legislation changed. After initial changes between the 1950s and early 1970s, modifications of GCC nationality regulations became rare and often limited to a few (generally restrictive) adjustments. The regulations in force today show that none of the GCC countries believes in the naturalization option to increase the proportion of nationals in the population.

Gulf States do not publish any statistics on naturalization. Moreover, the media are almost silent on the topic. It is only possible to gather anecdotic and unverifiable records, for example that in 2006, the Bahraini Minister of Interior stated that 4,971 Asian nationals were naturalized in 56 years.<sup>12</sup> According to the same source, in the period 2003-2008, 7,012 persons were naturalized (3,599 Asians, 2,240 Arabs, 1,095 GCC and 78 of various nationalities).<sup>13</sup> It has been argued that the actual numbers may be much higher.<sup>14</sup>

Some significant characteristics of national provisions regarding naturalization are as follows.

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9. For an in-depth analysis on the nationality regulations of the GCC (and other Arab) states, see Gianluca Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and the Nation State* (Amsterdam University Press, 2009).
  10. Saudi Arabia became independent in 1932, Kuwait in 1961, and the remaining four GCC countries in 1971.
  11. Oil was discovered in Bahrain in 1932, Kuwait 1938, Saudi Arabia 1938, Qatar 1940, UAE 1962, and Oman 1967. Time between discovery, exploitation and export of oil varied significantly among the countries and therefore also the initial influx of the first foreign workers exclusively related to oil exploitation and export started in different years. Obviously, the influx of foreign workers paid by oil revenues started subsequently but in most cases before the steep rise in oil prices of the 1970s.
  12. "Gulf news.com: 4,971 Asians Given Bahrain nationality in 56 years", 2006, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/423> (accessed October 27, 2010).
  13. Minister of Interior Lieutenant-General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa as reported in the Khaleej Times (online), December 3, 2009, [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?col=&section=middleeast&xfile=data/middleeast/2008/December/middleeast\\_December31.xml](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?col=&section=middleeast&xfile=data/middleeast/2008/December/middleeast_December31.xml) (accessed May 31, 2010).
  14. The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) instead estimates the total number of approximately 40,000 persons in the period 1996-2006: "Political Naturalization in Bahrain: Various Violations of Citizens and Foreign Workers Rights," September 1, 2006, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/425> (accessed May 31, 2010).



**Bahrain:**

One could be granted Bahraini nationality if he or she was a legal resident for at least 25 consecutive years starting from the entering into force of the 1963 law, be of good conduct, be able to speak Arabic, and possess real estate in Bahrain. The number of years is reduced to 15 for Arab nationals. If a non-Bahraini woman marries a Bahraini man she would become a Bahraini too.<sup>15</sup> The Decree Law No 10/1981 restricted the rights of foreign women to marry a Bahraini national by stating that she should demand to become a Bahraini national after five years of marriage, with the Minister of Interior maintaining the power to either relinquish all or parts of this period or block the acquisition of nationality for reasons of national security. Furthermore, the period in which the granted nationality could be withdrawn because a person would be convicted was extended from five to 10 years. Like all other GCC states, Bahrain does not give women the same rights in terms of naturalization and passing citizenship on to their children, resulting in large numbers of children being without nationality.<sup>16</sup> In 2006, 300 children of Bahraini mothers and non-Bahraini fathers were granted Bahraini citizenship by decree.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, in July 2009 it was announced that the law would change allowing Bahraini women to pass their nationality on to their children and the approximately 2,000 children without nationality at the time would become Bahraini nationals.<sup>18</sup>

**Kuwait:**

According to the 1948 law, naturalization in Kuwait was possible for those with work, proficiency in Arabic and by special order for valuable service.<sup>19</sup> With the adoption of law 15/1959, naturalization requirements were toughened and limited

15. For the 1963 and 1981 texts in English, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/3fb9f34f4.pdf>

16. Suad Hamada, "Bahraini Women to Get Equal Nationality Rights," *Khaleej Times*, July 13, 2009, [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?section=middleeast&xfilename=data/middleeast/2009/july/middleeast\\_july261.xml](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?section=middleeast&xfilename=data/middleeast/2009/july/middleeast_july261.xml) (accessed January 24, 2011).

17. Habib Toumi, "Children of Foreign Fathers get Bahraini Citizenship," *Gulf News*, September 20, 2006, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/children-of-foreign-fathers-get-bahraini-citizenship-1.255784> (accessed January 24, 2011).

18. Suad Hamada, "GULF: Gender Discrimination in Nationality Laws," IPS News, September 17, 2009 - <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=48473> (accessed January 24, 2011); see also Suad Hamada, "Bahraini Women to Get Equal Nationality Rights," *Khaleej Times*, July 13, 2009, [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?section=middleeast&xfilename=data/middleeast/2009/july/middleeast\\_july261.xml](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?section=middleeast&xfilename=data/middleeast/2009/july/middleeast_july261.xml) (accessed January 24, 2011).

