**Nexus of armed conflicts and migrations to the Gulf: Migrations to the GCC from war-torn source countries in Asia, Africa and the Arab neighbourhood**

**Abstract**

This article provides an analysis of migrations from war-torn countries to the Persian (Arabian) Gulf. A growing number of studies focus on labour migrations to the oil-rich countries in the Gulf; yet, migrations from countries in armed conflict and refugee-producing countries to this region are still relatively unexplored. It is maintained that the vast majority of temporary labour migrants in the Gulf originate in countries that are not involved in devastating armed conflicts. Migrations from conflict-ridden countries to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) are not negligible, however, and they have been growing in the last decades, with Saudi Arabia attaining the role as the largest host. The overview of migrations from the major refugee-producing countries, such as Syria, Sudan and Afghanistan, suggests that we may distinguish between different categories of mixed migrations; *inter alia*, migrants who migrated to the Gulf prior to, during and after the armed conflicts in their home countries. We argue that these migrations happened in parallel with the tremendous economic growth that the Gulf countries have experienced in the last decades. Of note, however, is that they also coincide with escalations of armed conflicts in several sending countries, which may indicate that some of these migrations are also, directly or indirectly, the result of war- or security-related push forces. We also contend that the dynamics of migrations from countries in conflict may in addition be related to the foreign policies of the Gulf countries, which are often closely related to their treatment of different migrant groups.

**Keywords:** Armed conflicts, Gulf region, Mixed Migrations, Refugees, Temporary labour migrations

This article provides an overview of migrations from war-torn countries to the Persian (Arabian) Gulf. The oil-rich Gulf countries are well known for their temporary labour-migration systems, which attract millions of economic migrants, primarily, though by no means exclusively, from large developing countries in South Asia. It is clear that job opportunities in the Gulf and wage differentials between the sending and receiving countries are important drivers of these migrations. In this article, however, we look beyond mere economic aspects of the migrations and discuss and analyse instead the nexus of mixed migrations and labour migrations. As our study indicates, labour migrations to the Gulf countries are indeed also related to direct and indirect push factors generated by armed conflicts in the selected sending countries.[[1]](#endnote-1)

The Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC)[[2]](#endnote-2) have been criticised for their restrictive refugee policies, and most recently for not accepting Syrian refugees. These states have not signed the Refugee Convention, and the numbers of asylum seekers in the region are diminishingly small. It is, however, relevant to ask whether the countries also receive sizeable numbers of migrants from countries suffering armed conflicts. It is assumed that labour migrants who originate in refugee-producing countries and countries in conflict may have more complex reasons for migrating to the Gulf than do migrants originating in countries that have not experienced severe armed conflicts. Drawing on scholarly debates on mixed migrations,[[3]](#endnote-3) we explore the dynamics and composition of the potential mixed migrations to the region. The following interconnected research questions are explored: (i) Which countries are the major senders of (potential) mixed migrants, and what is the scale and composition of these migrations? (ii) Can we identify any links between the dynamics of the labour migrations to the GCC, the armed conflicts in the sending countries and how GCC countries treat migrants from these states? (iii) Can we identify different categories of mixed migrants as well as variations in patterns of mixed migrations to different GCC countries?

Generally, there is a lack of statistics on migrations to the Gulf, and we have limited knowledge on migration trends to this region from countries in conflict. Therefore, we want to contribute to the field by merging and exploring available migration statistics. We base our analysis on several sources, such as dyadic-migration estimates from the United Nations’ (UN) Department of Economic Affairs, Population Division, and the World Bank’s Global Bilateral Migration Database. These two data sources are rarely if ever used in debates on possible mixed migration in the region. Merged together, though, and when combined with other relevant indices, they provide a highly useful starting point for an analysis of mixed migration to the region. In our study, the estimates from the UN and the World Bank are also combined with local reports and information from local experts. Furthermore, these data sources are supplemented with knowledge from studies on armed conflicts and migrations to the GCC, as well as with local reports on the treatment of different migrant groups in the Gulf region.

The empirical segment of the article is divided into several interrelated parts. In the first part, we explore migrations to the Gulf with an aim of assessing the scale and composition of migrations from countries that are or were in armed conflict. Among other things, we identify the largest receivers of mixed migrants in the GCC and the major refugee-producing sending countries. In the second part, we analyse the nexus of armed conflict in selected major sending countries and the labour migrations from these countries to the Gulf. In the third part, we provide an overview of migration trends to the Gulf from Afghanistan, the West Bank and Gaza (Palestine), Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Syria and Sudan. It is maintained herein that these cases of migrations to the GCC from Asia, Africa and neighbouring Arab countries represent the largest sources of prospective mixed migrations to the Gulf. Moreover, these migrations have grown in recent years, which may be explained by a combination of two things: a deterioration of the security environments in these countries and the considerable employment opportunities and wage differentials that have attracted millions of labour migrants to the Gulf from low-income countries.

**Panel data from the World Bank and UN**

We use migration data covering the period 1960–2015. These data are drawn from two prominent sources and combined into one coherent dataset. Firstly, we use recently-updated estimates of migration stocks from the United Nations’ Department of Economic Affairs, Population Division.[[4]](#endnote-4) These data contain calculations of bilateral migration flows; they are separated into five-year intervals and span the period 1990–2015. Secondly, data covering the period from 1960 to 1980 are from the World Bank’s Global Bilateral Migration Database 1960–2000.[[5]](#endnote-5) The World Bank data come in ten-year intervals; thus, to obtain consistent intervals for the entire period under study, we employ linear interpolation to measure missing mid-decade data (that is, data for 1965, 1975 and 1985).[[6]](#endnote-6) Population censuses form the main information base for these data, with both the UN and the World Bank likening migrants with foreign-born people.[[7]](#endnote-7)

 The migration data are best-estimates, which means that interpretations must be made with due caution. Moreover, missing data for some countries also pose a few challenges. One such challenge is that time-series, which are generally complete for high-sending states, are sometimes only partially complete for countries with a relatively low number of migrants to the Gulf. We generally set missing values to 0, which obviously leads to a modest underreporting of the total number of migrants in the GCC. Of the six GCC countries, Oman has the highest number of missing values. In some cases concerning data on migration to Saudi Arabia (and, in one instance, Oman) from 1990 and later years, it was possible to extract numbers from an older version of the UN’s dataset.[[8]](#endnote-8) In these instances, involving a total of nine sending states,[[9]](#endnote-9) data for 1995 and 2005 were linearly interpolated, and numbers for the year 2013 were used for 2015.

 Furthermore, the larger part of the empirical analysis takes place at the bilateral level, where we combine data from different sources. In some such cases, and for some variables, certain years lack data. This is particularly the case for 2015. For example, data on refugee populations are only available for 2014; data from that year are therefore, in some of the analyses, combined with data on migrant stocks for 2015. With regards to our sample of states, our study is, by necessity, limited to the 27 (non-western) sending countries for which data are available. This group of states, it should nonetheless be pointed out, include the most prominent source countries of migrations to the GCC.[[10]](#endnote-10) (In some parts of the analysis, for reasons of clarity of presentation, we exclude a handful of these 27.)

 We also have reason to suspect that migrant stocks are underreported. This is so considering, *inter alia*, that population censuses contain lags and that data on irregular migrants are undoubtedly sketchy.[[11]](#endnote-11) There are, furthermore, some discrepancies between the UN and the World Bank data. These discrepancies, however, are relatively minor, and they are therefore largely inconsequential. Correlations between the two datasets are generally very high (0.88 for 1990 and 0.90 for the year 2000). Correlations between migrant stocks for individual GCC countries are also very high; for 2015, for example, the *lowest* migrant-stock correlation between a Gulf state and the GCC total was 0.92 (Oman).

