

The *Nouveaux Riches* and the Toilers of the Persian Gulf:
An Analysis of International Labour Migration from India to the United Arab Emirates -
The Case of Kerala and Dubai

by

Janette Murawski

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Department of Political Studies
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Abstract

Based on primary and secondary evidence, the purpose of this thesis is to answer why people from Kerala have been migrating to Dubai for work since the early 1970s. Reflecting upon theories of migration and adopting Sassen's position that any migration stream ought to be examined with precision, it concludes that the Kerala-Dubai migration system is a product of its unique political, economic, sociological, geographic and religious dimensions, bound in historical perspective, that have linked both places together.

More specifically, the thesis demonstrates that the Keralite, Dubai, Indian and Emirati governments largely encouraged international migration since the 1970s through specific policies and institutional arrangements. This behavior shifted to a sense of discouragement by the UAE government in the mid 1990s as a result of 'Emiratization'. The thesis also analyses the Kerala-Dubai migration system through a remittance-led perspective, explores the socio-economic, religious and regional composition of migrants, calculates the stock of Keralites in Dubai, the volume of remittances they send back home, and discusses the future migration relationship between both places. While arguing that conventional ideologies represent a narrow way of thinking about why migrations begin, the thesis demonstrates that migration is more than an act of coming and going; it is about the realities of migrant workers, how they are connected to different places and the historical, political, economic and social elements that link them together.

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I dedicate this to my mother and her mother.

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List of Acronyms

CDR	credit-deposit ratio
GDP	gross domestic product
ECNR	emigration clearance not required
ECR	emigration clearance required
ECRS	emigration clearance requirement suspended
FDI	foreign direct investment
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	information technology
MOIA	Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NELM	new economics of labour migration
NORKA	department for Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs
NRD	non-resident deposits
NRI	non-resident Indians
NSDP	net state domestic product
ODA	official development assistance
PI	private investment
SII	small-scale industries
SLPSU	state-level public sector units
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USD	United States dollar
WB	World Bank

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Global Movement of People

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first introduces international migration as the central focus of the thesis and dispels its mainstream and conventional ideologies. This is done in an effort to reveal its realities and to advocate for its humanization. The second part presents the thesis question and is followed by a discussion on its significance and research aims. The final part outlines the structure of this work.

International labour migration: The thesis topic

This thesis stems from an interest in human migrations. I am particularly curious about the forces that propel global migrations and of the relationship between international labour migrants to their places of origin and destination. But, above all, this thesis grows from a fondness and appreciation towards migrants and acknowledges the significance of their roles in ancient and modern societies. This is important to recognize because the movement of people over space and time is (and has been) an intricate part of human history - such as the migration of homo erectus out from East Africa that came to populate nearly each continent on the globe; the transport of slaves throughout history to build temples, monuments, palaces and to work the lands; the settlement of the 'New World'; the formation of states and empires; and to the persistent flights of countless of people from famine, persecution and war in modern times.

Today, and while nothing new, a growing fear of the 'other' has engulfed the developed states with no indication of slowing down. Recent discussions concerning international migration in the Western media, the public and political circles have been

increasingly surrounded (and dominated) by debate and speculation over its size, scope and whether an ‘open-door’ policy towards migration is necessarily a good thing. The overarching conclusion is such that ‘landed’ and prospective migrants in the West are simply too many, that they mostly come from developing states and that the best way to manage the crisis is to shut the gates indefinitely. Historically speaking, this is nothing new, for states have repeatedly opened and closed their borders to international migrants as they deemed fit. However, what is new, as this thesis argues, are the large misperceptions and misunderstandings associated to international migration that have gained strong force in the later part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries to the point that it has become commonplace to be skeptical, suspicious and fearful of the outsider. The U. S. a is good example of such attitudes with respect to its recent Mexican ‘invasion’ as well as France towards its North African ‘problem’, not to mention the growing wave of support for extreme nationalist and anti-immigration right-wing parties across Western Europe, such as Austria’s Alliance for the Future of Austria party and Switzerland’s The Swiss People’s Party.

One common factor that has fueled such beliefs in the West is globalization theory. Though this thesis goes more in depth about the subject in the third chapter, I argue here that it projects two important images about international migration that, in the end, stand as mirages. The first includes the notion that international migration increased enormously since the late twentieth century. Is it true that this is the “age of migration” as Castles and Miller declare it to be?¹ Historically, the movement of people of large scale and over short and long distances has occurred for centuries and at higher rates than they

¹ Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993).

do today. In fact, the highest levels of voluntary² international migration in history occurred between 1815-1914 when roughly 100 million people crossed state borders as workers and immigrants.³ The largest migration stream during this period was between Europe and North America when tens of millions of people left Europe from famine and poverty for the promises of fertile lands and of better economic opportunity in the New World.⁴ This Great Atlantic migration was facilitated and encouraged by both places of origin and destination through specific policies and by a lack of barriers for exit and entry – only to be curtailed significantly after the First World War.⁵ Today, levels of cross-border migration are not high in comparison to the global population, standing at only 3 percent, a lower figure than during the previous century.⁶ Therefore, international migration has been declining since its peak between the nineteenth and early twentieth century and there have been few instances of growth in recent times.

An additional factor that further encourages misperceptions about international migration is the belief that armies of people from developing countries are flocking to, and pushing at the gates of prosperous western countries. In historical terms, the movement of people across borders was never simply a flight from poverty – if this were

² Segal defines “voluntary” as an “absence of physical coercion while recognizing that many other forms of coercion exist.” Aaron Segal, *An Atlas of International Migration* (London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1993), 14.

³ Ibid., 16; Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder with Donna Gabaccia, *What is Migration History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 35-42.

⁴ The United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 28-9. Last accessed March 31, 2012, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_EN_Complete.pdf

⁵ Ibid. p. 29-30; Segal, *An Atlas of International Migration*, 18, 20.

⁶ The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008* (Washington: The World Bank, 2008), 16. This figure was also located on the United Nations website: The United Nations Population Division, “International Migrant Stock: the 2008 Revision,” last accessed March 31, 2012, <http://esa.un.org/migration/>

the case, then all the poor peoples of the world would be emigrating to the west.⁷ However, this is not happening; instead, “only a very tiny fraction of poor people emigrate, and they do so from very specific areas and toward equally specific destinations.”⁸ For example, “[n]early half of all international migrants move within their region of origin and about 40 percent move to a neighbouring country.”⁹ At the same time, “nearly 6 out of 10 migrants move to a country where the major religion is the same as in their country of birth, and 4 out of 10 to a country where the dominant language is the same.”¹⁰ Moreover, migration from developing to developed countries represents 37 percent of all international migrations while only 3 percent migrate from the developed to the developing world.¹¹ This means that more than 60 percent of all international migrants occur “*within* countries in the same category of development.”¹² Consequently, and contrary to popular belief, it is not the poorest that migrate, nor are people from developing countries ‘invading’ the West.

Regrettably, such discussions about international migration, clouded by false ideologies, has created the perception that it is a ‘problem’ and as something to be ‘managed’ by certain interest groups, such as policy-makers and politicians, particularly from the developed states. In the West, migrants are perceived as ‘undesirables’ since popular beliefs echo that they ‘take’ more than they ‘give’ (i.e. the welfare state) and

⁷ Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York: The New Press, 1999), xiv; The United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*, 13; Hein de Haas, “Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective,” IMI Working Paper 9, Oxford: International Migration Institute (IMI), University of Oxford, 2008: 8. Last accessed March 31, 2012, <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/imi-working-papers/WP9%20Migration%20and%20development%20theory%20HdH.pdf>

⁸ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, xiv.

⁹ The United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*, 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹² *Ibid.*

threaten local culture and employment for nationals. This commonly leads to what Sassen describes as “anti-immigrant feelings, racialization, [and] a crisis mentality about controlling immigration....”¹³ that occurs all too frequently and without merit. This thesis does not go into detail about all of these elements but, instead, suggests that such attitudes and ideologies represent a narrow way of thinking about international migration because they mask, or do not properly illustrate, its true realities. Therefore, it is important to recreate an understanding of the subject, particularly, why people migrate in the first place.

The reasons for international migrations are complex. This is because each migration system is unique and, therefore, cannot be subject to generalizations. Such a reality comes off as rather puzzling to the migration researcher since there seems to be no clarity on how and where one is to begin to understand the motives for it. However, this thesis argues that migration relationships are better understood by framing it within Saskia Sassen’s arguments since they provide clarity to its causes and effects.¹⁴ A thorough examination of her position will be provided in the third chapter. Briefly, the most important argument that Sassen makes is that she asks us to move away from common misperceptions about migration and, in turn, encourages us to recognize that it is more valuable to study migration with precision - to observe specific migration flows and patterns between places of origin and destination so as to identify its particularities.¹⁵ Only when we understand why migrations occur can we have sensible policies about

¹³ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, xiii.

¹⁴ Sassen states that her arguments can be used for different forms of migration.

¹⁵ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*; Saskia Sassen, “Foreign Investment: A Neglected Variable” in *The Migration Reader: Exploring Politics and Policies* ed. Anthony M. Messina and Gallya Lahav (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

them. This is precisely what this thesis intends to do. I now turn to introducing the focus of this thesis: the labour migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai.

The question: The dreamland and its toilers

It seems unusual to be speaking of any connection between Dubai and Kerala since the two are very different with respect to such things as government, religion, culture, history, etc – not to mention the long distance between them. But, a closer look reveals the contrary.

Since the four-fold increase of oil prices in 1973, the world has seen Dubai transform itself from a desolate tribal society to an extravagant, glittering, even fantastical city equipped with all the novelties that the state's new massive wealth could afford: a slew of five star hotels, multi-million dollar archipelagoes, theme parks, casinos, desert golf parks and a string of billion-dollar investment deals. It is home to the world's largest airport, shopping centre and building which all push architectural and engineering boundaries. Its shores are lined with six-hundred skyscrapers¹⁶ and condominiums while streets are studded with flashy nightclubs, restaurants and luxury boutiques – a long way for a city that did not have electricity until the 1960s to have come.¹⁷ Dubai does not sleep. Or, at least, it has not done so for the past six years. During this time, thanks to the round-the-clock construction frenzy, it “quadrupled in size and doubled in population”¹⁸ and yet, intriguingly, only ten percent of Dubai's vision is completed.¹⁹ It is an

¹⁶ Mike Davis, “Sand, Fear, and Money in Dubai,” in *Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism*, ed. Mike Davis and Daniel Bertrand Monk (New York: The New Press, 2007), 50.

¹⁷ Jim Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009), 302.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 301.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 313.

‘imagineered’²⁰ playground full of capitalist extravagances for the rich and few and, above all, the city relentlessly pursues its ‘nothing is impossible’ motto.²¹ But Dubai’s ambitions, or that of its ruling royal family, the Maktoums, and governed by Sheikh Mohammed, stretch beyond all these things. Apart from its wealthy neighbours like Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, Dubai - facing dwindling oil supplies - seeks to create a secure post-oil future by becoming the centre for all things commercial, financial and touristic – just like Tokyo, London and New York City – but of the Middle East and aims to be better than the rest.²² Yet, what does all this have to do with Dubai’s connection to international labour migration? Plenty; the city is built by foreign workers.

The UAE and Dubai, in particular, have had a long migration history with other Arab countries and also with those from outside the region, particularly characterized by the migration of skilled workers and of low volume. However, this changed during the mid 1970s when, for the first time in history, migration to Dubai sharply increased due to the massive demand for labour – fuelled by the increase of oil prices - in order to realize its dream city. But, labour, and just like other countries that experienced rapid growth, had to be recruited from outside its borders since nationals were too few and unwilling to take on ‘lower class’ jobs such as construction workers, electricians and plumbers that were necessary to build Dubai from the ground up. And so began the migration process to Dubai: over a span of four decades, hundreds of thousands of international labour migrants, dominated by South and East Asian countries like India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Bangladesh, came as unskilled and semi-skilled workers, under contract and on temporary stay. Today, they represent an astounding 71 percent of Dubai’s total

²⁰ The term is used by Mike Davis, “Fear and Money in Dubai,” *New Left Review* (41) Sept-Oct 2006.

²¹ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 302.

²² *Ibid.*, 302.

population; it is a city of migrants. Interestingly, half of them are from India and more than half originate from the tiny south-western state of Kerala.

It is this fact that caught my attention. What is it that makes Kerala so special and what is its connection to Dubai? Moreover, how is it that one state in India can have such a strong migration relationship with a city thousands of kilometres away and with sharp cultural, religious, political and historical differences? Therefore, with these questions and with Sassens' arguments in mind, this thesis attempts to answer the question: *why* people from Kerala migrate to Dubai for work? It is this 'why' question that becomes very important because it asks one to undertake an examination of the historical, political, economic, social, religious and geographical features of both places. Doing so will reveal how Kerala and Dubai have formulated *linkages* between themselves that have helped to promote and facilitate migration over time. Also, this thesis hopes to show that by narrowing in on a specific migration stream, rather than by focusing on many labour migrations altogether (which is often done), will reveal particularities that are unique to it and, therefore, moves away from generalizing migrations (as a simple flight from poverty, overpopulation, etc) and argues that they instead exist within larger geo-political and economic structures that are often overlooked.

In an effort to answer the thesis question and to explore how certain links were created, this thesis first sets out to examine two critical time periods that have shaped the migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai: from 1973 to the early 1990s, and from then to present day. Briefly, the first period witnessed a close migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai that was *encouraged* and developed by both parties through their policies and institutional arrangements in order to facilitate recruitment and

remittances. The following period, between the mid 1990s – present, witnessed a changed migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai. During this time, the UAE’s government and people seemed to succumb to typical misperceptions and stereotypes of its foreign migrant population that have emerged in practically all labour-importing countries throughout history, including “anti-immigrant feelings, racialization, a crisis mentality about controlling immigration, rapid fluctuations from periods of acute demand for foreign workers to mass unemployment blamed on these same workers.”²³ The UAE, in response, issued a policy of ‘Emiratization’ as its effort to reduce dependency on foreign workers and to replace them with nationals. This was done by systematically pushing migrants out of the country and to make it more difficult for them to enter for work by tightening visa requirements, increasing fees and imposing employee quotas for nationals. However, India, for its part, continued to encourage emigration by loosening its rules and regulations for it. Kerala, on the other hand, has no migration policy – emigration “has taken place in a total policy void.”²⁴ Therefore, with migration being left politically ignored and unrestricted, Kerala is indirectly facilitating the emigration of its citizens.

In addition, this thesis also investigates the way in which remittances link and further encourage the Kerala-Dubai migration system. This is important because remittances play a significant part in international migrations because they provide workers and their families income that they otherwise might have had more difficulty to

²³ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, xiii.

²⁴ P. R. Gopinathan Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies” in *Emigration Dynamics in Developing Countries Volume II: South Asia*, ed. Reginald Appleyard (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 286.

earn at home, while, at the same time, providing governments with an attractive source of foreign exchange earnings.

This is particularly true for India and Kerala. Just like emigration, remittances have been increasing since the early 1970s so much that by 2007, India was the highest recipient of remittances in the world, standing at \$27 billion.²⁵ However, India's remittances in relation to its GDP (\$2.699 trillion)²⁶ are not that much (0.01 percent) whereas remittances in relation to Kerala's GDP are more significant: 5 billion in 2007²⁷ and translating to nearly 20 percent of its GDP (\$18.8 billion).²⁸ With very low levels of productivity in the agricultural, industrial and financial sectors – combined with high unemployment levels – remittances to Kerala are a 'godsend' and support "the state's economic output by nearly 25 percent."²⁹ Kerala simply depends on them.³⁰ Such a reality pushes people to leave the state in search of work. The statistics speak for themselves: from a total population of 32 million,³¹ "one Keralite worker in six now works overseas"³² which amounts to a striking 16 percent of the workforce. Kerala is a state of emigrants. But, why is this so? What is occurring in Kerala that it so heavily depends on remittances? Such questions ask us to examine how the historical, political, economic, social and geographical dimensions of the state encourage the emigration of Keralites to Dubai.

²⁵ Ilene Grabel, "The Political Economy of Remittances: What do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?" *Political Economy Research Institute* Working Paper Series No. 184 (Amherst, October 2008): 7.

²⁶ CIA Factbook, last accessed March 31, 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html#Econ>

²⁷ Jason DeParle, "Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support 'Model' State in India," *The New York Times*, September 7, 2007, last accessed Mar 31 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/07/world/asia/07migrate.html?pagewanted=all>

²⁸ "Kerala's GDP hits an all-time high," *Rediff*, February 9, 2006.

<http://www.rediff.com/money/2006/feb/09ker.htm>

²⁹ DeParle, "Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support 'Model' State in India."

³⁰ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 280.

³¹ DeParle, "Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support 'Model' State in India."

³² Ibid.

Significance of the topic and research aims

While there is currently much research being done about international labour migrations streams in general, there does not exist, to my knowledge, an analysis on the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship. This is unfortunate because the India-UAE migration corridor is rated among having the highest levels of migrants in world,³³ the majority from Kerala and travelling to Dubai for work. Therefore, this thesis aims to shed light on a migration relationship that has not received proper documentation among scholarly circles and also hopes to expose particularities that are unique to it.

Similarly, this thesis also aims to expose the hidden side of Dubai's labour relations: the mistreatment and violations against human rights towards its foreign workers by employers and by the Dubai and UAE governments. This includes certain elements such as withholding passports, extremely low wages, delayed payments, very poor working and housing conditions to mention but a few. Workers are subject to bondage and there is no legislation in Dubai for their protection: it is illegal to unionize, strike, rally, gather, and to voice their abuse. Such realities have only recently been documented over the past few years, particularly by the Human Rights Watch, various news organizations like the BBC and scholars, such as Mike Davis and Jim Krane. The hope here is to show that migrants are regularly exposed to abuse, as is the case in Dubai, and encourages governments to adopt progressive migration policies.