19. Order No. 3/1948. See Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 212, footnote 54.

to 50 persons a year. A naturalized foreigner has no political rights for 30 years. The naturalized father automatically transmits his nationality to his children. The naturalized husband also automatically transmits his Kuwaiti nationality to his non-Kuwaiti wife. There is no nationality transmission from a Kuwaiti woman to her non-Kuwait husband or to their children. There have been appeals to change the law,<sup>20</sup> but so far no changes have been made. “A non-Kuwaiti man who marries a Kuwaiti woman will be granted the Kuwaiti citizenship if his wife of at least ten years approves his application, a government study has recommended. According to the study, other conditions required for the citizenship stipulate that the couple has at least five children.”<sup>21</sup>

The debate around nationality and citizenship in Kuwait has for decades been centred around the so-called *bidûn* (a shorthand for *bidûn jinsiyya*, i.e. persons “without citizenship”). Presently, their number is estimated at around 100,000 but the exact figure is disputed. These persons belong to Bedouin tribes which lived between what eventually became the borders between Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait and settled in Kuwait when it became independent (up to 10,000 of them live in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia). Most of the *bidûn* have lived in Kuwait since their birth but have limited access to public services.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Oman:*

After 20 years of residence, foreign residents who never left the country for more than two months in any given year, can demand Omani nationality. The additional conditions include: having a good record, sufficient economic means, and renouncing any other nationality. As in other GCC countries, nationality is granted and can therefore also be refused even if all conditions are met. Naturalized

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20. See, for example, the symposium organized by the Women’s Cultural Social Society (WCSS) reported in the *Kuwait Times* (online) on February 6, 2008, [http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read\\_news.php?newsid=MzM0MjYwNDI4](http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=MzM0MjYwNDI4) (accessed October 27, 2010).

21. “Non Kuwaiti Husbands May Get Kuwaiti Citizenship if Wives Approve,” published on Habib Toumi - Observations from the Arab World and Beyond (website), April 13, 2010 - <http://www.habibtoumi.com/2010/04/13/non-kuwaiti-husbands-may-get-kuwaiti-citizenship-if-wives-approve/> (accessed October 28, 2010).

22. See Aziz Abu-Hamad, “The Bedoons of Kuwait: ‘citizens without citizenship’”, Human Rights Watch/Middle East 1995 - <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1995/Kuwait.htm> (accessed October 27, 2010); “Bedoons in Kuwait” in *Kuwait Times*, February 7, 2007 - [http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read\\_news.php?newsid=MTM5NTM](http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=MTM5NTM) (accessed October 27, 2010); Refugees International, “Kuwait: Honor Nationality Rights of the Bidun,” September 17, 2008 - <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/kuwait-honor-nationality-rights-bidun> (accessed October 27, 2010).

fathers immediately transmit their nationality to their children. The foreign wife of an Omani can obtain the Omani nationality after 10 years of marriage.

*Qatar:*

Foreign women married to Qataris can become Qatari nationals after five years of marriage. After 25 years of residence, foreign residents can demand the Qatari nationality. Qatari women married to foreign men have started demanding publicly that their children be granted citizenship on an equal basis as children with Qatari fathers and not have to wait 25 years while during those 25 years not having the same entitlements as Qatari children.<sup>23</sup>

*Saudi Arabia:*

According to the 1954 regulations, foreigners could acquire Saudi nationality if they met four conditions, including having been granted permanent residence status. Once Saudi nationality was obtained, his wife would also have access to citizenship. Non-Saudi women were granted the Saudi nationality on marrying a Saudi national.<sup>24</sup> In 2004, a member of the Saudi Shura Council is reported to have stated that “more Saudi men and women are marrying foreigners now than when the current law was passed some 50 years ago and this necessitates change.” “We now have more than seven million foreigners living here. We had to make it tougher to acquire citizenship in order to make sure that those who apply for it are loyal to the country and are integrated into Saudi society.”<sup>25</sup>

In April 2005, a point system was approved: applicants would, besides meeting all the basic conditions, need to score at least 23 points in order for their application to be considered. Ten points would be obtained for the 10-year residency. Other points are given to those who possess a Ph.D. (10 points and 13 points for a Ph.D. in medicine or engineering), MA (8) or BA (5).<sup>26</sup> Points are also given for the

23. “Qatari Women Want Citizenship Rights for Children of Non-citizen Fathers,” in Al Shorfa, May 4, 2010, [http://www.al-shorfa.com/cocoon/meii/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/meii/features/main/2010/05/04/feature-03](http://www.al-shorfa.com/cocoon/meii/xhtml/en_GB/features/meii/features/main/2010/05/04/feature-03) (accessed October 28, 2010).

24. See the collection of documents translated into English published by UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/3fb9eb6d2.pdf> (accessed October 21, 2010).

25. “Expatriates Welcome New Citizenship Law,” <http://archive.arabnews.com?page=1&section=0&article=53193&d=20&cm=10&cy=2004> (accessed October 21, 2010).