**Relevant previous research**

Two general categories of literature are relevant for this article. The first category contains studies that focus on labour migrations to the Gulf; the second are studies that explore the phenomenon of mixed migrations. Regarding labour migrations to the Persian Gulf in general, the largest group of studies includes a substantial body of qualitative and ethnographic research on various categories of migrants to the GCC. Most of these studies primarily focus on the negative consequences of temporary migrant, sponsorship-based *Kafala* systems, and they predominantly describe the context of divided and uncaring, neo-liberal and autocratic Gulf societies – traits that often result in the exploitation of labour migrants.[[12]](#endnote-12) Studies on migrations to the GCC also often point out that, in the last decades, these states have had to import a great share of their labour force from South Asia.[[13]](#endnote-13) Thus, Asian migrations to the Gulf have become far larger than immigrations from neighbouring Arab countries. Reasons for this shift in migration patterns seem to include the lower price of labour from Asia, security concerns and worries about ‘import of the conflict’ from unstable Arab states.[[14]](#endnote-14) The aforementioned studies may provide an important contextual frame for our analysis. Still, it is clear that there is a dearth of studies focusing on migrations to the GCC from sending countries at war. None of the Gulf countries have signed the Refugee Convention, and they all tend to abstain from granting refugee status to people from war-torn countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2015 there were less than two thousand registered refugees in the GCC. On the other hand, there exist studies that suggest that states in this region do host migrants from countries in conflict.[[15]](#endnote-15) H. Thiollet, for example, indicates that, while authorities in the Gulf region do not offer refugee status to people in need of protection, they have, at certain times, used migration policies as a foreign-policy tool; specifically, they sometimes use temporary labour ‘migration politics as an asylum policy by proxy’ or ‘quasi-asylum policy.[[16]](#endnote-16)

Another category of studies relevant for this article are thus those stressing that sustained economic and political instability and armed conflicts in the sending countries are producing heterogeneous migration flows that often are not captured by legal categories determined by the migration policies of receiving countries.[[17]](#endnote-17) The concept of mixed migrations recognises the fact that people could have mixed motivations for migration, and that these motivations may, directly or indirectly, be affected by wars. In some cases, people have had to flee to save their lives, while in others they have been forced to leave, either during the conflict or in the post-conflict phase due to their having lost their livelihood on account of the war.[[18]](#endnote-18)

Many of the above-mentioned studies also identify and distinguish between various sub-categories of refugee flows. The traditional image of refugees is usually associated with acute refugee movements, but people might certainly also move *in anticipation of* a worsening situation prior to the next escalation of the conflict.[[19]](#endnote-19) Some also argue that people who have already received refugee status in one country may continue their ‘fragmented journeys’.[[20]](#endnote-20) These migrants may move to other states via different migration channels, as labour migrants, irregular workers, or on student visas or family-reunion or visitor visas; this might be the case when the refugee status does not include proper rights to work, access to education and other rights and opportunities that refugees in a protracted refugee situation need.[[21]](#endnote-21) It is also suggested that motivations for migration may change over time. For example, people who move as economic migrants in the pre-conflict phase might become mixed migrants if the prospects for return diminish due to a deterioration of the situation in their home country.[[22]](#endnote-22) Several of such mechanisms, we assume, could be applicable to the situation in the GCC countries.[[23]](#endnote-23)

**Migrations to the Gulf: Sending and receiving countries**

The Gulf Cooperation Council states are clearly among the largest receivers of labour migrants in the world. The most prominent destinations in the GCC are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In 2015, there were an estimated total of 10.2 million migrants in Saudi Arabia and 7.8 million in the UAE. While other GCC countries exhibit lower absolute numbers,[[24]](#endnote-24) in relative terms numbers are substantial; migrants indeed constitute the majority of the population in Qatar (70 per cent) and Kuwait (77 per cent) – and half of the population in Bahrain – whereas the migrants’ share of Oman’s population is, comparatively speaking, a more modest 43 per cent.[[25]](#endnote-25)

With regards to source countries, migration patterns do not differ much across GCC states, with South Asians by far constituting the largest group. Figure 1 shows the migrant stocks in the GCC for 16 major source countries (*x*-axis) and migrant stocks controlled for population size of sending countries (*y*-axis). To ease interpretation of the figure, we excluded 11 additional countries for which we have data but whose migrant stock in the GCC constitutes less than 5 people per 1,000 source-country population.

**Figure 1 here**

Though the rank order varies a little bit among the Gulf states, in all of them migrants from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia and the Philippines make up the six largest migrant groups. In fact, these groups constitute more than 90 per cent of the total migrant stock in the GCC. These are countries that we do not normally associate with large-scale wars. Two points are nonetheless worth making in that regard. Firstly, according to data from the Armed Conflict Dataset, assembled by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and University of Uppsala,[[26]](#endnote-26) between 1960 and 2014 (the last year for which we have such data), these six countries did in fact experience *major* intra- or interstate war in 41 out of a total 318 country-years (that is, 12.9 per cent).[[27]](#endnote-27) Given that major wars in general are rare occurrences – the standard operational definition uses a cut-off point of 1000 battle deaths in a year – this is not an insignificant amount. When we also include *minor* wars in the assessment, numbers become notably high. For the six largest senders of migrants to the GCC, wars with more than 25 battle-related deaths have been the rule rather than the expectation: 191 out of 318 – or 60.1 per cent of – country-years saw such armed conflicts. To take but one example, the Philippines has experienced continuous insurgencies from 1969 until the present, which means that 45 out of 55 relevant years have been ‘war years’ for that country.[[28]](#endnote-28) To be sure, neither high- nor low-intensity war automatically renders a country’s overall security situation untenable, and it does not necessarily spur massive refugee crises. It does, however, justify raising the issue about possible mixed motives for at least a portion of migrants originating in such countries.

Secondly, when we extend the scope and look beyond these six largest migrant groups, we can note that within the group of sending countries are also sizeable numbers of Syrians, Afghans, Sudanese, Yemenis and other migrants hailing from states that have recently been, or still are, severely afflicted by war. Furthermore, when we control for the size of population in the sending countries, Yemen and Syria, the countries currently (at the time of writing, in 2017) affected by serious armed conflicts, emerge as highly important *per-capita senders* of migrants to the GCC. Figure 2 shows migrant stocks in the GCC in 2015, controlled for sending-country population, for 13 large source countries (*x*-axis), and source-country population of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) per capita for 2013–2014 (*y*-axis)**.** To ease interpretation of the figure, we excluded six additional countries for which we have data but whose population of refugees and IDPs is lower than 2 per 1,000 sending-country population. We also excluded eight countries whose migrant stock in the GCC fall below a threshold of 2 people per 1,000 sending-country population.

**Figure 2 here**

According to UN estimates, in 2015 the GCC hosted approximately 870,000 Yemenites, 650,000 Sri Lankans, 690,000 Syrians, 540,000 Sudanese and 380,000 Afghans.[[29]](#endnote-29) It should, however, be mentioned that, according to such estimates, the GCC harbours only a small share of the total number of emigrants from these and other countries that are among the world’s major refugee-producing states. Yet, there are some exceptions; approximately one third of the Sudanese and the Sri Lankan diaspora are in the GCC, and for most Yemenites the GCC is *the* major migrant destination (in 2015, almost 90 per cent of the Yemenite diaspora was in the Gulf region).

According to the merged estimates from the UN and the World Bank, there were 22.2 million migrants from non-refugee-producing countries in the GCC in 2015. In that same year, 2.6 million of the migrants to this region were from large refugee-producing states; the latter are defined here as countries that, according to World Bank data, have more than 5 refugees per 1000 people. In Figure 2, the UN’s estimates for 2015 are merged with the World Bank’s latest available estimates on refugee-producing countries (which are from 2013). Since then, the armed conflict has escalated in Yemen. That means that Yemen is situated quite low with respect to the *y*-axis; however, according to the UNHCR, there were over 2.3 million IDPs in Yemen in 2015.[[30]](#endnote-30) If we add migrants from Yemen to the numbers of migrants from other (of the above-mentioned) war-torn countries, the estimate reaches the 3.3-million mark. Table 1 shows the UN’s estimates of the Yemenite migrant stock in the Gulf region and numbers of migrants from the other states with large refugee populations. As we can see from the table, the vast majority of migrants from refugee-producing countries are hosted by Saudi Arabia.