This thesis also aspires to show that we can learn more about the origins and effects of migrations by studying particular streams. This thesis strongly supports this

³³ In rank order of the largest migrant corridors in the world in terms of number of migrants, they are: Mexico-U.S. followed by Russia-Ukraine, Ukraine-Russia, Bangladesh-India, Turkey-Germany, Kazakhstan-Russia and India-United Arab Emirates. The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*, 16.

argument because, as I have sought to understand why people from Kerala migrate to Dubai for work, I have come to see that the reasons that propel people to leave do not fit into the mold of ‘conventional ideologies’ that have plagued the West for so long. Instead, if we are to understand the nature of migrations, it is best to study them separately and with precision – doing so reveals that they are more complex than they appear to be.

At the same time, it is rather timely to speak of Dubai, particularly due to the recent global financial meltdown and of the consequential turbulence it has had (and is having) on Dubai’s economy. Of particular note is to examine how this affects emigration from Kerala to Dubai, the consequences it has toward remittances and if we can use this analysis to make predictions toward other migration streams in similar situations. In the end, I hope to show that my thesis is not just about migration in the sense of people simply moving from one place to the other; it is about the realities of migrant workers, how they are connected to different places and the historical, political, economic and social elements that link them together.

Overview of the thesis

The second chapter provides an overview of the methodology used to explore the thesis question. This includes how data was gathered, by what means and how it was analyzed. It further reports on methodological limitations when information was not available and how it was resolved.

Chapter 3 introduces the literature review which is divided into two parts: theoretical and empirical. The former discusses various theories that try to explain why

people migrate and show how they relate to the thesis question in particular. The latter presents an empirical review of scholars that contributed to the areas of migration in general, international labour migration, along with the politics, economics and migration histories of the UAE, Dubai, India and Kerala.

Chapter 4, “The Origins of the Kerala-Dubai Migration System: 1973 – mid 1990s” explores the historical, political and economic developments that occurred in Kerala, India, Dubai and the UAE between 1973 – mid 1990s. It further shows how, why and to what extent these developments formed linkages between both places that have created perfect conditions for migration.

Chapter 5, “‘Emiratization’ and the Kerala and India Responses: mid 1990s – present” reviews the historical, political and economic developments that have occurred in Kerala, India, Dubai and the UAE between the mid 1990s – present. It will specifically focus on how Kerala and India responded to the UAE’s ‘Emiratization’ policy and to what extent the migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai changed as a result of it.

Chapter 6, “Remittances and Labour Emigration” reveals the way in which remittances form linkages between and enforce the Kerala-Dubai migration system. Specifically, it seeks to explore the political and economic significance of remittances sent to the Keralite and Indian governments and, in turn, what this means to the migrants themselves and how they are being used. Finally, with Kerala being highly dependent on remittances³⁴ and with India being the recipient of it in such high volumes, this thesis also examines the role that remittances have played in determining migration policies from the Indian and Keralite perspectives and the impact they have had on Kerala’s economy.

³⁴ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 280.

Chapter 7, “An Ode to Theories of Migration” concludes the thesis by revisiting its major findings. It shows how theories help us better understand the Kerala-Dubai migration system and provides a brief discussion on its future.

Chapter 2

Methodological Framework

This chapter explains how research was conducted in order to analyze and understand the migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai. It first presents some problems I faced in writing the thesis and how I went about resolving them. Secondly, it outlines the research methods that are applied in order to answer the thesis question.

Limitations

As I went on with my research to uncover the reasons why people from Kerala migrate to Dubai work, I faced certain critical limitations of the existing literature: statistical data regarding the stock of Keralites in Dubai and the levels of remittances that they send back home were scant. Figures of this kind did not exist and, consequently, I was unclear how to proceed with my research. However, further investigation showed that my situation was not unique.

In fact, the field of migration studies has been long plagued by inaccurate, incomplete, limited and, often non-existent data pertaining to migration flows and stocks, levels of return migration and remittances on a stream-by-stream analysis and on a global scale. And this is more true of the less-developed nations and in politically contested environments³⁵ since the collection, processing and analysis of data pertaining to

³⁵ Sarah Collinson, "The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis," IMI Working Paper 12, Oxford: International Migration Institute (IMI), University of Oxford, 2009: 22. Last accessed March 31, 2012, <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/imi-working-papers/wp12-collinson>

migration is either absent or unavailable to the public.³⁶ It was particularly problematic that Dubai and Kerala carry out no such documentation. I had to find a way around this.

Sarah Collinson, a scholar from the International Migration Institute at the University of Oxford, argues that when sound data and research on migration is unavailable, “qualitative research will need to take priority.”³⁷ In fact, she adds “that a variety of methods will need to be employed, ideally *over a period of time*, in order to build up a detailed picture of the dynamics and significance of migration for a particular community, group, or within a particular economic or other sector or process.”³⁸ In this case, one may draw upon informal observation, community-level surveys, interviews and – critically for this thesis - an “analysis of a wide variety of background and ‘grey’ literature, particularly relating to the meso-, national and international-level political economy and history.”³⁹ In this effort, this thesis aims to construct credible estimates of how many migrants from Kerala are present in Dubai and how much money they send home in remittances. This is important to the overall understanding of the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship because it shows the connection between both places in numbers. This thesis examines several documents from the national and international levels over time and, along with particular scholarly works, how they contribute to arriving at estimates which, given the lack of official data from Kerala and Dubai, are the best indicators we can have for this migration relationship. The overall findings are included in the appendix of this thesis along with an explanation as to how I was able to form such conclusions.

³⁶ Ibid., 22.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid. Emphasis is my own.

³⁹ Ibid.

Scholars from the Centre of Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram (India) and others such as Nair, Kannan, Hari, Davis and DeParle, provide specific information in their own independent research. For example, they provide information regarding how many people from Kerala are present in the UAE and how many Indians are present in Dubai but, I was not able to specifically find what I was looking for, that is, how many Keralites are in Dubai. With respect to remittances, I was only able to obtain the amount of remittances that were sent from the UAE to India and from Keralites in the UAE to India, but not the amount of remittances from Keralities in Dubai to Kerala. As a result, my search to identify the volume of remittances from Dubai sent to Kerala by Keralites in Dubai and the number of Keralites located in Dubai, has led me to search for evidence elsewhere: from international organizations and any available information that I was able to acquire from the governments of India and the UAE pertaining to the questions at hand.⁴⁰

Two UAE and Kerala government publications were also helpful: the UAE's *The United Arab Emirates Yearbook 2006* and the *Kerala Economic Survey of 2007*. The latter provides information regarding the number of out-migrants from Kerala, however, this finding was not compiled by the government of Kerala but from the Centre for Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram, India. The former provides information regarding the population of the UAE, but fails to report the number of foreign migrants and from which countries they originate. This suggests that both governments statistically neglect immigrants and emigrants. The UAE does not collect any information regarding remittances.

⁴⁰ The governments of Dubai and Kerala have no known information regarding such information as opposed to the governments of India and the UAE.

Finally, this thesis examined several documents by international organizations that specialize in the analyses of migrant stocks, flows and remittances, they are: the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Population Division, the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In these cases, information was provided on a macro level, such as how many migrants left India in a particular year and where they went. Answers to the last question were broad in scope like the ‘Middle East’, the ‘oil-producing countries of the Gulf’ or the ‘United Arab Emirates’ which did not add to much – I needed to know *where* exactly in the UAE and *how many* migrants from Kerala are in Dubai. The data on remittances also suffered from the same problem. The international organizations studied were only able to provide figures of how much money India received in remittances in a particular year but were unable to provide information pertaining to the outflow of remittances from the UAE or Dubai, since those governments do not calculate or provide the public with such information.

At the same time, however common the shortcomings were, information provided by international governmental organizations were invaluable to this thesis. Where there was an absence of government information regarding the number of Keralite migrants in Dubai and how much they remit back home, they have provided this thesis with basic essential tools to conduct the more specific calculations it needed, such as the 2006 World Bank migration and remittances database that the organization had developed with the University of Sussex along with the United Nation’s *World Statistics Pocketbook*. With all of the information that I was able to collect from scholars, governments and international organizations, I was able to assemble of what I believe are to be credible

figures that indicate the number of Keralites in Dubai and the amount of remittances that are sent back home as detailed in the appendix. I now turn to present the research methods employed in order to explore the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship over time. This will lead me to answer the thesis question: why do people from Kerala migrate to Dubai for work.

Research methods

In the effort to best understand why people from Kerala migrate to Dubai for work, this thesis frames the research question within a historical perspective.⁴¹ The historical lens is used as this thesis' methodological framework because it permits us to uncover, over time, the political, economic and social dimensions of the sending and receiving countries that link them together to form a migration flow. Therefore, just like Sassen, I have aimed to expose particular events regarding the Kerala-Dubai migration system "as it intersects with economies, societies and polities."⁴² Doing so will also enable us to recognize if there are a certain set of patterns that link each place together, that is: are there particular structural conditions and policies in Kerala and Dubai that encourage migration between them. The historical lens has made it possible to explore the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship from its origins to the present day along with how it has changed over time.

This has led me to national legislative documents, policies and forums pertaining to labour, immigration and emigration laws and the rights of foreign workers; I analyzed financial statements from the website of Reserve Bank of India to examine the role of

⁴¹ Collinson, de Haas, Kritz & Zlotnik, Sassen & Zolberg all advocate using a historical perspective when studying migration.

⁴² Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, p. x.

remittances in India's economy; I explored documents from various international organizations to estimate the number of Keralites in Dubai and the amount of remittances they send home; I searched through newspapers and articles in the Gulf region, in India and in North America to uncover the sentiment of people, over time, in India, Kerala, Dubai and in the UAE regarding migration, emigration and of foreign migrants and finally; I surveyed scholarly works regarding the thesis topic. The following reflects and outlines all of these elements in more detail so as to illustrate the nature of the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship and how it has evolved from an attitude of encouragement to restraint.

This thesis relies on primary and secondary research. Primary research has been the best tool to chronologically observe the changed Kerala-Dubai migration relationship. In particular, the thesis focuses on four newspapers from India and the Persian Gulf (*Times of India*, *The Hindu*, the *Khaleej Times* and *Gulf News*) and four international sources (the *New York Times*, the *BBC*, the *Economist* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*). The aim is to document a variety of perspectives to gain a sense of the migration issue. Specific attention is paid to the behaviors and reactions of the governments of India, Kerala and the UAE (and their citizens) with regard to migration policies that have been implemented, reactions from nationals in the UAE about foreign workers and the impact all of this has had for the migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai along with its future prospects.

These newspapers were searched via internet and by microfiche at the University of Manitoba library. Keywords that have been used when searching for documents on the internet include the broad and the specific: migration and India, Kerala and labour

migrants, migration and labour and the UAE, migration and labour and Dubai, migrants and Dubai, Keralities or Kerala and Dubai, labour and Dubai, labour and UAE, India and remittances, Kerala and remittances, Keralites and remittances, exploitation and Keralaites and Dubai, exploitation and migrants and UAE, Kerala and Dubai, Keralites and Dubai, construction boom and Dubai, economy and Dubai, economy and Kerala, people and Dubai, unemployment and Kerala, poverty and Kerala, economy and Kerala, labour recruitment in India and Kerala. All retrieved newspapers and articles are dated from the early 1970s to present day.

In addition, this thesis investigates government documents and laws from the UAE and India to observe the extent to which they facilitate and/or restrict migration from Kerala to Dubai and to determine how they have affected the migration relationship between both places from the 1970s - present. This thesis reviews 3 major migration policies from the UAE that have shaped its migration policy and behavior toward migration. They are: (a) Federal Law 8 of 1980, (b) the 'Emiratization' policy of the mid 1990s and (c) the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with India. The government of Kerala does not have any policies or laws regarding migration. Therefore, this thesis reviews three migration policies from the Indian government, its laws and efforts to help its citizens abroad against difficulty they may be experiencing and to help facilitate other Indians to migrate. These include: (a) the liberalization of Indian passport laws in late 1970s, (b) the 1983 Indian Emigration Act and (c) the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) from the Indian perspective. The primary research shows that the behaviors and attitudes towards migrants have evolved from a sentiment of encouragement and acceptance to one of hostility and restriction in the UAE and Dubai

that only reveals the typicality of all societies that relied on foreign labour during times of growth.

Secondary research includes works by scholars that this thesis has heavily relied upon. They include: Abella, Appleyard, Ballard, Castles, Collinson, Davidson, Davis, Grabel, de Haas, Hari, Hirst, Jeromi, Kannan, Krane, Kritz, Massey et al., Nair, Prakash, Rajan, Sassen, Thompson, Zachariah, Zlotnik and Zolberg. I will not go into detail here about each scholar, as their importance and what they have offered this thesis will be explained in the literature review. Briefly, their expertise and interests include: international migration in general and international labour migration in particular; migration theory; emigration dynamics in Kerala; history of migration to the UAE; the political, economic and historical developments in Dubai and finally; the political economy of remittances.

Furthermore, this thesis also documents and reports on the findings of multiple international organizations that have analyzed most extensively on international migration and remittances. They include: the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations (UN), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As this chapter indicated earlier, these organizations have been key in helping this thesis formulate a sound estimate of the number of Keralites located in Dubai and the amount of money they send home in remittances. However, at the same time, these organizations have also been noteworthy to this thesis in the sense that they have contributed to an excellent and thorough examination of the nature, consequences, impacts and legalities of all types of international migrations, including that of international labour migration. In this aspect,

their knowledge has directed a better understanding of the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship. Besides the documents from these organizations that have been previously mentioned, other documents this thesis has analyzed include the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, the UN *Human Development Report 2009 Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, the IOMs' *World Migration Report 2005: Cost and Benefits of International Migration* and the *World Migration Report 2008: Managing Labour Mobility in the Evolving Global Economy*. They have all enriched this thesis.

My analysis of the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship through a historical lens has directed this thesis into what I believe is a multi-faceted approach to study this particular migration stream: it identifies the dynamics in each place and the relations between them along with an analysis of how this migration relationship has changed over time. However, while this thesis aims to answer why certain people migrate to Dubai, it also hopes to show why others do not and how long we can expect this migration to last. Finally, through all of this, I also hope to convey that migration is more than just an act of going and returning: it involves people, their histories and the places that they are connected to. It includes politics, economics, the policies that govern their movement and the borders that welcome or disdain their presence. Such a recognition can lead to progressive migration policies for temporary foreign workers that are all too absent in present times.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first provides a theoretical literature review of why migrations occur, while the second presents an empirical review of the literature.

The intent of the theoretical component is not to rule in favour of any one theory over the other, nor is it to provide an extensive account of the theoretical causes of international migration, since such analyses are beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, the purpose is to carefully showcase general international migration theories that have developed over time to explain why people migrate. Since no one theory can provide a full account of why migrations occur, the aim here is to show how some theories can be useful in understanding the Dubai-Kerala migration stream. It concludes that the best way to understand the Kerala-Dubai migration stream is to frame it within a historical perspective, as Sassen argues, because this will allow for a more precise analysis of the distinct political, economic and social processes that have unfolded, over time, in both places. By doing so, this will also reveal how certain migration theories fit into explaining the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship. The second part of this chapter provides a description of secondary sources that have been consulted throughout the thesis writing process and provides an account of what they have contributed in detail.

I. Theoretical literature review

An introduction to migration theory

Why do people migrate? In quite simple terms, people migrate for many reasons, however those reasons are highly varied, complex, and, at times, vague. Consequently, it

has become rather difficult to understand the motives of what makes a person leave one place for another and, in the larger scheme of things, why certain places become small, medium or large sending nations of migrants while others have become the opposite – receivers (places of destination), and even both. Moreover, in present times, we can also observe distinct and discrete migration streams, that is: strong migration flows to a specific place of destination that predominately originates from a particular place. Such is the case of current migration streams between Turkey and Germany, Poland and Ireland, and that of Morocco and France. Yet, why these particular relationships? Theory has tried to answer all of these matters, and has done so by applying all disciplines of the social sciences for clues.⁴³ Yet, with all of this effort, there exists no unifying or universal theory that can explain why an international migration stream begins, “only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries.”⁴⁴ To add, and even to this day, no one has perfect theoretical knowledge of what causes one to migrate while others do not, why a stream continues and why it ends. But, this is not to say that theory is useless when it comes to understanding the motives for international migration, in fact quite the contrary, as the following pages of this chapter describe.

However, before immersing ourselves into the theory of international migration, this thesis finds it necessary to provide a brief account of contemporary international migration flows, beginning from the sixteenth century onwards. By no any means does it attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of such a history. The purpose of this is first,

⁴³ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 19.

⁴⁴ Douglas S. Massey et al. “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” in *The Migration Reader: Exploring Politics and Policies* ed. Anthony M. Messina and Gallya Lahav (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 35.

to show that the causes of international migration are profuse and thus, highly resistant to general explanations.⁴⁵ The second intention is to demonstrate how patterns and trends of international migration have evolved as they have cut across particular political, economic and social processes of their time. This will indicate how such histories have shaped international migration theory over time and will, thus, allow for a more thorough theoretical understanding of why international migrations take place. At the same time, examining international migration throughout history also allows us to situate the Kerala-Dubai migration stream within it so as to see where it fits in.

International migration in historical perspective

Humans, as Massey et al. argue, are migratory beings.⁴⁶ In fact, “migration is as old as humanity itself”⁴⁷ and, as Stalker suggests, “[t]ravel is a central part of the human experience.”⁴⁸ Indeed, one can observe this throughout history. The earliest traces of human movement can range as far back to the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Evil, from the biblical perspective, or as the anthropologist would aver, with the first humans who journeyed from the north-east corner of Africa to inhabit the rest of the world, over one million years ago. As time passed, empires, regions and entire continents were swept by invading powers, such as by the ancient Romans, Mongols, Vandals, Crusaders and of Alexander’s conquests, as examples – giving rise to new states

⁴⁵ Joaquin Arango, “Theories of International Migration” in *International Migration in the New Millennium: Global Movement and Settlement* ed. Daniele Joly (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 31.