26. See for all requirements and the point system the official Saudi site: [http://www.saudi.gov.sa/wps/portal/!ut/p/c0/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os\\_jgUENPL08TIwN\\_wwALA0-DAGMvS6CYu7GhfnBqnn5BtqMiAGUs2\\_w!/?orgid=department%20of%20civil%20affairs&srvid=saudi%20nationality&catid](http://www.saudi.gov.sa/wps/portal/!ut/p/c0/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os_jgUENPL08TIwN_wwALA0-DAGMvS6CYu7GhfnBqnn5BtqMiAGUs2_w!/?orgid=department%20of%20civil%20affairs&srvid=saudi%20nationality&catid) (accessed October 21, 2010).

presence of Saudi family members.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly enough, reading and writing Arabic is not mentioned either among the requirements or among the items for which one can score points. Two years later, however, according to a report of May 2007, no application had yet been accepted but the King was about to do so.<sup>28</sup>

#### *UAE:*

As in other GCC countries, a UAE mother can only transfer her nationality if the father is unknown. Children born in the UAE of unknown parents also have right to UAE nationality. After 30 years of residence (7 for Arabs), foreign residents can demand the UAE nationality. Those who become a UAE national are perpetually excluded from political rights. As in other GCC states, a naturalized person can lose the UAE nationality if she commits a crime. Furthermore, one can lose the UAE nationality if absent from the country for longer than one year.<sup>29</sup> In December 2007, the UAE labor minister flatly rejected the request to allow foreign workers to become eligible for the UAE nationality after five years of residence.<sup>30</sup>

From the above review, one can conclude that in no Gulf State is naturalization a strategy to increase the size of the national population and citizenry. By comparison, the 27 member states of the European Union have naturalized a total of approximately 6.2 million foreigners in the 10 years between 1999 and 2008 (i.e., 1.3 percent of their total population).<sup>31</sup>

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27. If the father is a Saudi, the applicant will get 3 points. If the mother is a Saudi and her father a Saudi too, the applicant will get 3 points, but if the father is not a Saudi, the applicant will get two points. If the applicant has more than two Saudi brothers, he will get two points, but if they are not more than two, he will get one point. See: [http://www.saudi.gov.sa/wps/portal!/ut/p/c0/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os\\_jgUENPL08TIwN\\_wwALA0-DAGMvS6CYu7GhfBqnn5BtqMiAGUs2\\_w!/?orgid=department%20of%20civil%20affairs&srvid=saudi%20nationality&catid](http://www.saudi.gov.sa/wps/portal!/ut/p/c0/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os_jgUENPL08TIwN_wwALA0-DAGMvS6CYu7GhfBqnn5BtqMiAGUs2_w!/?orgid=department%20of%20civil%20affairs&srvid=saudi%20nationality&catid) (accessed October 21, 2010).

28. "Saudi Arabia: King Grants Citizenship to a Number of Applicants," <http://www.zawya.com/marketing.cfm?zp&cp=/Story.cfm/sidZAWYA20070505031748> (accessed October 21, 2010).

29. See the section "Nationality" in the "Considerations of Reports submitted by States Parties Under Art. 18 of CEDAW – United Arab Emirates," September 17, 2008, [http://www.bayefsky.com/reports/unitedarab\\_cedaw\\_c\\_are\\_1.pdf](http://www.bayefsky.com/reports/unitedarab_cedaw_c_are_1.pdf) (accessed 28 October 2010).

30. "UAE Flatly Rejects Citizenship for Foreign Workers," in *Arabianbusiness.com*, December 12, 2007 - <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/uae-flatly-rejects-citizenship-for-foreign-workers-122627.html> (accessed October 28, 2010).

31. EUROSTAT, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/database>.

#### 4. The Demographically Sustainable Establishment of Foreigners

As everywhere else, the presence of guest workers in the GCC is more stable than expected. Family reunion takes place, a second generation is born, and return is not the preferred option for many migrants who instead will stay even after they have retired. This process of demographic normalization is observed in most countries of immigration around the world and the GCC is no exception, even though its member states display important differences among themselves.

The age structure of the foreign population in the GCC countries (Table 9, Figure 2) is strongly skewed towards the working ages, which reflects the fact that these countries tend to restrict immigration exclusively for the purpose of work. Age group 15-65 currently represents between 80 percent (Saudi Arabia) and 90 percent (Bahrain) of the foreign population compared with around 60 percent of the national population.