**Table 1 here**

Table 1 depicts the composition and distribution of the population of migrants in the GCC in 2015 that come from large refugee-producing countries. We have also scrutinised longitudinal migration data, both nominal values and per-capita migrations, for each of the large refugee-producing countries. The fluctuations in migrations to the GCC were thereafter related to various relevant push-factor indicators, such as developments of armed conflicts in the countries, total emigration and total refugee migrations in the states under study. Figure 3 shows the six largest nationalities in the GCC from refugee-producing countries in the period 1960-2015. The figure suggests that the total migrant stock from such states has grown considerably in the last decades and that the largest contributors have for years been Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Sudan. A few additional large refugee-producing countries were excluded from the figure. For example, migrants from Bangladesh make up one of the very largest migrant groups in the GCC, and during the Bangladeshi ‘Liberation War’ in 1971 ten million East Bengalis fled the country. However, at that time migrations from Bangladesh to the GCC were negligibly small compared to the large-scale migrations from Bangladesh that started around two decades later.[[31]](#endnote-31)

**Figure 3 here**

Several Arab sending countries are also included in the figure. Some of these, such as Lebanon and the West Bank and Gaza (Palestine), have in the last few decades been affected by several armed conflicts, and all three have for many years been significant refugee-producing countries. Others, with Syria being the obvious example, have only recently become refugee-producing countries. In the case of Syria, migrations to the GCC have grown since the war in the country started in 2011, but the migrations have not intensified greatly compared to the pre-war period – this despite the presence of increased and severe war-related push forces.[[32]](#endnote-32) Both the Syrian and the Bangladeshi cases hence suggest that conflicts in the sending countries do not (necessarily) have an immediate impact on the dynamics of migrations to the GCC. Indeed, while it seems that in some cases we can trace possible links between armed conflicts in the war-torn sending countries and the dynamics of migrations from these countries to the GCC, this is not so in all cases. As we will soon see, an exploration of these links requires a more detailed analysis of migration developments and the policies of receiving countries. Over the next pages, we therefore analyse separately the dynamics of migrations to the GCC from major refugee-producing countries in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East. With reference to several different cases, we discuss recent decades’ developments in mixed migrations to the region and identify possible future trends. The available migration estimates are combined with information from local experts, relevant reports on conflicts in the each major sending country and studies of the GCC countries’ policies that conceivably affect migrations to the region.

**Refugee-producing countries in Asia and mixed migrations to the GCC**

Afghanistan and Sri Lanka are the largest producers of *potential* mixed migrants to the Gulf. Both countries have experienced devastating wars, and both have for years been large refugee-producing countries. Apart from those aspects, though, similarities between the migrant flows from these countries to the GCC are fairly limited.

Afghanistan has been riddled by civil war and foreign incursions for decades. Since the Soviet invasion in 1979, the country has also been among the largest producers of refugees in the world.[[33]](#endnote-33) According to the UNHCR’s estimates, there were 2.5 million Afghan refugees in 2015, most of them hosted by Pakistan and Iran.[[34]](#endnote-34) We are inclined to surmise that the displacement of Afghans may primarily be related to the long-lasting conflict(s), which has triggered a variety of migration strategies, including mixed migrations to the GCC.[[35]](#endnote-35) A. Monsutti, who studied the emigration of Afghans, points out:

Although, generally speaking, Afghans have fled from war, their reasons for migration and the actual dynamics of the movement are much more nuanced. The physical effects of the war may be differentiated from the disruption of traditional livelihoods, the political and ethnic repercussion of the war and the economic fallout caused by the war.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Since the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Afghan migrations to the Gulf have increased steadily. In 1975, there were fewer than 30,000 Afghans in the GCC. The first large surge in the numbers of migrants to the GCC took place in the decade that followed the Soviet invasion (see Figure 3). Since the 1970s, the number of Afghans in the Gulf region has increased significantly, reaching 170,000 in 1990. There were over six million Afghan refugees outside the country in 1990, most of them in Pakistan and Iran, but in 1992-1993 almost 3 million of these returned to their homeland.[[37]](#endnote-37) In the late 1990s, though, the Taliban expanded their influence in Afghanistan; their capture of Kabul, in particular, produced new waves of refugees. Nonetheless, this escalation of the conflict did not result in an increase in *Gulf-bound* Afghan migration; UN estimates instead point to the steadiness of the stock of Afghan migrants in the Gulf throughout the 1990s (numbering approximately 170,000). As is well-known, in late 2001, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States and its allies toppled the Taliban government and soon proceeded to invade Afghanistan. It is estimated that 5.7 million Afghans have returned in a second major repatriation wave since 2002.[[38]](#endnote-38) It was in that same period that Afghan migrations to the Gulf started to grow significantly again. The presence of the US and NATO led to an improvement of the situation in parts of the country; still, the protracted conflict that by then had lasted for decades had surely impoverished the country, thereby creating push forces that helped generate the massive emigrations to the Gulf. In 2000, around 170,000 Afghans were living in the Gulf; thereafter, following more than a decade of continuous growth in migrations, the Afghan migrant stock had doubled in size – and in 2015 it passed the 370,000 mark.[[39]](#endnote-39)

UN estimates indicate that the vast majority of Afghans in the GCC – more than 95 per cent – are hosted by Saudi Arabia. However, it should be mentioned that estimates on Afghans in the GCC diverge a lot. According to UN numbers, there are less than 8000 Afghans in the United Arab Emirates; according to the Afghan Embassy in Abu Dhabi, on the other hand, the real number is 150,000.[[40]](#endnote-40) One of the factors that seemingly makes such assessments so difficult is the fact that many Afghans in the GCC used to arrive in the region with Pakistani passports.[[41]](#endnote-41)

The expectation is that the GCC countries, and in particular the UAE and Saudi Arabia, will also in the future constitute an important destination for Afghans.[[42]](#endnote-42) Both of these countries have close relations with Afghanistan, and both have supported the country in many ways, *inter alia* with donations, economic aid and various other agreements, including those that govern the immigration of Afghan workers. According to the Afghan Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz agreed in 2015 to accept an additional 25,000 Afghan workers into the kingdom.[[43]](#endnote-43)

As already noted, another possible source of sizeable mixed migrations to the Gulf is Sri Lanka; it is indeed possible to identify certain connections between the armed conflict in that island state and the dynamics of emigration from the country to the GCC.[[44]](#endnote-44) Sri Lanka originally became a large refugee-producing country in 1983, when clashes intensified between Tamil secessionists and Sinhalese-dominated governmental forces. The largest surge in the number of refugees, most of them Tamils, took place between 1980 and 1990. The numbers of internationally displaced Tamils and Sinhalese continued to grow thereafter.[[45]](#endnote-45) D. Sriskandarajah explored the effect of the civil war in Sri Lanka on emigrations. According to him, two main types of migrant flows intensified during the armed conflict in the country: labour migration to the GCC and politically-motivated emigration of people who sought asylum in the West. In the words of the author:

…the conflict has had high direct and indirect costs island-wide in terms of lives, livelihoods, and slower economic growth. Not surprisingly, the largest increases in both migration flows have occurred since 1983… While the majority of political migrants have been Tamils directly affected by the conflict in the north-east, the conflict has also indirectly fuelled the increased flows of predominately Sinhalese labour migration from the south-west…More than three-quarters of migrant workers reside in the Gulf region.[[46]](#endnote-46)

The protracted armed conflict had devastating effects on Sri Lanka’s society and economy alike.[[47]](#endnote-47) This, coupled with other push factors, generated substantial emigration from the country to wealthy autocracies in the Gulf.[[48]](#endnote-48) Figure 4 exhibits the key developments in refugee migrations from Sri Lanka, total migrations and labour migrations to the GCC in the period 1965-2015.

**Figure 4 here**

 The figure indicates that the GCC has been an important migration channel for migrants from Sri Lanka. The Gulf region seems especially to have attracted those who could not or did not want to seek protection in the West during the war.[[49]](#endnote-49) The armed conflict in Sri Lanka lasted almost three decades (1983-2009), and UN and World Bank statistics show that in the same period, the migrant stock from Sri Lanka in the GCC increased considerably, from under 50,000 in 1980 to 200,000 in 1990. Saudi Arabia served as the largest host country, followed by the Emirates and Kuwait. In 1990, migrations to the Gulf stabilised, but after 2000 they started surging again. Migrations from Sri Lanka continued in the new millennium, also in periods of escalating conflict in the country, such as in 2006 and in 2009; these were the years when the war saw its culmination as the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers in northern parts of the country. As Figure 5 indicates, very high levels of migrations were upheld through the whole period. Further, as Figure 5 also shows, this trend continued in the post-conflict period, with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar being the largest host countries.