⁴⁶ Douglas S. Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1. Last accessed April 2, 2012, <http://lib.myilibrary.com.proxy1.lib.umanitoba.ca/Open.aspx?id=81485&loc=&srch=undefined&src=0>

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 1.

⁴⁸ Peter Stalker, *The Work of Strangers: A Survey of International Labour Migration* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 1994), 9.

while swallowing others⁴⁹ - all the while creating mass displacements of people. Merchants travelled great lengths for commerce; explorers voyaged abroad to discover new lands and sea passageways, while Mediaeval European “journeymen”⁵⁰ wandered great distances “to broaden their skill and experience.”⁵¹ Some returned home while others did not.⁵² Migration has also become so heavily connected to the human condition that it is even embedded in national folklore, tales and myths, such as that of Odysseus. However, the international migration theory of our time is rooted in a more specific historical experience of migration, the phase of modern international migration that began in the nineteenth century.⁵³

Massey et al divide modern international migration into four distinct periods: the mercantile period, the industrial period, the period of limited migration and the post-industrial migration period.⁵⁴ The *mercantile period*, beginning roughly from 1500 to 1800, was largely shaped by the “processes of colonization and economic growth under mercantilist capitalism.”⁵⁵ During this time, Europeans dominated world migration flows by emigrating *en masse*,⁵⁶ as colonizers in the form of agrarian settlers, artisans, administrators, entrepreneurs, etc., to virtually all continents on the globe.⁵⁷ Such widespread colonial expansion “required mobilizing “foreign” labor supplies,”⁵⁸ the most extreme being slavery, which led Stalker to suggest that international labour migration

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 9.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 9.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 9.

⁵² Ibid. p. 9.

⁵³ Ravenstein is credited as the ‘father of migration theory’ with his “Laws of Migration” published in 1885 & 1889.

⁵⁴ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 1-2.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 1.

⁵⁶ The precise number regarding the number of colonizers is unknown. Ibid. p. 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 1.

⁵⁸ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, p. 3.

might “have started in earnest”⁵⁹ with it. Over the course of more than two centuries, 15 million people were enslaved in order to extract raw materials for export to Europe’s mercantilist economies.⁶⁰ To this day, the movement of African slaves during this time remains as, “one of the largest mass migrations of labour in human history.”⁶¹

Following this is the *industrial period*, beginning in the early 1800s and ending with the outbreak of the First World War.⁶² This period is distinguished by Europe’s economic development, or its industrialization, mostly characterized by “the shift to factory-based manufacturing and the development of the railroad,”⁶³ and the spread of it to its colonies.⁶⁴ Just like the mercantile period, European emigration during this time dominated world migration flows, but it was of a different kind and much higher. Emigration from Europe was largely caused by agricultural changes: either people were forcefully pushed off the lands to make room for ‘industrialization’ or they left as a result of crop failure, famine and as a result of rural poverty.⁶⁵ From 1846–1890, 17 million people emigrated from Europe, 8 million of which came from the British Isles.⁶⁶ However, the largest exodus took place between 1891 to 1920 when 27 million people left Europe for the Americas and Oceania,⁶⁷ totaling more than 48 million people since the beginning of the industrial period,⁶⁸ or a staggering 12 percent of Europe’s total population.⁶⁹ Most people emigrated from the British Isles, an astonishing 41 percent,

⁵⁹ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 9.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 9; Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 1.

⁶¹ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 11.

⁶² Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 1.

⁶³ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Hatton and Williamson 1994c quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 1.

⁶⁵ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 13.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 1.

⁶⁹ Based on its population in 1900. Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, p. 16.

followed by Norway - reaching 36 percent.⁷⁰ Such high levels of emigration have yet to be repeated whether from Europe, or anywhere else. Also, particularly important to this period is the fact that only few countries dominated as key senders and receivers of migrants. Britain, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Sweden and Norway provided the bulk of all emigrants.⁷¹ Of these, 85 percent travelled to a select few countries of destination: the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina.⁷²

At the same time, indentured workers (slavery's replacement) were also part of this landscape during the industrial period, with India and China being the largest of suppliers.⁷³ Major colonial powers, such as Britain, controlled vast pools of labour for capital accumulation and modernization.⁷⁴ The first group of indentured workers from India was sent to Mauritius in 1834 to work on its sugar plantations and then, in the following years, millions were sent to work to various parts of the world like Africa, in Asian colonies such as Borneo, Burma and Malaya and throughout the Caribbean islands.⁷⁵ Chinese indentured workers also travelled to Borneo, one of their earliest of destinations, to work in gold mines.⁷⁶ However, thousands of others were also sent to work throughout South-East Asia, Australia, Canada, Cuba and South Africa.⁷⁷ In 1849, the United States also became a primary destination of Chinese labour after the discovery

⁷⁰ This is based between the years of 1846-1924. Massey (1988) quoted in Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 15-6.

⁷¹ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁷³ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 11. Stalker notes that indentured labour was slavery's replacement.

⁷⁴ Stephen Castles, "Comparing the Experience of Five Major Emigration Countries." International Migration Institute. Working Paper 7, 2007. p. 4. Last accessed April 2, 2012, <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/imi-working-papers/WP7%20Comparing%205%20countries.pdf>

⁷⁵ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

of gold.⁷⁸ They not only worked in mines and but also built railways in the US and Panama, later to be replaced by Japanese workers after the 1882 ban of Chinese labour.⁷⁹ In addition, South America was raided of its indigenous people to work in Caribbean plantations, such as the large volumes of Venezuelans because it was not believed “to have any other resources.”⁸⁰

Though the exact number of indentured workers are unknown due to an absence of statistical recordings during this time, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that globally, there were no less than 12 million indentured workers during this period and that they may have exceeded 37 million.⁸¹ Therefore, taking into consideration all of the population movements during the industrial period, there were 60 – 85 million global migrants, possibly more. These movements, as Sassen notes, “are familiar features; they are generally recognized to be an integral part of the economic history of the Americas, of Africa, and of Asia.”⁸²

This historic period of mass migration abruptly halted with the outbreak of the First World War,⁸³ marking the beginning of a four-decade *period of limited migration*. For the first time in modern history, immigration suddenly became restrictive as particular destination countries, such as the United States, introduced strict immigration laws, thus making it very difficult to enter.⁸⁴ However, migration to the West did continue, but at much lower levels, and proceeded to slow down during the Great Depression - ultimately leading to a complete stand-still with the onset of the Second

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 11-2.

⁸⁰ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, 3.

⁸¹ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 11.

⁸² Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, p. 3.

⁸³ Massey (1995) quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁸⁴ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 13.

World War.⁸⁵ Whatever movement did occur during this time “consisted largely of refugees and displaced persons and was not tied strongly to the rhythms of economic growth and development,⁸⁶ a pattern that persisted well into the subsequent decade.⁸⁷ It is estimated that at the end of the Second World War, some 15 million people were uprooted waiting to be transferred “from one country to another.”⁸⁸ Millions had to relocate due to boundary changes – Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia the most affected,⁸⁹ as well as millions of refugees, particularly Jews, who migrated to Israel and Western countries as a result of the war.

The 1960s ended the period of limited migration and indurated the *period of post-industrial migration*, which “constituted a sharp break with the past.”⁹⁰ A number of new migration trends emerged. Of particular note was the major shift of the origins of international migrants. Whereas Europe before 1925 supplied 85 percent of all international migrants, post-war Europe contributed much lower levels of migrants but, on the other hand, emigration from Asia, Africa and Latin America increased significantly.⁹¹ The post-industrial migration period is also marked by a new diversity of destination countries.⁹² Countries in Western Europe, specifically France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, joined the traditional destinations countries in pulling large numbers of immigrants⁹³ (mostly “guest-workers” who were

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Holmes 1995; Noiriel 1995; Sword 1995; Kay 1995 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁸⁷ Massey (1995) quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁸⁸ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 16.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁹¹ Kritiz *et al.* 1981; Stalker 1994 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁹² Massey et al. *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁹³ Abadan-Unat 1995; Anwar 1995; Hammar 1995; Hoffman-Nowotny 1995; Ogden 1995 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

only expected to stay temporarily and to return when they were no longer needed),⁹⁴ and even classic emigration countries like Spain, Portugal and Italy “began receiving immigrants from the Mediterranean Basin and Africa.”⁹⁵ New destination countries also emerged in the Gulf after a dramatic increase of oil prices in the early 1970s that brought, for the first time, large-scale labour migration flows (predominately from Asia) to its oil-producing states.⁹⁶ The break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989 to 1991 also led to new movements of people as new states formed and as people suddenly found themselves in new territories. Moreover, we also witness large numbers of internally displaced people and refugees due to the recent Afghan an Iraq wars, not to mention persisting civil wars across the globe, such as in both Sudans.

With all of these migration periods in mind, we can observe certain features that are unique to international migration systems today, particularly in the last quarter of the twentieth century.⁹⁷ The first relates to the origins of migrants. Today, most migrants come from states that have large reserves of labour and are plagued with low levels of job creation and capital.⁹⁸ The second feature shows that migrant-receiving states “are far more intensive in capital and much less intensive in land than destination countries of the past.”⁹⁹ Third, whereas migrants were once seen as needed and wanted by receiving states, particularly during Europe’s period of industrialization, this is no longer the case.¹⁰⁰ Today, migrants are perceived as a problem to the developed countries, that they are to be managed and the best way of doing so is to implement restrictive immigration

⁹⁴ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 4.

⁹⁵ Fakiolas 1995; Sole 1995 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁹⁶ This history will be later examined in the following chapters of this thesis. Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

policies that are “designed to limit the number of immigrants, confine their activities to the labour market [as opposed being political and social actors through the right to protest and ability to unionize], discourage the entry of dependents, and deter or prevent ultimate settlement”¹⁰¹ – even though there remains a strong demand for their labour,¹⁰² such as in the United Arab Emirates. There are also large disparities between migrant sending and receiving countries in terms of power, growth, wealth and income.¹⁰³ Finally, human trafficking and undocumented flows of people have increased during the past twenty-five years.¹⁰⁴ All of this leads Massey and his colleagues to conclude that, “[c]ompared to the earlier industrial era, contemporary migration patterns and processes of international migration are far more complex.”¹⁰⁵ But, what does all of this reveal about international migration theory? How has the recent history of international migration shaped the theory of it?

This historical outline of international migration in modern times reveals, perhaps more than anything, that the character and patterns of international migration are embedded in a number of complex factors and structural constraints, at both places of origin and destination. At the same time, it reveals that international labour migration, for the most part, does not occur suddenly, but instead takes form after a “culmination of long historical processes.”¹⁰⁶ Colonization is but one example. The historical analysis of contemporary international migration also suggests that it “may be entering a new era”¹⁰⁷ due to the emergence of new trends and patterns in terms of size, geography and

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁴ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 22.

¹⁰⁵ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Castles, “Comparing the Experience of Five Major Emigration Countries,” 6.

¹⁰⁷ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 22.

duration.¹⁰⁸ For example, a number of new labour migrations emerged since the 1980s: major European labour-exporting countries like Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece became labour-importing ones, as well as renewed East-West migrations after the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, as the following pages will show, there is a clear relationship between migration history and migration theory – as time progressed, the latter evolved from the former. As such, thinking about migration has responded to its present realities and moved away from narrow ideas of the past, which have been based on only explaining internal migration.¹¹⁰

Migration theory in perspective

In comparison to other disciplines in the social sciences, migration theory is rather new. Although people have been on the move for millennia, the field of migration studies itself, and the theory of it, was born in the late nineteenth century when an English geographer, Ernest Ravenstein, documented internal migration flows in England and penned a set of observations, or ‘laws’ that he made about those very migrants.¹¹¹ Interestingly, though his observations/theories were of migrations within the state, it later became a basis of theories of international migration.

¹⁰⁸ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, 134.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 109-10.

¹¹⁰ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 22.

¹¹¹ A more comprehensive account of Ravenstein will be provided in the following pages of this chapter. However, I will mention here that this thesis does not agree that what Ravenstein proposed were a set of migration theories as some scholars might say but were more rather observations than anything else. Massey et al. along with Arango (1985) state that Ravenstein’s ‘laws of migration’ “never consisted a theory so much as a collection of empirical regularities.” Arango (1985) quoted in Massey et al., Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 15.

Today, classical (or traditional) theories of migration stand in state of crisis.¹¹² Developed during the industrial era, they were once widely accepted to explain international migration but, over time, they grew rigid and are now ill-suited to understand international migration in modern times since it reflects the unique politics, social institutions, economic arrangements, demography and technology of its time.¹¹³ In response to this gap, modern theories emerged and have thus brought new light to the scientific thinking on the topic by being grounded in contemporary realities and conditions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries¹¹⁴ - although, they too must be scrutinized with care. The migration theories of today are all widely disputed and none has been officially adopted by scholars as fully acceptable for understanding why people migrate across borders. In fact, no general theory of migration exists simply because migration is too complex and diverse.¹¹⁵ As a result, scholars are exceedingly doubtful that a universalizing theory will ever surface.¹¹⁶

Furthermore, prominent scholars in the field, including Arango, Collinson, de Haas, Massey and Zolberg, report on the constricting nature of migration theory-building. For example, Arango remarks that the received theories have done little to advance our knowledge of migration,¹¹⁷ and that the limitations of migration theory primarily lies with migration itself, pointing to its inherent complexity and diversity regarding its forms, processes, motivations, actors and structures, which, consequently, make a study of

¹¹² Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 3.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Arango, "Theories of International Migration," 15.

¹¹⁶ Collinson, "The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis," 7.

¹¹⁷ Arango, "Theories of International Migration," 33.

migration all that more difficult.¹¹⁸ Thus, migration resists attempts at theory-building and the theories that do exist “promise more than they deliver”¹¹⁹ in the sense that their applicability to actual migrations are “neither met nor disclaimed.”¹²⁰ Instead, he argues that theories are best to lean on than to accept entirely.¹²¹

The question then came to be as to how best organize the received theories so as to present them with clarity within the pages of this thesis. To do this, this chapter divides the theories into two broad groups: classical theories of migration and of the modern kind. Of the classical theories, I mention two scholars: Ravenstein (1885, 1889), who was the first to contribute theory to the subject, and Lee (1966) whose work was profoundly inspired by his predecessor. Both have paved the way for future migration theories. The second category offers eight theories. They are separated into two distinct parts: those that explain the *initiation* of international migration or essentially, why it begins, and the theories that explain its *perpetuation* - why people continue to leave.¹²² It is important to distinguish between these two elements because, as Massey et al. point out, “the conditions that initiate international movement may be quite different from those that perpetuate it across space and time.”¹²³ This will offer a more comprehensive and forthright understanding of the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship because it provides a theoretical understanding of its origins and why it is sustained. The chapter will then situate Sassen within the literature and indicate the significance of her ideas for the overall theoretical understanding of the topic. Finally, it sets to argue that Sassen must be

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 33.

¹²² This thesis borrows from Massey et al.’s organization of the migration theories in *Worlds in Motion* and Massey et al.’s “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal.”

¹²³ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 42.

accompanied by Aristide Zolberg, who refuses to allow us to forget the importance of the state in its ability to regulate the volume and character of migration flows - with the implementation of border control policies.

Classical theories of migration

When we speak of classical theories of migration, we essentially speak of two early theorists – Ravenstein and Lee. Until near the end of the nineteenth century, migration rarely occasioned much public discussion or scholarly analysis – whether of its scale, volume, characteristics, or consequences, and as far as Farr could tell, “migration appeared to go on without any definite law.”¹²⁴ All of this changed when Ravenstein, a demographer, presented a paper (in response to Farr’s comment)¹²⁵ in 1885 that meticulously investigated internal population movements in the United Kingdom, the first of its kind, as well as establishing itself as the first systematic study of migration. Four years later, in 1889, he delivered a second paper that exposed internal migrations in North America and from a select number of European countries. Ravenstein’s work was (and is to this day) considered as a major feat, though the relevance of his contributions in explaining migration in the late 20th century has been much debated. In any case, what Ravenstein managed to do was to problematize the subject and make it the subject of serious scholarship. Specifically, he proposed “**laws of migration**” in the UK, supplanting the unthinking assumption that migration was simply a random act.¹²⁶ As a result, Ravenstein became the earliest theoretician of migration, the ‘father of migration

¹²⁴ E. G. Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* Vol. 48, No. 2 (June 1885): 167.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.,168.

studies'. Therefore, any theoretical account of migration ought to begin with this gentleman.

Ravenstein's articles analyse more than one hundred and thirty pages of data, and a detailed summary is neither necessary nor possible in this thesis. Here we need focus only on his seven "laws of migration" that govern the actions of actual and prospective migrants and migrations. These "laws" were presented in his first paper and, as Lee described it, "extended or amended"¹²⁷ in the second.

However, before going on to outline them, we must deal with two issues associated with Ravenstein's works. Firstly, his "laws" are probably better regarded viewed as a set of principles, observations or, as Arango describes, as a "collection of empirical regularities"¹²⁸ that he made about population movements within the UK. Ravenstein never, to my knowledge, explicitly set out to establish a theory of migration, nor did he ever declare such an objective and came to be regarded as doing so only by later writers. The "Laws of Migration" were only meant to provide a picture of internal population movements in the UK and later, of other countries in the world. Secondly, though Ravenstein's works focused on internal population movements, they have influenced international migration theory and, indeed, constitute the foundation on which it rests.

Ravenstein's seven 'laws', as Lee points out, are as follows:

- I. The first of Ravenstein's laws relates to *migration and distance*.¹²⁹ He declares that "the great body of our migrants only proceed a short distance."¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Everett S Lee, "A Theory of Migration" in *Migration*, ed. J. A. Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 282.

