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JOHN CHALCRAFT

Abstract

Migrants make up a greater proportion of the workforce in the Arabian peninsula than perhaps in any other region of the world. Migration politics, however, has been either understudied – in comparative politics and conventional economics – or treated by authors influenced by modernization theory and Marxism alike in a deterministic manner. Using Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, historic bloc and alternative hegemony, this paper aims to analyse the significance of migration for the changing fate of monarchy in the region since 1945. On the basis of primary and secondary sources in Arabic and English I argue that migration has played two different roles in the region. In the 1950s and 1960s, it formed a part of an oppositional bloc challenging monarchy. From the 1970s to the 2000s, however, the oppositional bloc dissolved and migration became an adjunct rather than a challenge to the ruling order.

INTRODUCTION

Historians and social scientists have done remarkably little to connect migration to the changing fate of monarchy in recent decades on the Arabian peninsula. The literature on monarchy and patrimonial rule – dominated by comparative politics, but including some history and anthropology – has almost completely omitted to discuss the political significance of migration (Anderson 1991, 2000; Ashton 2008; Ayalon 2000; Beblawi 1990; Crystal 1990; Damis 1992; Davidson 2008; Entelis 1976, 1989; Halliday 2000; Hammoudi 1997; Huntington 1968; Khalaf 1992, 2000; Kostiner 2000; Luciani 1990; Maddy-Weitzman 2000; Mahdavy 1970; Okruhlik 1999; Ross 2001; Shlaim 2007; Waterbury 1970, 1973; Zagorski 2009; Zartman 1987). The emphasis has instead been on the ways in which monarchs have overcome the dilemmas of modernization and, more *sotto voce*, the contradictions of capitalism, through great-power support, the crafting of states and building of coalitions (using rents where possible), and on the way rulers have identified themselves as generous father-figures, authentic yet modernizing guardians of national, Arab and Islamic traditions and values. The relative lack of attention to migration may be regarded as a surprise given the fact that in six of the eight surviving monarchies in the Arab world, the workforce is between one-half and nine-tenths foreign.

On the other hand, the literature on migration to the Gulf – dominated by economics – has done surprisingly little to probe the political significance of migration. The dominant approach since the 1970s has analysed migrants as

‘manpower requirements’ in a story of ‘economic growth’ in which expert planners and responsible authorities either succeed or fail in implementing migration policies that will guarantee the undistorted operation of the market – while paying due attention to local ‘cultural’ and ‘demographic’ concerns (Bhagwati 1984; Birks and Sinclair 1980; Fergany 1982; Kapiszeswki 2001; Seccombe 1983, 1987; Seccombe and Lawless 1986; Serageldin 1983; Sherbiny 1981, 1984). This approach occludes both its own politics and those of migrant ‘manpower’ by making the profoundly unequal and consequential control over *persons*, their livelihoods and social and political relations, appear merely as the neutral and technocratic management of *things*. At best, such approaches only inform a conversation about markets and growth, which, in some very deliberate sense, is all they purport to do. They have done little to illuminate, except as primary sources, the political role played by migrants in the changing fate of monarchies in the Gulf (cf. Longva 1997: 2).

Authors influenced by Marxism have argued that migration has been a way to divide and defeat the challenge posed to monarchy by the emergent forces of a socialist working class (Disney 1977: 22; Franklin 1985; Halliday 1977a, 1980, 1984; Khalaf 1985; Lackner 1978: 194, 197, 216). And scattered references, by writers influenced by modernization theory, to the convenience to ruling families of having an ‘apolitical’ and ‘transient’ workforce (for example, Davidson 2008) suggest an at least implicit account in which foreign and ‘disposable’ migrant workers helped reforming patrimonial rulers overcome the dilemmas of modernization. The problem with both of these accounts, however, is that they rely on determinist, materialist and teleological expectations of who workers are and how they are supposed to behave. Migrants are supposed to spring, fully formed, from the socioeconomic base, and then enter the political superstructure in order to enact certain anti-monarchical positions. Clearly this socioeconomic determinism will not do.

The literature treating migrants as acculturated subjects, however, and that which takes politics more seriously, is growing (Abu Lughod 1985; Choucri 1986; Kapiszewski 2001; Khoury 1981; Lackner 1978; Longva 1997; Louër 2008; Russell 1988, 1989; Russell and Al-Ramadhan 1994; Vitalis 2007; Weiner 1982). The point of departure for this paper is best articulated by Longva: ‘[a]n approach that recognizes labor migration as an integral part of social life in the region is ... urgently needed’ (Longva 1997: 2). Further, in order to escape the determinisms of modernization theory and materialist Marxism alike, but without rushing headlong

into the jaws of linguistic or discursive determinism, the paper makes use of Antonio Gramsci's notions of historic bloc, hegemony and alternative hegemony. The aim is to build on existing conversations to develop a distinctive argument about the political role of migration in the Arabian peninsula from 1945 to the present.

The paper argues that migration played two quite different roles depending on history and context. On the one hand, in the particular international and regional context of the 1950s and 1960s, migration was an element in a serious challenge to the rule of beleaguered monarchs in the peninsula. In the decades following 1947–8, Arab migrants – especially Palestinians, Egyptians and Yemenis – acted to transmit international and regional anti-monarchical pressures. They played a role in 'the revolutionary, Arab nationalist tide which inundated the Gulf and Arab peninsula region in the 1950s' (Al-Naqeeb 1990: 101). Domestically they formed an important element in oppositional assemblages, involving renegade princes, disaffected officers, merchants, professional and intermediary classes, workers and migrants. These groups were stitched together – articulated hegemonically in a way that made diverse social elements appear as a unity – in various ways by the ideas of pan-Arabism, Nasserism, leftism, statist developmentalism and reformism, and posed a real challenge to the ruling families.

Migration took on a completely different political significance in the greatly altered international and regional context of the 1970s–2000s, when it became an adjunct rather than a challenge to the resurgent power of patrimonial ruling families in the region. In the two decades after 1973, migrants mediated via remittances a new international and regional balance in which Gulf monarchs became more powerful vis-à-vis increasingly indebted and divided Arab and Third World sending countries. Migrants, further, were a transmission belt for structural transformations and ideas that undermined the power and hegemony of the formerly radical single-party regimes vis-à-vis their monarchic competitors. Domestically, migrants of ever more varied national origins were disarticulated from oppositional assemblages with the attrition of radical pan-Arabism and leftism and the rise of local, conservative nationalism and neoliberalism. Alienated from local allies, understood as a demographic and cultural problem, and facing market forces, segregation and exclusion, migrants were now only able to lodge protests in corporate-economic terms, and the political challenge to monarchies of which they formed a part was defeated.

MONARCHY UNDER SIEGE

In the 1960s, ruling families in the Arabian peninsula, with their patrimonial politics ‘based primarily on family ties, personal loyalty, and patronage’ (Zagorski 2009: 441), had strong reasons to feel under siege. True, geopolitical support for monarchs had long come from Britain and more recently from the United States, and such support was reaffirmed with the British–CIA coup of 1953 in Iran which faced down the forces of nationalism, liberal democracy and leftism and re-established the Peacock Throne on a more authoritarian basis (Abrahamian 2001). But ‘protection’ from the imperialist camp had not saved other monarchs – whether in Egypt in 1952 or Iraq in 1958 – and it was clear to most that the charge of being a British or American puppet could be devastating. Revolutionaries in Oman, for example, were inspired by the belief that ‘[King] Feisal [of Saudi Arabia] is [President Lyndon] Johnson’s ass’ (cited in Halliday 2002: 384), and the *muwahhidun* gunmen who seized the grand mosque in Mecca in 1979 believed that the Saudi royal family were the craven servants of American infidels (Trofimov 2007). Sometimes, moreover, the commitment of the British or the Americans to supporting ruling families was not as firm as those families themselves might have liked. Arms and resources were usually forthcoming, but did even the British and the Americans really believe that the monarchs would last? Their left intellectuals certainly did not. Instead, some heralded the way combined and uneven capitalism promised anti-monarchist revolution and anti-imperialism. Socialism and class politics ‘opened up the possibility of an alternative fate for the peoples of the Middle East still under various intense oppressions ... the radical anti-imperialism developing in the Arabian peninsula pointed to a liberated future’ (Halliday 2002: 29). That several copies of Halliday’s book were seen in Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal’s office in the 1970s implies that these things were noted ‘on high’ (Halliday 2002: 1).