**Table 9: Age and Sex Distribution by Nationality  
in GCC Countries, Most Recent Data**

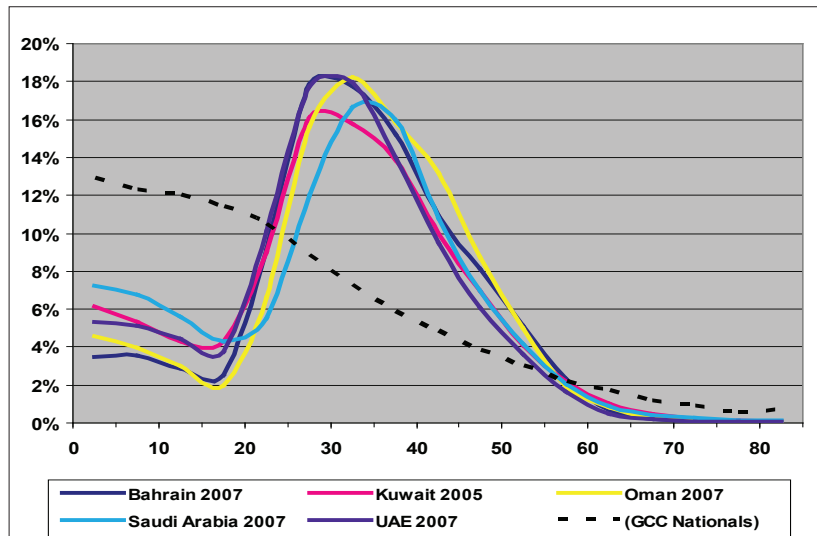
Age group	Age distribution %			Sex ratio (males per 100 females)		
	Nationals	Foreigners	Total	Nationals	Foreigners	Total
<b>Bahrain 2007</b>						
Below 15	32.1%	9.9%	21.1%	104	103	104
15-65	63.4%	89.7%	76.3%	102	281	177
Above 65	4.5%	0.5%	2.5%	90	147	94
<b>Kuwait 2005</b>						
Below 15	40.0%	15.8%	25.3%	107	109	107
15-65	57.0%	83.3%	73.0%	91	216	164
Above 65	2.9%	0.9%	1.7%	102	153	116
<b>Oman 2007</b>						
Below 15	36.2%	11.5%	28.8%	103	147	108
15-65	61.7%	87.9%	69.5%	101	458	165
Above 65	2.2%	0.6%	1.7%	109	205	116

Table 9 (continued)

Qatar 2008						
Below 15	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	105
15-65	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	402
Above 65	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	174
Saudi Arabia 2007						
Below 15	37.2%	19.6%	32.5%	101	104	102
15-65	59.3%	79.4%	64.7%	102	279	139
Above 65	3.5%	1.0%	2.8%	102	161	107
UAE 2007						
Below 15	38.1%	14.8%	19.5%	106	110	108
15-65	59.3%	84.8%	79.7%	99	324	263
Above 65	2.6%	0.4%	0.8%	142	148	144

Source: National statistical sources (See note 1) - See the Annex for detailed distributions

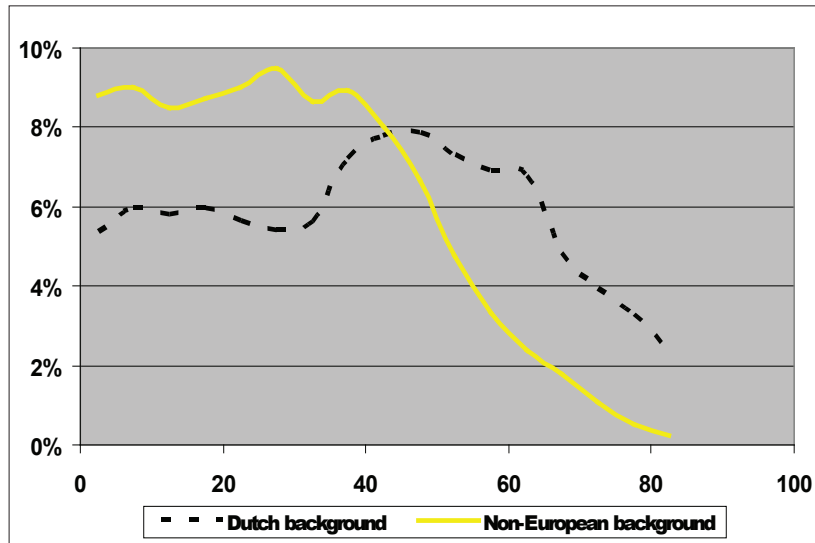
Figure 2: Age Distribution of Non-National vs. National Populations in 5 GCC Countries



Source: National statistical sources (see note 1)

By comparison, the age distribution of immigrants in a European country (The Netherlands: Figure 3) is much less skewed and resembles that of natives, apart from the impact a higher fertility among immigrants has in terms of a higher proportion of children.

**Figure 3: Age Distribution of Dutch and Non-European Background Population in the Netherlands, 2009**



Source: Statistics Netherlands - <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/default.aspx?LA=EN> (accessed January 21, 2010)

While the age group 15-65 is very large as a result of labor migration, there is already a significant number of under-working age, non-national children in the Gulf. Out of approximately 10 million children under 15 years of age who presently live in the GCC (most recent data in five countries), some 2.1 million, that is 21 percent, are non-nationals. In Saudi Arabia and Oman, they are still a limited minority (12-16 percent), but in the UAE they already constitute the majority (61 percent) of children under 15 (Table 10). Some of these are immigrants who came with their parents and others were born in the Gulf where they form an emerging and growing second generation of non-nationals. For them, return migration is meaningless because they never migrated. They represent a powerful opportunity to enlarge the demographic base of Gulf citizenries, which would require a shift from strict *jus sanguinis* to a mix of *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* by GCC governments. In doing so, they could take the example of Germany, another major country of immigration with a tradition of predominantly *jus sanguinis* under which only

ethnic Germans were eligible for naturalization until the overhaul of the nationality law in 1999 which opened the door for extended naturalization of non-Germans.