¹²⁸ Arango, 1985 quoted Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 15.

¹²⁹ Lee, "A Theory of Migration," 283.

¹³⁰ Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* Vol. 48, No. 2 (June 1885): 198, quoted in Lee, "A Theory of Migration," 283.

This is also argued in his second paper.¹³¹ A corollary is that “[m]igrants proceeding long distances generally go by the preference of to one of the great centres of commerce or industry.”¹³²

- II. Ravenstein’s second law is that *migration proceeds by stages*.¹³³ In this case, he identifies three elements. First, “[t]here takes place consequently a universal shifting or displacement of the population, which produces “currents of migration” setting in the direction of the great centres of commerce and industry which absorb the migrants.”¹³⁴ He further declares that

[t]he inhabitants of the country immediately surrounding a town of rapid growth, flock to it; the gaps thus left in the rural population are filled up by migrants from more remote districts, until the attractive force of one of our rapidly growing cities makes its influence felt, step by step, to the most remote corner of the kingdom.¹³⁵

Finally, Ravenstein notes that “[t]he process of dispersion is the inverse of that of absorption, and exhibits similar features”¹³⁶ in the sense that areas of growth will absorb migrants from their environs “before they [former places of dispersion] call upon the resources in men of the more distant parts of the

¹³¹ E. G. Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* Vol. 52, No. 2 (June 1889): 286.

¹³² Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* Vol. 48, No. 2 (June 1885): 199, quoted in Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 283.

¹³³ The italics on “proceeds” is of my own emphasis. Lee speaks of “*Migration by stages*.” Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 283.

¹³⁴ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* Vol. 48, No. 2 (June 1885): 198, quoted in Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 283.

¹³⁵ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* Vol. 48, No. 2 (June 1885): 199, quoted in Lee, “A Theory of Migration” 283.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 283.

country.”¹³⁷ Therefore, a place of dispersion can later become a place of absorption. With few exceptions, the major direction of migration, as he sees it, is from agricultural areas to places of commerce and industry.¹³⁸

- III. Ravenstein’s third law argues, “[e]ach main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current.”¹³⁹ This reflects the notion that when there is “in-migration” to a particular place, “out-migration” will occur. Counter-currents are a result of return migration of original migrants (though Ravenstien does not include this element in his study because such data did not exist at the time).¹⁴⁰
- IV. The fourth “law” is the rather self-evident proposition that “[t]he natives of towns are less migratory than those of the rural parts of the country.”¹⁴¹
- V. The fifth law is, by contrast, considerably less intuitive: “[f]emales are more migratory than males,”¹⁴² which is reiterated in his second paper.¹⁴³
- VI. The sixth law argues that “an increase in the means of locomotion and a development of manufactures and commerce have led to an increase of migration.”¹⁴⁴
- VII. The final law argues that the dominant reason for migration is the desire for economic self-improvement,

¹³⁷ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 193.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 186-7.

¹³⁹ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* Vol. 48, No. 2 (June 1885): 199, quoted in Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 283.

¹⁴⁰ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 187.

¹⁴¹ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* Vol. 48, No. 2 (June 1885): 199, quoted in Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 283.

¹⁴² Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 199.

¹⁴³ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 288.

¹⁴⁴ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* Vol. 52, No. 2 (June 1889): 288, quoted in Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 283.

[b]ad or oppressive laws, heavy taxation, an unattractive climate, uncongenial social surroundings, and even compulsion (slave trade, transportation), all have produced and are still producing currents of migration, but none of these currents can compare in volume with that which arises from the desire inherent in most men to “better” themselves in material respects.¹⁴⁵

Therefore, and in brief, Ravenstein essentially argued that migration is linked to development, distance, population density, and that the strongest motivating factor for migration was economic betterment: to gain a higher income. Thus, he argued migration tends to achieve “a certain special-economic equilibrium.”¹⁴⁶ Ravenstein’s observations are today criticized for oversimplifying a complex phenomenon. This said, his work should not be dismissed by modern migration scholars. Indeed, whether it may be out-of-date or not is irrelevant. The point to be made is that it should not be forgotten that his “laws” served as a platform to future studies of migration theory and research. In fact, after Ravenstein’s “Laws of Migration”, no other significant contribution to migration theory was made for roughly 70 years; the discipline was in slumber until the second half of the twentieth-century when, in 1966, Lee, being greatly influenced by Ravenstein, revisited his works and presented a new framework to understanding the motives for migration.¹⁴⁷

Lee argued that the decision to migrate is the complex result of positive, negative or indifferent factors that are associated to the place of origin, the place of destination,

¹⁴⁵ Ravenstein, “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* Vol. 52, No. 2 (June 1889): 286, quoted in Everett, “A Theory of Migration,” 283.

¹⁴⁶ De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 4.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 8.

intervening obstacles (situated between the areas of origin and destination) and personal factors.¹⁴⁸ This is commonly known as the ‘**push-pull**’ framework/model¹⁴⁹ since certain factors ‘push’ (or repel) the migrant to leave his or her place of origin while other factors ‘pull’, or lure, the migrant to a place of destination that appears to be attractive. In essence, the main argument of the ‘push-pull’ model is that “migration is a function of spatial disequilibria.”¹⁵⁰

Lee explains that the decision to leave is based upon a comparison of perceived factors in both places, however, Lee argues that a “simple calculus of +s and –s does not decide the act of migration.”¹⁵¹ In fact, one has to take into account ‘intervening obstacles’ that stand in between the points of origin and destination “which may be slight in some instances and insurmountable in others,”¹⁵² such as immigration laws, physical barriers and distance.¹⁵³ Personal factors come into account as well for they influence the decision to migrate, such as the longing for change, and having personal contacts.¹⁵⁴ Though Lee never explicitly stated what the push-pull factors were beyond that the “set of +s [positives] and –s [negatives] at both origin and destination is differently defined for every migrant and prospective migrant,”¹⁵⁵ numerous scholars, such as Skeldon,

¹⁴⁸ Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 287.

¹⁴⁹ Lee did not use this terminology to describe his theory. In fact, he does not suggest a title to his theory. The “push-pull model” has unanimously been attributed to him by scholars in the field. However, de Haas remarks that the push-pull scheme was first spoken of by Peterson in 1958, though his analysis of its origins are vague. De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9.

¹⁵⁰ Hein de Haas, “Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration,” IMI Working Paper 24, Oxford: International Migration Institute (IMI), University of Oxford, 2010: 4. Last accessed April 2, 2010, <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/imi-working-papers/wp24-migration-transitions-1>

¹⁵¹ Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 287.

¹⁵² Ibid. p. 287.

¹⁵³ De Haas, “Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration,” 4.

¹⁵⁴ Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 287.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 286.

assume that they include economic, demographic and environmental factors.¹⁵⁶ In more specific detail, Castles and Miller include political repression, low living standards, absence of economic opportunities and demographic growth among the push factors while, on the other hand, pull factors include the opposite such as, good economic opportunities, political freedoms, labour demand and availability of land.¹⁵⁷ At the same time, Massey et al argue that the push-pull model has “always been exclusively economic.”¹⁵⁸ The push-pull model includes essentially Malthusian expectations that an increase in rural population pushes people to leave since it places pressure on natural resources and infrastructure.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, better economic conditions in cities and in developed countries, such as higher wages, is expected to attract people to migrate to those areas.¹⁶⁰ In any case, the push-pull framework is a methodologically individualist equilibrium model derived from, and analogous to, neoclassical economic theory (also to be examined).¹⁶¹

In addition, Lee formulated a set of hypotheses that stemmed from his “push-pull framework” about “the volume of migration under varying conditions, the development of stream and counterstream, and the characteristics of migrants.”¹⁶² Without going into too much detail, since an attempt of describing all of Lee’s hypotheses are beyond the scope of this thesis, we can highlight the three most important principles from each category. With respect to the volume of migration, Lee argued that it is dependent on

¹⁵⁶ De Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9.

¹⁵⁷ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 19.

¹⁵⁸ Massey et al, *Worlds in Motion*, 12.

¹⁵⁹ De Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9; Ronald Skeldon, *Migration and Development: A Global Perspective* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 20.

¹⁶⁰ De Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9.

¹⁶¹ De Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9; Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 12.

¹⁶² Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” 288.

whether one is to overcome intervening obstacles and that it tends to increase if “checks” are not imposed.¹⁶³ He also argued that migration commonly proceeds within defined streams and that they are “highly specific both in origin and destination.”¹⁶⁴ Finally, Lee states that migration is selective because people “respond differently to the sets of plus and minus factors at origin and destination, [and] have different abilities to overcome the intervening sets of obstacles.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, migrants are not randomly selected but, instead, exist within specific conditions and travel along specific routes, conclusions that are also echoed by Sassen.

Since its introduction in 1966, the push-pull model came to be highly admired for its ability to include (apparently) all factors that influence the decision to migrate and it was also deemed as being the best tool to analyze labour migration.¹⁶⁶ More recently, however, it has attracted much criticism. Of particular note, critics question whether the push-pull model is a theory at all. For example, de Hass notes that it is more so “a descriptive model in which the different factors playing a role in migration decisions are enumerated in a relatively arbitrary manner,”¹⁶⁷ while Massey et al argue that it is “a means of classifying migration and ordering its determinants in space.”¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, the push-pull model suggests that push factors are mirrored to pull factors and vice-versa, which is problematic.¹⁶⁹ For instance, such a belief will assume that migrants are pulled to a new place due to an absence of environmental degradation, therefore implying the existence of environmental degradation at the place of origin -

¹⁶³ Ibid., 290-1.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 293.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 294-5.

¹⁶⁶ Bauer & Zimmermann 1998; Schoorl 1998:103 quoted in De Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9.

¹⁶⁷ de Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9.

¹⁶⁸ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 12.

¹⁶⁹ de Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9.

causing one to leave. The same conclusion can be made about income levels, employment rates, etc. Essentially, the push-pull model assumes that there is a perceived difference between the sending and receiving areas.¹⁷⁰ In addition, it cannot explain return migration, why a rural area, town, or city may have high rates of emigration while its neighbors do not, nor can it explain why a group of migrants travel to a particular place but not to another,¹⁷¹ such as why do more Mexicans migrate to the United States than to Canada, and why do most Turks migrate to Germany but not Poland. Clearly, there are serious limitations to the push-pull model.

In effect, there are also severe weaknesses with respect to its predictions. For example, it expects people to migrate from low to high wage places – not illogical, but in reality, this is not often the case.¹⁷² For example, de Haas argues that if migration occurs, it “depends on the skills and knowledge of migrants and conditions in the specific economic sectors where they are likely to find employment both at the origin and destination.”¹⁷³ Moreover, “[s]uch sectoral differences may even explain migration from areas (or countries) with higher *on average* wages to poorer areas.”¹⁷⁴ At the same time, the push-pull model presumes that people will migrate from densely populated and environmentally degraded areas to places that are less populated and have little environmental degradation.¹⁷⁵ This might have been true in some points in history, such as during the industrial period when millions of migrants left Europe for the New World

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹⁷¹ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 21; de Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 11.

¹⁷² De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 10.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

but today, this is not the case. In fact, most migrants travel to cities and towns that are highly concentrated in population and tend not to have a ‘better environment’.¹⁷⁶

Of particular debate is whether or not the “push” factor is more important in causing one to migrate than the “pull”, or if they each hold equal weight.¹⁷⁷ For example, should high unemployment rates and political strife in the place of origin be equally measured as push factors that propel one to leave? If so, how should it be measured? Lee does not pay attention to this question, but Massey and his colleagues attempted to answer it by framing it within a historical perspective. In the industrial period, for example, Massey and company explain that scholars such as Singer, Thomas and Lowell indicate that there were indeed “cases in which the forces of attraction predominate, cases where those of expulsion rule, and even changes in the sequence and predominance of forces over time.”¹⁷⁸ However, in the post-industrial period, Massey et al argue that push factors, or the forces of expulsion, are much stronger than its counterpart.¹⁷⁹ Wage differentials between the North and South are so wide that they indeed provide a constant incentive to move, not to mention the large number of refugees and asylees that also illustrates the predominance of push forces over pull.¹⁸⁰ Most important, perhaps, is the fact that developed (and traditional) countries of destination, such as the United States, France, Britain and Germany have altogether halted labour recruitment and erected large barriers against entry, such as restrictive admission policies and laws in order to actively

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷⁸ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

stop, or make near impossible the entry of immigrants; thus again diminishing the pull polarity over the push.¹⁸¹

In the larger scheme of things, the push-pull model is ahistorical and individualistic.¹⁸² It focuses on the individual as the prime decision-maker in which the decision to migrate is rational, based on a comparison of the costs and benefits of staying or leaving. It portrays migrants as operating in a cultural, social and institutional void and assumes that they have perfect and equal information regarding conditions at the place of destination, irrespective of structural constraints across boundaries.¹⁸³ In other words, the push-pull model assumes that societies are homogenous and discounts any internal stratification within them.¹⁸⁴

Although classical theories of migration may have been useful when they were first created, not least in blazing the trail for migration theory, their value today is highly doubtful.¹⁸⁵ The acknowledgement of the complexity of migration in recent times has led to new theoretical insights as to why it occurs, thus moving away from the classic notions and rigid models explaining that they exist within “simple social, economic and demographic disparities between counties.”¹⁸⁶ In fact, analyses of international migration patterns and trends in the post World War II era has revealed the contrary (migrants do not blindly react to wage differentials, the household does play an important role in the decision making process and immigration policies *do* matter), thus sparking new theoretical insights about its nature – specifically of its origins, of the migrants

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 20.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ De Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 9.

¹⁸⁵ Davis 1988 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 15.

¹⁸⁶ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 15.

themselves, the realities of decision-making process and the socio-economic and political contexts within which they are made.¹⁸⁷

Modern theories of migration

Widespread dissatisfaction with the push-pull framework has led scholars to search for new approaches that can incorporate multiple perspectives and different levels of analysis to explain the initiation of migration and its continuation across space and time.¹⁸⁸ Since contemporary theories of international migration are scattered all over the social and human sciences, Massey et al's classification of them, those that explain why they begin and those that help our understanding of why they continue, is useful.

Theories of initiation

A variety of theories attempt to explain why international migrations begin on the basis of different assumptions, frames of reference and concepts.¹⁸⁹ This section explores four: neoclassical economic theory, the new economics of labour migration (also called new labour economics), segmented labour market theory and world systems theory.

To begin, neoclassical economic theory (divided by theorists between micro and macro perspectives), originally developed by Harris and Todaro to explain internal migration in Third World,¹⁹⁰ dominated migration theory in the 1960s and 1970s to make sense of the recent surge of both internal and international migration due to

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ De Haas, "Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration," p. 4.

decolonization and of the supposed “economic development” in the developing world.¹⁹¹ Today, neoclassical economic theory is widely recognized in the migration literature (next to the push-pull model) as being the most popular theory for explaining contemporary international population movements. As such, it has strongly influenced public opinion around migration issues and has shaped most immigration policies in the Western world today.¹⁹² Although it is similar to classical migration theory, it features a number of important new arguments and assumptions.

With respect to macro-neoclassical economic theory, it views international migration as a result of “geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labour,”¹⁹³ mirroring Ravenstein and Lee’s models, though classical models downplayed employment rates, particularly at the place of destination.¹⁹⁴ It implies that wage differentials lead workers to move from places that suffer from low-wages and large supplies of labour, to places that offer higher wages and smaller supplies of labour.¹⁹⁵ This will lead to equilibrium of labour supply and demand because the movement of workers to the place of destination will increase wages at the place of origin and will also make labour supply scarcer while, on the receiving end, wages will decrease and the supply of labour is expected to grow.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, from such reasoning, it maintains that international migration will not continue once wage differentials are removed.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 16.

¹⁹² Massey et al. *Worlds in Motion*, 19.

¹⁹³ Todaro & Maruszko, 1987 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 18; De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 4.

¹⁹⁴ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 20.

¹⁹⁵ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 18; & De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 4; De Haas, “Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration,” 4.

¹⁹⁶ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 18; De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 4.

¹⁹⁷ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 19.

Moreover, macro-neoclassical economic theory argues that international labour migration is most influenced by labour markets, thus governments of sending and receiving countries have the ability to manage migration flows as a result.¹⁹⁸

In addition, micro-neoclassical economic theory is firmly grounded in the individual choice approach.¹⁹⁹ It perceives migrants as individual and rational actors whose decision to migrate is based on a simple calculation of cost-benefit determinants.²⁰⁰ As such, migrants travel to the place where they perceive they will be most productive, meaning to the place where they can earn higher wages (assuming that they have full and equal access to information about employment, conditions, labour market, etc, in both places of origin and destination).²⁰¹ Therefore, a person will migrate to the place that where he/she will receive the greatest net return.²⁰² However, before migration takes place, micro-neoclassicists argue that the migrant must also engage in certain investments, such as: the costs of travelling and looking for work, learning a new language and dealing with the psychological costs of living in a new place.”²⁰³

Additional arguments of micro-neoclassical economic theory consist of the following: that individual capital characteristics, such as language skills, education and experience, increases the probability of international migration because the likelihood of remuneration is much higher; international migration will increase when migration costs are lowered by such factors as social condition, technologies and human capital because

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 19; De Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 5.

²⁰² Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 20.

