Migration in the Middle East:
Transformation and Change

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1. INTRODUCTION

The large-scale international movement of manpower is one of the most dramatic effects of the oil price increase and related events of 1973. The issues raised by migration in the Middle East have not received the attention they deserve from political analysts, economists, or area specialists. Yet the economic development of the Arab region is critically tied to manpower requirements; many of the bottlenecks and constraints on economic growth stem directly from the flow of labor across national borders. So, too, labor migration is changing the political demography of the region, shaping the parameters for political and social conflict in the years to come.

This paper places contemporary migration in the Middle East in its historical context and then reviews the transformations in migration over the past ten years. It seeks to trace the evolution of migration processes. The basic, guiding proposition is that the "reality" has changed. The challenge lies in delineating these transformations and identifying the various flows and sequences in the evolution of the migration process.

To begin with, it is important to appreciate the distinctive features of migration in the Middle East, for these point to the fundamental nature of the process over the past decade.[1]

First, it is a transfer among developing countries. Labor at first remained largely *within* the region, but it now also comes from other developing countries — mainly from South and East Asia.

Second, it is composed of both skilled and unskilled labor; the *entire* skill and occupational structure of the labor forces is involved in, and in turn is affected by, this movement.

Third, it is not permanent in nature, but *temporary*, generally from one to four years.

Fourth, it is generated and maintained by underlying *economic* and *political* forces that create the incentives for movement and the regulations for controlling the flows.

Fifth, the migration dynamics incorporate decisions made by *different kinds of actors*. Individuals, industrial firms, and governments all respond to the economic and political forces generated by the others.

Sixth, the supply of and demand for labor place pressures on respective national governments for *policy* responses to regulate and facilitate the movement of labor across national boundaries.

2. MIGRATION IN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Earlier Patterns

Contemporary migration in the Middle East can best be understood in the context of the history of the region. The new regional labor flows have helped reverse fifty years of economic fragmentation in the Arab world brought about by the Western powers. The sense of community which had prevailed under Ottoman rule disintegrated with the dismantling of the Empire and the division of its territory by the British and French between World Wars I and II. The new colonial powers proceeded to erect significant trade barriers in order to preserve their economic advantage. They completed the economic penetration and

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reorientation of the region with the establishment of separate customs territories, with different units of currency, during the 1920s.

Significant increases in tariffs on intraregional trade and the new monetary dichotomy, which tied the countries to the British pound sterling and the French franc, continued to adversely affect inter-Arab trade throughout the 1930s. This economic disintegration led to fragmentation of labor markets. Nevertheless, two distinct migration flows took hold and were maintained during the period. The first was the movement of Egyptian teachers and administrators into other countries; the second was the flow of unskilled workers, primarily Yemenis to Saudi Arabia and Sudanese to Egypt. Both trends continue today, but they have been supplemented by larger and more complex flows. In the decade of the 1960s, two additional flows emerged, completing this traditional setting. One was the migration of Turks to Germany and Austria, the other was the movement of Algerians to France. Both were extra-regional migrations, pulling labor out of the Middle East into the economies of the West. These additional flows thus sharply contrast with the earlier streams, in this traditional phase. Of course, the mobility of Palestinians, motivated by obvious conflict dynamics, led to a massive displacement that is essentially refugeeism, not migration.[2]

Until the events of 1973, the strong political differences among the countries of the region, coupled with differences in their posture on Cold War politics, created further political barriers to mobility. The fragmentation of labor markets persisted. Despite efforts at regional cooperation, the economic disintegration of the inter-war period continued unabated until that fateful year. Then the traditional forms of mobility merged with new streams to change the demography of the region.

2.2 New Wealth[3]

The oil price increases of 1973 led to massive investments in all oil exporting countries which greatly increased the demand for labor. Wages and employment opportunities grew. Labor from other countries responded to the prospect of higher wages. At the same time, Egypt's "open door" policy had removed political obstacles to movement of labor for Egyptians and a more conciliatory posture toward other Arab countries encouraged Arab governments to recruit Egyptians. These factors contributed to massive shifts of manpower throughout the region.

Although some countries, such as Algeria, continued to export unskilled labor to Europe, a new profile of labor migration began to emerge. First, the primary destination of the migrant flow changed from Europe to the oil-rich states. Second, the scale of migration expanded. Labor began to exhibit its now legendary mobility. Exporters of predominantly skilled labor like Egypt became major sources of exports of *all* skills. Every state either imported or exported workers; some did both. Everyone seemed to be on the move.