**Table 10: Children under 15 Years of Age  
in GCC Countries by Nationality, Most Recent Years**

Country	Absolute numbers			Proportion of non-nationals
	Nationals	Non-nationals	Total	
Bahrain 2007	169,177	50,436	219,613	23%
Kuwait 2005	342,502	209,788	552,290	38%
Oman 2007	695,804	94,451	790,255	12%
Saudi Arabia 2007	6,512,096	1,270,900	7,782,996	16%
UAE 2007	313,872	486,706	800,578	61%

Source: See Annex

At the other end of the spectrum, there are foreign nationals in the age group 65 and older, although in smaller numbers. Out of 2.8 million elderly persons in the GCC countries, about 740,000, i.e., 27 percent are non-nationals (Table 11). Strikingly, the proportion of non-nationals among persons aged 65 is almost as high in Saudi Arabia as in Kuwait and the UAE where foreigners are in much higher proportion in the population. Whether the reason is that the first waves of migration to the Kingdom started more than half a century ago or that they brought more Arabs than subsequent waves, Saudi Arabia is characterized by a significant level of settlement.

**Table 11: Populations of 65 Years and over  
in GCC Countries by Nationality, Most Recent Years**

Country	Absolute numbers			Proportion of non-nationals
	Nationals	Non-nationals	Total	
Bahrain 2007	23,738	2,513	26,251	10%
Kuwait 2005	24,942	11,961	36,903	32%



**Table 11 (continued)**

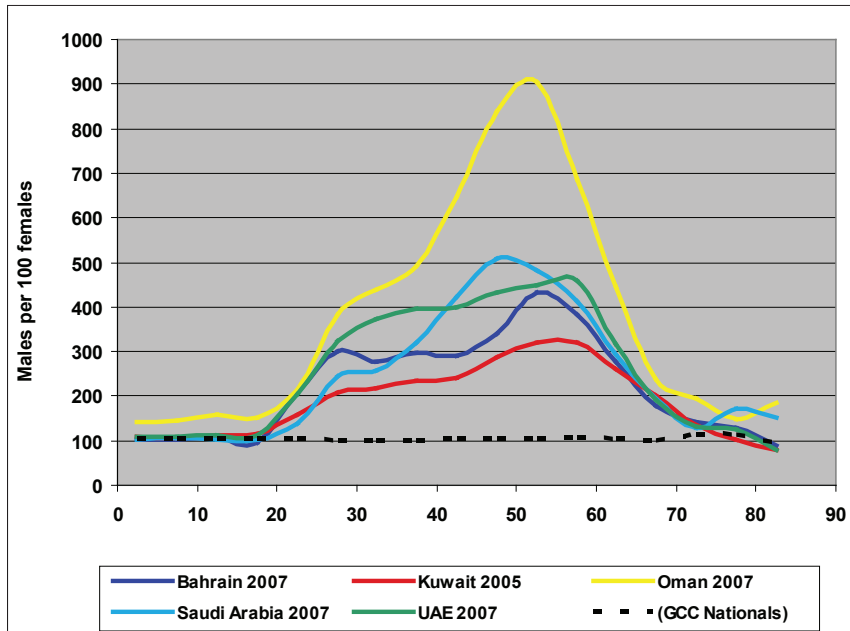
Oman 2007	1,964,123	825,902	2,790,025	30%
Saudi Arabia 2007	18,102,937	6,553,812	24,656,749	27%
UAE 2007	21,728	11,801	33,529	35%

Source: See Annex

The sex structure of the foreign population in the GCC countries (Table 9, Figure 4) is marked by a strong predominance of males, as a result of the type of work offered and also possibly cultural biases. However, the striking phenomenon here is a difference between generations. The proportion of males is peaking in a relatively old generation (45-65 years of age), i.e., among relatively old waves of migration. Among young adults (15-45) women are in much higher proportion, a sign that recently the GCC countries have, on the one hand, witnessed a steady rise of foreign female employment (mainly domestic workers, but also workers in education and health) and, on the other, de facto opened the door to increasing family reunion or immigration of families. The first trend was already noticed more than two decades ago in Kuwait, where rates of economic activity among foreign women had continuously and steadily increased since the first wave of immigration in the early 1950s till the 1990-91 War.<sup>32</sup> The second trend cannot be directly evidenced by statistics as data on family reunion are not published in the GCC countries, but it can be indirectly inferred from the evolution of the sex ratio among foreign populations. In Bahrain, for example, its highest value is observed among the generation born around 1950 (Figure 5). This has been true at every moment in time from the first census in 1976 – when this generation was made of fresh migrants in their 20s – to the most recent census in 2001 – when they were in their 50s – a fact which suggests that the excess of men over women among migrants depends more upon the period when they arrived than on their duration of stay. Recent migration flows would count an increasing proportion of women, whether they are employed on their own or following a husband.