²⁰³ Todaro & Maruszko 1987 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 19.

it increases net return, and finally; differentials in expected earnings between the places of origin and destination determines the size of the migration flow.²⁰⁴

However, the credibility of neoclassical economic theory's explanation of international migration has been eroding, mostly because it does not acknowledge the complexities within which it exists in present times.²⁰⁵ For example, scholars in the social sciences question whether international migration is indeed a means for establishing equilibrium of labour supply and demand between the places of origin and destination at the macro-level, while, at the micro-level, they doubt the notion of migrants as rational actors that simply respond to economic disparities between both places.²⁰⁶ Though neoclassical economic theory places much emphasis on explaining international migrations as a consequence of economic disparities between countries, it is therefore important to ask why certain migration flows did not happen before, taking into consideration that many economic differences have been present for a long time²⁰⁷ and, secondly, in a world where the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow - why is it that so few people actually migrate?²⁰⁸ These questions represent the Achilles heel of neoclassical economic theory.²⁰⁹

Thus, international migration cannot be solely explained as a result of economic disparities between countries. Instead, as Massey et al argue, it is necessary to stress that economic disparities “appear to be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for labour migration to occur,”²¹⁰ an argument also reiterated by Arango.²¹¹ The point to be made is

²⁰⁴ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 20-1.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 19.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 8.

that economic disparities ought to be associated with larger micro and macro structures in the political, economic and social realms that cause international migration in the first place.

The fact that economic disparities are not enough of a trigger to set off migration can be found in contemporary examples. For instance, wage differentials between Southern and Northern Europe are quite high, yet migration volumes between them are small: “little migration occurs between Spain, Portugal, and Italy, on the one hand, and Germany, Belgium, and Denmark, on the other.”²¹² Furthermore, it is false to presume that the volume of international migration is directly related to the size of economic differentials between the places of origin and destination: maintaining that higher economic disparities result in higher levels of migrants between countries.²¹³ However, if this were true, then “there would be more countries in the ‘sending’ category than we now observe.”²¹⁴ In fact, the number of sending countries are not that many: only a few countries combined make up the world’s largest senders of international migrants, and they are typically not the poorest of nations²¹⁵ and the migrants are also not among the poorest in these countries. At the same time, recent advancements in global communication and transportation have greatly reduced its costs without causing a proportional increase of global migrants.²¹⁶ For instance, in some places, where the costs of migration are low, migration between them is not high; in fact, it is barely noticeable, as is the case between Puerto Rico and the US mainland.²¹⁷

²¹¹ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 19.

²¹² Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 8.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The neoclassical economic perspective also falsely assumes that international migration will continue until wages are at equilibrium between the sending and receiving points, and will cease when this is attained, however, this is not the case.²¹⁸ If it were true, then there would be far more international migrants than there are currently. History reveals that wage differentials between places rarely fade but, in the few instances that they have, Massey et al argue that it was achieved through a number of mechanisms, “among which migration is not necessarily the most important.”²¹⁹ In reality, the equalization of wages has not typically ceased international migration between countries, but, instead, “with the attainment of bearable conditions of life in areas of origin, after which people find migration not worth the effort.”²²⁰ For example, the US mainland and Puerto Rico, suffer from wide wage gaps and a lack of legal barriers to control movement, however, sustained net migration from the latter to the former ended forty years ago. Consequently, Massey and company argue that this highlights the need to re-examine standard economic theory, particularly “with respect to what it assumes about human motivations.”²²¹ Therefore, all of these arguments severely question neoclassical economic theory with respect to understanding the factors that lead to international migration.

A final problem with neoclassical economic theory of migration is that it tends to separate itself from other large contexts, such as the political, social, historical, institutional and cultural, which all design the space in which people are motivated to

²¹⁸ Ibid., 9.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

leave.²²² Consequently, this theory is not applicable to current realities.²²³ It cannot explain why one leaves while another does not, nor why a developing country has a high rate of emigration while a different developing state does not.²²⁴ Similarly, it cannot explain why migrants travel to countries that do not offer higher wages, why migration can occur when there are no wage differentials between places, and that migration often ends without the occurrence of equilibrium of wages.²²⁵ Moreover, the neo-classical economic model cannot explain non-economic motivations for migration and wrongly assumes “that migrants are homogenous with respect to taste and risk”²²⁶ and “are weakened by the assumption that that decision-makers have perfect knowledge about the costs and benefits of migration.”²²⁷ Arango argues that such shortcomings are a consequence of the theory’s one-dimensionality and from excluding a political dimension, specifically of restrictive admission policies that hold ample power to curtail international labour movements.²²⁸ Therefore, it is clear that neoclassical economic theory, when applied to explain the realities of present-day international migration, has little value.²²⁹

In response to neoclassical economic theory, a new theory emerged in the 1980s to better explain the initiation of international migrations: the new economics of labour

²²² Gold, 2005 quoted Collinson. “The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis,” 5.

²²³ Collinson, Sarah. “The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis,” 5.

²²⁴ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 8.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ McDowell and de Haan, 1997: 9 in Collinson, “The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis,” 5.

²²⁸ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 20.

²²⁹ Ibid.

migration (NELM), also called the new economics of migration.²³⁰ This theory, influenced by two renowned migration, economic and demography scholars, Oded Stark and David E. Bloom, argues that the decision to migrate is made by households (or families) instead of the individual, as is maintained by neoclassical economic theory.²³¹ Therefore, the household is the primary unit of analysis. Essentially, the NELM views migration as a household strategy to maximize income, minimize income risks and to defeat numerous market constraints.²³² For instance, households, unlike individuals, have a better opportunity to influence or control risks associated to their economic well-being that is achieved by diversifying family labour and income.²³³ As a result, one or more household members may travel for work to a different part of the country, or internationally, in the effort to provide income insurance, in the form of remittances, should economic activities and conditions at the place of origin fail.²³⁴ This argument can explain why international migration continues (and commences) when economic disparities between countries, such as (expected) wage differentials, are absent,²³⁵ such as the Burkina Faso-Cote D'Ivoire migration stream.²³⁶ Moreover, the NELM argues that international migration will continue if certain markets (other than labour) at the sending end are either in disequilibrium, absent or imperfect, such as insurance markets (crop, retirement and unemployment), futures markets, capital markets and consumer credit.²³⁷

²³⁰ Massey et al 1993: 436 in De Hass, "Migration and development: A theoretical perspective," 34.

²³¹ De Hass, "Migration and development: A theoretical perspective," 35.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 21.

²³⁴ Ibid., 21-2.

²³⁵ De Hass, "Migration and development: A theoretical perspective," 35.

²³⁶ Grabel, "The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?" 25.

²³⁷ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 22-7.

As such, the theory argues that governments have the ability to control the levels of international migration by influencing these markets.²³⁸

Although remittances take no part in neo-classical economic theory, they are considered to be the primary motive for migration in the NELM.²³⁹ This is due to the fact that unlike their counter-parts, many developing countries' capital, credit and insurance markets are either flawed, inaccessible or non-existent and government mechanisms to protect families from loss of income are also lacking.²⁴⁰ In this case, international migration is appealing since remittances act as income insurance for households and as a means for capital accumulation.²⁴¹ Correspondingly, the new economics of labour migration argues that, in most cases, migration is not done to escape extreme poverty and unemployment, but is rather a calculated and planned attempt by households to "spread income risks, improve their social and economic status and, hence, to overcome local development constraints...and [views] migration as an expression of strong social bonds and of a wish to improve the lives of those left behind."²⁴² At the same time, NELM also suffers from a string of shortcomings. The most important, perhaps, is the fact that it only focuses on the causes for international migration from the perspective of the place of origin.²⁴³

Positioned apart from the new economics of labour migration and neoclassical economic theory, which view international migration as a decision made by either households or individuals, and where decisions are carried out in well-functioning or

²³⁸ Ibid., 27.

²³⁹ De Hass, "Migration and development: A theoretical perspective," 35.

²⁴⁰ de Hass, "Migration and development: A theoretical perspective," 35; Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 22.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² de Hass, "Migration and development: A theoretical perspective," 40.

²⁴³ Arango, "Theories of International Migration," 23.

imperfect markets in which capital, income and risk are set to be either maximized or minimized, is segmented labour market theory, also called dual labour market theory.

²⁴⁴ This theory, largely advanced by Michael Piore, argues that international migration stems from a “permanent demand for immigrant labour that is inherent to the economic structure of developed nations.”²⁴⁵ With respect to the push-pull model, segmented labour market theory maintains that migration is not derived from push factors in the place of origin, but by pull factors (chronic and high demand of foreign workers) at the place of destination.²⁴⁶

Five traits of the economic structure of the host country account of in-migration: structural inflation (effort by governments to maintain the status quo of occupational wages in the job hierarchy so as to keep them in line with social expectations), hierarchical constraints on motivation (reflects the idea that people work for income and for higher social statuses which is a problem for employers of low-level jobs who seek workers that only view employment as a means to earn money without any desire for social status), economic dualism (bifurcated labour markets create a distinction between labour and capital in which the secondary sector suffers from unstable job conditions, low wages and expendability – thus making it very hard to draw native workers for this type of employment), ethnic enclaves (suggests that businesses set up by immigrants relies on foreign labour for their survival, thereby creating a demand for foreign workers) and finally, labour supply demographics (argues that developed countries suffer from a very

²⁴⁴ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 28.

²⁴⁵ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 41.

²⁴⁶ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 28.

limited supply of workers – youth, women and rural to urban migrants - to take on entry-level and menial jobs as they once did in the past).²⁴⁷

As a result, these characteristics of the economic structure of industrialized countries provide employers a massive incentive to hire foreign workers since they will readily accept lower wages and undertake low status jobs that are commonly shunned by natives of receiving countries.²⁴⁸ Therefore, according to this theory, international migration is caused purely by the structural needs of the economy at the receiving end. As such, segmented labour market theory implies that labour is demand-based and, as a result, concludes that labour recruitment is performed by formal mechanisms than from migrants' efforts.²⁴⁹ However, segmented labour market theory fails to explain why developed countries of similar economic structures do not have the same immigration rates as others, which contradicts the theory's logic.²⁵⁰

The final theory to explain the initiation of international migration is world systems theory (or historical-structural theory). Initially, during the 1960s and expanding into the first part of the 1970s, historical-structuralists largely focused their attention on internal population movements and on rural-urban migration; international migration was considered as a passing aberration in the political system and, thus, theoretically overlooked.²⁵¹ An exception to this, however, was interest in the “brain-drain” – the emigration of educated and skilled people from developing to developed countries – though Massey et al object that the ‘brain-drain’ dialogue “reflected less of an interest in

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 28-32.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 28-33.

²⁴⁹ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 54.

²⁵⁰ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 25.

²⁵¹ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 35.

labour migration than in capital flight.”²⁵² However, all of this changed in the 1970s when economic recessions across the industrialized world made scholars aware that ‘guest workers’ were not returning home and governments now faced the political challenge of their integration.²⁵³ As such, new perspectives emerged as scholars began to perceive international migration as a consequence of “structural changes that accompanied a nation’s insertion into the global market place,”²⁵⁴ as opposed to rational²⁵⁵ decision-making made by households or individuals.²⁵⁶

In brief, world systems theory argues that industrialized countries (the core), maintain superior economic and political power over developing countries (the periphery), placing them in a chronic disadvantageous position in the global structure, whereby capitalist expansion only serves to reinforce such inequalities.²⁵⁷ Moreover, under the guidance of multinational companies and neocolonial governments, capitalist penetration of poor countries not only creates uneven access and exploitation of raw materials, resources and labour, but also produces “a mobile population that is prone to migrate.”²⁵⁸ Therefore, cross-border migration is deemed by world systems theory as a natural consequence of capitalist development.²⁵⁹

Finally, world systems theory rests on four general assumptions: employment and wage differentials between nations do not play a role in instigating migration between them; governments can influence migration levels through such means as controlling

²⁵² Ibid., 35-6.

²⁵³ Ibid., 36.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 35.

²⁵⁵ Collinson, “The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis,” 5.

²⁵⁶ Sassen (1988); Morawska (1990) quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 36.

²⁵⁷ De Hass, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 7.

²⁵⁸ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 36.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 37.

investment activities of multinational corporations and by regulating the international flow of capital; former colonial powers and their colonies are particularly likely to engage in migration with each other, as a consequence of already established administrative, communicative, cultural and transportation links which, ultimately, promote migration between them.²⁶⁰ The fourth proposition deserves special mention. World systems theory argues, “international flows of labor follow international flows of capital, only in the opposite direction.”²⁶¹ It implies that foreign direct investment (FDI), channeled into the periphery, is accompanied by a string of detrimental consequences that pose immediate and long-term harm into the region through various mechanisms (such as privatization and deregulation). Emigration is one consequence of FDI. Instead of encouraging people to stay, FDI does the opposite, thus concluding, “that streams of foreign capital going into peripheral regions are accompanied by corresponding outflows of emigrants.”²⁶² Particular criticisms to world systems theory generally stems from neoclassical economic theory in the sense that it has little to do with employment differentials and wage rates between countries.²⁶³ At the same time, world systems theory is criticized for not paying enough attention to human agency.

Hence, we can detect a variety of reasons, bound in theoretical explanations, which attempt to explain the initiation of international migration, including: the desire for an improvement for individual income, high unemployment rates in sending countries, pressing demands for labour in destination countries, risk diversification for household income, wages differentials between counties, market penetration to the underdeveloped

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 42.

²⁶¹ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 55.

²⁶² Ibid., 55.

²⁶³ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 41.

world and that the decision to migrate is done by individual, rational actors and by households. Apart from theories of initiation, there are a set of additional theories that help explain why international migration continues or perpetuates, which act and function independently from those that initiate it.²⁶⁴

Theories of perpetuation

Four theories attempt to explain the perpetuation of international migration: network theory, institutional theory, cumulative causation theory and systems theory. Theories of perpetuation move away from the rigidity of classical and neo-classical models towards more pluralist approaches to understand the cross-border movement of people.²⁶⁵ These new approaches challenge understanding of international migration as originating from particular factors, such as income differentials, and from the viewpoint of a single level of analysis, such as the individual.²⁶⁶ Instead, autonomy, agency, perceptions, institutional constraints, historical and cultural forces are taken into account as is the influence of relationships and of social groups on migration experiences and dynamics.²⁶⁷ Therefore, it places an emphasis on understanding the nature of international migration as being multi-faceted in scope.²⁶⁸

The first of such theories is migration network theory, also known as ‘chain migration’. It argues that international migration is sustained by “sets of interpersonal relations that link migrants or returned migrants with relatives, friends or fellow

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 42.

²⁶⁵ Hein de Haas (2008) quoted in Collinson, “The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis,” 6.

²⁶⁶ Collinson, “The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis,” 5.

²⁶⁷ Gold, 2005 quoted in Collinson, “The Political Economy of Migration Processes: An Agenda for Migration Research and Analysis,” 5-6.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

countrymen at home.”²⁶⁹ In this case, migrant communities on the receiving end increase the possibility of ensuing migrations to that place²⁷⁰ because they provide assistance to potential migrants back home about finding employment and housing, informing them of working conditions, organizing residence papers,²⁷¹ provide financial assistance,²⁷² etc. This, in turn, makes the move much easier in the sense that it reduces the costs and risks of migration,²⁷³ while also providing prospective migrants with the opportunity to accumulate savings and send remittances back home.²⁷⁴ In this sense, international migration evolves into a self-perpetuating activity “because each act of migration itself creates the social structure needed to sustain it.”²⁷⁵ Notably, networks, as argued by Arango, are perhaps also the best indicator to predict future migration flows.²⁷⁶

Migration network theory also makes several key assumptions. First, unlike neoclassical economic theory, which does not provide an explanation as to why migrants send remittances back home, migration network theory argues that this is done due to strong social bonds between migrants at the place of destination and those at the place of origin.²⁷⁷ It also maintains “[o]nce begun, international migration tends to expand over time until network connections have diffused so widely in the sending region that all people who wish to migrate can do so without difficulty.”²⁷⁸ Moreover, migration network theory insists that wage or employment differentials between the sending and

²⁶⁹ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 27-8.

²⁷⁰ Appleyard 1992 quoted in De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 19.

²⁷¹ de Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 19.

²⁷² Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 28.

²⁷³ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 43.

²⁷⁴ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 43.

²⁷⁵ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 44.

²⁷⁶ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 28.

²⁷⁷ Djajic 1986; Taylor 1999 quoted in De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 19.

²⁷⁸ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 44.

receiving countries do not have a strong effect in determining the size of migration between them “because whatever effects these variables have in promoting or inhibiting migration are progressively overshadowed by the costs and risks of movement stemming from the growth of migrant networks over time.”²⁷⁹ Finally, network theory argues that states do not have any control in regulating migration flows since “the process of network formation lies largely outside their control and occurs no matter what regime is pursued.”²⁸⁰ At the same time, migration network theory is criticized for its circular logic, insisting that international migration will continue without end,²⁸¹ along with other shortcomings such as its inability to provide insight as to why some networks dissolve over time²⁸² and to recognize other factors (internal, external and structural) that can add to the formation of migration networks.²⁸³

To follow, institutional theory provides a contrasting perspective on the perpetuation of international migration. Perhaps one of the most straightforward of theories, it argues that since capital-rich countries face a high demand for entry, but offer few admission visas,²⁸⁴ institutions and private entrepreneurs emerge to provide entry services (legal and illegal). Services include the provision of legitimate or fraudulent documents, transporting or smuggling migrants across state boundaries, organizing labour contracts with employers and arranging housing for migrants – all at extraordinary fees.²⁸⁵ At the same time, due to such exploitation, humanitarian organizations emerge in

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 44-5.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 45.

²⁸¹ Massey et al., in 1998: 48 quoted in De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 20.

²⁸² De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 20.

²⁸³ Klaver 1997: 4 in De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 20.