But more ominously for rulers, even prominent US political scientists on the political right and close to power who frowned on instability and popular movements were convinced that monarchs worldwide were due to fall. Samuel Huntington, to pick the most oft-cited example, reckoned in the 1960s that monarchy would never be able to survive the acute ‘king’s dilemma’ it faced: monarchy needed to centralize power in order to deliver reform, but this would make ‘difficult or impossible the expansion of the power of the traditional polity and the assimilation into it of the new groups produced by modernization’. The outlook for these monarchs was ‘bleak’ and

the only real questions concerned 'the scope of the violence of their demise and who wields the violence' (Huntington 1968: 5, 177, 191; cf. Halpern 1963). The British diplomatic records for Saudi Arabia emphatically confirm that British officials held similar views until 1971, when it was decided that the prospects for monarchical survival were improving (Burdett 1997, 2004).

Beyond the United States and Britain, the picture was bleaker. Certainly the geopolitical manoeuvres of the Soviet Union and China were sometimes ambiguous, but it is still probably fair to say that the general thrust was anti-monarchical. The Communist Party of Iraq, for example, had to swallow many a difficult directive from the Kremlin (such as the recognition of Israel in 1948 in the midst of the catastrophic dispossession of the Palestinian people), but they were never asked to support the Iraqi monarchy. Of course the official line in the world communist movement, as well as the ideas that motivated people to become communists, were strongly opposed to the feudal, bourgeois or imperialist anachronism that was monarchy, seen as irrelevant to or nugatory for liberation, progress and development.

Elsewhere, the eruption of the Non-Aligned Movement onto the world stage at Bandung in 1955 as the embodiment of the political aspirations of newly independent Third World nations was just another threat to the sultans of Arabia. None of the major figures in the movement – Nasser of Egypt, Nehru of India, Nkrumah of Ghana and Tito of Yugoslavia – was a monarch. Third Worldism generally depicted Arabian amirs and shaykhs as the old-fashioned, reactionary puppets of neocolonialism, and adjuncts of economic dependency and underdevelopment (Khalili 2007; Malley 1996; Prashad 2007).

If anything, the regional stage was even less comforting. In Morocco, the monarchy lurched from crisis to crisis in the 1960s and early 1970s (Hudson 1977: 223; Waterbury 1973). Sultan Muhammad V (ruling 1927-61) seemed to survive independence only because France's decision to deport him in 1953 inadvertently worked to cement his nationalist credentials. Jordan's King Hussein was nearly unseated in 1956-7. His dynasty remained under threat until 1961 only to face a further crisis in 1970 (Ashton 2008; Shlaim 2007). Could Hussein's much-remarked political skill really be reliably emulated? And these were the success stories. All the other Arab monarchs had been besomed into the dustbin of history: King Farouk of Egypt in 1952-3, Muhammad VIII al-Amin of Tunisia in 1956-7, the Hashemites of Iraq in 1958, the Imam of Yemen in 1962 and King Idriss of Libya in 1969.

The republican and revolutionary governments in the region voiced their opposition to monarchs loudly, and appeared very much to hold the political initiative in terms of their identification with the ascendant forces of the Third World, pan-Arab anti-imperial national liberation, economic development, social justice, progress and modernization. The officers who put an end to the monarchy in Iraq in 1958 triumphantly claimed to have ‘liberated the country from the domination of a corrupt group which was installed by imperialism to lull the people’. In Egypt, the Free Officers declared that the whole nation was ‘unanimous in wishing to see the monarchical regime disappear forever’. Closer to home, the Yemeni Revolutionary Council which deposed the imam defined the primary goal of the revolution as putting ‘an end to those things that have blocked all progress in Yemen – tyranny, reaction, corrupt government, and the evil system of monarchy’ (quoted in Ayalon 2000: 34). These regional governments, which, together with Syria, were increasingly viewed as playing key roles on the pan-Arab stage, were ready to give troops, arms, money and logistical support to anti-monarchical opposition movements in the peninsula. Thus Egypt threw its military weight behind the anti-monarchists in the eight-year civil war in North Yemen which began after the revolution of 1962 (Halliday 1980: 215-17), and Nasser supported and gave a platform to Gulf opposition movements through Sawt al-Arab (‘Voice of the Arabs’), the popular pan-Arab radio station.

In short, in the regional and international context of the 1950s and 1960s, the kings, shaykhs and amirs of the peninsula had many persuasive reasons to peer out from their palaces, city-states and desert kingdoms with considerable anxiety about their future. It should be no surprise that the Arab migrants – especially Palestinians, Egyptians and Yemenis – who flocked to the peninsula after the Second World War seemed to, and actually did, transmit external anti-monarchical pressures.

ARAB MIGRANTS

After the Second World War, Arab migration to the peninsula greatly increased. Until the 1940s, notwithstanding relatively small numbers of Palestinian and Egyptian school teachers arriving to work in Kuwait and Bahrain from the late 1920s, ‘most of the immigrant labor present in the region ... was drawn from the Indian sub-continent’ (Seccombe and Lawless 1986: 573). This changed during the 1950s and 1960s. Ironically, perhaps, national independence and the break-up of the British empire played an important role. On the one hand, Indian independence in 1947

loosened ties to South Asia. On the other hand, the passing of empire in Mandate Palestine was the crucial backdrop to the mass dispossession of the Palestinians at the hands of Zionist settlers, which resulted in the exile to other Arab states of about 1.5 million Palestinians (Halliday 1984: 4). The Ba‘thist coup in Baghdad of 1968 and the civil war in Yemen – echoes of the break-up of the imperial system – also propelled Arabs towards the peninsula monarchies. Moreover, the development and leadership imperatives occasioned by national independence were part of the backdrop to the development projects that would employ migrants.

By 1975, 90 per cent of the non-national workforce of Saudi Arabia was comprised of Arab migrants. In a country where the total resident population was around six million, North Yemenis numbered 280,400, Palestinians 175,000, Egyptians 95,000 and South Yemenis 55,000 (Birks and Sinclair 1980: 97, 115). In Kuwait, Arab migrants totalled around 400,000 (out of a total resident population of about one million) and thus comprised about four-fifths of the total non-national workforce in 1975. Almost half of the Arab migrants were Palestinian/Jordanian, and most of the rest were either Egyptian, Syrian or Iraqi (Birks and Sinclair 1980: 34, 44, 48-50; Joukhadar 1980; Russell 1989: 27). Brand points out that ‘appointing Palestinians came to be viewed as a national obligation (*wajib qawmi*)’ (Brand 1988: 144) during a ‘honeymoon period’ for both communities, who were ‘swept up in the Arab nationalist fervor of the time’ (Brand 1988: 124).

In Bahrain, in 1971, around half the non-national workforce was Arab, the majority (two-thirds) of these from Oman (Birks and Sinclair 1980: 158, 168, 171). The absolute numbers involved in Qatar were smaller, but still proportionally significant. Petroleum Development Qatar recruited Palestinians from the 1950s, and Arab migrants comprised just over a quarter of non-nationals, with Palestinian/Jordanians and Egyptians being the largest groups (Birks and Sinclair 1980: 57-8, 70).

Socioeconomic development plans and associated employment were developed later (from the late 1960s onwards) in the United Arab Emirates and Oman – but, especially in the early stages, they also employed Arab migrants in large numbers. Egyptians and Palestinians were teaching in schools in Dubai in the 1950s in smaller numbers. In the UAE in 1975, a quarter (62,000) of all migrant workers (251,500) were Arab, the most numerous being Palestinian/Jordanian, Omani and Egyptian (Birks and Sinclair 1980: 73, 89). In Oman, almost half the workforce was

probably non-national in 1975, an unknown but significant proportion of these being Arab (Birks and Sinclair 1980: 177, 186).

Some Arab migrants were employed in the oil industry – in the 1950s the Kuwait Oil Company followed Aramco of Saudi Arabia's lead and began to recruit Palestinian labour (Seccombe and Lawless 1986: 573). But the great majority worked in the construction, staffing and maintenance of the physical infrastructure, education, health and social services. Such migrants were a key element in the development plans of ruling families attempting to secure their rule.