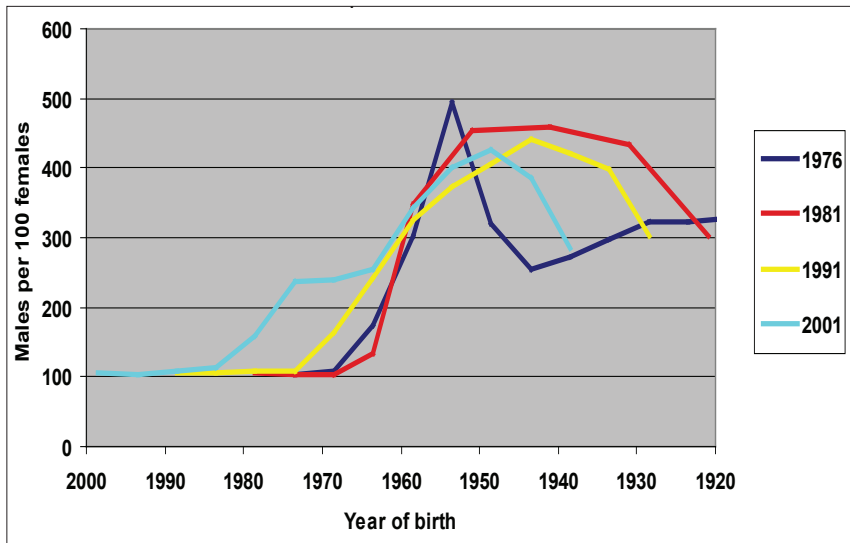
32. Gross rates of economic activity among foreign women in Kuwait increased as follows: 17.4 percent in 1970; 24.3 percent in 1975; 29.6 percent in 1980; 43.7 percent in 1985. See Philippe Fargues, “La migration obéit-elle à la conjoncture pétrolière dans le Golfe ? L'exemple du Koweït,” Document de travail n°10, INED, Paris, 1987, [http://www.ined.fr/fr/ressources\\_documentation/publications/documents\\_travail/bdd/publication/1385/](http://www.ined.fr/fr/ressources_documentation/publications/documents_travail/bdd/publication/1385/).

Figure 4: Sex Ratio by Age of Non-National Populations in GCC Countries



Source: National statistical sources (see note 1)

Figure 5: Sex Ratio of the Foreign Populations in Bahrain by Year of Birth and Year of Census



Source: Population Censuses of Bahrain

## **Conclusion**

This paper has highlighted four fundamental characteristics of Gulf States' demographics. First, their national populations are too small to allow them to use their full potential, economically as well as strategically. Second, their natural population growth is among the highest in the world, supported on the one hand by tradition and on the other by an exceptional welfare state. Nevertheless, fertility has started to decline among national populations across the Gulf in relation with women empowerment, in particular with their rapidly rising level of education. Third, an additional strategy to strengthen the demographic base of the nation would have been naturalizing foreign residents. So far, this option has been opposed and foreigners are persistently seen as temporary residents with no future in the place. Fourth, notwithstanding GCC policies and in accordance with all the lessons that can be learnt from international migration worldwide, many temporary migrants tend to become permanent residents as eloquently demonstrated by demographic evidence. Many migrants have spent all their lives in Gulf and the second generation is already born. These are facts to be acknowledged by governments. In a world dominated by large nations, immigrants may be seen by Gulf governments as an opportunity, not a threat.

## Annex

Age and Sex Distribution of GCC Populations, Most Recent Data in Bahrain (2007)

Country	Nationals			Foreigners			Total population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
00 04	28,857	27,897	56,754	8,942	8,834	17,776	37,799	36,731	74,530
05 09	28,408	27,019	55,427	9,182	8,845	18,027	37,590	35,864	73,454
10 14	29,120	27,876	56,996	7,512	7,121	14,633	36,632	34,997	71,629
15 19	28,929	27,324	56,253	6,331	6,547	12,878	35,260	33,871	69,131
20 24	25,902	24,555	50,457	31,713	15,191	46,904	57,615	39,746	97,361
25 29	22,796	21,669	44,465	68,759	22,938	91,697	91,555	44,607	136,162
30 34	18,455	18,777	37,232	66,928	24,088	91,016	85,383	42,865	128,248
35 39	16,169	17,125	33,294	58,230	19,691	77,921	74,399	36,816	111,215
40 44	16,759	17,843	34,602	41,522	14,297	55,819	58,281	32,140	90,421
45 49	14,810	15,863	30,673	32,049	9,406	41,455	46,859	25,269	72,128
50 54	11,714	11,044	22,758	21,173	4,904	26,077	32,887	15,948	48,835
55 59	8,542	6,884	15,426	9,336	2,439	11,775	17,878	9,323	27,201
60 64	4,705	4,654	9,359	2,483	892	3,375	7,188	5,546	12,734
65 69	4,167	4,349	8,516	735	415	1,150	4,902	4,764	9,666
70 74	2,618	2,970	5,588	379	269	648	2,997	3,239	6,236
75 79	1,997	2,217	4,214	221	172	393	2,218	2,389	4,607
80 84	1,177	1,183	2,360	87	98	185	1,264	1,281	2,545
85 +	1,296	1,764	3,060	74	63	137	1,370	1,827	3,197
Total	266,420	261,014	527,433	365,654	146,209	511,864	632,074	407,223	1,039,297