²⁸⁴ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 45, 57.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 45.

order to enforce the rights of migrants and to provide for their well-being.²⁸⁶ International migration, therefore, becomes institutionalized and, consequently, comes to be “independent of factors that originally caused it.”²⁸⁷

At the same time, institutions have a direct role in perpetuating international migration since they are principally designed to support, promote and sustain international movement.²⁸⁸ Moreover, institutional theory argues that states have limited control in managing the levels of international migration because “the process of institutionalization is difficult to regulate”²⁸⁹ since large profits and police crackdown on illegal migrants will always create a lucrative black market for the international movement of people.²⁹⁰ Finally, a particular flaw of institutional theory, as Massey et al see it, is the fact that it is unclear to what extent institutions perpetuate migration levels and the influence it has over the household and individual decision-making process.²⁹¹

Furthermore, introduced by Myrdal in 1957 and reintroduced by Massey in 1990,²⁹² the theory of cumulative causation proposes “the general hypothesis that migration sustains itself in such a way that migration tends to create more migration.”²⁹³ Specifically, it supports the idea that “acts of migration at one point in time affect the context within which subsequent decisions are made.”²⁹⁴ Migration, therefore, alters the economic and social structures in the place of origin, which, in turn, influences future decisions by other households and individuals to migrate as well – “leading to

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 46.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 46, 57.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 46.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 57.

²⁹² Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 45.

²⁹³ Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 57.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

migration's cumulative causation over time."²⁹⁵ Migration scholars have identified seven factors that lead to the cumulative causation of international migration, they are: the expansion of networks, the distribution of income, the distribution of land, the organization of farm production, a 'culture of migration', the distribution of human capital, and social labeling.²⁹⁶

Briefly, the expansion of networks, or network theory as previously discussed, argues that when networks reach a certain level at the place of origin, migration matures into a self-perpetuating activity "because each act of migration creates the social structure needed to sustain it."²⁹⁷ Moreover, the distribution of income, in line with the new economics of labour migration, indicates that apart from the motivation to migrate to diversify risks and to increase income, the likelihood of leaving increases when a household becomes aware of their relative deprivation, or what they do not have (such as larger homes and luxurious items), against other households that have undertaken that decision.²⁹⁸ Though, it is important to note that comparison does not lie with people in the West, but with their own communities and neighbours. Therefore, this perpetuates international migration and causes it to be cumulative because as income inequality increases between migrant and non-migrant households, it increases the sense of deprivation and further motivates others to migrate in order to also attain a more affluent lifestyle, and the cycle continues.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Massey et al., 1987; Massey, 1990b quoted in Massey et al., "Theories of International: A Review and Appraisal," 57.

²⁹⁶ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 46.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

Land distribution also plays a role in the theory of cumulative causation. Migrants, particularly in developing countries, primarily use their remittances to buy land as a retirement investment or for prestige, rather than for agricultural purposes, thus leaving valuable land to be fallow.³⁰⁰ As a result, this decreases the demand for farm labour, resulting to an increase in unemployment levels and thus heightening the pressure for emigration.³⁰¹ As more people leave, they will purchase more land, which leads to more withdrawal from agricultural production and so on, thus contributing to the cumulative causation of migration.³⁰² In close association to the former point, the organization of farm production also causes international migration to be cumulative and perpetual. In fact, when migrants do decide to farm their land, they have the ability to purchase and use machinery, pesticides, fertilizers, build irrigation, etc.³⁰³ Consequently, this requires less human labour and displaces agrarian workers, which only increases pressure for more emigration, therefore causing the cycle to continue once again.³⁰⁴ In addition, the chances for future international migration are increased due to the emergence of a ‘culture of migration’.³⁰⁵ This means that as migration becomes more prevalent in a sending society, it alters cultural perceptions and values associated to it, and can even be a rite of passage for some as migrants acquire “a taste for consumer goods and styles of life that are difficult to attain through local labour.”³⁰⁶

The distribution of human capital also reinforces the cumulative process of international migration in the sense that continuous emigration “may lead to the depletion

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 47.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Massey et al., 1987 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 47.

³⁰⁵ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 47.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

of human capital in the sending regions and its accumulation in the receiving areas, enhancing the productivity of the latter while lowering that of the former.”³⁰⁷ In other words, it argues that, over time, the place of destination will experience economic growth while the place of origin will suffer from economic stagnation, adding to the conditions that make international migration more attractive.³⁰⁸ Moreover, social labeling also holds the same weight. As migrants become more numerous in certain occupations in the receiving society, native workers refrain from taking those jobs because they view them as ‘immigrant jobs’ and culturally inappropriate, thereby once again strengthening the demand for foreign workers.³⁰⁹ We see this happening in the Arab oil-rich states and places like California where Mexican migrants workers take employment in agriculture, housekeeping, gardening and other socially inferior jobs. All of these factors, therefore, indicate that international migration persists in a cumulative and perpetuating fashion. Yet, a particular limitation to this theory reflects upon the process of cumulative causation in the sense that it cannot continue *ad infinitum* in any finite population.³¹⁰ For example, networks will reach a point of numerical saturation if migration continues long enough.³¹¹

Finally, migration systems theory, originally founded by Mabogunje in 1970 to explain rural-urban migration in Africa, and later extended to international migration by Kritz, Lim and Zlotnik in 1992,³¹² explains a migration system as “a set of places (within or across state borders) linked by flows and counter flows of people, goods, services, and

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 48.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 48.

³⁰⁹ Bohning 1972, 1984; Piore 1979 quoted in Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 48.

³¹⁰ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 48.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² De Haas, “Migration and development: A theoretical perspective,” 21.

information, which tend to facilitate further exchange, including migration between both places.”³¹³ Apart from migration flows, migration systems are also defined by various other connections.³¹⁴ These include geographical proximity, structural homogeneity between the countries involved, sharing common migration policies and belonging to the same international organizations.³¹⁵ At the same time, systems theory also argues that it is able to include other received theories into its framework, such as network theory, institutional theory, the theory of cumulative causation and the state, which is a particularly neglected domain in migration theory.³¹⁶

In addition, systems theory highlights the strength of government policies toward migration since they have considerable power in regulating the shape and flow of emigration and immigration from both places of origin and destination.³¹⁷ Moreover, it also stresses the importance of viewing migration from a historical perspective, which helps to identify interactive patterns that shape migration at both places, such as structural conditions along with political and economic links that exist between them.³¹⁸ Systems theory also acknowledges that countries can be part of multiple migration systems and that systems are never fixed because they are tied to economic and political conditions at both places which are always evolving, meaning that countries may choose to leave or join a system depending on particular environments.³¹⁹ Examples of contemporary

³¹³ De Haas, Hein, “Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration,” 8.

³¹⁴ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 29.

³¹⁵ Zlotnik (1992) quoted in Arango, Joaquin, “Theories of International Migration,” 29.

³¹⁶ Arango, “Theories of International Migration,” 29; Massey et al., “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal,” 49.

³¹⁷ Mary M. Kritz and Hania Zlotnik, “Global Interactions: Migration Systems, Processes and Policies” in *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach* ed. Mary M. Kritz, Lin Lean Lim & Hania Zlotnik (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 15.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

³¹⁹ Massey et al., “Theories of International: A Review and Appraisal,” 49-50.

migration systems include Mexico and the United States, Poland and Ireland and, of course, India and the United Arab Emirates.

New perspectives: Zolberg & Sassen

Standing apart from the classic and modern theories of migration are arguments put forward by Aristide Zolberg, who asks “where is the state in all of this?” thus, bringing the state back into migration theory, and Saskia Sassen, who pushes away grandiose ideas about the origins of international migration and looks at them through a historical lens. Both merit particular attention.

Zolberg argues that nothing invalidates all of the received theories more than looking at migration from a political perspective, namely the state and the control it exercises over its exit and entry policies. This is because the state is “central to explaining contemporary migration for theoretical as well as practical reasons.”³²⁰ This argument is also reiterated by Sassen, though she also places considerable attention to other forces, as will be later explained.³²¹ Zolberg makes up for the lack of interest in the role of the state in classic and more recent migration theories, bringing an element of realism to them.³²² For example, micro-analytic theories, such as Ravenstiens’, view state barriers in allowing for various degrees of exit and entry “as mere error factors which mar otherwise elegant, value-free equations.”³²³ Likewise, more recent theories, which tend to be more macro-analytic in scope, perceive international migration as originating from “uneven

³²⁰ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 14.

³²¹ Please see: Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*.

³²² Aristide R. Zolberg, “International Migrations in Political Perspective,” in *Global Trends in Migration: Theory and Research on International Population Movements* ed. Mary M. Kritz, Charles B. Keeley & Silvano M. Tomasi (New York, Center for Migration Studies, 1981), 3-4.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

economic exchange between states of origin and destination”³²⁴ and pay little attention to the fact that many people around the world who may want to migrate to another country cannot “simply because there are virtually insurmountable barriers against exit,”³²⁵ to which this thesis adds that there are also insurmountable barriers against entry. Secondly, it must be remembered that people migrate “for reasons that are not economic,”³²⁶ also a reality of modern migration.

These shortcomings can be overcome by viewing international migration from a political perspective, which conceives the world as divided into distinct societies and mutually exclusive states, each of which seeks “to maximize collective goals by controlling the exit or entry of individuals.”³²⁷ Such goals can include: the protection of cultural integrity and meeting labour demand, but it must also be recognized that admission policies can be determined by racist and xenophobic attitudes.³²⁸ On the other hand, the state’s interests are paired with that of individuals who seek to “maximize their welfare by exercising a variety of choices, including among them that of transferring from one political jurisdiction to another.”³²⁹ All of this, therefore, compels Zolberg to argue that a study of international migration is not to be limited to an analysis of the factors that cause people to leave³³⁰ but, rather, as an inherent “tension between the interests of individuals and the interest of societies.”³³¹ Therefore, it is this conflict, between the interests of states and those of individuals that shape international movement. Capitalist democracies do not just allow anyone “in”. In fact, they have made

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid., 7.

³²⁸ Ibid., 15.

³²⁹ Ibid., 7.

³³⁰ Ibid., 4.

³³¹ Ibid., 7.

entry extremely difficult by mounting thick and tall barriers, with the exception of “small doors that allow for specific flows”³³² – which are mainly reserved for a limited amount of asylum-seekers, for family reunification purposes and for a specific type of labour, such as temporary, skilled or unskilled, which all hold specific parameters and criteria that can become very complex.³³³

Indeed, as Zolberg puts it, the problem lies in the “*availability*”³³⁴ of universally desired conditions, both economic and noneconomic,³³⁵ which are highly unattainable for most migrants. Though individuals ‘vote with their feet’, articulating their desire to stay or relocate,³³⁶ such restraints constitute important hurdles from the migrants’ perspective because it makes international movement that much more difficult and impedes migrants from going to whichever place they desire, even if exit policies from the place of origin are neglectful or indifferent.³³⁷ Overall, Zolberg’s perspective is invaluable: what good are theories that attempt to explain international migration if they do not factor in state control over border policies, which either restrict, prohibit or permit migratory flows and ultimately influence the size and character of migrations?

Saskia Sassen’s book, *Guests and Aliens*, has had a considerable impact on the direction and framework of this thesis. Though her work does not necessarily provide a theory of international labour migration, she offers a refreshing perspective for understanding it, and indicating where one ought to begin research on migration. Sassen’s sweeping portrait of European labor migration from the 1800s to present-day identifies

³³² Aristide Zolberg, “The Next Waves: Migration Theory for a Changing World,” *International Migration Review* Vol. 23, No. 3, Special Silver Anniversary Issue: International Migration an Assessment for the 90’s (Autumn, 1989): 406.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ The stress is my own.

³³⁵ Zolberg, Aristide R, “International Migrations in Political Perspective,” 26.

³³⁶ Ibid., 7-8.

³³⁷ Ibid., 8.

concrete migration flows in terms of their distinct political, economic and social determinants. In doing so, she lets us know that popular beliefs about the causes of international migration (of them being ignited by such things as overpopulation, poverty and persecution) that have plagued the Western world for decades are not only misleading, but unacceptable. Worse, they form the basis of the migration policies of the receiving and sending countries.

Though she does not deny that that such factors influence migration, she argues that they are instead raw ingredients that exist “within larger political and economic structures so that people are set in motion.”³³⁸ Poverty itself, for example, does not cause people to leave one place and settle in another: we do not see all of sub-Saharan Africa emigrating in the West, nor do we see all of India’s poor emigrating to the United States, for example. In fact, only a small portion of poor people actually migrate, “and they do so from very specific areas and toward equally specific destinations.”³³⁹ Sassen argues that this is because “[m]igrations are highly selective processes: only certain people leave, and they travel on highly structured routes to their destinations, rather than gravitate blindly toward any rich country they want.”³⁴⁰ Therefore, migrations are not random acts, or even simple acts of coming and going, but instead include a variety of determinants that make it possible for a migration stream to develop. As Sassen best concludes, “migrations are patterned, bounded in scale and duration, and conditioned on several particular processes.”³⁴¹

³³⁸ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, 2.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

The point here is that any research of migration ought to be reviewed with *precision*. That is: to examine a specific migration stream between two places – the place of origin and destination. This way, we have a more honest look as to what is *really* happening – politically, economically and socially – in both places, which, in the end, provide clues about the true motivations for migration. Focusing on discrete migration streams and then undertaking a comparative analysis of them reveals the uniqueness of each. For example, the origins for the Irish migration to the US in the late nineteenth century, is entirely different than the reasons for the current Polish migration to Germany, and that between Kerala and Dubai. Similarities can and do exist, but they will never be perfect because each migration relationship exists within, and develops from, its own distinct political, economic and social forces of its time. Therefore, a historical perspective to its study is of the utmost importance.

This is what sets Sassen apart from other migration scholars. What better way to begin a study of the origins of a labor migration than by exploring specific occurrences in each place – politically, economically and socially – from a historical perspective and away from a heavy dependence on theories? This is what this thesis intends to do. I found that Sassen's method offers the most useful and honest approach, particularly towards this thesis question since a study of the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship does not exist. However, theory here is not irrelevant. This thesis argues that if we do as Sassen asks, then we will be able to see how traditional and modern theories of migration fit into explaining a specific migration stream at hand, more specifically, between Kerala and Dubai.

Migration theory, quite unfortunately, comes off as a one-size fits all approach: that each theory harmonizes perfectly with each migration. However, studies show that this is not the case. Not all components of a theory, or a theory in whole, can relate to the realities of international migration, or even that of a specific stream, simply because migration is ‘messy’, as Hein de Haas describes.³⁴² When we come to understand a specific stream, then it can become clear that certain components of a theory, or in combination with others, help us understand why a migration has developed. Quite plainly, “we can only know what [theory] fits once we have done the empirical research.”³⁴³ At the same time, all of this needs to be complemented with an examination of the political, economic and social forces that propel people to move, and away from conventional ideologies, in order to receive a complete understanding of the origins of a migration relationship. Doing so reveals that we can identify regularities to international migration, thus quashing the idea that it occurs in an arbitrary fashion.³⁴⁴ This is what this thesis intends to do. As the following chapters of this thesis unfold, it will unravel the political, economic and social factors in Kerala and Dubai, from a historical perspective, that help to link these two places together.

II. Empirical literature review

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, migration (both internal and international) has received increasing attention from all the social sciences. Research includes a wide variety of sub-fields including its origins, specific migration streams,

³⁴² De Haas, “Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration,” 2.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

regional analyses, emerging migration trends and patterns, relationship with development, irregular (forced and illegal) migration, refugees, the relationship between international law and migration, the role of the state vis-à-vis migration, human rights of migrants, the economic role of remittances and migration and theory. In the west, it might be fair to say that the study of migration has been dominated by how to best manage migration. Of course, ‘managing’ migration usually means restricting it.

The management of migration in this form is usually set against the putative background of ‘globalization’. Castles and Miller³⁴⁵ argue we live in a globalized era of mass migration in the sense that it “registers as a quantitative change in the extent and scope of migration rather than a feature of a potentially different socioeconomic order.”³⁴⁶ While we have noted in chapter 1 and in the theoretical review that the second half of the twenty-first century is certainly marked by a diversity of countries of origin, migration for employment still remains, in large part, confined to a privileged few.

However, is migration really made easier by ‘globalization’? Stalker, Hirst and Thompson show that the international economy was more open in the years between 1815-1914 than it is today in terms of global trade and capital flows.³⁴⁷ Their skeptical account of globalization also radically questions the dominant view of globalization and migration.³⁴⁸ For example, today’s labour markets continue to be strongly and nationally regulated (largely inaccessible to outsiders) and government policy has typically constrained international labour migration, allowing only small trickles of specified types

³⁴⁵ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

³⁴⁶ Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, “Globalization and the History of the International Economy,” in *Globalization in Question*, Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 23.

³⁴⁷ Peter Stalker, *Workers Without Frontiers: The Impact of Globalization on International Migration* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000), 1-10; Hirst and Thompson, “Globalization and the History of the International Economy,” 19-61.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 27-30.

of workers, especially the professional and temporary type – a far cry from the nineteenth century when the international movement of workers was unrestricted and encouraged.³⁴⁹ Today, only 3% of the world’s population are international migrants (1.7% in 1992)³⁵⁰, much smaller than the previous century. Thus, globalization has not increased global migration flows.

This empirical literature review seeks to frame the Kerala-Dubai migration stream within such critical historical, political, economic, sociological and theoretical scholarship that goes against the grain of dominant discourses on international migration. My review of the existing literature has uncovered no study that asks or answers this question, nor one that analyzes this migration stream in any context. Thus, I rely on material from various scholars, international organizations and government publications from the UAE and India that study autonomous dimensions of my topic, thus piecing them together to answer my thesis question. Here, I discuss the secondary literature that has proved the most useful, recognizing strengths and weakness in helping me answer my question: why do people from Kerala migrate to Dubai for work?

This review is divided into four thematic sections. First, I research works that frame the realities of international migration through a historical lens in general. The second section analyzes material that helps us comprehend Keralite emigration while the third section does the same for Dubai immigration. Finally, I assess research that aids our understanding of what role remittances play in shaping labour out-flows from Kerala to Dubai.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 29-30.

³⁵⁰ Castles and Miller (1993) in Hirst and Thompson, “Globalization and the History of the International Economy,” 23.