MIGRANT POLITICS

Arab migrants were not just manpower; they also brought politics. In Bahrain, the relatively few educated Egyptians and migrants from the Mashriq played an indirect role by spreading the ideas associated with the round of non-sectarian, nationalist, constitutional and labour protest from 1954 to 1956 against British imperialism and the ruling Khalifa autocracy (Khuri 1980: 198). Migrants were active in the politicized cultural clubs in Bahrain's principal towns – Muharraq and Manama. Their presence here, indeed, reached back to the 1920s, when Egyptians, Syrians and others were first employed as teachers and administrators in Bahrain (Al-Mdairis 2004: 13–14), bringing Arab nationalism, and even strike action, with them (Bahrain Government 1986, vol. 2: 28–9). After 1945, Al-Mdairis argues that Arab migrants 'played a major role in the development of the political and cultural consciousness of [Arab] nationalism in Bahraini society' along with the demand for a constitution and representative institutions (Al-Mdairis 2004: 12). These migrants also played important roles in establishing branches of the political parties that already existed in the Mashriq. No surprise that the British Adviser, Charles Belgrave, was to be found complaining in the 1950s about Egyptian teachers in schools and their 'dangerous' Nasserism (Al-Mdairis 2004: 14). Arab migrants, along with their activism, were accepted in Bahrain and encouraged by pan-Arabists aiming to build solidarity with those they saw as their Arab brothers. Some enjoined the abolition of passports for Arabs moving around the Arab world (Al-Mdairis 2004: 15-16). The *Voice of Bahrain* urged that 'The fellow Arab is not the foreigner' and championed the rights of Arab labour in Bahrain (Khuri 1980: 198). Iraqi activists exiled to Bahrain – among others – lent their experience in labour organizing to Bahraini nationalists in the 1950s (Khalaf 1985: 25).

In Kuwait, Arab migrants were more numerous, more active and engaged more directly in strikes and protests – including those associated with Suez and the Tripartite Aggression in 1956, the United Arab Republic in 1959, the defeat of 1967, and even the politics of the Kuwait National Assembly at different points between its founding in 1963 and closure in 1976. Arab migrants, especially Palestinians, who were often wealthy and took skilled managerial positions, were involved in Kuwait's cultural and political clubs, in student activism, the underground political parties, and the formation of unions (Al-Ghazali 2007: 428-33; Al-Mdairis 2004: 22). Notable was the influence of the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN), founded at the American University of Beirut under Palestinian leadership in the early 1950s, but active in Kuwait shortly thereafter with both migrant and Kuwait leadership and participation (Lackner 1978: 94). The MAN movement itself played a leading role in labour organizing in Kuwait (Brand 1988: 127) – organization assisted by the Palestinian members' 'experience of labour organization and ... progressive political consciousness' (Smith 1984: 172-3). Labour organizing and Arab nationalism marched together, where foreign and non-Arab companies – above all the oil companies – were attacked for exploiting their Arab labour (Al-Mdairis 2004: 15-16). The Palestinians themselves formed labour unions in Kuwait under the auspices of the PLO (Brand 1988: 128-9).

Fatah – the long-dominant faction of the PLO after 1969 – was founded by Yasser Arafat and others in the late 1950s in Kuwait. While Fatah (along with the PLO more generally) pursued of necessity a policy of 'non-interference' in Kuwait and other Arab states' domestic affairs, its form of leadership was revolutionary not monarchical. Tolerance and even sponsorship of the PLO in Kuwait by the ruling family in order to bolster its pan-Arab credentials was therefore a policy that risked unintended anti-monarchic consequences. Factions of the movement such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) were far less willing to refrain from criticisms – at the very least – of Arab governments seen as reactionary, feudal and in hock to Western imperialism.

Further, migration politics played a role in the politics and fortunes of Kuwait's representative assembly. The first Kuwaiti National Assembly was elected in 1963, the product of a compromise by the ruling family with merchants seeking a say in government. '[F]rom the beginning', writes Weiner, 'there were sharp political cleavages [in the Assembly] between supporters of the Amir and leftist opponents

supported by the large Jordanian/ Palestinian immigrant population' (Weiner 1982: 23). In 1965, the growing strength in the National Assembly of the Arab nationalist bloc led the government to try to 'pre-empt any tendencies toward political activism on the part of migrants by solidifying government control over the entry and employment of aliens' (Russell 1989: 34). But in line with pan-Arab ideals, the 'leftwing legal opposition' continued to press the ruling family 'to loosen the conditions of citizenship' (Halliday 1984: 6; Russell and Al-Ramadhan 1994: 584). Palestinians – often wealthy and highly educated – sought a larger role in Kuwaiti affairs. They objected to the amendments of the Kuwait Nationality Law and measures in 1965 and 1966 that aimed to augment Kuwaiti nationalist constituencies against the Arab nationalist bloc via expanded naturalization of Bedouin who could trace their attachment to Kuwait through tribal lines (Russell 1989: 34), while setting an upper limit of fifty on the number of aliens that could be naturalized yearly. Opponents of the ruling family in the National Assembly launched outspoken attacks on the government about the discriminatory policy of naturalizing 'illiterate' Bedouin while denying citizenship to vast numbers of educated Arabs born in Kuwait (Russell 1989: 37). In 1967, the unions struck in protest against the government for not giving adequate support to front-line Arab states in the war with Israel.

In 1976, the National Assembly wanted Kuwait's rulers to take a firmer stand on the Palestinian cause with regard to events in Lebanon, opposing the ruling family's call for merely a ceasefire, and passed a resolution condemning the Syrian intervention against the Palestinians, leftists and pan-Arabists. The Kuwaiti opposition 'was viewed by conservatives as an intrusion of migrants' political concerns into Kuwait's traditionally neutral stance towards neighboring countries of the region, and was directly linked to the dissolution of the Assembly [in 1976]' (Russell 1989: 37). As Weiner has it, members of the Kuwaiti elite were alarmed 'at the increasing signs of militancy among the Palestinians and their Kuwaiti supporters'. In August 1976, Amir Sabah prorogued the constitution and suspended the assembly: strikes and public meetings were banned, the press was controlled and public opposition to the government was ended (Weiner 1982: 23). Ruling family sensitivities to accusations by MPs of corruption played an important role in this decision, just as in more recent examples of constitutional suspension. But it would seem that the linkages between MPs and migrants on pan-Arab and left-leaning issues also played their part.

While the Republican coup d'état on the Nasserist model in North Yemen in 1962 owed something to the activities of Nasserist Egyptian officers training the forces of the soon-to-be deposed imam, migrants were involved in much larger numbers in the labour movement and anti-colonial struggle that evicted the British from Aden and South Yemen in 1967. The British had recruited North Yemeni migrant labour for work in the port of Aden for political reasons – fearing any disruption of the social structure in the hinterland of South Yemen itself (Halliday 2002: 183). Nonetheless, these North Yemeni migrants went on strike in their thousands from March 1956 onwards in what became one of the most radical and sustained waves of labour protest in the Arab world in the post-war period (Halliday 2002: 86; Watt 1962). These protests at points paralysed the port and played an important role in making the colony ungovernable from the British point of view, contributing to the decision to withdraw completely. The Saudi ruling family, fearing for their throne, regarded this withdrawal with horror. Faysal complained to the British that just when they had closed the door to revolution in North Yemen, the British had opened it again in South Yemen (Burdett 2004, vol. 3: 288).

In the desert kingdom of Saudi Arabia itself, republican, liberal, leftist and labour opposition developed in various ways in the Hejaz, the oil-fields of the Eastern province and the armed forces. Arab migrants – Palestinian, Yemeni and Egyptian – played important roles. In the Hejaz, existing regional and ideological opponents of the House of Saud were joined by journalists and politicized elements in the sizeable community of Arab migrants – especially Egyptians and Palestinians – who started to work in numbers from the late 1940s in Saudi and the Hejaz in the oil industry, education, journalism and administration. While clubs and unions were generally banned, migrants writing in the press worked to link together pan-Arab consciousness and ideas of administrative reform, representative institutions and socioeconomic development (Abir 1993: 28-9, 35). Especially between 1958 and 1960, in addition to pamphleteering by opposition organizations, the Saudi press – ‘dominated by Egyptians and the Hijazi intelligentsia’ – openly defied censorship and frequently published articles promoting Arab nationalism – and indirectly attacking the regime (Abir 1993: 40). In the 1960s, the Saudi regime made moves to censor and reorient the press, deport journalists and reduce numbers of Egyptian teachers, who were thought to be importing Arab nationalist ideas (Kapiszewski 2001: 133–44; Lackner 1978: 192–3).