By 1975 another phenomenon emerged, further transforming the labor structure of the Arab world: large-scale migration of Asian labor. Both politics and markets played a role in the new interregional flow. The Gulf states needed to tap new sources to meet the apparently insatiable demand for labor. Asians would accept working conditions that Arabs would refuse. They appeared better disciplined and more productive. In addition, Asians had a distinct political advantage: the Gulf states worried less about Asian workers making claims for citizenship. They were alien and could remain disenfranchised. The Asians were regarded as more likely to be passive observers of political processes than potential activists or claimants on social services and other benefits.

3. TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MIGRATION PROCESS

In the past it has been customary to view the Arab world as a closed demographic system with relatively little inflow or outflow of population, despite the Algerian flows to France. This view came to rest in the post-1973 period.

Economic changes induced by the oil price increases created a dynamic process that fundamentally changed both the view of and the reality in the Arab world. For example, in 1962 there were 100,000 Egyptians abroad, mostly permanent migrants; in 1983 there are close to 2 million Egyptians in the Middle East, most of these being away only temporarily. Some observers argue for an even higher estimate. These migrant workers constitute about 10-15 percent of the country's labor force. Data problems aside, such magnitudes represent qualitative changes in both the structure and the composition of the labor force. Between 1973 and 1983 the employment and labor matrices of almost all Arab states experienced substantial adjustments and transformations.

The most important fact about migration in the Middle East is its dynamism.[4] In retrospect we

TABLE 1
Migrant Workers by Origin and Destination, Circa 1970

		ORIGIN										
DESTINATION	YEAR	PDR Yemen	Egypt	Syria	Palestinians	Lebanon	Jordan	Oman	Other Arab Countries	All Arab Countries	Non-Arab Countries	Unknown
Saudi Arabia	1970	200,000 250,000	n.a.	[40,000]	[50,000]	[30,000]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	[345,000]	n.a.	[55,000]
Kuwait	1970	6,898	17,714	12,659	*	8,419	41,299	10,483	24,467	121,939	53.500	-
Libya	1973	-	60,752	6,162	4,324	8,324	4,324	-	24,215	108,101	20,300	-
Lebanon	1970	n.a.	4,500	33,800	8,100	-	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	46,400	n.a.	21,600
U.A.E.	1968	n.a.	11,100	-	6,640	n.a.	6,640	6,640	4,430	35,450	8,819	n.a.
Qatar	1970	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	[24,000]	[16,090]	n.a.
Bahrain	1971	[2,000]	n.a.	n.a.	[2,000]	n.a.	[2,000]	[5,600]	[4,000]	[15,600]	[6,000]	[751]
Oman	1973	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	[2,000]	[3,000]	n.a.
TOTAL	circa 1970	233,898	94,066	92,621	71,064	46,743	54,263	22,723	57,112	648,490	107,709	77,351

NOTES: Figures in brackets denote rough estimates.
n.a. = not available
*included with Jordanians
† despite the label, this category almost certainly must include North Yemen.

SOURCE: Adapted from Abdelmegid M. Farrag, "Migration Between Arab Countries," in *Manpower and Employment in Arab Countries: Some Critical Issues* (Geneva: International Labor Office), 1975, p. 105 (numerical discrepancies have been corrected).

can distinguish at least five phases in the flow of labor across national boundaries. While not mutually exclusive, they characterize substantially different types of movements dominant at each point in time. Together they reveal the underlying shifts that have taken place as the individual economies of the area adjust to new realities.

3.1 The Traditional Context

The first phase in the migration process ended with the events of October 1973. As noted earlier, the region experienced three types of intra-regional flows. Egyptians (and, to some extent, Jordanians) migrated to other Arab countries, principally as teachers and administrators. The small numbers involved made control possible since it required minimal organization or regulation by the governments of both sending and receiving states' policies to set out procedures for individual secondment or official state-to-state missions. The movement was likened to the "brain drain" phenomenon, allegedly depriving the sending country of valuable skills and manpower.

At the same time unskilled Yemenis and Sudanese would migrate to the service and construction sectors of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Although the migration of Palestinians was a non-voluntary movement resulting from violence and coercion, the refugees came to play a central role in many of the labor importing countries.

Table 1 (p. 18) presents the stocks of migrant workers by countries of origin and destination for the period around 1970. All but 12 percent of the migrant workers originated from other Arab states. No single migrant group dominated the labor force of any one country, with the exception of the 200-250 thousand Yemenis working in Saudi Arabia.