**Figure 5 here**

The war in Sri Lanka, which lasted for three decades, has degraded the country, both politically and economically. However, in this case as well it is rather difficult to estimate the scale of mixed migrations to the Gulf; there is no clear-cut way of measuring the proportion of these migrations that are motivated by non-economic factors. War in Sri Lanka, as it were, was concentrated in the northern parts of the country, and the Sinhalese population in other areas of the island was primarily only *indirectly* affected by the war via recruitment into government military forces and economic fallouts of the war. It is not unusual that emigration increases with the escalation of a conflict as people migrate to avoid forced military recruitment. On the other hand, migrations from Sri Lanka to the Gulf has actually been dominated by women to a much larger extent than is the case of migrations from other war-torn countries analysed in this article. Reportedly, in some periods, women working as domestic employees on temporary contracts made up close to 90 per cent of Sri Lankan migrants to the GCC. Several studies also maintain that Gulf states recruit large numbers of domestic workers from South and Southeast Asia, and growing numbers of reports reveal frequent mistreatments, abuse and deportations of domestic workers in the region.[[50]](#endnote-50) Yet, despite such predicaments, financial necessities have undoubtedly motivated hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankan women to migrate to the GCC region, both during the conflict and in the post-conflict period. As senders of remittances, these women usually become primary breadwinners for families back home.[[51]](#endnote-51)

**Migrations to the GCC from refugee-producing countries in Africa**

In relative terms, there are few African migrants in the GCC. Absolute numbers tell a different story, though, as there are sizeable numbers of migrants in the GCC that have experienced devastating war in states such as Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia. Thiollet analysed migrations from Eritrea to Saudi Arabia during the former’s protracted war of independence against Ethiopia (1962-1991), pointing out that Saudi authorities supported the Eritrean cause not only by financing the guerrillas but also by facilitating the entry of Eritrean migrants. In the words of the author:

Arab countries in general, and the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia in particular, supported the Eritrean guerrillas from the 1960s to the 1990s on an ideological basis and allowed Eritrean refugees to enter and settle in the oil-rich countries…Eritreans could enter the country without a predefined job contract or prospective employer; the procedural burden of immigration registration was alleviated; and the public administration showed tolerance vis-à-vis undocumented migrants.[[52]](#endnote-52)

Saudi Arabia and other the GCC countries had not signed the Refugee Convention, and they did not award Eritreans refugee status or explicit asylum rights. Instead, their practice towards Eritreans can, according to H. Thiollet, be understood as an *informal* asylum policy that allowed Eritrean refugees to enter and settle in the oil-rich countries using labour-migration policies as an asylum policy by proxy. [[53]](#endnote-53)

Saudi Arabia hosts almost the entire Eritrean migrant population in the GCC. In 2015, there were almost 100,000 Eritreans in the country. Sudan is another and considerably larger source – it indeed appears that it is *the* largest (please recall Figure 1) – of African mixed migrants and unrecognised refugees in the GCC. The civil war(s) in Sudan is considered to be among the most devastating armed conflicts in Africa. We have thus chosen to concentrate the remaining part of this section on the nexus of migrations from and war in this African country. The war between the North and the South – by far the most bloody of the Sudanese conflicts – lasted for more than two decades (1983-2005) and was subsequently followed by the civil war in South Sudan, which resulted in the displacement of more than a million people.[[54]](#endnote-54) Although Sudan has an abundance of natural resources, most notably oil, the war has devastated the country’s economy, which for years has made Sudan dependent on foreign aid.[[55]](#endnote-55)

After the armed conflict between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the central government in Khartoum intensified in 1983, the numbers of international refugees and IDPs surged.[[56]](#endnote-56) In addition to such refugee flows, the country has been and still is a large sender of labour migrants, with the GCC countries constituting a major destination. Since the 1980s, the refugee outflows and labour migrations to the Gulf follow similar patterns. Most Sudanese refugees, to be sure, are found in neighbouring countries; still, in parallel with an increase in the number of refugees into neighbouring countries, the labour migrations from Sudan to the Gulf also increased. Figure 6 depicts refugee migrations from Sudan, total emigrations and migrations to the GCC in the period 1965-2015.

**Figure 6 here**

Refugee migrations have surged since the war in the Sudan started in the 1980s. Figure 6 shows a similar trend, indicating that migrations to the Gulf have gradually become an important alternative exit avenue for the Sudanese. Neighbouring countries that have received large numbers of refugees from Sudan are among the poorest countries in the world, and the prospects of obtaining employment there are consequently meagre. In such a context, labour migration to the Gulf, to the extent that such migration is feasible, should be seen as a superior alternative with respect to acquiring employment and, thus, as a source of remittances to families back home.[[57]](#endnote-57) In terms of numbers, there were fewer than 100,000 Sudanese in the Gulf prior to the war in 1980. A few years after the war had started, these numbers tripled. Then, in 1990 and throughout the rest of the millennium, the migrant stock stagnated – but it started growing again from 2000 onwards. In the last two decades, the Sudanese migrant stock in the GCC has almost doubled, reaching over half a million by 2015, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE as the largest host countries.

In 2011, Sudan finally broke into two parts after the severe and long-lasting armed conflict between the southern secessionists and the government-controlled regular forces and militias. Since 2013, South Sudan, now an independent state, has been afflicted by armed conflict between the Nuer and the Dinkas, the two largest ethnic groups in the country.[[58]](#endnote-58) Most Sudanese in the GCC, however, originate from the Arab-dominated north; comparatively fewer are from South Sudan. According to the UN’s estimates, there were 44,000 South Sudanese in the Gulf region in 2015, more than half of them residing in Saudi Arabia. Figure 7 shows the developments in migrations from Sudan to Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries in the period 1960-2015.

**Figure 7 here**

What do we know about the position of the Sudanese diaspora in the Gulf? It is often argued that the attitudes and policies of the GCC states towards different migrant communities should be seen in light of these states’ foreign policy interests and their bilateral relations with sending countries.[[59]](#endnote-59) Saudi Arabia is among the world’s largest destinations for Sudanese migrants. Yet, in certain periods many of these migrants lived there in considerable insecurity and fear of deportations as relations between the Saudi Kingdom and Sudan were seriously strained due to Khartoum’s close ties with Iran, the Saudis’ main regional rival.[[60]](#endnote-60) However, in 2014, Sudan’s relations with Iran soured, and the former even proceeded to join the Saudi-led coalition in its war against Shia-affiliated Houthi rebels in Yemen. It is thus reasonable to expect that this major diplomatic change will have a positive impact on the position of Sudanese migrants in Saudi Arabia and, likely, in the GCC in general.[[61]](#endnote-61)

**Migrations to the Gulf from refugee-producing countries in the Middle East**

Since the Second World War, Palestinians have been among the most dispersed groups in the Middle East.[[62]](#endnote-62) It is clear that Palestinian emigrations from the West Bank and Gaza (Palestine) are to a large extent the result of various political and economic push factors, most of which are triggered by the conflicts between Israel and its neighbours –that is, bordering Arab states, the Palestinian authorities and militant groups in the West Bank and Gaza.[[63]](#endnote-63) There are large Palestinian communities in several Arab countries, not only in Israel’s immediate neighbours – such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon – but also in the less geographically proximate Gulf states.

The largest Palestinian community in the GCC had for years been the one residing in Kuwait. Prior to the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent 1991 Gulf War, almost half a million Palestinians lived in that country. In the early 1990s, though, Kuwaiti authorities expelled hundreds of thousands of Palestinians as a response to the Palestine Liberation Organization’s (PLO) support of the Iraqi regime during the Gulf war.[[64]](#endnote-64) According to G.H. Talhami, approximately 350,000 Palestinians in Kuwait had Jordanian passports, and most of them were therefore deported to Jordan.[[65]](#endnote-65) Indeed, few Palestinians remained in Kuwait following the large-scale expulsions in 1991. Since 2000, however, the numbers of immigrants from the West Bank and Gaza into the Gulf region have steadily grown again. According to the UN’s estimates, the migrant stock from the West Bank and Gaza in the GCC has almost doubled since 2000 – from 118,000 in 1995 to almost 200,000 in 2015, with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait as the largest host countries. It is, moreover, assumed that the Palestinian migrant stock in the GCC is significantly larger than official numbers would indicate, as many Palestinians in the region use Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese or other such travel documents.[[66]](#endnote-66)