The most important round of worker mobilization (petitions, demonstrations, boycotts and strikes) in Saudi history began at Aramco in March 1953 and continued until June 1956. Thousands of workers – most of the Aramco workforce – participated (Vitalis 2007: 127–93). As elsewhere on the peninsula, workers’ demands combined social and economic issues with nationalist, Nasserist, communist and pan-Arab politics (Abir 1993: 35; Al-Rasheed 2002: 99-100; Smith 1984: 173). Although Vitalis underplays their role, Palestinians, Yemenis and others were involved as activists and participants (Halliday 1984: 7; Lackner 1978: 94-5). While arrests, imprisonment and deportation may have been in error, and thus cannot serve as an entirely accurate guide as to who was engaged in activism, it would seem to be hasty to dismiss this evidence completely. Aramco had an intelligence bureau and informants in the workforce. The Saudi security services were developing a reputation for effectiveness through these decades – at least to judge by the internal comments in the British embassy archives. Given that in the 1950s, at least, the Saudis were just as likely to deny foreign involvement as to proclaim it, it cannot be said that arrests and deportations were always for show, especially when repression was kept quiet. Moreover, Aramco opposed some arrests and deportations as they valued their Palestinian workers for economic reasons (Smith 1984: 173). Deportations of migrant workers from Aramco in November 1953 included ‘three Palestinians, a Bahraini, and a naturalized Saudi citizen from Aden ... who was stripped of his citizenship before being exiled’ (Vitalis 2007: 154-5). By the end of 1954, more than 160 Palestinian workers had been arrested and deported; another 100 were arrested in 1955 – for ‘unauthorized political activity’ (Smith 1984: 173). These Palestinians were suspected members of the Parti Populaire Syrien and the Ba‘th Party (Lackner 1978: 193; Vitalis 2007: 161). The authorities noted ‘tracts in some of the [workers’] rooms’ and the fact that ‘the terms and phrases used by the most articulate had Moscow (via Beirut) written all over them’ (Vitalis 2007: 152). According to Smith, ‘[d]uring the following years the number of Palestinians allowed to work in sensitive installations and in the oilfields was reduced considerably’ (Smith 1984: 173; cf. Brand 1988: 127).

The third main site of opposition in Saudi Arabia, apart from the Hejaz and Al-Hasa, was the army and the air force. There was an attempted coup by a small group of Free Officers in 1955, a number of acts of sabotage (such as the explosions of November 1966 to February 1967), several assassination attempts on leading

members of the royal family, and at least one other serious coup attempt in 1969. In 1967, members of the armed forces and the police were accused of organizing, joining in or at the very least failing to prevent demonstrations and crowd actions. Certainly the British assessment from the mid-1950s until 1971 was that a coup was a definite possibility, and even a likelihood (Burdett 1997, 2004). The point to note here is that those who volunteered for, or were persuaded or coerced into carrying out, acts of sabotage seem often to have been Palestinian or Yemeni migrants. For example, an arms cache was discovered hidden in the king's palace in Riyadh in April 1957. A Palestinian confessed to having secreted the arms on the instructions of the Egyptian military attaché, Lt. Col. Khashaba (Vitalis 2007: 189). Sketchy details in the British documents of a plot to kill Faisal in January 1965 involved Palestinians (Burdett 1997, vol. 5: 23). The bombs of November 1966 to February 1967 were initially blamed on Egyptian-trained Yemenis, and seventeen Yemenis were executed publicly in March 1967 (Burdett 2004, vol 2: 507-19). The Saudis arrested and beat a number of Palestinians in the wake of a few explosions on 2 June 1967 at American targets in Jeddah (Burdett 2004, vol 2: 847, 857). Finally, South Yemenis from the South Yemeni National Liberation Front and the Hadramaut, Egyptian military instructors and at least one Lebanese were among those arrested during the clampdown following the coup attempt of 1969 (Burdett 2004, vol. 4: 4ff, vol. 5: 59-64).

PAN-ARABISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Migration as an idea, and migrants themselves as a social group, were linked materially and affectively to pan-Arabism. The idea that the borders of the Gulf States had been fixed artificially by the colonial powers to dominate an Arab nation divided into statelets (*dawliyyat*) was a central artefact of pan-Arab ideology attractive to many in the 1950s and 1960s. Some form of unity, it was held, would enable the Arab nation to achieve liberation from colonial divide and rule and economic dependency, to punch its weight on the world stage and to reverse the catastrophic expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948. Migration was bound up with this pan-Arabism. It was imperative that Arabs should be able to migrate to live and work in any 'region' of the Arab homeland without restriction or discrimination. Many in the peninsula were profoundly attached to the idea that new arrivals from the Arab world should be welcomed as brothers. They were not even viewed as 'international migrants', as Western commentators called them, but instead as Arabs from different parts of the

homeland. Restriction and discrimination transgressed the pressing need for political unity in the face of colonial divide and rule; offended against the principle that friendship, brotherhood and cooperation should characterize relations between Arabs; and weakened the very forms of cultural exchange and solidarity that free movement was intended to promote. Iraq's open borders to Arab labour in the 1970s were intended to burnish that country's (not always perfect) pan-Arab credentials.

Some went further to argue that the inclusive and egalitarian movement of labour was an important element in the *economic* development of the Arab nation. For Arab nationalists such as the Saudi official Abdallah al-Tariqi, who played an important role in the founding of OPEC, but who was exiled in the early 1960s (Vitalis 2007: 133-4), oil wealth represented an opportunity whereby Arab states with different endowments in population, natural resources and capital could cooperate with one another and complement one another's strengths, in an overall project involving not the distribution of rents, but the 'expansion of the productive base of the economy through industrialization and the diversification of sources of income' (Al-Naqeeb 1990: 83, 101) in an enlarged regional bloc vital for escaping dependency and subordination. For the sending Arab countries to receive the full economic benefit of movement across regional borders, a number of voices argued that the receiving countries should not discriminate in socioeconomic terms against their fellow Arabs. This would restrict opportunities for migrants, lower remittances, and diminish migrants' ability to acquire skills in the receiving countries and/or bring them back to the sending countries. Likewise, for the receiving countries, discrimination and restriction were inimical to socioeconomic development, for they would only create a class of unproductive rentiers in the oil-rich states, who could rely on expatriates to do all the productive and menial labour (Sayigh 1972: 293-4, 298-9). 'True reform', the Kuwaiti academic Shamlan Alessa wrote, 'and more efficiency in the bureaucracy cannot occur unless there is equality of treatment and pay for all workers, regardless of country of origin' (Alessa 1981: 55). These ideas served to identify (meaning both to give content to, and to link together) the interests and aspirations of Arab migrants with those of local groups in the peninsula. Under the banner of pan-Arabism, locals and migrants identified themselves as 'brothers' with similar interests. These 'brothers' found themselves in opposition to dynasts pursuing rentierism, local nationalism and exclusion.

MONARCHY RESURGENT

As has been widely attested, the six monarchies of the Arabian peninsula overcame the opposition that beset them. By the 1990s, they were more secure and stable internationally and domestically than ever before. Most would probably assent to the general and rather vague view that the presence of an apolitical and transient expatriate population has played some role in the new dispensation, although remarkably few have actually paid systematic attention to how this worked, or addressed the puzzle of how migration politics could be so transformed. This paper argues that between the 1970s and the 2000s, migrants' role changed fundamentally. In a changed international and regional context, migrants were unstitched from oppositional, regional and domestic assemblages that were themselves unravelling; meanwhile, they were riveted into a resurgent ruling historic bloc through violence, mass expulsion, segregation and selection on the one hand, and neoliberalism and local nationalism on the other. By the 1990s, migrants had become an adjunct rather than a challenge to monarchy.