Four types of migration patterns characterized the countries of the region.

(i) countries that exported unskilled or relatively unskilled labor to Europe (Algeria, Turkey) or the Gulf region and Libya (North and South Yemen and Syria);

(ii) countries that imported a small number of workers at all levels of skills (the Gulf region and Libya);

(iii) countries that exported relatively highly skilled labor (Egypt and Jordan);

(iv) countries exhibiting a relative self-sufficiency in manpower (Morocco and Tunisia).

3.2 Exploding Demand

The oil price increases of 1973 initiated, almost overnight, the second phase in the migration process. The massive investments in economic structure and industry led to an explosive demand for labor. The Arab world witnessed large-scale adjustments in their national labor forces and a general expansion of economic interactions.

By 1975 the evolution of migration flows resulted in a new, fivefold regional profile:

(i) countries that imported labor of all kinds (the Gulf states and Libya);

(ii) countries that sent skilled and unskilled labor (Egypt and Jordan);

(iii) countries that exported their skilled labor to fill unskilled occupations in the receiving countries (such as the Sudan or Yemen);

(iv) countries that sent labor to Europe and began to import skilled labor from elsewhere in the Middle East (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco);

(v) countries that *both* exported and imported labor (Iraq and Oman).

Table 2 (pp. 20-1) depicts both the expansion and the diversification of migrant flows. The stock of migrant workers mushroomed from 880,000 to over 1,800,000 between 1970 and 1975, most of that occurring in the last two years. Increased migration from the traditional labor exporting countries as well as new labor exporters fueled this growth. Egypt's role as a supplier of labor expanded dramatically. Sadat's open door policy, beginning in 1973, paved the way for Egyptians to take advantage of both the employment opportunities and the higher wages in the oil-rich countries. Thus, when oil prices exploded, both skilled and unskilled Egyptian workers flocked to the oil exporters, transforming Egypt from an important (but by no means dominant) labor exporter to the largest source of labor in the Middle East. Over time this massive outflow of labor created bottlenecks in Egypt's own development projects. Popular support for the opportunity to migrate prevented the government from taking any regulatory action. Worker remittances created further disincentives for establishing official controls over this migration.

In conjunction with the surge of Egyptian workers, Yemenis, Jordanians, and Palestinians moved in massive numbers to the Gulf. By the mid-1970s one fourth of North Yemen's labor force was in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. Table 2 indicates that over 250,000 Jordanians and Palestinians found employment in the labor importers. These figures must be compared with a Jordanian workforce of 400,000.[5] However, a significant proportion of the workers are in fact Palestinians travelling with Jordanian passports and should not be included in the assessment. A

TABLE 2
Migrant Workers in the Arab Middle East by Nationality and Country of Employment, 1975

COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT	Egyptian (%)	Yemeni (YAR) (%)	Jordanian and Palestinian (%)	Yemeni (PDRY) (%)	Syrian (%)	Lebanese (%)	Sudanese (%)	Tunisian (%)	Omani (%)
Saudi Arabia	95,000 (23.9)	280,400 (94.9)	175,000 (44.1)	55,000 (77.9)	15,000 (21.3)	20,000 (40.3)	35,000 (76.3)	-	17,500 (45.6)
Libya	229,500 (57.8)	-	14,150 (5.3)	-	13,000 (10.5)	5,700 (11.5)	7,000 (15.3)	34,000 (99.6)	-
U.A.E.	12,500 (3.1)	4,500 (1.6)	14,500 (5.5)	4,500 (6.4)	4,500 (6.4)	4,500 (9.0)	1,500 (3.2)	-	14,000 (36.4)
Kuwait	37,558 (9.4)	2,757 (1.0)	47,653 (18.0)	8,658 (12.2)	16,547 (23.4)	7,232 (14.6)	873 (1.9)	40 (0.1)	3,660 (9.5)
Qatar	2,850 (0.7)	1,250 (0.4)	6,000 (2.3)	1,250 (1.8)	750 (1.1)	500 (1.0)	400 (0.9)	-	1,870 (4.9)
Bahrain	1,237 (0.3)	1,121 (0.4)	614 (0.7)	1,122 (1.4)	60 (0.1)	129 (0.3)	400 (0.9)	-	1,383 (3.6)
Jordan	5,300 (1.3)	-	-	-	20,000 (28.4)	7,500 (15.1)	-	-	-
Oman	4,600 (1.2)	100 (0.0)	1,600 (0.6)	100 (0.1)	400 (0.6)	1,100 (2.2)	500 (1.1)	100 (0.3)	-
Yemen (YAR)	2,000 (0.5)	-	200 (1.9)	-	150 (6.0)	-	-	-	-
Iraq	7,000 (1.8)	-	5,000 (1.9)	-	-	3,000 (6.0)	200 (0.4)	-	-
TOTAL	397,545 (100.0)	290,120 (100.0)	264,717 (100.0)	70,630 (100.0)	70,415 (100.0)	49,661 (100.0)	45,873 (100.0)	34,649 (100.0)	36,413 (100.0)

COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT	Iraqi (%)	Somali (%)	Moroccan (%)	Algerian (%)	ALL ARAB (%)	Pakistani (%)	Indian (%)	Other Asian (%)	ALL ASIAN (%)	TOTAL (%)

TOTAL	397,545 (100.0)	290,120 (100.0)	264,717 (100.0)	70,630 (100.0)	70,415 (100.0)	49,661 (100.0)	45,873 (100.0)	34,649 (100.0)	36,413 (100.0)	

COUNTRY OF EMPLOYMENT	Iraqi (%)	Somali (%)	Moroccan (%)	Algerian (%)	ALL ARAB (%)	Pakistani (%)	Indian (%)	Other Asian (%)	ALL ASIAN (%)	TOTAL (%)
Saudi Arabia	2,000 (9.7)	5,000 (76.4)	-	-	699,900 (54.0)	15,000 (7.9)	15,000 (9.7)	8,000 (54.1)	38,000 (10.4)	773,400 (42.5)
Libya	-	-	2,500 (98.9)	-	310,350 (24.0)	4,500 (2.4)	500 (0.3)	500 (3.4)	5,500 (1.5)	332,354 (10.3)
U.A.E.	500 (2.4)	1,000 (15.2)	-	-	62,000 (4.8)	100,000 (52.4)	61,500 (30.8)	2,000 (13.5)	163,500 (45.4)	251,900 (13.9)
Kuwait	17,999 (87.3)	247 (3.8)	29 (1.1)	18 (100.0)	143,280 (11.1)	11,038 (5.8)	21,475 (13.9)	1,103 (7.5)	33,616 (9.4)	208,001 (11.4)
Qatar	-	-	-	-	124,870 (1.1)	16,000 (8.4)	16,000 (10.5)	2,000 (13.5)	34,000 (9.4)	53,714 (3.0)
Bahrain	126 (0.6)	-	-	-	4,200 (0.5)	6,620 (3.5)	8,943 (5.8)	981 (6.6)	16,604 (4.6)	29,201 (1.6)
Jordan	-	-	-	-	32,800 (2.4)	-	-	-	-	32,900 (1.8)
Oman	-	300 (4.6)	-	-	8,800 (0.7)	32,500 (17.0)	24,000 (16.8)	200 (1.4)	54,700 (16.3)	70,700 (3.9)
Yemen (YAR)	-	-	-	-	2,350 (0.2)	-	-	-	-	2,450 (0.1)
Iraq	-	-	-	-	15,200 (1.2)	5,000 (2.6)	5,000 (3.2)	-	30,000 (2.6)	65,700 (3.6)
TOTAL	20,625 (100.0)	6,947 (100.0)	2,529 (100.0)	18 (100.0)	1,295,750 (100.0)	190,718 (100.0)	154,418 (100.0)	14,794 (100.0)	349,920 (100.0)	1,820,000 (100.0)

NOTES: "-" indicates no migrants of this nationality recorded.

Numbers specific to one digit possess a greater reliability than those rounded to 000s. Totals are left specific to one digit, but they are only as reliable as the figures which sum to their total.

Total includes migrants from areas other than Asia or the Arab world.

SOURCE: J. S. Birks and C. A. Sinclair, "International Migration in the Arab World: Rapid Growth, Changing Patterns, and Broad Implications," paper prepared for a seminar on Population, Employment, and Migration in the Arab Gulf States, Kuwait, December 16-18, 1978, p. 9.

reasonable calculation assumes about an equal number of Jordanians and Palestinians. This still means that some 30 percent of the Jordanian labor force was working in other countries during the mid-1970s — a very high figure indeed. By that time labor exports from North Yemen and Jordan approached their ceiling; little additional growth could be expected from either source. Other Arab countries expanded their exports of workers, but the numbers were quite marginal in comparison. Sudan and Somalia also began to supply small numbers of workers.