Literature on understanding international migration

In my effort to *understand* the complexity of what international migration is, I sought to comprehend the history of international migration since the nineteenth century and determine *why* people migrate across borders (including theoretical contributions) with the hope of finding insights that I would apply to the Kerala-Dubai migration stream.

Migration literature is rich in its analyses of histories of migration. Global migration scholarship paints a labyrinthine landscape, revealing various trends and patterns of international movement that are unique to specific communities, states/provinces, countries, and regions – all bound in particular points in time. Sweeping historical portraits of international migrations, including labour, refugee and illegal movements, are exemplified in numerous works that have placed my own research into context.

Robin Cohen's edited volume,³⁵¹ for example, is perhaps a good place to start. It offers an invaluable exploration of international migration across all continents of the globe since the seventeenth century. Dozens of scholars - like Hernandez-Cruz, who studies Puerto-Rican migration trends since the 1950s, Lucassen who provides a compelling analysis of emigration to the US and Dutch colonies, and Morawska who chronicles Eastern European migrations during the nineteenth century - contribute detailed research pertaining to colonial migration, indentured labour, the Great Atlantic migration to North America, internal European migrations, African, Latin American and

³⁵¹ Robin Cohen, ed., *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Oceanic migrations, labour and refugee movements after the Second World War, and Middle Eastern migrations.

Similarly, Stalker³⁵² provides analyses of international migrations since the African slave trade to current migration systems after 1945. And, like Cohen, he provides numerous regional case studies (North America, Western and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Gulf states and Eastern Asia), as well as over one dozen country-level analyses that explain their migration experiences, as do Massey et al.³⁵³

On the other hand, Castles and Miller³⁵⁴ purely focus on international population movements during the twentieth century. They conclude (as the title suggests) that we are currently living in an age of migration (which started from 1945) because of the “way it [migration] affects more and more countries and regions, and its linkages with complex processes affecting the entire world.”³⁵⁵ The authors also maintain that the levels of international migration will only grow in the future, which they associate with the forces of globalization. Their argument would cast doubt for Hirst, Thompson and Stalker (a position that I also accept). At the same time, Castles and Miller explore European guest-worker movements from 1945 to the early 1970s, regional migration analyses in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, as well as two cases studies of Australian and German migratory processes, while Messina and Lahav (eds)³⁵⁶ offer scholarly accounts from David Forsythe, Rey Koslowski, Charles Tilly and Hania Zlotnik

³⁵² Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*.

³⁵³ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*.

³⁵⁴ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 260.

³⁵⁶ Anthony M. Messina and Gallya Lahav, eds., *The Migration Reader: Exploring Politics and Policies* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

that contribute insightful evaluations of Palestinian refugees, human trafficking in Europe, modern European migrations and South-North female migrations. Sassen,³⁵⁷ in turn, provides a moving and detailed account of European labour and refugee movements since the nineteenth century and shows how capitalism draws in workers and pushes them out just as readily. Thus what I take away from these readings is that migrations are as diverse as the histories in which they reside and are not simple creations of the globalization theorem.

My second goal to understand international migration was to comprehend *why* people migrate for work. The answer turned out to be far more complex than I had imagined.

The histories of international migration that I explored above showed that migrations arise from various historical processes that are unique to each migration stream and system. Massey et al., for example, describe how the Gulf migration system arose under different circumstances than in post-war Europe: while both implemented recruitment programs, migration to the latter was a result of autonomous processes of economic growth that generated wealth through industrialization, while the Gulf sought industrialization through wealth from large oil reservoirs (though the difference is only slight).³⁵⁸ Ravenstein shows us that people in nineteenth century England migrated to booming industrial centres, Kepinska explains that the present seasonal migration of Poles to Germany is a result of bilateral agreements between both countries to allow the

³⁵⁷ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*.

³⁵⁸ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*, 134.

former to work in the latter's agriculture and hospitality sectors,³⁵⁹ while Stalker determines that labour migration is also a result of colonial links between sending and receiving countries, such as France during and after the First World War which took people from its African colonies "to replace French workers...drafted into the Army who left shortages in agriculture, mining and construction."³⁶⁰ The English did the same: recruiters brought over Caribbean people during a time of labour shortage and war to work in Scottish forests, munitions factories and to serve in the Royal Air Force, while after the war, they were recruited to work for British Rail, London Transport and the National Health Service.³⁶¹ Today, France's African and England's Caribbean immigrant communities are a legacy of their control over, and links to, former colonies.³⁶²

Apart from labour shortage, bilateral agreements, colonialism and industrialization, other reasons also explain the origin of international migration. Our analysis of classical and modern migration theories, explored earlier, suggests that political decisions, unemployment at the place of origin, the desire for improved income, migrant networks, institutions, wage differentials between countries, and cultures of migration all encourage and perpetuate migration flows. While Stalker,³⁶³ for example, highlighted such reasons, Body-Gendrot & Schain, Hammar, Russell, Sassen and Zolberg emphasize the important role of political decisions that open and restrict entry in their analyses of European, Kuwaiti, French and American immigration policies.³⁶⁴ Yet, the

³⁵⁹ Ewa Kepinska, "Recent Trends in International Migration: The 2007 SOPEMI Report for Poland," Centre of Migration Research, Working Paper 29/87. Warsaw University, Warsaw, December 2007: 37. Last accessed April 2, 2012, www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/download/publikacja/558/

³⁶⁰ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 29.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*.

³⁶⁴ Please see: Sophie Body-Gendrot and Martin A. Schain, "National and Local Politics and the Development of Immigration Policy in the United States and France: A Comparative Analysis"; Tomas

simplest explanation, as Stalker sees it, “is that people move to places where they hope to be better off.”³⁶⁵ However, he is well aware that this leaves many questions left unanswered: why do the poorest people not migrate, why do people from one village migrate for work, but not from another that lies only a few miles away, and why do people from different nationalities migrate to different countries: Chinese to Canada, North Africans to France and Turks to Germany?³⁶⁶

Rich as they are, the aforementioned books are of limited utility in understanding Gulf migration. Cohen’s book offers Abella’s³⁶⁷ short work of a general historical overview of Asian (predominantly Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani) migration to the Gulf since the 1970s that was fueled by oil discovery, ensuing economic growth and demand for unskilled and semi-skilled temporary workers, as do Castles and Miller in *The Age of Migration*.³⁶⁸

Massey et al.’s³⁶⁹ account of labour migration to Gulf states sheds light on labour migrations to the region since the beginning of the twentieth century. They highlight the shifting sources of migrant labour in different periods of time that were required to build modern industrial infrastructure: from Arab to Indian migrant workers which then expanded to other South and East Asian countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, South Korea and the Philippines. Although the authors do not go into any detail about

Hammar, “European Immigration Policy: A Comparative Study”; Sharon Stanton Russell, “Politics and Ideology in Policy Formulation: The Case of Kuwait”; Aristide Zolberg, “Patterns of International Migration Policy: A Diachronic Comparison” all in Anthony M. Messina & Gallya Lahav eds., *The Migration Reader: Exploring Politics and Policies* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006); Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*.

³⁶⁵ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 21.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Manolo Abella, “Asian Migrant and Contract Workers in the Middle East” in *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, ed. Robin Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁶⁸ Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

³⁶⁹ Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion*.

labour migration to the UAE from India or Kerala to Dubai, it offers broad analyses of immigration policies to the Gulf, the types of contract workers and conditions for employment, the effects of the Gulf War on labour migration, empirical data pertaining to the levels of foreign migrant workers to each GCC country from 1980-90 and data on remittances. What separates this text from any other is that the authors apply theories of migration, particularly segmented labour market theory, neoclassical economic theory, the new economics of labour migration and world systems theory to the Gulf system to determine how well they help explain labour migration to the region.

Stalker's short analysis of the Gulf region, which he argues "has been one of the most volatile migration destinations, with the flows fluctuating in response to rapid economic and political developments,"³⁷⁰ views labour migration to the GCC (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) as proceeding through six stages that range from traditional migratory movements between Gulf states from 1945-73 to the 1990 Iraq-Kuwait War (largely characterized by return migration). Furthermore, he explains which countries are the most prominent sources of labour to the Gulf overtime, as well as the working conditions and contracts of migrant workers.

None of the aforementioned authors include an analysis of Indian or Keralite emigration, nor do they provide a discussion on immigration to the UAE (in a specific context) or to Dubai. Thus, we need to seek this information elsewhere.

Literature on Keralite emigration

To this day, the vast bulk of scholarship on Keralite emigration has been conducted by the same few academics - Hari, Kannan, Mathew, Nair, Prakash, Rajan and

³⁷⁰ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 239.

Zachariah – and by the Centre of Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala). Other notable scholars in the field are Khadria, Kurien and Raghuram.

Literature on emigration of Keralites to the Gulf in the late 1970s and 1980s was based on few household surveys. Raju Kurian³⁷¹ in 1979 measured emigration dynamics from two villages in Kerala and Nair³⁷² in 1984 who was the first (to my knowledge) to collect data on returned migrants from the Gulf. While today's analyses are more seasoned in depth and scope, and offer more detailed statistical data on levels of emigration and remittances, these early studies reflected on migrant profiles, their socio-economic background, recruitment processes, earnings, remittances and issues of return migration. Kurian, for example, argued that emigration from Kerala during that time was not high in proportion to total population (and compared to other states), but noticed that the educated population was undergoing internal migration and leaving for large cities like Delhi and Bombay for work, while another segment of the population was going to the Gulf.³⁷³ Nair followed this study by conducting almost 1,000 migrant household surveys across 11 districts (at the time) on returned migrants from the Gulf in which he included a discussion of historical and sociological factors of Muslim emigration, the first to my knowledge (Kurian did not include a discussion on religion, nor did he note that mainly Muslims went to the Gulf).³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ Raju Kurian, "Patterns of Emigration from Kerala," *Social Scientist* Vol. 7, No. 6 (Jan., 1979).

³⁷² P. R. Gopinathan Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)," in *Migration to the Arab World: Experience of Returning Migrants*, ed. Godfrey Gunatilleke (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1991).

³⁷³ Kurian, "Patterns of Emigration from Kerala," 32.

³⁷⁴ Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)."

Data in the following decades painted a richer analysis of Indian and Keralite emigration dynamics to the Gulf states and to the UAE in particular³⁷⁵ in terms of migration policies, working conditions, return migration and socio-economic backgrounds of migrants. Nair,³⁷⁶ Khadria³⁷⁷ and Zachariah et al.³⁷⁸ show that Indian emigration policies relaxed overtime, particularly after the 1922 Indian Emigration Act was suspended in 1976 while also consistently expanding its ‘emigration clearance not required’ category in order to facilitate emigration flows. In turn, they also document the effects and consequences of emerging ‘Emiratization’ attitudes in the UAE (vastly different from previous years), first marked by the events of 1979 and the 1980 UAE Federal Law 8. Though Nair does not get into the ‘Emiratization’ discussion into detail, except for stating “[i]t is possible the Middle East is no longer economically attractive as it once was”³⁷⁹ most likely because he was writing in 1998 when “Emiratization’ was just

³⁷⁵ B. A. Prakash, “Gulf Migration and its Economic Impact: The Kerala Experience,” *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 33, No. 50 (Dec. 12-18 1998); B. A. Prakash, “Exodus of Gulf Emigrants: Return Emigrants of Varkala Town in Kerala,” *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 35, No. 51 (Dec. 16-22, 2000); Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies”; P. R. Gopinathan Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects,” *International Migration* Vol. 37 (1) 1999; K. P. Kannan and K. S. Hari, “Kerala’s Gulf Connection: Emigration, Remittances and their Macroeconomic Impact 1972-2000,” Working Paper No. 328, Centre for Development Studies, 2002. Last accessed April 2, 2012, http://www.cds.edu/download_files/328.pdf; K. C. Zachariah, B. A. Prakash & S. Irudaya Rajan, “Gulf Migration Study: Employment, Wages and Working Conditions of Kerala Emigrants in the United Arab Emirates,” Working Paper No. 326, Centre for Development Studies (Thiruvananthapuram), March 2002. Last accessed April 2, 2012 http://www.cds.edu/download_files/326.pdf; K. C. Zachariah, B. A. Prakash and S. Irudaya Rajan, “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates,” *International Migration* Vol. 41 (4) 2003; K. C. Zachariah and Rajan, S. Irudaya, *Kerala Migration Survey 2007*, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. Department of Non-Resident Keralite Affairs (NORKA). Government of Kerala, 2008. Last accessed April 2, 2012, <http://www.cds.edu/admin/homeFiles/Kerala%20Migration%20Survey%202007.pdf>

³⁷⁶ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies”; Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects.”

³⁷⁷ Khadria, Binod. “India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf.”

³⁷⁸ Zachariah et al., “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates.”

³⁷⁹ Nair, “Emigration Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” p. 276.

beginning. Zachariah et al.³⁸⁰ and Zachariah and Rajan³⁸¹ paint a more complete picture of what ‘Emiratization’ entailed, including replacing migrant workers with nationals, making work visas more costly, sending back illegal unskilled workers and refusing unskilled visa applications for Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in 1999, along with their impacts on emigration flows to the UAE.³⁸² While these works are of great value, they do not point out what seems to me, one obvious conclusion: that the UAE went from encouraging to discouraging migrant labour since the mid 1990s.

Lack of policy efforts by the Indian and Keralite governments to protect their migrant population from abuse – which ranged from employers misusing the sponsorship system, not paying wages (or paying less than promised), dangerous working conditions and denial of labour rights – in host countries drew much criticism from Nair,³⁸³ Zachariah et al.,³⁸⁴ and more recently by the Human Rights Watch³⁸⁵ and Khadria.³⁸⁶ Poor rehabilitation efforts of returned migrants by the Kerala government, such as skill upgrading and job placement were also criticized by Nair³⁸⁷ and through Prakash’s³⁸⁸

³⁸⁰ Zachariah et al., “Gulf Migration Study”; Zachariah et al., “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates.”

³⁸¹ Zachariah, et al., “Kerala Migration Survey 2007.”

³⁸² Khadria, “India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf”; Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies”; Zachariah et al., “Gulf Migration Study”; Zachariah et al., “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates.”

³⁸³ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies”; Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects.”

³⁸⁴ Zachariah et al., “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates.”

³⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, “Building Towers, Cheating Workers: Exploitation of Migrant Construction Workers in the United Arab Emirates,” Volume 18, No. 8 (E), November 2006. Last accessed April 2, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uae1106webwcover.pdf>

³⁸⁶ Khadria, “India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf.”

³⁸⁷ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies”; Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects.”

³⁸⁸ Prakash, B. A. “Exodus of Gulf Emigrants: Return Emigrants of Varkala Town in Kerala.”

nominal 2000 case study of Varkala town (Kerala). But works by DeParle³⁸⁹ and Kannan and Hari³⁹⁰ for example, suggest by contrast that emigration to the Gulf is necessary as it provides essential work for a large and jobless section of Kerala's population, thus supporting the famed "Kerala Model" in the former's analysis, while Kannan and Hair suggests that Gulf migration exposed millions of Keralites to the outside world, failing to mention the horrible working conditions and other exploitation they endure while abroad, as well as a lack of strong support for migrant workers from the Indian and Keralite governments. Khadria notes this is due to the fact that the Indian government was more interested in the emigration of skilled workers to developed countries, than unskilled workers to the Gulf whom "have been considered more of responsibility than pride for India."³⁹¹

Apart from political decisions, a review of the literature also reveals that emigration from Kerala can also stem from the longtime poor performance of its economy, as well as from inadequate infrastructure like roads and electricity.³⁹² Although this literature is thin, and more recent analyses need to be conducted on the economy in terms of growth, job creation, job retention and future prospects, the authors clearly portray the link between a poor economy and emigration.

However, our understanding of the dynamics of Keralite emigration greatly benefits from two current texts: the *Gulf Migration Study 2002*³⁹³ and the *Kerala*

³⁸⁹ DeParle, Jason. "Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support 'Model' State in India."

³⁹⁰ Kannan and Hari, "Kerala's Gulf Connection: Emigration, Remittances and their Macroeconomic Impact 1972-2000."

³⁹¹ Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 105.

³⁹² P. D. Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," *Economic & Political Weekly* Vol. 38, No. 16 (Apr. 19-25, 2003); Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies"; Nair, "Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects."

³⁹³ Zachariah et al., "Gulf Migration Study."

Migration Survey 2007.³⁹⁴ While both studies are based on sample surveys, the former was collected from 361 Keralite workers of all skill sets in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah in order to determine the wages and working conditions of Keralites in all GCC countries, Gulf and Indian migration policies, major destinations of Indian migrants, remittances to Kerala, while the latter was based on a random sample of 10,000 households in each district and taluk in Kerala in the effort to determine current socio-economic and demographic profile of migrants, their households, the amount of money migrants send home and its uses. Although the *Gulf Migration Study* reflects on a number of important issues, most important to this thesis was its analysis of the Emigration Clearance Not Required category and what type of emigrant falls under its provision, as well as the number of Indian workers granted emigration clearance by Gulf countries, the UAE included. The *Kerala Migration Survey* was also limitless in its value (as the forthcoming chapters describe), most particularly indicating that migration is classed, gendered and localised.

Literature on Dubai immigration

Despite the attention Dubai has attracted in recent years thanks to its rapid economic development, there is little literature on Dubai's migrant workers, few accurate figures of labour in-flows and remittances, and little analysis of the socio-economic and political contexts in which they live and work.

Before the 1980s, very "little was known of the scale or processes of movement of labour in the area [(Gulf)], other than that it was likely to have changed dramatically

³⁹⁴ Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007."

during the 1970s.”³⁹⁵ The earliest important work on the matter was from Birks and Sinclair who argued that international labour immigration to the Gulf was principally a result of a supply and demand for labour, other factors like migration policies in the places of origin and destination, distance, whether there was a tradition of migration or not, and bilateral labour agreements between countries were second of importance in explaining labour migration to the region.³⁹⁶ In their regional case study of the UAE, they argued “the quick and large-scale response of Asians to a demand for labour at a time when only limited number of Arabs were available ... accounted for the explosion of the Asian population”³⁹⁷ – a position that would be panned by modern theory, particularly by the new economics of labour migration, world-systems theory, institutional theory, systems theory and the theory of cumulative causation.