Source: National statistical sources (See note 1)

Age and Sex Distribution of GCC Populations, Most Recent Data in Kuwait (2005)

Country	Nationals			Foreigners			Total population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
00 04	60,353	56,847	117,200	42,356	39,083	81,439	102,709	95,930	198,639
05 09	60,431	56,158	116,589	36,575	34,294	70,869	97,006	90,452	187,458
10 14	56,025	52,688	108,713	30,302	27,178	57,480	86,327	79,866	166,193
15 19	49,580	47,967	97,547	30,749	26,821	57,570	80,329	74,788	155,117
20 24	40,151	39,310	79,461	73,314	46,368	119,682	113,465	85,678	199,143
25 29	31,029	33,255	64,284	144,236	69,913	214,149	175,265	103,168	278,433
30 34	27,283	30,086	57,369	144,145	65,768	209,913	171,428	95,854	267,282
35 39	24,429	27,392	51,821	129,609	55,125	184,734	154,038	82,517	236,555
40 44	20,795	23,341	44,136	93,682	38,841	132,523	114,477	62,182	176,659
45 49	15,733	19,674	35,407	68,682	24,040	92,722	84,415	43,714	128,129
50 54	11,855	14,881	26,736	41,814	13,014	54,828	53,669	27,895	81,564
55 59	5,202	11,143	16,345	22,031	6,848	28,879	27,233	17,991	45,224
60 64	6,876	7,953	14,829	9,586	3,685	13,271	16,462	11,638	28,100
65 69	5,712	5,581	11,293	4,257	2,127	6,384	9,969	7,708	17,677
70 74	3,294	3,356	6,650	1,770	1,295	3,065	5,064	4,651	9,715
75 79	2,034	1,800	3,834	697	689	1,386	2,731	2,489	5,220
80 84	,892	948	1,840	272	347	619	1,164	1,295	2,459
85 +	673	652	1,325	238	269	507	911	921	1,832
<b>Total</b>	<b>433,977</b>	<b>446,797</b>	<b>880,774</b>	<b>876,090</b>	<b>456,539</b>	<b>1,332,629</b>	<b>1,310,067</b>	<b>903,336</b>	<b>2,213,403</b>

Source: National statistical sources (See note 1)

Age and Sex Distribution of GCC Populations, Most Recent Data in Oman (2007)

Country	Nationals			Foreigners			Total population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
00 04	112,292	110,314	222,606	21,859	15,480	37,339	134,151	125,794	259,945
05 09	113,060	109,130	222,190	19,185	13,065	32,250	132,245	122,195	254,440
10 14	127,819	123,189	251,008	15,223	9,639	24,862	143,042	132,828	275,870
15 19	141,343	136,620	277,963	9,645	6,330	15,975	150,988	142,950	293,938
20 24	129,618	125,139	254,757	37,132	17,356	54,488	166,750	142,495	309,245
25 29	103,233	103,709	206,942	101,448	26,577	128,025	204,681	130,286	334,967
30 34	69,029	69,130	138,159	121,853	27,710	149,563	190,882	96,840	287,722
35 39	45,050	43,397	88,447	108,097	21,916	130,013	153,147	65,313	218,460
40 44	33,830	36,328	70,158	93,444	14,454	107,898	127,274	50,782	178,056
45 49	22,668	26,033	48,701	64,050	7,654	71,704	86,718	33,687	120,405
50 54	19,466	21,159	40,625	36,997	4,084	41,081	56,463	25,243	81,706
55 59	15,748	14,733	30,481	13,762	2,001	15,763	29,510	16,734	46,244
60 64	15,739	13,495	29,234	5,508	1,233	6,741	21,247	14,728	35,975
65 69	8,865	7,041	15,906	1,698	713	2,411	10,563	7,754	18,317
70 74	7,039	6,637	13,676	929	477	1,406	7,968	7,114	15,082
75 79	2,494	2,468	4,962	376	254	630	2,870	2,722	5,592
80 +	3,196	3,686	6,882	424	229	653	3,620	3,915	7,535
Total	970,489	952,208	1,922,697	651,630	169,172	820,802	1,622,119	1,121,380	2,743,499

Source: National statistical sources (See note 1)