In short, the period 1975-76 was particularly dynamic for the political economy of the Arab world, yet the new equilibrium in the disposition of the regional labor forced proved transitional. A convergence of labor shifts, economic change, and massive investment programs contributed to the emergence of the next phase.

3.3 Asians in the Gulf

The third phase in the migration process evolved through the latter part of the 1970s. Arabs continued to migrate, but the Gulf states began to admit larger numbers of South Asian workers. Indians, Pakistanis, and to a lesser extent Bangladeshis had earlier migrated in small numbers but now increased their presence in the Gulf states. Table 2 shows the presence of sizable Pakistani and Indian communities by 1975. These two groups accounted for 18 percent of all migrant workers, while Arabs comprised about 60-70 percent.

Two factors led to the large scale entry of Asians into the labor markets of the Middle East. First, the size of the demand for migrant workers out-stripped the ability of Arab states to supply them easily. Second, South Asian workers willingly accepted jobs and wages that Arab workers found unacceptable or could not fill effectively. This Asian migrant flow expanded rapidly, challenging the position of the traditional suppliers. Some evidence suggests that Indians and Pakistanis supplanted Egyptians and Jordanians in some of the more skilled occupations.

From less than 200,000 in 1975, the number of Pakistanis working in the Middle East skyrocketed to 500,000 in 1977; by 1979 the figure reached 1.25 million. The number of Egyptians continued to grow rapidly, from 330,000-400,000 in 1975 to 600,000 in 1976 to 1,365,000 in 1978. If these figures are close to being correct, Egypt and Pakistan clearly dominated the labor flows in the late 1970s. They also indicate that the migration phenomenon is much larger than depicted by reports based on data collected in 1975 for the World Bank and the International Labor Office.

The number of North Yemeni and Indian migrants reinforces these assertions. North Yemen managed to increase its export of workers to 500,000 or more by 1977. India, like Pakistan, emerged as an equally important supplier, with 500,000 workers in the Gulf by 1979. India and Pakistan forced Egypt and North Yemen to share their positions in the Gulf labor markets. Asians were now almost as important as Arabs in the region.

By this time the Gulf states had — to different degrees — initiated various policies designed to deal with the influx of foreigners and to control the different national groups and the extent of their contact with the host societies. For example, Saudi Arabia decided to strictly enforce its border-crossing procedures, thus constricting the flow of Yemenis into the country. Arab sending states also began to try to organize policy responses to counter what looked like negative effects of migration, including proving shortages of skilled manpower and the failure to attract a large enough share of worker remittances. This phase marks the beginning of the intense politicization of migration in both senders and receivers.

3.4 Complexity in the Composition of Migrants

The fourth phase emerged by the end of the decade, marked by two new trends. First, the composition of Asian labor grew increasingly complex. Koreans, Taiwanese, Filipinos, and others began to appear in the Gulf and elsewhere. This labor was accompanied by a new set of institutional and economic relations. Second, governments in both sending and receiving countries assumed a much more active role in managing the flows.

By 1977 South Korea and Bangladesh began increasing their exports of workers. By 1979 the Philippines and Thailand were also sending enough workers that they too were counted separately. These trends continued into the 1980s. Table 3 (p. 26) presents estimates of the number of East Asian workers in the Middle East through the early 1980s. China, Taiwan, and Indonesia, while small in terms of absolute numbers, nevertheless are important. Together with South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, they represent the eastward expansion of the Middle East migration phenomenon.

The incentives to employ East Asians differ from those which led to the migration of South Asian labor. First, in many instances East Asian firms tendered lower bids for construction projects. More importantly, East Asian firms offered a novel method of supplying workers which would minimize their contact with and effect upon the labor importing countries. Since the labor importing countries had become sensitive to the large numbers of foreign workers already in their midst, the labor importers welcomed this alternative source of labor and the arrangements under which they were recruited. East Asian (particularly South Korean and Taiwanese) firms built work camps to house, feed, entertain, and otherwise support their workers. They could control their workers and prevent them from interacting with the local population.

Comprehensive estimates of the stock of migrant workers in the Middle East for 1980 are still not available. Projections based on the data reproduced in Table 2 show a declining proportion of Arab workers, from 70.8 percent in 1975 to 62.5 percent in 1980, and a rising proportion of Asians from 20.2 percent to 29.1 percent.[6] Unfortunately, these figures consistently underestimate the growth in Asian migration.