Of course, the West Bank and Gaza have suffered from a long-lasting conflict with Israel, a conflict that has seen several bouts of escalation.[[67]](#endnote-67) In the last such instances of the conflict flaring up to the point of war, in 2008-2009 and again in 2014, armed clashes between Israeli military forces and Gaza-based Hamas resulted in a considerable loss of lives, a destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of (Palestinian) people.[[68]](#endnote-68) Migration to the Gulf also intensified in that period. In 2005, there were less than 140,000 Palestinian migrants in the GCC, according to the UN. A few years after these conflicts – that is, in 2015 – the number of migrants had increased by 60,000. The largest relative increase was associated with the UAE, where the number of migrants from Gaza and the West Bank almost tripled over only a few years. It should also be mentioned that, as a group, Palestinians, who are scattered across several countries in the Middle East, have recently faced additional displacements courtesy of the deteriorating security situation in the region. Notably, this is the case in Syria. Prior to the outbreak of the Syrian war, that country hosted a large Palestinian community. Almost 600,000 Palestinians lived in Syria; 160,000 of these resided in the Yarmouk camp in Damascus alone, but most of these people were forced to flee to either Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey or European countries.[[69]](#endnote-69) It is also to be expected that the ‘fragmented migrations’[[70]](#endnote-70) and recent displacements of Palestinians will soon or eventually result in an increase of the Palestinian migrant stock in the GCC.[[71]](#endnote-71)

Lebanon is yet another sizeable Arab source of potential mixed migrants. The civil war in Lebanon, which raged between 1975 and 1990, resulted in the devastation of the country, and it tragically and negatively affected Lebanese society as a whole.[[72]](#endnote-72) The war also produced large outflows of people. According to World Bank estimates, there were almost 200,000 Lebanese refugees in the 1970s. In addition, the number of Lebanese labour migrants in the GCC also increased significantly during the war. Both World Bank and UN data suggest that, prior to the war, in 1970, there were only 36,000 Lebanese in the Gulf region; during the war years, though, the migrant stock from Lebanon almost doubled, surpassing 70,000 in 1990. In 1970, the largest receiver was Kuwait, but from the 1990s onwards, Saudi Arabia has been the major host country.[[73]](#endnote-73)

In 2006, Lebanon experienced yet another new war, this time between Hezbollah, an Iranian-affiliated but Lebanese-based Shica Islamist militant group-cum-political organisation, and Israeli military forces. The so-called July War, which primarily affected people in southern Lebanon, northern Israel and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, was not a long-lasting one, but it still had severe economic and social consequences for Lebanon, and it resulted in large-scale displacements of people.[[74]](#endnote-74) Since 2006, the emigration from Lebanon to Canada, Europe and the Gulf has grown. According to local reports, this may be related to the war, to post-conflict social, political and economic crises and to people’s incessant anxieties about the possibility of a renewal of old, or the appearance of new, serious conflicts in the country.[[75]](#endnote-75) Between the two wars in Lebanon, and during the turmoil in the GCC states produced by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent foreign intervention, the Lebanese migrant stock in the Gulf increased only slightly. After the 2006 July War, however, the migrant stock surged, almost doubling in the decade that followed, from 100,000 in 2006 to 190,000 in 2015, with the Emirates accounting for the largest relative increase in the influx of Lebanese migrants.[[76]](#endnote-76) Figure 8 depicts the developments in migrations from Lebanon to the GCC in the period 1960-2015.

**Figure 8 here**

Estimates presented in Figure 8 are quite conservative compared to some other sources that claim that there are more than 350,000 Lebanese in the GCC.[[77]](#endnote-77) It is, in any case, clear that migration to the Gulf countries has functioned as an important exit avenue in periods when the situation in Lebanon has deteriorated. The GCC region has for years been a popular destination for Lebanese migrants and Lebanese businesses alike. Many Lebanese nationals have achieved prominent positions in the economies of Gulf states.[[78]](#endnote-78) Moreover, Lebanon and the GCC countries also used to have amicable economic and political relations. These relations have soured in recent years, though, which also affects Lebanese immigrants in the Gulf. Several reports focus on these recent developments and discuss the concerns that arose as a result of attendant migration-policy changes. In her most recent update of the migrant situation in the GCC, G. Hourani sums up these concerns:

Major concerns as a result of the deterioration of these relations include: Deporting Lebanese working in the GCC; the fear of sanctioning Lebanese from entering the GCC, which would affect the inflow of remittances into Lebanon; concerns about closing Lebanese businesses in the GCC; anxiety about pulling out deposits from Lebanese banks and trepidation about banning GCC citizens from visiting Lebanon.[[79]](#endnote-79)

The above-mentioned concerns are related to the Gulf countries’ reactions to Lebanon’s diplomatic support of Iran. The strengthening of Iranian-affiliated Hezbollah’s position in the country – and its involvement in the war in Syria alongside both regime and Iranian forces – has resulted in a severe straining of relations between Lebanon and the GCC countries.[[80]](#endnote-80) In February 2016, for example, Saudi Arabia cancelled a four-billion dollar grant that was intended to strengthen the Lebanese army and security forces. Thereafter, in early March 2016, the GCC countries collectively and publicly denounced Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation.[[81]](#endnote-81) Furthermore, in that same year, authorities in Saudi Arabia and several other GCC states called on their citizens to leave Lebanon and to refrain from travelling to that country. Some Lebanese businesses in the Gulf were also recently closed, and smaller groups of Lebanese migrants have been deported as a part of punitive campaigns directed against Lebanon.[[82]](#endnote-82)

**Ongoing wars in Syria and Yemen and migrations to the Gulf**

Since the war in Syria started in 2011, millions of people have fled the country, with most of them ending up in neighbouring countries – notably, Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan – or in Europe. Prior to the atrocious war, there was a sizeable Syrian community in the GCC, a community that has grown in the last few years. The vast majority of Syrians in the GCC are hosted by Saudi Arabia. According to the UN’s estimates, there were 590,000 Syrians in the Gulf region prior to the war (that is, in 2010); five years later, the migrant stock from Syria had grown to 690,000.[[83]](#endnote-83) GCC officials call Syrians ‘their Arab brothers and sisters in distress’ and claim that they proceeded to relax visa regulations for Syrians following the outbreak of the war; it is held, *inter alia*, that residence permits were extended for those who were already in a GCC country.[[84]](#endnote-84) However, as already noted, our data do not suggest that migrations of Syrians to the GCC intensified or accelerated since 2011, compared to the rate of increase of such migrations prior to the outbreak of war – or, indeed, compared to the rate of increase of migrant stocks from other sending countries. Migrant stocks have actually grown at a *lower* rate after the war commenced (see Figure 3). F. De Bel-Air made an attempt to assess the scale of the influx and the stance of the GCC authorities towards Syrians in the Gulf states. She notes in her report that GCC authorities have not encouraged the entry of Syrian labour migrants since 2011, and that it has become more, not less, difficult for Syrians to get a sponsor (*Kafel*) in the GCC. She concludes that the Gulf states do seem to represent an alternative to refugee status in other countries, but this is primarily the case for Syrians who arrived in the GCC before the war started.[[85]](#endnote-85)

With regards to Saudi Arabia, it seems that Saudi authorities have decided to refrain from expelling Syrians; according to several reports, Syrians are granted the rightof temporaryresidency and work,and Saudi authorities have provided them with educationandhealth services.[[86]](#endnote-86)

Of the additional recent migrant flows that have also been associated with the concept of mixed migrations, those related to the armed conflict in Yemen are especially notable.[[87]](#endnote-87) The Yemeni Civil War, an internationalised armed conflict, started in March 2015, is still ongoing at the time of writing and has already resulted in substantial displacements of people. According to the UN’s estimates, there were almost 900,000 Yemenis in the GCC in 2015, most of them in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The position of the Gulf countries on mixed migrations from Yemen resembles the above-mentioned practices towards Syrians. As indicated in the UNHCR report on ‘Yemen Situation – Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan’:

Traditionally, the Gulf countries have been hosting a large number of Yemenis who reside and work through different migration channels or are staying irregularly. With the escalation of the conflict in Yemen, most of the Yemenis were allowed to stay in situ. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provided a six-month visa to more than 465,000 Yemenis to regulate their stay in the country, allowing the Yemenis to access basic health services, education and labour market. Overstay has been largely tolerated in most of the GCC countries so far, whilst new arrivals have experienced more restricted access.[[88]](#endnote-88)

There are several examples of the harsh treatment of Yemenis in the GCC; Saudi authorities have, *inter alia*, at several times expelled large numbers of Yemenis.[[89]](#endnote-89) Nevertheless, we have reasons to expect that countries in the GCC, primarily Saudi Arabia, will continue to be an important host country for migrants from Yemen. Several Gulf states (with Oman being the notable exception), under the leadership of the Saudi kingdom, are heavily involved in the civil war in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is also the world’s largest host of the Yemenite diaspora, and there have been sizeable regular and irregular migrations from Yemen to Saudi Arabia for years. Due to the proximity of the two countries; the existence of historical, social and political ties between them; and the porosity of the Saudi-Yemeni border, the GCC region, in general, and Saudi Arabia, in particular, will likely continue hosting a substantial number of Yemenis – both extant and new migrants.[[90]](#endnote-90)