The international and regional context changed fundamentally during these decades. Throughout the period, the United States and Britain continued to offer significant geopolitical support to monarchies in the region, the difference being that the United States was increasingly powerful internationally, and after 1991 became the world's only superpower with a major military presence in the Persian Gulf to boot. What changed also was the increasing confidence in, or indifference to, the survival of monarchs displayed by cultural elites in Europe and the USA. Socialist critique was heard less and less. New analyses enumerated in a rather top-down fashion all the surprising functional advantages or techniques that monarchy was said to possess or wield to crush opponents and/or co-opt opposition. The theory of the rentier state, which started out very much as a leftist critique of the nugatory economic effects of rentierism, became, with the demise of this kind of developmentalist economics, a rather elitist and determinist explanation for the power of monarchs to repress or co-opt. (Arguably the literature treating oil resources as a major cause of state breakdown, civil war, conflict and instability (Fearon 2005; Kaldor and Said 2007) should have driven another nail into cruder versions of this determinism.) Neoliberal economists either bracketed politics as a market distortion, or offered their consultancy services to the ruling families, or both. Towards the political right, and among those mostly closely identified with US and Israeli

geopolitical interests, monarchy was increasingly applauded as ‘politically balanced, economically developmental, yet traditional and socioculturally integrative’ (Kostiner 2000: 10). By the 1990s, an emergent human rights critique aside, opposition to Gulf monarchy in the United States and Britain was carried on less in the universities and more at the popular level, and less in terms of secular left critique and more through neo-Orientalist, tabloid tropes about ‘dodgy Arab sheikhs’.

Elsewhere on the international stage, formerly threatening geopolitical and ideological forces disappeared. The Non-Aligned Movement ran out of steam, fatally split over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and steadily lost its revolutionary appeal. The USSR broke up in 1991. China was engaged in forms of neoliberal market reform from the late 1970s. Regionally, pan-Arab unity schemes failed to bear lasting fruit, and the Arab radical republics were crushingly defeated at the hands of Israel in 1967. If the *nakba* of 1948 was a hammer blow to the lustre of monarchs, the *naksa* of 1967 was crushing for the reputation and appeal of the revolutionary states. Sadat’s October ‘victory’ in 1973 was very much in the name of Egyptian national interests rather than those of Arabs and Palestinians. And whereas the turn towards what came to be known as Washington Consensus economics involved a coup d’état in Chile (1973), Sadat’s Egypt inaugurated without any such coercion an economic liberalization (or *infitah*, literally ‘opening’) that marked a clear break with Nasserism. Further, by signing a separate peace with Israel in 1978–9, Egypt broke ranks with the Arab world, abandoning the Palestinians to their fate. Syrian national interests governed, and were seen to govern its intervention in Lebanon in 1976 against Palestinians, leftists and pan-Arabists. On the domestic stage, the republics, weighed down with high energy prices and debt, compared extremely unfavourably with the Gulf monarchies, boosted by the quadrupling in the oil price in 1973, in terms of delivering physical and social infrastructure and raised disposable incomes to their national populations. Opposition movements in the peninsula were now severed from international material or affective support, and oppositional assemblages in the peninsula could no longer be stitched together by pan-Arabism, developmentalism and regional radicalism because these ideas were comprehensively losing their lustre.

MIGRATION POLITICS

In this greatly altered context, migration into the oil-rich monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council from the formerly radical republics became a potent symbol of the changing balance of power and wealth, and transmitted ideas and practices to the poorer states that undermined the hegemony of pan-Arabism, Nasserism and leftist developmentalism, and promoted the neoliberal dispensation (Halliday 1984: 3). The regional governments that had formerly held the progressive initiative, and appeared almost to lay siege to the peninsula in political terms, approached the Gulf monarchs in matters of migration as subordinates, increasingly spoke the language of market forces, and mostly competed with each other to send the cheapest, most obedient and hard-working labour force (Halliday 1984: 10). Pan-Arab migration had been seen as a way to break the bonds of dependency; it now became, through remittances sent home to cover indebted governments' spiralling energy bills and balance of payments crises, a sign and mediator of a powerful new form of dependency – that of the formerly radical republics on their monarchical 'elder brothers' (Alnasrawi 1991: 155-66).

Halliday argued that return migration encouraged 'the spread of capitalist relations into the poorer developing countries affected by the oil boom' (Halliday 1980: 226). Certainly, the World Bank and other USA-sponsored international development agencies discovered (in the 1970s) the entrepreneurial virtues of the 'informal sector' (Elyachar 2005), itself very much a creature of the tens of billions of dollars in remittances that Gulf migrants sent to many newly minted 'developing countries' in the Arab world and beyond (Harik and Sullivan 1992; Ibrahim 1982). Migrants themselves were supposed to be, and sometimes aspired to be, the micro-entrepreneurs so lauded in neoliberal economics. The reality seems more to be that skills useful for sending countries were not learned in menial jobs in the Gulf, and remittances drove up inflation, encouraged imports, and were spent on survival and privatized consumption often centred on the nuclear family. Regardless, migration drove a wedge into statist developmentalism and organized national labour, and acted to reinforce the very patterns of dependency that market theories centred on economic growth claimed they would reverse. Instead of the mutually beneficial cooperation between oil-rich and population-rich countries envisaged by pan-Arabism, these years witnessed 'increased inequality and deterioration in the productive and human

resources of the Arab world ... between the oil-rich and population-rich states' (Halliday 1984: 3).

RE-COMPOSITION AND DIVERSIFICATION

On the domestic stage, migrants were simultaneously unstitched from their place in oppositional assemblages, which were themselves unravelling, and linked to a resurgent dominant bloc led locally by the ruling families. This process of political alienation was based above all on the re-composition and diversification of the migrant workforce, new forms of segregation and control, the attrition of radicalism, and the rise of local nationalism and neoliberalism.

The re-composition of the migrant workforce in the GCC monarchies between the 1970s and the 1990s drove a coach and horses through the material and affective links that had bound migrants through pan-Arabism to allies in the receiving country. The central features of this were the turn to Asian labour from the mid-1970s (Choucri 1986); the growing restrictions on Palestinian labour in the 1970s, followed by the mass expulsions of Palestinian and Yemeni labour from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in 1991-2; and policies of 'diversification' thereafter.

There were old precedents for the political manipulation of the national composition of the migrant workforce in the Persian Gulf in general, and the use of South Asian labour to this end in particular. In Bahrain in the late 1930s, the British viewed Iranian workers as reinforcing an Iranian claim to sovereignty there, and hence both the British and the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), in the words of the BAPCO representative at the time, endeavoured 'in every way to cut down the proportion of that [Persian] nationality' and to employ Indians instead, even though Iranians were cheaper and easier to procure (Seccombe 1983: 6-7). Bahrain, moreover, had long restricted the employment of Palestinian migrants, in part for political reasons (Weiner 1982: 28). Bahrain, therefore, had a longer experience of the ways in which Indian and other migrants, unlike Arabs, were severed from allies in the host population. As Franklin puts it, '[b]ecause most foreigners in Bahrain are non-Arab, Arab nationalism does not cut across the distinction between national and expatriate as it does in Kuwait. Alliances are unlikely and foreigners lack a Bahraini audience for any complaints about conditions' (Franklin 1985: 12). In Oman, the preference for Asian labour over Arab for political reasons was also well known:

The [Omani] government is relatively suspicious of other Arabs: Egyptians have been brought in as teachers and civil servants, but the main sources of unskilled labor have been Pakistan and India, with whom Oman has long-standing economic links. The Baluchistan area of Pakistan has traditionally supplied soldiers for the Sultan of Oman's army, and today many unskilled workers in Oman are Baluchi peasants. (Halliday 1977b: 10)

It was nothing particularly new, in principle, that ruling families in the peninsula looked to Asian workers in the 1970s as a measure to head off challenges to their rule. Certainly, Arab labour exporters could not fully meet the sky-rocketing demand for labour, and to be sure, there was a dose of 'bungling and [a] planning void' (Al-Naqeeb 1980: 86), but to reduce the turn to Asian labour to either this or 'market forces' and objective 'manpower requirements' is indefensible, not least because the very demand for labour itself did not stem from the oil sector, but in part from political decisions to allocate oil revenue to labour-intensive construction and maintenance of physical and social infrastructure, decisions which were in turn designed to win the consent of populations thirsty for what was seen as modernization. Moreover, Gulf country resource, skill and population endowments might have suggested to many an economist a capital-intensive rather than a labour-intensive development path in any case. 'Lifestyle' and status-oriented decisions to employ numerous maids, gardeners, drivers and other servants are also not simply matters of economic or labour market necessity but linked to social relations of distinction and stigma. Closer to the point here:

Asians had a distinct political advantage: Asian workers were unlikely to make claims for citizenship. Asians were alien and could continue to remain disenfranchised. They were regarded as more likely to be passive observers of political processes rather than as potential activists or claimants on social services and other benefits of citizenship. (Choucri 1986: 252)

Not only were the workers themselves more easily alienated from politics, in no small measure because of language barriers, but they came without intra-Arab and regional entanglements. It was thought that the political repercussions of expelling Asians, for example, were much smaller than those of expelling Arabs (Weiner 1982: 12). Asian labour, simply put, was 'less politically menacing' for the ruling families (Halliday 1984: 5; Kapiszewski 2006: 6-7; Weiner 1982: 28) and 'removed [migrants] from the currents of Arab nationalism and Islamism' (Humphrey 1993: 7). Moreover, some middle-class migrants from South Asia undoubtedly had political concerns of

their own that actually worked in support of monarchical rule: they were anxious ‘that some day they [might] share the fate of the Indian trading and business communities of East Africa. Indeed, many of the Indian merchants in Oman and Dubai once ran businesses in Uganda, Tanzania, Zanzibar, and Kenya’ (Weiner 1982: 9). This meant that these wealthy migrants feared populism and supported monarchy as the guarantor of a segmented society, where ‘[s]ociety’s diversity, rather than its uniformity, is a virtue’, and national unity is specifically avoided in the service of monarchical rule (cf. Kostiner 2000: 4-5; Elias 1983). By 1985, the percentage of migrants in the GCC countries accounted for by Arabs had fallen to 56 per cent (from 72 per cent in 1975). Contrariwise, non-Arabs had constituted only 12 per cent of all workers in the Gulf in 1970, but by 1985 Asians comprised some 63 per cent of the Gulf workforce (Kapiszewski 2006: 7).

The two countries where the re-composition of the resident population was most violent and far-reaching were those which had received the largest numbers of Arab migrants, and which had experienced the most political opposition to monarchy from migration politics. In Kuwait, the turn to Asian labour in the 1970s was in part aimed at defusing what were largely expressions of Arab nationalist concerns by changing the composition of the immigrant population. Certainly in the 1970s, ‘Jordanians and Palestinians were the only group that experience[d] reductions in rates of immigration across all sectors’ (Russell 1989: 36-7). Efforts to deport, imprison or execute Palestinian or Yemeni radicals had been pursued for years in Saudi Arabia, and Asian labour was increasingly recruited. But the real change came with the invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990. In Kuwait,

The invasion, the subsequent war, and its aftermath accomplished by force what policies could only aim to do incrementally: they dramatically altered the composition of Kuwait’s population and provided an unprecedented opportunity for the country to rethink radically the role of migrants in its society. (Russell and Al-Ramadhan 1994: 569)

Yasser Arafat, in a bid for popularity, had declared the support of the PLO for Iraq, which had touted its 1980 invasion of Iran in pan-Arab terms, and linked its invasion of Kuwait rhetorically to the Arab and Palestinian cause. And while most Kuwaiti nationals observed a general strike in protest at the occupation, they considered the fact that many migrants did not to be a terrible betrayal of their generous and charitable host nation, the ‘pearl of the Gulf’ (Russell and Al-Ramadhan 1994: 581).

Lurid stories circulated, moreover, regarding the collaboration of Palestinians with the Iraqi occupiers. For many Kuwaitis under occupation any support for Iraq and its dictator was ludicrously offensive, and some 300,000-400,000 Palestinians were expelled from the country during 1991-2. Yemen also 'attempted to remain officially neutral' (Okruhlik and Conge 1997: 559), and Yemeni workers in Saudi Arabia paid the price, the occasion acting as a 'catalyst' (Okruhlik and Conge 1997: 562) for the Saudi authorities effectively to force some 750,000 to 1 million Yemenis to leave in the few months following September 1990 (Hartmann 1995; Sadowski 1991). The re-composition of the migrant population was indeed dramatic. In Saudi Arabia the percentage of Arabs in the foreign population fell from 91 per cent in 1975 to 33 per cent in 2004; in Kuwait 'the decline was from 80 per cent in 1975 to 30 per cent in 2003' (Kapiszewski 2006: 8).

The mass expulsions of 1990-1 were both a symptom and a cause of the profound disarticulation of migrants to the Gulf from any larger alternative hegemony: a symptom because the migrants themselves, once an important element in local politics, were completely unable to organize any resistance to their devastating expulsion. Appeals to nationals in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia 'to pressure their governments to reverse the decision' were impossible or doomed, in spite of long years of residency, contact and cooperation. Regional governments were unable or unwilling to step in. Indeed, on the Arab stage, there was 'barely a ripple of political consequences' (Gause 1993: 161-2). In some ways, the straightforward expulsion of Arab migrants from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia was simply an overdue proof that any connection between migrants and regional or domestic radicalism had been terminated. As Gause wrote at the time: '[f]oreign workers pose no threat to the Gulf regimes', and their 'incapacity' was definitively brought home by the 'Gulf crisis' (Gause 1993: 161).

But these expulsions were a cause of further disarticulation. Not only did they remove potential or actual political activists from the scene, they emboldened ruling families to state openly and formalize as policy what had previously been harder to formulate explicitly and implement because of the need at the very least to pay lip-service to pan-Arab ideals. Whereas it had been common, even until the 1980s, for 'leaders of Gulf countries [to] speak [in unlikely fashion] of their preference for migrants from Arab neighbors' (Weiner 1982: 28), the need to maintain this public

position was broken by the occupation and its aftermath. As Russell and Al-Ramadhan conclude, in Kuwait after 1991:

Most significantly, the ministry for the first time openly expressed the view that the composition of the migrant population should consider nationality and ethnicity to prevent any one group from controlling the labour market. (Russell and Al-Ramadhan 1994: 580)

What had long been the stuff of innuendo in Kuwaiti politics was now openly declared, and policies of ‘diversification’ were publicly endorsed and implemented. The beginnings of de facto diversification policies had been noted during the 1980s (Choucri 1986: 262–3, 266). But after 1990, it was clear that the question for ruling families was not how to reduce the proportion of Arab migrants and increase the proportion of South and South-East Asians, for the resistance of Arab migrants had been, and had been seen to have been, definitively broken. Instead, the question was now how to ensure that no one group could ascend to any position that might allow it either to articulate itself to an oppositional bloc, or to initiate an alternative leadership project of its own. Segmenting the resident population and labour force by nationality and ethnicity was one way to achieve this goal.

SEGREGATION AND ROTATION

Disarticulation proceeded not only by the national and ethnic re-composition and diversification of the residential and working population, but also through the introduction of more developed forms of geographical, workplace and legal segregation and rotation designed to minimize the possibility of political, economic, cultural or social links being forged between migrants and the indigenous population. First, many of the development projects inaugurated in the 1970s were located in enclaves at some distance from existing urban centres, minimizing contact between the migrant workers who built them and nationals. Enclave industrial areas initiated in the 1970s, including Shuaiba (in Kuwait), Umm Said (Qatar), Jebel Ali (Dubai), Ruwais (Abu Dhabi), Yenbo and Jubail (Saudi Arabia), were all on desert sites away from major centres of population (Birks and Sinclair 1980: 151).

Second, a new system of ‘self-sufficient’ contracting begun in 1976 greatly reduced the kinds of social and economic linkages that a large migrant worker population otherwise tended to create with nationals. Under this ‘turn-key’ system:

Contractors who bring all the labour they need with them, build and provide all the facilities necessary for these workers, and take the workers back after the completion of the contract, are given preference. (Lackner 1978: 194)

The system ensured that workers were severed ‘both from the indigenous population and from other countries, and from any danger of political “infection”’ (Disney 1977: 24). It also enforced their end-of-contract departure, something the authorities had conspicuously failed to achieve, for example, regarding the construction of the aluminium plant for ALBA in Bahrain which had not been done on an enclave or self-sufficient basis (Birks and Sinclair 1980: 151). Thus contracts to Japanese, Taiwanese and South Korean firms increased, such as that involving 5,000 Korean workers for a \$1-billion harbour project in Jubail in Saudi Arabia, managed by Hyundai (Disney 1977: 23; Kapiszewski 2006: 7; Lackner 1978: 194).