Information on remittances for 1979 point to an Asian presence in Arab countries that is as strong as that of migrant Arab workers. The combined remittances for Egypt and North Yemen total $3.4 billion (U.S.). For Pakistan and India the sum is $3.1 billion.[7] Without evidence to the contrary, the safest assumption is that migrants from different countries remit approximately the same proportion of their wages. Under that assumption the sheer magnitude of Asian migration becomes obvious. In fact, India's role as a labor exporter appears to be at least as large as that of Pakistan.

Drawing upon the most recent available information, Table 4 (p. 27) presents our own estimates of the number of migrant workers by exporter and importer in the early 1980s. The size of the labor force in each state and the proportion of migrant workers are presented as well. Relying on data drawn mainly from the labor receiving countries, it appears that by the beginning of the present decade some 3.5–4 million migrants were working in the Gulf. To place that number in perspective, the domestic workforces in the labor importers total to 2 million. That means over 60 percent of the workers in the oil-rich countries are migrants. Alternatively, if we use information provided by labor sending states on numbers of nationals abroad, the total migrant population reaches as high as 5.5-6 million.[8] This significant discrepancy in accounts again raises the question of whether or not the most widely quoted sources consistently underestimate the size of the migrant population. Leaving aside the problems with the data, these numbers graphically underscore the pervasiveness of the migration phenomenon. With figures such as this it should come as no surprise that governments became directly involved in the migration at the end of the 1970s. Further, labor importing countries were becoming much more concerned with urging, if not forcing, migrants to return home upon completion of their contracts.

3.5 Stabilization and Shifts in Composition

New factors and trend suggest the emergence of a fifth phase in migration of labor: a period of stabilization and perhaps a decline in the total number of migrants. It is further characterized by a shift in the sectoral allocation of labor from construction to industry and service; a concomitant shift in demand for higher skilled workers; and a relative (small) increase in the proportion of East Asian workers. These changes result from a combination of three factors: structural change in the economies of the labor importers; an end to the financial surplus for some of the importers; and political opposition to continued unbridled growth, motivated, in part, by the large number of migrants living in host countries. Migration in the Middle East may well have reached its peak.

One important characteristic of each phase in the migration process is that each one was superimposed upon the previous pattern. Indeed, each new phase brought an additional flow with attendant political and economic characteristics, creating a substantially more complex web of interdependence.

4. ASIANS IN THE ARAB WORLD

By 1980 Asians accounted for approximately one-third of the foreign labor force in the region. According to the high growth scenario of a recent World Bank study, the Arab proportion of the foreign workforce in the Gulf will decline from 65 percent in 1975 to 52 percent in 1985.[9] They forecast an increase in the percentage from the Indian subcontinent, from 21.6 percent (1975) to 25.6 percent (1985); workers from the Far East will soar from 1.3 percent of the total foreign labor force to 10.5 percent. Given the differences of opinion over these forecasts, it is nonetheless plausible to expect the Asian presence to be an essential feature of the region's demography through the decade and possibly even longer.

Asian migration to the Middle East is distinctive in that it encompasses the entire cross-section of skills in the sending countries but concentrates heavily in specific sectors; it occurs as a result of officially sanctioned policies; and it represents the migration of both individual workers and entire corporations to the receiving states. In contrast with the Arab migration, Asians appear relatively more formalized in structure and in process. So, too, Asian states consciously view labor transfers as part of a strategy to restructure overall relations between themselves and the Arab world. As with Arabs, Asian exporters consider migration as a temporary situation, a way to pay their oil import bills; however, they also wish to establish longer term trading relationships. The Asian senders and the Arab labor importers seek to control and regulate the flow of labor, making it the basis for broader interaction.

The clearest distinction between Asian labor and Arab labor (in all the phases of migration to date) is that the former includes a highly *organized* component, regulated by governments and corporations, whereas the latter, though regulated in some occupations (such as education), has been generally unorganized and *individual* (or private) in nature. This difference suggests that the policy issues raised by Asian labor are substantially different than in the more traditional forms of migration of Arab citizens.

5. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Five trends shape this (current) fifth phase in Middle East migration:[10]

First, the regional movement of labor continues, but at a slower pace, as the basic infrastructural projects in the oil exporting countries are near completion.

Second, the migration process grows more organized on both the sending and receiving ends. Dislocations caused by the tremendous growth of migration in the early and mid 1970s, the intent of exporters to capture an increasing share of remittances, and a desire on the part of labor exporters to offer an attractive labor "package" led to efforts to bring migration under tighter control.

Third, the national composition of migrants grows more diverse, as Pakistanis, Indians, Koreans, and others respond to the demand for labor in Arab countries. The new flows are partly a response to market conditions and partly fueled by political concerns. However, market conditions seem to be more important in determining trends and patterns of migration.