**Nexus of armed conflicts in sending countries and migrations to the GCC**

Several studies indicate that labour-migration systems in the GCC are based on the principle of ‘high numbers-low rights’ and the principle of temporality.[[91]](#endnote-91) Therefore, the admittance of large groups of labour migrants from countries in severe conflict – that is, people whom GCC authorities might not be able to repatriate so easily once their work contracts and temporary residence visas expire – is in contradiction with the very core principles of the temporary-migration system. Security concerns, foreign policy interests and worries regarding ‘import of the conflict’ have also resulted in a restrictive stance toward migrants from conflict-ridden (Arab) states.[[92]](#endnote-92) Indeed, migrants from neighbouring countries have, in certain periods at least, been treated quite roughly. The best-known example of harsh treatment of Arab migrants is, as already noted, the forceful expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian, Jordanian and Yemeni migrants from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the early 1990s – policies which represented a response to these countries’ support of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War .[[93]](#endnote-93)

Nonetheless, it seems that the above-mentioned principles and concerns did not stop migrants from war-torn countries altogether from entering the GCC. Such interests and obstacles to migration as outlined above seem often to be undermined by local needs for foreign labour as well as from push forces in sending countries and migrants’ own survival strategies. The region as a whole hosts millions of migrants from refugee-producing countries. Furthermore, as several of the brief case analyses presented herein have illustrated, the influx of immigrants from large refugee-producing countries to the Gulf happened during periods when these countries experienced severe wars. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that many of these labour migrants have more complex motivations for migrating when compared with migrants from non-refugee-producing countries. Figure 9 summarises some of the major developments we have already outlined in the case analyses.

**Figure 9 here**

The figure depicts major developments in armed conflicts of relevance to this article. It also displays the general trends in migrations to the Gulf from major refugee-producing countries. The figure shows, overall, a (more or less) general increase in the total migrant stock from this group of conflict-ridden countries. It seems, moreover, that developments in migrations to the Gulf may roughly be divided into three major phases. The first phase is dominated by a surge in migrations in the 1980s; the second phase is characterised by a stagnation in migrations in the 1990s; and the third is marked by a new, even more substantial increase that started in 2000 and intensified after 2005. The empirical data also indicate that these migration trends tend to coincide with at least some of the conflicts or wars highlighted in the figure. In the 1980s, for example, severe wars erupted in several sending countries, such as Sudan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. This led to considerable displacements of people, and to emigration – including emigration to the Gulf. The stagnation in the growth of migrant stocks that happened in the 1990s, for its part, coincides with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War, as well as with the economic downturn that followed in the wake of these debacles. As already mentioned, due to the invasion of Kuwait hundreds of thousands of migrants fled the region, while others became the victims of mass expulsion.

It is maintained herein that surges in migrations to the GCC generally coincide with escalations in conflicts in several of the war-torn countries. Yet, it is important to stress that migrations from non-refugee-producing states also grew in the 1980s as well as after 2005, which also works to remind us that there certainly exist other important push factors than wars, and that migrations to the GCC should also be seen in the light of pull forces produced by the tremendous economic growth in the GCC. Developments in these pull forces have undoubtedly influenced the dynamics of migrations to the Gulf, both from refugee-producing and from non-refugee-producing countries. The period after 2000, in particular, was characterized by the presence of strong pull forces, as economic growth in the Gulf region was restored following the Gulf War and the turmoil in the 1990s, and as the need for a huge foreign-labour force again increased.

The extraordinary growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) in the GCC – in particular since 1990 – coincided with a substantial increase in migrant stocks, with the most significant surge in both GDP and migrations taking place after 2000. The period 2000-2010 witnessed an increase in migrant stocks in the region as a whole of 94 per cent. In the same period, the combined gross domestic product for this group of states rose by 67 per cent when measured in inflation-adjusted (i.e. constant) US dollars (or 203 per cent if we measure in current US dollars). A somewhat weaker correlation between GDP growth and growth in migration exists prior to the year 2000 (we do not have inflation-adjusted growth numbers for that period), and in particular before the 1990s. This is not surprising, though; the real ‘take-off’ in migrations to the GCC can be pinpointed to the 2000s.[[94]](#endnote-94) All of the 23 countries for which we have complete data have fairly low average incomes. And this is especially the case for the states suffering armed conflicts, which we examined earlier.[[95]](#endnote-95) Of course, there exist some really strong pull forces as well, which we have also outlined above, and which, in conjunction with the GCC group’s unique temporary labour system, have helped allow for the influx of millions of migrants.[[96]](#endnote-96) However, the push forces also gradually intensified, especially in the post-2005 period, as old conflicts escalated in Lebanon, in the Palestinian territories and in Sri Lanka – and as new armed conflicts started in other sending countries, notably Syria and Yemen.

**Conclusion**

The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council have often been quite heavily criticized for not accepting refugees. The point of departure of this article was the recognition that the GCC states have not signed the Refugee Convention, which means that we have had to go beyond legal migration categories in our endeavour to explore the reception practices of the Gulf countries. Drawing on the previous research that demonstrates the limitations of legal migration categories that are based on a voluntary-forced migration dichotomy, we used various available indices of mixed migrations to the Gulf. The overview of migration estimates from the UN and the World Bank that we have presented in this article may thus be seen as a contribution to debates on mixed migrations to the region. On the one hand, this overview shows that the GCC countries primarily receive labour migrants from countries that are not large refugee-producing countries. These migrations, to be sure, have tended to happen in times of substantial economic growth in the GCC, which has attracted millions of migrants from South Asia and the Middle East. On the other hand, as our study indicates, in that same period the Gulf states also received a large number of labour migrants from refugee-producing countries; these may, in one way or another, be characterised as mixed migrants.

We obviously acknowledge that migrations from countries afflicted by armed conflict are small in comparison with the several millions of temporary labour migrants from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and other non-refugee-producing countries. However, our findings nonetheless indicate that migrations to the GCC from countries in conflict are not negligible. Moreover, they have been growing in the last few decades. The Gulf region harbours quite substantial numbers of migrants from war-torn and refugee-producing states, such as Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Sudan and Sri Lanka. The vast majority of these migrants in the GCC are hosted by Saudi Arabia, though the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and, indeed, the rest of the Gulf countries as well, also host sizeable numbers of such migrants. Keeping in mind the numerous studies and reports on the marginalized position, mass deportations and exploitation of labour migrants in the GCC, however, it would be naïve to suggest that the growth in migrations from refugee-producing countries is the result of (mainly) humanitarian efforts aimed at helping people in need. These migrations should rather be seen in light of the tremendous needs that the growing economies of the GCC countries have (had) for cheap labour.

The *Kafala* systems in the GCC process an enormous influx of millions of temporary labour migrants from developing countries, and among them are also relatively small but, in terms of absolute numbers, actually quite large numbers of migrants from conflict-ridden states. The temporary labour-migration regimes in the Gulf represent a strong pull factor considering that they give employment and increased incomes to large numbers of people from countries in armed conflict. Despite the fact that they are exploitative and excluding, the *Kafala* systems in the GCC do represent a clear pull factor. This is so not least because they are unique in the sense that they enable large-scale regular labour migrations of people of all skills. The popularity of the Gulf region as a destination should thus be understood in terms of the interrelationship between push forces and migrants’ migration strategies within the context of the highly restricted options for migration. In such a context, getting a job in the GCC appears for many migrants from poor, politically unstable and war-torn countries as the only opportunity to improve their predicaments, to earn some money and to send remittances to their families back home.

Our findings also suggest that migrations from war-afflicted countries to the Gulf may be associated with three general categories of mixed migrants. The first category encompasses people who migrated to the Gulf during a prolonged armed conflict in their home country. Most GCC-based migrants from Afghanistan, Sudan, Sri Lanka and a few other major refugee-producing countries seem to belong to this category. In the second category are people who migrated to the Gulf in the post-conflict period. Political, social and economic problems, presumably largely caused by the war itself, seem to be important push factors here, whereas job opportunities, wage improvements and the prospects of sending remittances back home constitute major pull factors.[[97]](#endnote-97) We have, for example, witnessed a sizeable recent growth in migrations from Sri Lanka, Sudan and Lebanon in their respective post-conflict periods. The above-mentioned factors, then, in combination with established migration channels and transnational networks, contribute to perpetuating these migration patterns. Lastly, in the third category are temporary labour migrants who migrated to the Gulf prior to the armed conflict and who stayed after the outbreak of the war. These people are usually trying to extend or renew their residential visas and labour contracts, and, if this is not possible, they often overstay and thereby become irregular migrants while waiting for possible corrections in their status. For the moment, in 2016, the majority of Syrians and Yemenis belong to this latter category.