Finally, segregation and rotation were now backed by new legal and administrative measures to supplement the already formidable panoply of controls denying nationality, political freedoms and social rights to migrants (Khalaf 1992: 72) – controls policed by the sanction of summary deportation. In the UAE, for example, ‘[t]he government devised a new law [the Federal Labour Law of 1980] that requires foreign workers to leave the country for six months before changing jobs’. This measure was designed to prevent the ‘trouble’ that the presence of unemployed migrants might provoke and shore up the system of rotation (Choucri 1986: 263; Winckler 2000: 246). Far from exposing themselves to regional anti-monarchical pressures, therefore, the ruling families through segregation and rotation aimed to acquire their modern infrastructure through foreigners who would show up, do the job and disappear. These measures, together with re-composition and diversification, were a formidable force in preventing migrants from forging political linkages with local allies. By barring assimilation, rulers kept the population of patronage claimants low, increasing per capita the amount of patronage to be dispensed, and thus enhancing its political impact. As Khalaf has it, ‘[t]he state, personified by the ruling family ... has produced in the eyes of its subjects an image of a paternalistic, all-powerful, all-providing, and all-giving father’ (Khalaf 1992: 64). This image and practice were far easier to sustain where the recipients of such paternalism were two or three times less numerous than they might otherwise have been.

LOCAL NATIONALISM

Pan-Arabism was completely incapable of identifying the interests of allies in the national population with Indians, Pakistanis, Filipinas, South Koreans, Sri Lankans and others who were non-Arabic-speaking aliens, seen as strange in culture, colour and manners, foreign to the common Arab and Islamic history of the region and decidedly outside the bounds of the Arab nation. Bandung and Third Worldism may have inspired many, Nasser may have sponsored the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, and there was of course a potentially internationalist dimension in the more class-based (and less pan-Arab) socialism that appeared among vanguardist movements inside and outside the Gulf after the Arab failure of 1967 (Halliday 2002), but these elements were not dominant. On the contrary, the guardians of pan-Arabism were threatened by the turn to Asian labour, and tended to write of(f) Asian migrants in negative and sometimes racist language (Fergany 1983). The very hegemonic terms which had stitched migrants into a previous oppositional assemblage maintained their attraction even as the composition of the migrant population changed, and thus were instrumental in the non-development of new oppositional forms of articulation.

This severance was made permanent, however, when the tropes of pan-Arabism were mapped onto and started inadvertently to reinforce the language of local nationalism. When it came to 'Asians', pan-Arabist and local nationalist languages marched in lock step. Bahraini nationalist complaints against Indian monopolies of skilled work, for example, were virtually indistinguishable from the grievances lodged by their pan-Arab counterparts. Ironically, local nationalism drew succour from pan-Arabism, and with the regional attrition of the latter, it was the former that emerged victorious.

An analogous slippage morphed socialism into nationalism. The newly declared class-based positions of the Omani liberation movement, for example, led it not to internationalism but towards a position close to local Omani nationalism. 'In Oman', writes Halliday, 'the promotion of migration is seen by political opponents of the regime [the banned People's Front for the Liberation of Oman] as a means of avoiding the creation of an indigenous working class.' The PFLO also published around this time the programme of a National Committee for Oman Workers, calling for limitations on the import of foreign labour (Halliday 1984: 6). Such movements were unwilling or unable to organize among Asian migrants – and their appeals to

working-class solidarity turned out to be segmented on local, nationalist lines: they were for *Omani* workers.

Of course migration had long acted as a lightning rod for local politicization on nationalist lines. In 1936 in Kuwait, the British Political Representative reckoned that ‘an influx of Indians would be liable to lead to trouble’ among the local population (Seccombe 1983: 14), and in July 1951, in Qatar, workers at Petroleum Development Qatar went on strike demanding the dismissal of 150 Dhofaris working for the company. In both cases, however, protests were understood to spell trouble for local rulers who were identified with British imperialism in general and Indian subjects in particular. In Kuwait, the British feared ‘discontent with the sheikh’s rule’ and proposed to limit the number of Indians being allowed in (Seccombe 1983: 14). In the case of Qatar, ‘[t]he British, fearing that this could get out of hand and undermine the Sheikh’s position, arranged for the evacuation of the Dhofeiri workers, and later thirty-seven Dhofeiri members of the Police Force resigned’ (Seccombe 1983: 12). Nationalist mobilization in these cases was seen as threatening to the ruling family.

The difference regarding more recent decades is that nationalist mobilization has – with the retreat of the British from the Gulf – been turned to monarchical advantage. With the attrition of radicalism and pan-Arabism, local nationalism was re-articulated in a conservative direction. Ruling families and their allies have invented and made use of cultural traditions, nationalism, cultural authenticity and ‘traditional’ values – such as the ‘invention of camel culture’ in the UAE – in order to identify themselves as the guardians of authentic Arab values and traditions, and thus bolster the ‘dynastic political structure’ (Khalaf 2000: 244; see also Khalaf 1992). In Kuwait, local nationalists sought to preserve the ‘traditional’ ideological bases of Kuwaiti identity: ‘loyalty to the patriarchal leadership of the monarch and adherence to the principle that anyone who was not a member of one of the original tribes is an alien with no legitimate claims on the rights or prerogatives of tribal membership’ (Russell 1989: 31). In this view, migrants, Arab and non-Arab, were seen as outsiders and competitors in the labour market. Local nationalism, suitably re-articulated in conservative terms, could serve shaykhly rule. Its mobilization – against migrants or otherwise – did not necessarily spell trouble for rulers, but operated in important ways to stitch together their dominant bloc.

This re-articulation set the stage for a new hegemonic insistence on and particular definition of the double threat posed by migrants. First, migrants were said

to be threatening because they made nationals a ‘minority in their own country’. This characterization of the threat was heavily dependent on the attrition of pan-Arabism, which was more expansive in the definition of who was indigenous; on the attrition of leftist political or economic critique, which went well beyond demography; and on the complete closure of any route to citizenship or nationality, which ensured that foreigners would stay foreigners and ‘locals’ remain a minority. Second, again and again, migrants were said to be threatening – by rulers and subjects alike – because they might change the much-cherished traditions, customs and values of the Gulf countries. As Abd al-Rahman al-Dirham from the Qatari Ministry of Labour said in 1982: ‘Our social customs are threatened by foreigners’ (cited in Kapiszewski 2006: 8). In short, the monarchic, conservative, nationalist dispensation was buttressed by the notion that migrants posed a demographic and cultural threat to the Gulf countries. As long as nationalist anxieties about migrants were channelled into these hegemonic terms, they were a force which helped the dominant bloc, led locally by the ruling families, to cohere. As Nelida Fuccaro writes, ‘[i]t is beyond doubt ... that the political, economic and social segregation experienced by “guest” workers in contemporary Gulf cities forms one of the core tenets underpinning national consensus’ (Fuccaro 2008: 3–4).

Nationalization policies, ostensibly intended to replace the foreign workforce with suitably trained nationals, had their origins in the economic slowdown attendant on falling oil revenues in the 1980s. The slowdown created discontent, triggered a search for scapegoats, and stoked the fires of local nationalism. One of the main goals of Saudi’s Fourth Five Year Development Plan (1985–90) was ostensibly to reduce the number of foreigners in the kingdom by 1.2 million. Oman imposed restrictions on certain occupational categories in 1987. A Bahraini programme was initiated in 1989 (Winckler 2000: 246). But given that for more than a quarter of a century nationalization policies have been almost completely unsuccessful, in that the foreign proportion of the workforce has only increased (Winckler 2000: 246–8, 251–2), it makes sense to question whether the ostensible aim of these programmes is the only matter at stake. If it were, then why would these failed policies be continually re-implemented? It seems plausible instead to view these programmes at least partly in the light of the hegemonic functions they serve. Perhaps they in some way work to win the consent of the dominant bloc and that of various subaltern social groups on the national stage. Certainly when nationalization policies threatened widespread

interests, such as the legislation in Kuwait restricting according to wealth the number of foreign maids that households could employ, an outcry followed and the law was quickly rescinded. It may be that nationalization programmes, and the flurry of conferences, panels, lectures, press articles and discussion that surrounds them, while making little difference to the composition of the workforce, do repeatedly affirm the unity of nationals against foreigners, ingrain the interpellation of migrants as demographic and cultural threats, and provide an important justification for the patronage-enhancing policy of the rotation of 'guest-worker' migrants: if migrants are supposedly to be replaced, sooner or later, by nationals, there need be no provision for their assimilation.