Fourth, labor issues in the 1980s will be shaped not only by magnitude of demand, but more directly by the structure and composition of that demand. Transformations in the economies of the importing countries generate demand for new mixes of skills. Responses to this demand will inevitably influence the composition of the labor forces in the sending countries.

Fifth, the need for a practical, comprehensive labor exchange policy between exporters and importers emerges as the region experiences the effects of a contraction in economic activity due to the decline in petroleum prices.

Perhaps the most important consequence of this emerging fifth phase involves the political repercussions of this potential decline for the exporting countries. A large cadre of returning migrant workers accustomed to higher incomes and better jobs could be a source of political pressure. The large number of workers who did not nor will not have the opportunity to "strike it rich" by working abroad poses an even greater threat to political cohesion. Countries such as Egypt or Yemen must face the possibility of disgruntlement in some quarters if or when the option to migrate is no longer available for many workers in the labor force.

The future of migrant labor in the Middle East will be influenced by economic conditions, including changes in the domestic labor forces of the receiving countries and future investment patterns. Political factors are much harder to assay and we approach them warily. At present some observers have noted a trend toward a renewed preference for Arab workers. While domestic pressures to reduce non-Arab and non-Muslim workers could become real, for the moment such views are purely speculative.

The influence of political-security concerns in the conservative Gulf states, combined with the attractive, economically efficient export policies of the East Asians and the still strong comparative advantage of traditional Arab senders in some sectors, could lead to a more or less formalized segmentation of the Gulf labor markets. Egyptians will not be easily dislodged from their position in the education systems of the various Gulf states. Other areas may be equally impervious to new entrants. The language and cultural ties make Arab nationals the first choice in service and government sector posts. At the same time Asian states promise efficiency as well as access to relatively sophisticated technologies and to a wide range of nonmigration-related economic activities. Their strength in the construction sector may be matched in electronics and other manufacturing ventures.

In conclusion, we continue to observe changes in migration processes. Transformations in the flows have been dramatic. New conditions generated in both sending and receiving countries lead to demands for new sources of supply and to changes in the quantities and skill mixes supplied. The expanded role of Asians — a reflection of this underlying dynamism — will doubtless influence the evolution of the next phase in Middle Eastern migration. The resulting segmentation in labor markets will shape the political demography of the region through this decade.

FOOTNOTES

1. This paper draws upon internal reports prepared as part of an ongoing research project entitled "Population Movements in the Middle East," supported by the Ford Foundation. It also draws upon research on labor migration completed under the auspices of the Technology Adaptation Program at M.I.T. See Nazli Choucri, *Migration Processes among Developing Countries* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Center for International Studies), 1978; and Nazli Choucri, *Migration in the Middle East: The Egyptian Case* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T., Technology Adaptation Program), 1982.

2. Nazli Choucri, *Population and Conflict: New Dimensions of Population Dynamics* (United Nations Fund for Population Activities, Policy Development Study Number 8), 1983.

3. See Nazli Choucri, "The Arab World in the 1980s: Macro-Politics and Economic Change," in *Journal of Arab Affairs*, vol. 1 (1982), pp. 167-187.

4. This section is prepared in collaboration with Peter Brecke, doctoral candidate, Department of Political Science, M.I.T. Mr. Brecke's assistance in careful reconstruction of dynamic processes from disparate and confusing data demonstrates considerable skill in analysis of underlying processes.

5. Joan Clarke, "Jordan: A Labor Receiver — A Labor Supplier," paper prepared for the AID/Near East Bureau Seminar on Labor Migration in the Middle East, Washington, D.C., 20 September 1977.

6. J. S. Birks and C. A. Sinclair, "International Migration in the Arab World: Rapid Growth, Changing Patterns, and Broad Implications," paper prepared for a seminar on Population, Employment, and Migration in the Arab Gulf States, Kuwait, December 16-18, p. 9.

7. Remittance figures for Egypt, North Yemen, and Pakistan come from *Balance of Payments Statistics*, vol. 32, Yearbook Part 1, 1981. The figure for India comes from Myron Weiner, "International Migration and Development: Indians in the Persian Gulf," *Population and Development Review*, vol. 8 (1982), p. 4. The value of remittances to each country was:

Egypt	\$2.2 billion
North Yemen	\$1.2 billion
Pakistan	\$1.5 billion
India	\$1.6 billion

8. Including the Asian states which do not appear in Table 4.

9. See I. Serageldin et al., *Manpower and International Labor Migration in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

10. Nazli Choucri (with the collaboration of Peter Brecke), *Migration in the Middle East: Transformations, Policies, and Processes* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Technology Adaptation Program), 1983; and Nazli Choucri and Supriya Lahiri, *Macro-Economic Impacts of Remittances in Egypt: An Exploratory Analysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Technology Adaptation Program, Report 83-10), 1983.