**Notes**

1. For other drivers of migration to the Gulf see M. Valenta and J. Jakobsen, ‘Moving to the Gulf: an empirical analysis of the patterns and drivers of migration to the GCC countries, 1960–2013’, *Labor History,* Vol.57, No.5 (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2016.1239885> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The GCC countries include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See J. Klaauw, ‘Refugee Rights in Times of Mixed Migration: Evolving Status and Protection Issues’, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.1 (2010), pp. 59-86; T. Linde, ‘Mixed Migration – A Humanitarian Counterpoint, *Refugee Survey Quarterly,* Vol.30, No.1 (2011), pp.89-99; N. Van Hear, *Mixed Migration: Policy Challenges* (Oxford: COMPAS, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/index.shtml> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. See <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/global-bilateral-migration-database> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Estimations for 1965 and 1975 are made using World Bank data. Data for 1985 are the sum of World Bank estimates for 1980 plus the UN’s estimates for 1990, divided by 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. D. Ratha and W. Shaw, ‘South-South Migration and Remittances’*,* *World Bank Working Paper,* No. 102 (2007), pp.1-58; United Nations, *International migrant stock: By destination and origin* (Geneva: UN, Population Division, 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. See Valenta and Jakobsen,’ Moving to the Gulf’. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. This concerns estimates of migrant stocks in Saudi Arabia coming from Eritrea, Morocco, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Chad, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey, and migrants in Oman from South Sudan. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. These countries are (in alphabetical order): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, West Bank and Gaza (Palestine) and Yemen. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. For more, see Ratha and Shaw, *South-South Migration and Remittances,* pp.1-58*.* [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. A. Gardner, ‘Gulf Migration and the Family’, *Journal of Arabian Studies*, Vol.1, No.1 (2011), pp.3–25; M, Buckley, ‘Locating Neoliberalism in Dubai: Migrant Workers and Class Struggle in the Autocratic City’, *Antipode,* Vol.45, (2013), pp.256–274. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. A, Kapiszewski, *Arab**versus**Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries* (Beirut: UN/POP/EGM, 2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Kapiszewski, *Arab**versus**Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries*; G. Naufal and I. Genc, *Labor Migration in the GCC Countries: Past, Present and Future* (Middle East Institute: Washington, 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. H. Thiollet, ‘Migration as Diplomacy: Labour Migrants, Refugees, and Arab Regional Politics in the Oil-Rich Countries’, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 79, (2011), pp. 103-121; F. De Bel-Air, *A Note on Syrian Refugees in the Gulf: Attempting to Assess Data and Policies* (Florence, Italy: European University Institute, 2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Thiollet, ‘Migration as Diplomacy’, p.113, 116. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Klaauw, ‘Refugee Rights in Times of Mixed Migration’, pp.59-86; Linde, ‘Mixed Migration’, pp.89-99; Crush, Chikanda and Tawodzera, ‘[The Third Wave’, pp.363-82](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280445031_The_Third_Wave_Mixed_Migration_from_Zimbabwe_to_South_Africa)  [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. A. Monsutti, ‘Afghan Migratory Strategies and the Three Solutions to the Refugee Problem,’ *Refugee Survey Quarterly* Vol.27, No. 1 (2008), pp.58-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. G. Hourani and E. Sansening-Dabbous, *Insecurity, Migration and Return: The Case of Lebanon Following the Summer 2006 War,* (Florence: European University Institute, 2007); Monsutti; *Afghan Migratory Strategies and the Three Solutions to the Refugee Problem,* pp.58-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. M. Collyer, ‘Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey’, *Journal of Refugee Studies,* Vol.23, No.3 (2010), pp.273-293. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. E. [Collett](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/about/staff/elizabeth-collett), P. [Clewett](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/about/staff/paul-clewett) and  [S. Fratzke](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/about/staff/susan-fratzke), *No Way Out? Making Additional Migration Channels Work for Refugees*. (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. J. Klaauw, ‘Refugee Rights in Times of Mixed Migration: Evolving Status and Protection Issues’, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.4 (2010), pp.59-86; UNHCR, *Yemen Situation. Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan* 2016 (UNHCR, 2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Thiollet, *Migration as Diplomacy*, pp.103-121; De Bel-Air, *A Note on Syrian Refugees in the Gulf;* for more see, UNHCR, *Yemen Situation*. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. In 2015, there were approximately 2.7 million migrants in Kuwait, 1.7 million in Oman, 1.6 million in Qatar and 680,000 in Bahrain. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Total population numbers for 2014 are used in these calculations. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. See <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp_prio_armed_conflict_dataset/> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Egypt experienced major warfare with at least 1000 battle-related deaths in 1967 and 1973: Indonesia in 1961, 1975–1978 and 1981; India in 1962, 1965, 1971, 1988, 1990–1992, 2000 and 2002–2005; Pakistan in 1965, 1971, 1974 and 2008–2014; and the Philippines in 1978, 1981–1987, 1990–1991 and 2000. Bangladesh has not seen any major war since the extremely bloody 1971 war of independence, which in the PRIO/Uppsala data is coded as a Pakistani war (Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan before 1972). [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Bangladesh suffered warfare with at least 25 battle-related deaths in the following periods and years: 1975–1991, 2005–2006; Egypt in 1967, 1969–1970, 1973, 1993–1998, 2014; Indonesia in 1960–1969, 1975–1988, 1990–1992, 1997–2005; India in 1961–1971, 1979–2014; Pakistan in 1964–1965, 1971, 1974–1977, 1984, 1987, 1989–1992, 1994–2004, 2006–2014; the Philippines in 1969–2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. It should be noted that estimates of the numbers of Syrians in the GCC diverge a lot, even those from the UN and the World Bank. According to the dataset from the UN’s Population Division, there were 690,000 Syrians in the Gulf region in 2013, whereas World Bank data claims the number is 1.4 million. See for instance: <http://europe.newsweek.com/gulf-states-are-taking-syrian-refugees-401131?rm=eu> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. In this article, we have chosen to rely on the UN’s estimates for the years 1990–2015 given both the temporal consistency of these data – which include five-year intervals up to and including the year 2015 – and the fact that the UN is generally regarded as the most authoritative source of such data. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. See http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=57066a626&query=refugee asylum 2016 [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Bangladeshi migrations to the GCC commenced for real later, at a time when Bangladesh was no longer a large refugee-producing country. Migrations from Bangladesh to the GCC increased gradually from the late 1970s, attaining the character of large-scale migrations in the 1990s. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Migrations from Syria will be discussed later in the article. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Monsutti, ‘Afghan Migratory Strategies’, pp. 58-73. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. For more see UNHCR, *Yemen Situation.*  [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. For more on mixed migrations from Afghanistan, see also: http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/seeking-safety-jobs-and-more-afghanistans-mixed-flows-test-migration-policies [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Monsutti, ‘Afghan Migratory Strategies’, p. 63. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. K. Koser, *Transition, Crisis and Mobility in Afghanistan: Rhetoric and Reality* (Geneva: IOM, 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. It is assumed that some of these people have migrated directly from Afghanistan to the GCC, while others are Afghan migrants in Pakistan and Iran who subsequently migrated to the GCC hoping to improve their situation. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. See: <http://www.afghanembassy-uae.com/> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. According to Koser, there are at least 150,000 Afghans in the UAE. For more see Koser, *Transition, Crisis and Mobility in Afghanistan.* [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. See <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/general/finally-afghans-get-their-own-passports> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. See for example: <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/08/23/thousands-afghans-being-dispatched-gulf-states-minister> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. See <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/12/13/25000-afghan-workers-being-sent-saudi-arabia> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. D. Sriskandarajah, ‘The Migration–Development Nexus: Sri Lanka Case Study’, *International Migration*, Vol.40, No.5 (2002), pp.283–307; M. **Ember**, C. **Ember**, I. **Skoggard,** *Encyclopedia of Diasporas* (Yale: Springer, 2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. In 2001, the UNHCR estimated the stock of internationally displaced Tamils to be 800,000, most of whom were refugees and asylum seekers, see Sriskandarajah, ‘The Migration–Development Nexus’, pp.283–307 [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Sriskandarajah, ‘The Migration–Development Nexus’, p.289, and p.293 [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. D. Winslow and M. Woost, *Economy, Culture and Civil War in Sri Lanka* (Bloomington IN: University of Indiana Press, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Sriskandarajah, ‘The Migration–Development Nexus: Sri Lanka Case Study’, pp.283–307 [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. See, for example: <http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2014_04.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. For more, see: <http://www.mei.edu/content/sri-lankan-migration-gulf-female-breadwinners-domestic-workers> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Thiollet, ‘Migration as Diplomacy’, p.14, p.16 [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Gulf States are outside the ‘international refugee regime’ but they nonetheless cooperate with it. Recently, the UAE has even used the word ‘refugee’, declaring that it will take in 15,000 ‘refugees’ – the word appearing *in lieu* of the more commonly-employed expression ‘Arab brothers and sisters in distress’. See [http://www.thenational.ae/uae/uae-to-welcome-](http://www.thenational.ae/uae/uae-to-welcome-15000-refugees-from-syria)