NEOLIBERALISM

The hegemonic fabric of the ruling bloc was woven together, finally, both internationally and domestically, with a neoliberalism heavily identified with US geopolitical interests, where the USA, its military presence and dominance affirmed after 1991, was supposed to represent the 'guardian of market forces in the Gulf' (Gause 1993: 195). Neoliberalism played a crucial role in severing migrants from the old oppositional bloc, while linking them to the new ruling dispensation.

The manpower planning assumptions associated with a gathering Washington Consensus, and implicit (and explicit) in numerous World Bank publications, consultancy reports and academic tracts (Bhagwati 1984; Birks and Sinclair 1980; Fergany 1982; Kapiszeswki 2001; Seccombe 1983, 1987; Seccombe and Lawless 1986; Serageldin 1983; Sherbiny 1981, 1984), were fundamentally at odds with the statist and developmentalist economics associated with radical pan-Arabism. Whereas the aim of the developmentalists had been a diversified project of productive and regionally balanced industrialization and economic development linked to the strength of the Arab nation, the aim of neoliberal economics was national 'economic growth' measured by gross domestic product. This formulation was thoroughly wedded to local nationalism. Whereas the developmentalists had insisted that development necessarily implied an inclusionary and egalitarian policy with regard to Arab migrants, this kind of 'politics' was irrelevant to neoliberal consultants, who were interested only in whether the national state was creating the conditions for the undistorted operation of supply and demand in the labour market. It was precisely at

this neoliberal formulation that Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal was taking aim when he observed in 1984 how disheartening it was to see that

Many of the decision-makers involved with problems of manpower migration would rather relegate their resolution to the non-human invisible hand of the market forces than put up with implications and complications that can ensue from viewing such problems from a 'human' or at least a regional socio-political [read pan-Arab] perspective. (Bin Talal 1984: 612)

No wonder, perhaps, that Bin Talal, questioning here the sacred script of the market, was eventually considered unsuitable to rule Jordan. But for ruling families in the Gulf the language of neoliberalism was congenial: it enabled a view of migration in apparently apolitical, non-pan-Arab and local nationalist terms.

With regard to 'expatriates' and 'economic growth', the new economists operated with a very simple assumption based on World Bank manpower planning models: '[t]he tougher the population policy, the greater the reduction of future economic growth' (Sherbiny 1984: 655). However dubious the economic sense of a prescription that totally ignored the question of productivity per head, the point for my purposes here is that neoliberal economists told Gulf rulers that the more migrants they allowed to their shores, the higher the economic growth they could expect. This was a policy prescription enacted from on high, not a 'free market' force on the ground that prevented Gulf rulers in spite of their best intentions from nationalizing the workforce, as some assume (Kapiszewski 2006: 7–9). Further, given that local rulers sought to retain the power of patronage by keeping their national populations small, but to deliver economic growth to win consent and insure themselves against the vagaries of the oil market, the implication for migration policy was clear. They should allow as many migrants as possible to work in their territories, while minimizing costs (such as unfavourable 'dependency rates') and excluding migrants from the benefits of nationality as far as possible. The thinking here was the exact opposite of the developmentalist prescriptions on inclusion and non-discrimination, and totally ignored their critique of rentierism and exploitation, which implied far-reaching socio-political change. In complete contrast, neoliberalism delivered, under the circumstances, a powerful prescription for the maintenance of the status quo through exclusion, segregation and discrimination.

These assumptions could be readily internalized by important national sectors in the Gulf. Who did not want to see economic growth? Or, more to the point, who,

from householders to businessmen, wanted to be told that they could not import cheap, abundant and menial labour? At the same time, few wanted to see their slice of the oil-rent pie cut more thinly by policies of assimilation, and so nationals had a stake in the segregation and exclusion of migrants – a self-interested view that was authorized by the individualistic neoliberal vision. Neoliberalism, further, offered a view of migrants as faceless, maximizing and even opportunistic individuals who chose to come to the Gulf because that was where they could make the most money (Davidson 2008: 187). This view was a potent solvent of an identification of national with migrant interests, and vice versa.

STRIKES AND PROTESTS

Even under harsh conditions of exclusion, segregation, state violence and deportation, and bereft of allies in the receiving country, or meaningful support from sending governments, migrants of virtually all nationalities have continued to hold a strong sense of grievance about pay, conditions and exclusion. As a Pakistani taxi-driver told me with some feeling in April 2009 in Dubai: ‘We are social slaves here!’ Indeed, migrants have organized protests from the 1970s to the present. From the Korean strikes in Saudi Arabia in 1977, to clashes of Indians with their employers in Oman in 1978 (Halliday 1984: 7; Weiner 1982: 21–2), to the mass protests of Bangladeshi cleaners in Kuwait in 2005, and the new rounds of protest in the Gulf more generally since that time, migrants have continued to interpret their condition and try to change it for the better. But these strikes and protests, in stark contrast to those in which migrants were involved in the 1950s and 1960s, have put forward only economic-corporate demands. Indeed, many protests have involved only desperate rearguard actions by workers to obtain wages promised to them in contracts but never paid. These protests have not been identified with the larger politics of any rising alternative hegemony. They have ceased, therefore, for the time being, to be part of any broad-based political challenge to ruling families of the GCC.

CONCLUSION

This paper has sketched out a way in which migration can be written into the analysis of the changing fate of monarchy on the Arabian peninsula. I have argued that migration played a role in both the challenge to, and the consolidation of, family rule. In the 1950s and 1960s, migrants, especially Arabs, were identified with oppositional

assemblages associated with pan-Arabism and republicanism and posed a challenge to patrimonial and monarchical rule. From the 1970s onwards, in a completely changed international and regional context, however, migrants were severed from this rising opposition, and forcefully connected to the interests of the ruling, patrimonial bloc. This was chiefly effected, on the domestic stage, through the re-composition and diversification of the workforce; through exclusivist and sometimes violent policies of mass expulsion, segregation and rotation; and through the attrition of leftist pan-Arabism, and the rise of a closed and conservative local nationalism on the one hand, and the ‘savage god’ (Davis 2001) of the free market on the other. By the 1990s, migrants posed no real threat to monarchies; far from being an element in any opposition, they had, at least for the time being, become a presupposition and a prop of the ruling bloc itself. Migration has indeed been ‘an integral part of the social life in the region’, and not just an ‘epiphenomenon of the labour market’ (Longva 1997: 2). This paper has aimed to point to some of the political dimensions of this by showing how migrants have both challenged and consolidated monarchical rule on the peninsula.

Two points are worth underlining. First, this analysis avoids the strong tendencies to teleology, materialism and determinism of modernization theory on the one hand, and of Marxism on the other. Monarchs did not via migration overcome an inevitable ‘king’s dilemma’, or fragment a socialist working class, because the dilemmas of modernization and the rise of working-class socialism were not and are not inevitable or automatic. Much depended instead on the (de)construction of hegemony and alternative hegemony. No inherent telos prevailed; history, context and contingency mattered; and there was real scope for the role of ideas in identifying diverse interests.

Second, the argument aims to illustrate how in comparative politics the meaning and effect of a given factor – in this case migration – is not constant and stable. The political world depicted here is not a clock-like mechanism comprised of levers and springs, cogs and hands (dependent and independent variables), with each having assigned or predictable effects, or operating as constant or even probabilistic causes (Almond and Genco 1977). Instead the effect of migration, and the meaning, form and politics of migration itself, varied fundamentally (although not in an endlessly fluid or random way) according to history, context and the (re)construction of hegemony.

The foregoing implies, finally, that the present state of migrant political disarticulation may not last. It is perfectly possible that in the coming years an oppositional politics linking the interests, ideas and aspirations of various groups – second- and even third-generation migrants (often professionals) excluded from citizenship, exploited workers, those in marriages between nationals and non-nationals, bidun groups and disaffected nationals, for example – will emerge to challenge the status quo anew.

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