TABLE 3
Composite Estimates of the Stock of Asian Workers in the Middle East, Recent Years

	1975	1977	1979	1980	1981	1982
India	154,000		300,000 500,000		250,000	913,000
Pakistan	191,000	500,000	200,000 1,246,000		775,000	
Bangladesh		50,000	100,000		178,500	
Sri Lanka					50,000	
Indonesia				8-14,000	20,000	
Korea		60,000	80,000		182,400	
Philippines			80,000		342,300	
Thailand			30,000		159,000	200,000
Taiwan				3,397		
China				13,000		100,000

SOURCES

1975: J. S. Birks and C. A. Sinclair, "International Migration in the Arab World: Rapid Growth, Changing Patterns, and Broad Implications." Paper prepared for the Seminar on Population, Employment, and Migration in the Arab Gulf States, Kuwait, 16-18 December 1978, p. 9.

1977: S. Gerakis and S. Thayanithy, "Wave of Middle East Migration Raises Questions of Policy in Many Countries," *IMF Survey*, vol. 7 (1978), p. 261.

1979: The primary source is the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 May 1979, p. 38. The number for Pakistan is obviously too low. The alternative estimate comes from Ijaz Gilani, *Pakistani Emigration to the Middle East: A Cost-Benefit Analysis*. Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, 1981, p. 23. The second figure for India comes from Myron Weiner, "International Migration and Development: Indians in the Persian Gulf," *Population and Development Review*, vol. 8 (1982), p. 31.

1980: Data gathered in Lily Ling, "East Asian Migration to the Middle East: Causes, Consequences, and Considerations," *International Migration Review*, forthcoming.

1981: All figures from Lionel Demery, "Asian Labor Migration to the Middle East: An Empirical Assessment." Paper delivered to the Conference on Asian Labor Migration to the Middle East, East-West Center, Hawaii, 19-23 September 1983. He admits that the Indian figure is unreliable.

1982: Figure for India is from A.K. Tandon, "Policies and Programmes Concerning Labor Migration from India to the Middle East." Conference on Asian Labor Migration to the Middle East, East-West Center, Hawaii, 19-23 September 1983; the entry for Thailand is cited in Vichitra Prompunthum, "Overseas Employment Policy in Thailand," East-West Center Conference. The number for China comes from the *Middle East Economic Digest*, 8 October 1982, pp. 75-84.

TABLE 4
Migrant Workers as a Proportion of the Labor Force in Several Middle East Countries in the Early 1980s

	Exports of Migrant Workers to Libya and the Gulf Region	Imports of Foreign Workers	Labor Force	Proportion of Migrant Workers to Labor Force
Algeria	(650,000)		4,000,000	(16)
Bahrain		80,700	137,900	59
Egypt	2,000,000		11,000,000	18
Iraq		.75-1 million	4-4.3 million	19-25
Jordan	300,000	120,000	450,000	67 27
Kuwait		378,710	482,000	79
Lebanon	140,000		700,000	20
Libya		467,000	920,000	51
Morocco	(366,000)		5,800,000	(6)
Oman	50,000	145,000	298,000	17 49
Qatar		94,400	111,400	85
Saudi Arabia		1.1-2 million	2.5-3.4 million	44-59
Sudan	200,000		5,695,000	4
Syria	80,000		2,400,000	3
Tunisia	80,000 (350,000)		1,400,000	6 (25)
Turkey	250,000 (1,000,000)		15,000,000	2 (7)
UAE		491,000	551,000	89
Yemen, A.R.	600,000		2,350,000	26
Yemen, P.D.R.	80,000		430,000	19
Pakistan	1,400,000		23,650,000	6

SOURCE: Nazli Choucri (with the collaboration of Peter Brecke), *Migration in the Middle East: Transformations, Policies, and Processes*, 2 vols., Technology Adaptation Program Report No. 83-3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1983), Table 3-7; see notes to Table 3-7 for individual country sources. These figures are compiled on the basis of information from Arab states. Data from Asian sending countries, by destination, result in substantially larger numbers for the Gulf states' expatriate labor force.