[>15000-refugees-from-syria](http://www.thenational.ae/uae/uae-to-welcome-15000-refugees-from-syria) [last accessed 19 May 2017]. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. See <http://www.unhcr.org/5715f0619.html> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. See <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/south%20sudan/217-south-sudan-a-civil-war-by-any-other-name.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]; See also <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4e43cb466.html> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. For more on migration trends from Sudan, see <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mpsudan_18nov2013_final.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. For more on migration trends from Sudan, see <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mpsudan_18nov2013_final.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. For more on the conflict in South Sudan, see <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/south%20sudan/217-south-sudan-a-civil-war-by-any-other-name.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Kapiszewski, *Arab**versus**Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries*; Thiollet, ‘Migration as Diplomacy’, pp.103-121; G, Hourani, ‘**Bilateral Relations, Security and Migration: Lebanese Expatriates in the Gulf States’,** *The European Scientific Journal*, June, (2014), pp.643-657 [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. A comparable example, in the early 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Yemenites were expelled from Saudi Arabia. In 2013, during a clampdown on and the effectuation of systematic deportations of irregular workers from Saudi Arabia, hundreds of thousands of Sudanese risked deportations. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/12/sudan-siding-with-saudi-arabia-long-term-ally-iran> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. **Ember**, **Ember, Skoggard,** *Encyclopedia of Diasporas*; J. Peteet, ‘Problematizing Palestinian Diaspora’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.39, No.4, (2007), pp.627-646. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Peteet, ‘Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora’, pp.627-646; D. Rabinowitz, ‘Postnational Palestine/Israel? Globalization, Diaspora, Transnationalism, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict’, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.26, No.4 (2000), pp.757-772. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. S. Russell, ‘International Migration and Political Turmoil in the Middle East’, *Population and Development Review*, Vol.18, No.4 (1992), pp.719-727. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. G.H. Talhami**,** *Palestinian Refugees: Pawns to Political Actors* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. See, for example: <http://7days.ae/uae-based-palestinians-trapped-in-passport-travel-limbo> [last accessed 24 May 2016]; See also <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e426ab42.html> [last accessed 24 May 2016]; see also <http://www.refworld.org/docid/532024234.html> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Peteet, ‘Problematizing Palestinian Diaspora’, pp.627-646 [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/22/un-accuses-israel-and-hamas-of-possible-war-crimes-during-2014-gaza-war> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. See <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20141203-a-series-on-statelessness-palestinians-fleeing-death-and-destruction-in-syria-are-unwelcome-visitors-in-host-countries/> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Collyer, ‘Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey’, pp.273-293. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. However, it is not known how many of these people will be registered as Syrians (they often have Syrian travel documents). For more on migrations of Syrian Palestinians see: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/palestinian-syrians-refugees-160321055107834.html> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. E. Picard, *Lebanon****,*** *a Shattered Country: Myths and Realities of the Wars in Lebanon* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 2002); J. Bures, *Main Characteristic**and Development Trends**of Migration**in the**Arab World* (Prague: Institute of International Relations, 2008). [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. According to other estimates, the number of Lebanese migrants in the GCC was considerably higher. For other estimates, see: http://www.mei.edu/content/lebanese-migration-gulf-1950-2009 [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. See http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/lebanese-crisis-and-its-impact-immigrants-and-refugees [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Hourani and Sansening-Dabbous, *Insecurity, Migration and Return*. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. According to other estimates, there are 500,000 Lebanese working in the GCC; see: <http://www.ndu.edu.lb/Lerc/publications/LERC-Situation%20Report-Lebanon-GCC%20Bilateral%20Relations-March%202016-Final.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. See http://www.mei.edu/content/lebanese-migration-gulf-1950-2009 [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. For more on Lebanese migrations to the Gulf, see <http://www.mei.edu/content/lebanese-migration-gulf-1950-2009> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. See <http://www.ndu.edu.lb/lerc/publications/LERC-Situation%20Report-Lebanon-GCC%20Bilateral%20Relations-March%202016-Final.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. See <http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/lebanese-expats-fearful-gcc-nations-expel-dozens-100-expelled-bahrain-kuwait-uae-2-months/> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. See <http://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2016-03-30/saudi-iranian-tensions-at-play-in-lebanon> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. See <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/kuwait-joins-gulf-allies-banning-travel-lebanon-160224161730185.html> [last accessed 24 May 2016]; see also <http://www.ndu.edu.lb/Lerc/publications/LERC-Situation%20Report-Lebanon-GCC%20Bilateral%20Relations-March%202016-Final.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. As already mentioned, estimates of the number of Syrians in the GCC diverge a lot. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. See <http://europe.newsweek.com/gulf-states-are-taking-syrian-refugees-401131?rm=eu> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. See also <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34132308> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/webtv/reports/2015/09/08/Half-a-million-Syrians-entered-Saudi-since-the-start-of-the-war.html> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. See UNHCR, *Yemen Situation.* For more on recent developments in mixed migrations from Yemen, see: <http://www.regionalmms.org/indexe5cc.html?id=20> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. UNHCR, *Yemen Situation*, p.7 [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. See Russell, ‘International Migration and Political Turmoil in the Middle East’, pp.719-727; Kapiszewski, *Arab**versus**Asian Migrant Workers* ; See also <https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/2014-07-01-Yemeni-Migrant-Snapshot.pdf> [last accessed 24 May 2016]; <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/countries/saudi/saudi-expatriates-crisis.htm#sthash.RTIje9Nd.dpbs> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. For more, see UNHCR (2016); see also <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/yemen-s-migrants-troubles-don-t-end-saudi-border-384186194> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. M. Kamrava, and Z. Babar, *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); M. Ruhs, [*The Price of Rights: Regulating International Labor Migration*](http://press.princeton.edu/titles/10140.html) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. See Kapiszewski, *Arab**versus**Asian Migrant Workers*; see Hourani, ‘**Bilateral Relations, Security and Migration’,** pp.643-657; see also De Bel-Air, *A Note on Syrian Refugees in the Gulf;* local experts we met have also reported that the GCC countries have restricted immigration via the *Kafala* system of migrants from countries in war, such as Syria, Iraq and Yemen. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. Russell, ‘International Migration and Political Turmoil in the Middle East’, pp*.*719-727; G. Naufal, ‘Labor migration and remittances in the GCC’, *Labor History*, Vol.52, No.3 (2011), pp.307-322 [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. Indeed, the overview of potential mixed migrations to the Gulf reminds us that, in addition to political and social motivations, economic motivations for migration also matter. The prospects of earning an income, parts of which can be sent to families back home in the form of remittances, have clearly constituted an important motivation for migrations to the Gulf. See for example Naufal, ‘Labor migration and remittances in the GCC’, pp.307-322 [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. Relatively well-off Lebanon is the only exception. Still, Lebanon has a considerably lower GDP per capita than GCC countries. In any case, geographic and cultural proximity certainly seems to matter as well. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. See Valenta and Jakobsen, *Moving to the Gulf*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2016.1239885> [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. See Monsutti, ‘Afghan Migratory Strategies’, pp. 58-73; see also: <http://www.mei.edu/content/lebanese-migration-gulf-1950-2009> [last accessed 24 May 2016]. [↑](#endnote-ref-97)