## Age and Sex Distribution of GCC Populations, Most Recent Data in Qatar (2008)

Country	Nationals			Foreigners			Total population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
00 04							40,288	37,938	78,226
05 09							36,252	34,546	70,798
10 14							31,450	29,936	61,386
15 19							36,750	26,015	62,765
20 24							157,274	32,854	190,128
25 29							209,314	45,068	254,382
30 34							168,299	41,392	209,691
35 39							143,020	33,058	176,078
40 44							103,272	25,105	128,377
45 49							75,116	18,445	93,561
50 54							50,085	11,652	61,737
55 59							24,924	6,336	31,260
60 64							10,689	3,500	14,189
65 69							4,477	2,297	6,774
70 74							2,632	1,503	4,135
75 79							1,426	913	2,339
80 +							1,549	1,074	2,623
Total							1,096,817	351,632	1,448,449

No data on foreign population by age and sex have been published

Source: National statistical sources (See note 1)

Age and Sex Distribution of GCC Populations, Most Recent Data in Saudi Arabia (2007)

Country	Nationals			Foreigners			Total population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
00 04	115,6830	112,3383	2,280,213	237,034	232,818	469,852	1,393,864	1,356,201	2,750,065
05 09	108,5018	107,2622	2,157,640	226,211	211,640	437,851	1,311,229	1,284,262	2,595,491
10 14	103,6749	103,7494	2,074,243	185,078	178,119	363,197	1,221,827	1,215,613	2,437,440
15 19	97,1800	95,2298	1,924,098	141,749	139,168	280,917	1,113,549	1,091,466	2,205,015
20 24	90,5027	87,9874	1,784,901	208,059	149,968	358,027	1,113,086	1,029,842	2,142,928
25 29	76,3820	76,1580	1,525,400	552,876	226,871	779,747	1,316,696	988,451	2,305,147
30 34	64,7697	64,5973	1,293,670	779,134	301,120	1,080,254	1,426,831	947,093	2,373,924
35 39	52,8670	53,1588	1,060,258	789,179	246,317	1,035,496	1,317,849	777,905	2,095,754
40 44	43,8783	42,6304	865,087	566,723	134,489	701,212	1,005,506	560,793	1,566,299
45 49	35,1698	33,4441	686,139	376,980	73,975	450,955	728,678	408,416	1,137,094
50 54	27,4447	26,6932	541,379	224,563	46,724	271,287	499,010	313,656	812,666
55 59	20,1939	19,0868	392,807	108,546	26,346	134,892	310,485	217,214	527,699
60 64	15,0464	14,7492	297,956	42,841	14,600	57,441	193,305	162,092	355,397
65 69	10,3314	10,7859	211,173	17,508	9,063	26,571	120,822	116,922	237,744
70 74	8,8901	7,7643	166,544	10,844	8,521	19,365	99,745	86,164	185,909
75 79	5,2531	4,6883	99,414	6,099	3,582	9,681	58,630	50,465	109,095
80 +	6,3593	6,8849	132,442	6,464	4,261	10,725	70,057	73,110	143,167
Total	882,1281	867,2083	17,493,364	4,479,888	2,007,582	6,487,470	13,301,169	10,679,665	23,980,834

Source: National statistical sources (See note 1)



Age and Sex Distribution of GCC Populations, Most Recent Data in UAE (2007)

Country	Nationals			Foreigners			Total population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
00 04	55,120	52,310	107,430	90,481	84,228	174,709	145,601	136,538	282,139
05 09	52,371	49,704	102,075	87,558	79,749	167,307	139,929	129,453	269,382
10 14	53,985	50,382	104,367	76,793	67,897	144,690	130,778	118,279	249,057
15 19	55,575	52,536	108,111	65,813	58,302	124,115	121,388	110,838	232,226
20 24	50,673	52,764	103,437	221,363	108,766	330,129	272,036	161,530	433,566
25 29	39,396	41,121	80,517	444,261	137,016	581,277	483,657	178,137	661,794
30 34	25,846	26,497	52,343	464,033	123,985	588,018	489,879	150,482	640,361
35 39	20,190	21,553	41,743	366,572	92,291	458,863	386,762	113,844	500,606
40 44	14,632	16,367	30,999	248,086	62,176	310,262	262,718	78,543	341,261
45 49	12,433	13,857	26,290	162,026	37,454	199,480	174,459	51,311	225,770
50 54	10,246	9,947	20,193	97,093	21,592	118,685	107,339	31,539	138,878
55 59	7,893	6,341	14,234	43,410	9,463	52,873	51,303	15,804	67,107
60 64	6,176	4,549	10,725	12,644	3,978	16,622	18,820	8,527	27,347
65 69	5,335	3,283	8,618	3,837	2,002	5,839	9,172	5,285	14,457
70 74	3,657	2,699	6,356	1,734	1,314	3,048	5,391	4,013	9,404
75 79	1,640	1,207	2,847	800	630	1,430	2,440	1,837	4,277
80 84	1,160	960	2,120	377	479	856	1,537	1,439	2,976
85 +	958	829	1,787	292	336	628	1,250	1,165	2,415
Total	417,917	407,578	825,495	2,388,224	892,708	3,280,932	2,806,141	1,300,286	4,106,427

Source: National statistical sources (See note 1)