Also important to this thesis was exploring works on the Gulf’s and the UAE’s economic development since the latter half of the twentieth century as it would raise important issues for labour immigration. In one of the earliest works on the UAE’s economic development, El Mallakh certainly paints a compelling portrait of its social and economic infrastructures, the development of the oil industry and early descriptions of Dubai’s planned infrastructure projects and free-trade zones,³⁹⁸ but little attention is paid to labour immigration, except for echoing Birks and Sinclair’s argument of the large labour demand and equally large labour shortage of Emirati and Arab nationals to fill positions. El Mallakh argued that “a liberal immigration policy is a feasible, if partial,

³⁹⁵ Birks, J. S. and C. A. Sinclair, *International Migration and Development in the Arab World* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1980), 5.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁹⁸ Ragaie El Mallakh, *The Economic Development of the United Arab Emirates* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 57.

solution to the labour shortage”³⁹⁹ and correctly predicted that the influx of migrant workers will “encounter political and social constraints which will eventually place limits on immigration.”⁴⁰⁰

In more recent times, however, Adam Hanieh has given a more thorough account of Gulf’s and the UAE’s economic development. Hanieh who argues from a Marxian perspective that we need to think of the Gulf states “not simply monarchies that sit atop an oil spigot,”⁴⁰¹ but as capitalist states that help “form the broader hierarchies of the Middle East.”⁴⁰² His analysis of the evolution of Gulf capitalism and capitalist class formation (with specific mention of Dubai) stands as one of the most important advances on the subject in recent years. His principle argument is that a new class has formed in the Gulf from “Khaleeji Capital” (Gulf capital) which describes “those capitalists whose accumulation is most thoroughly and consistently grounded in the internationalization of capital across the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] space”⁴⁰³ that is “intimately linked to the rapid development of the Gulf economies and the physical transformation of the Gulf cities.”⁴⁰⁴ Although his work centres around the development of capitalism in the Gulf after the Second World War, he traces how it transformed Gulf states into industrialized and financialized entrepôts due to “the judicious use of oil revenues”⁴⁰⁵ and reflects how prominent questions of why migrant workers are there in the first place (strong population pressures in the place of origin, labour demand at the place of destination and an absence of locally experienced workforce) mask important questions such as, “why

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Adam Hanieh, *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), vii.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 1.

are these workers systematically denied any possibility of becoming permanent citizens of the GCC states and how does this exclusion facilitate capital accumulation in the Gulf?”⁴⁰⁶

Like other scholars, Hanieh reflects how migrant workers from the Indian subcontinent have been particularly attractive sources of labour following by the mid 1980s as a partial response to the “potential radicalization of Arab noncitizen residents”⁴⁰⁷ and the after the 1990-1 Gulf War which “provided an excellent opportunity to hasten the transition toward South Asian labor.”⁴⁰⁸ He argues that this temporary form of labour had certain benefits for the countries of destination, namely that it allowed for high rates of exploitation, such as very low wages (“largely measured relative to the social conditions extant in the worker’s home country rather than the country in which they work”⁴⁰⁹), substandard living conditions and construction workers, for example, labouring ten-hours per day and six days per week is largely related to the Gulf’s massive “reserve army of labour”⁴¹⁰ which indeed portrays “the fact that class is formed through a relationship established between spatially distinct sets of social relations – acts to depress the price of labor power and magnify the exploitation of these workers.”⁴¹¹

Although Hanieh’s book stands as an important and current work on Gulf capitalism that helps put its relationship with international labour migration into perspective, works exclusively focusing on Dubai’s political, economic and social

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

transformation have only surfaced over the past few years, thanks to Davidson,⁴¹² Davis⁴¹³ and Krane.⁴¹⁴ Each offers critical and fascinating portraits of Dubai's rise from a poor village to extraordinary wealth and its relationship with labour migration. Davis, for example, unravels contemporary Dubai by showing the unsettling nature lying behind its towering skyscrapers and tangle of highways: built by "a sequence of fortuitous geopolitical accidents"⁴¹⁵ (ie. discovery of oil, fear post 9/11, and labour on the backs of over one million abused migrant workers), this "dreamworld of conspicuous consumption,"⁴¹⁶ as he wisely predicted before the 2008 financial crash, "may ultimately flop."⁴¹⁷ Detailing the ruthless class system of Dubai, Davis argues that it "has achieved the state of the art disenfranchisement of labor"⁴¹⁸ by disregarding ILO labour regulations, resisting the adoption of the international Migrant Workers Conventions, not allowing unions or collective bargaining, but even more so, that Dubai's policy of 'Emiratization' has been unsuccessful in the sense that it "has failed to recruit enough Arabs willing to work at the lowly wages (\$100 to \$150 per month) paid to construction laborers to meet the insatiable demands of the exploding skyline and half-built megaprojects."⁴¹⁹

While Davidson and Krane would also agree that "[a]t the end of the day, Dubai is capitalized just as much on cheap labor as it is on expensive oil"⁴²⁰ their works explore more exhaustive accounts of Dubai's history, including its birth as a Sheikdom, colonial

⁴¹² Christopher Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Christopher Davidson, "Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream," *Middle East Report* 251 (Summer, 2009).

⁴¹³ Davis, "Sand, Fear, and Money in Dubai."

⁴¹⁴ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*.

⁴¹⁵ Davis, "Sand, Fear, and Money in Dubai," 55.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

ties with Britain, economic diversifications, political structure and relations with other emirates and states, labour migration, human trafficking, slavery, the impact of the 2008 financial crash and future prospects. Each added important critical contributions to understating modern Dubai and the migrant labour that have been historically so monumental in building the city from the sands up.

Literature on remittances from Dubai to Kerala

Scholarly contributions in the areas of economic development, finance and international capital flows have generally overlooked remittances, mostly focusing on official development assistance, foreign direct investment and private loans instead.⁴²¹ Though an emerging field, present knowledge on the volume of global remittances is largely uncertain due to the difficulty of tracking this money and because of national variations in the definition of remittances. Thus, literature on the subject is thin and is even more so with respect to the amount Keralites send home from Dubai. However, I was able to utilize particular data from various sources to formulate conclusions on the relationship between remittances and emigration in the Kerala and Dubai context.

One of the major areas of research in remittances is the question of their developmental potential for receiving countries, although as Grable notes, “[t]he initial euphoria about remittances has subsided and has given way to more nuanced assessments of their developmental contributions.”⁴²² I have generally refrained from entering into this discussion as the field is extremely broad and would need the attention of a separate thesis altogether. Yet, I do bear in mind, as Grable shows, that they can, indeed, function

⁴²¹ Ilene Grabel, “Remittances: Political Economy and Development Implications,” *International Journal of Political Economy* Vol. 38, no. 4, (Winter 2009-10): 87-8.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 87.

as “a form of self-insurance in developing countries”⁴²³ reflected in the remittances migrants tend to send home following political, economic and environmental crises,⁴²⁴ which can explain surges in the volume of remittances sent to Kerala during India’s balance of payments crisis in 1991⁴²⁵ and the 2008 financial crash.

Important advancements in the empirical landscape of global remittances, including India, has not only been conducted by the World Bank,⁴²⁶ but also by Grabel⁴²⁷ who analyses various dimensions of remittances, including its trends and characteristics, effects on poverty, inequality, consumption, economic growth, social effects and what future research ought to entail. With respect to compiling figures on remittances from the Gulf and the UAE to Kerala, this thesis heavily relied on data from Khadria,⁴²⁸ the Kerala *Migration Survey 2007*⁴²⁹ and *Gulf Migration Study 2002*⁴³⁰ conducted by researchers at the Centre for Development Studies in Trivandrum who also analyze the distribution of remittances by districts and religious community proving that they tend to be directed towards areas where emigration rates are high (coastal districts) and in Muslim communities, as do Zachariah et al.⁴³¹ Yet, while DeParle⁴³² emphasizes the fact that Kerala has come to greatly depend on remittances and that Raghuram⁴³³ argues that their

⁴²³ Ibid., 89.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Khadria, “India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf,” 96.

⁴²⁶ The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*; The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 2nd ed. (Washington: The World Bank, 2011). Last accessed April 2, 2012, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/migration-and-remittances>

⁴²⁷ Grabel, “Remittances: Political Economy and Development Implications”; Grabel, “The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?”

⁴²⁸ Khadria, “India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf.”

⁴²⁹ Zachariah et al., “*Kerala Migration Survey 2007*.”

⁴³⁰ Zachariah et al., “Gulf Migration Study.”

⁴³¹ Zachariah et al., “Impact of Migration on Kerala’s Economy and Society,” 74.

⁴³² DeParle, “*Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support ‘Model’ State in India*.”

⁴³³ Parvati Raghuram, “Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story,” in *Global Migration and Development*, eds. Ton van Naerssen, Ernst Spaan and Annelies Zoomers (New York: Routledge, 2008), 314.

huge volumes have caught the Indian governments attention regarding development potential, we must bear in mind Nair's contribution in the sense that "[i]t is likely that the urge to transfer incomes to the country of origin is greater for temporary than for permanent migrants."⁴³⁴ Therefore, Keralites in Dubai are more likely to remit income back home than those living in Canada or elsewhere.

While the uses of remittances by migrants and their household were first identified Nair⁴³⁵ in a 1984 sample survey, later by Zachariah et al⁴³⁶ in 2001 and the *Kerala Migration Survey 2007*, Kurien⁴³⁷ goes beyond the static examples provided in these studies (repayment of debt, purchasing homes, land and vehicles after subsistence is met) and argues that we ought to take into consideration socio-economic differences among migrants and their households as they "profoundly shape the use of such income."⁴³⁸ Consequently, Kurien examines three villages in Kerala (the first dominantly Muslim, the other Hindu and the final Christian) that have had high emigration rates to the Gulf and concludes that "[t]he patterns of consumption, investment and exchange were distinctly different in the three areas...since the socio-cultural structures of the communities were very different."⁴³⁹ These differences should be taken seriously "by policymakers interested in enhancing the development potential of migrant remittances."⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁴ Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)," 19.

⁴³⁵ Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)," 45-6.

⁴³⁶ Zachariah et al., "Impact of Migration on Kerala's Economy and Society," 74-7.

⁴³⁷ Prema Kurien, "A Socio-Cultural Perspective on Migration and Economic Development: Middle Eastern Migration from Kerala, India" in *Migration and Development Within and Across Borders: Research and Policy Perspectives on Internal and International Migration*, ed. Josh DeWind and Jennifer Holdaway (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2008).

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 190.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

Yet, apart from the increase of remittances to India and Kerala, a number of scholars point to the fact that they have not improved Kerala's economy by, for example, decreasing unemployment levels or generally expanding economic activity.⁴⁴¹ Instead, they have played a significant part in providing short-term benefits to migrants and their households such as improving levels of consumption and savings while, on the other hand, increasing the cost of living (ie. higher prices for food, housing, transportation), thus affecting non-migrant households and those with fixed incomes.⁴⁴² Nair, on the other hand, reflects on the fact that remittances deposited in Kerala could very well leak into other Indian states as Kerala relies on the bulk of its goods (ie. construction materials, consumer goods, vehicles) from other states, thereby stimulating their production and employment, and that a fair portion of remittances have been used to buy land, representing only "a transfer of ownership of existing assets."⁴⁴³ At the same time, Ballard's analysis of remittances and economic development in District Jullundur in Indian Punjab and District Mirpur in the Kashmir region of Pakistan reveals that remittances can lead to what he terms as "de-development"⁴⁴⁴ and instead fuel "the wealth and living standards of distant and urban elites"⁴⁴⁵ instead of it being invested into the local economy, to potential migrants and their households. Consequently, he adds,

[t]he more extensive this process of diversion becomes, the more resources to improve local infrastructure in areas of high migration will decrease, and the

⁴⁴¹ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 280-3; Prakash, "Gulf Migration and Its Economic Impacts – The Kerala Experience," 3209-13; Zachariah et al., "Impact of Migration on Kerala's Economy and Society."

⁴⁴² Prakash, "Gulf Migration and Its Economic Impacts – The Kerala Experience," 3211-2.

⁴⁴³ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 281.

⁴⁴⁴ Roger Ballard, "Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan," in *Remittances: Development Impact and Future Prospects*, eds. Dilip Ratha and Samuel Munzele Maimbo (The World Bank: Washington, 2005), 105.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

greater the prospect that local cycles of capital rich underdevelopment will emerge. This trend can be expected to reinforce the local propensity to migrate.⁴⁴⁶ Thus, we can draw a connection (and in the absence of any such case study of Kerala), that remittances deposits in Kerala are reinvested in other states, which simply confirms Nair's statement.

Together, the theoretical and empirical literature has placed the Kerala-Dubai migration stream into context and has thus allowed us to explore it in more specific detail in the chapters that follow.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 4

The Origins of the Kerala-Dubai Migration Corridor: From 1973 to mid 1990s

Introduction

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that in 2005 the Indian diaspora was 20 million, the second largest after China (35 million).⁴⁴⁷ At the same time, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs estimated that there were over 5 million Indians working abroad (2006-7 and 2010-1), the vast majority on temporary stay and 90 percent working in the Gulf.⁴⁴⁸ Remarkably, it is also estimated that at least *half* of India's emigrants originate from Kerala (2.5 million), a tiny coastal state located in India's southern tip, representing just 3% of India's total population⁴⁴⁹ and 1.18% of its total geographical area!⁴⁵⁰ With a total population of over one billion people, India is certainly not a country of mass emigration. But, Kerala, on the other hand, is. With a total population of 32 million, of which 8 percent are emigrants, "one Keralite worker in six now works overseas."⁴⁵¹ This translates and more than 16% of the workforce!

With respect to the Kerala-Dubai migration stream, we know that since 2006, a *minimum* of 360,000 Keralites have been working in Dubai as temporary and unskilled workers.⁴⁵² This is an extraordinary number. In 2006, Dubai had a population of 1.4

⁴⁴⁷ International Organization for Migration, accessed June 20, 2011, <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/about-migration/facts-and-figures/regional-and-country-figures/cache/offonce/>

⁴⁴⁸ Government of India, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, "Annual Report 2006-07," 18. http://moia.gov.in/pdf/Annual_Report2006-07-English_nic.pdf (accessed March 8, 2012); Government of India, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, "Annual Report 2010-11," 26. http://moia.gov.in/writereaddata/pdf/Annual_Report_2010-2011.pdf (accessed March 8, 2012).

⁴⁴⁹ Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)," 29.

⁴⁵⁰ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 261.

⁴⁵¹ DeParle, "Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support 'Model' State in India."

⁴⁵² I have calculated this figure from my own research since such data does not exist. Please see appendix for more detail.

million: 225,000 nationals, 200,000 foreigners owning second homes in Dubai and who take “two months of overseas leave every summer,”⁴⁵³ and roughly 1 million *foreign workers* - amounting to an incredible 71 percent of its total population! Therefore, Keralites in Dubai’s make up 26% of its population! From this perspective, Kerala’s unique position merits special attention. Indeed, what is it that makes Kerala a large sender of migrants, and why do so many of them migrate to Dubai?

In light of a noticeable absence of scholarly research on this question (the constitution of the Kerala-Dubai migration corridor), I attempt to provide one here. Bearing in mind Sassen’s argument that any given migration stream needs to be studied with precision, this chapter begins by exploring the socio-economic and political developments in Kerala and Dubai between the early 1970s to mid 1990s, the period during which this stream was constituted. This is executed in an effort to show why, and to what degree, linkages between both places were formed and, in the end, helped to create ideal conditions for migration between them. More specifically, I first investigate Kerala with respect to its emigration histories, its socio-economic, demographic and political structures, and its economy by principally exploring its agricultural, industrial and financial sectors. I follow this with an examination of similar features in Dubai during the same period. Third, this chapter proceeds by analyzing migration policies (keeping Zolberg’s arguments in mind) formulated by the governments of Kerala, Dubai, India and the UAE, and aims to conclude to what extent migration between them was encouraged, facilitated, restricted and to what degree it was a result of ‘benign neglect’. My intention for this chapter (and for the next) is to illustrate that international migration is not a random occurrence, as is widely believed. Rather, I hope to show that it is a

⁴⁵³ Davis, “Sand, Fear, and Money in Dubai,” 64.

selective, calculated process that enables only certain people to travel on specific routes. Ideas that international migration is caused by globalization or poverty are tossed altogether. To begin, I first turn to a discussion on Kerala.

Kerala: behind the looking-glass

International migration from Kerala is nothing new. And, like most cases, it developed out of long, historical processes. Although Kerala's migration history is rich, particularly with the Arab world, which dates back to nearly two thousand years due to trade and matrimony⁴⁵⁴ (Indian Hindu merchants, for example, dominated Dubai's textile and gold trade)⁴⁵⁵ labour emigration, however, did not take off until much later. This took three distinct forms.

The first labour emigrants from India took the form of *indentured workers* for the British Empire who ('kindly') recruited the most destitute of classes and "in their last stage of poverty"⁴⁵⁶ to work (or rather, slave) in British colonies around the world. However, this type of labour emigration nearly came to a halt by the early 1910s, due to the outbreak of WWI.⁴⁵⁷ Following the end of the Second World War, emigration revived in the 1950s.⁴⁵⁸ During this time, Indian emigration was restricted to only allow for the emigration of *skilled* workers, as outlined by the 1922 Emigration Act (an important part

⁴⁵⁴ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 263.

⁴⁵⁵ Vaughan Robinson, "Bridging the Gulf: The Economic Significance of South Asian Migration to and from the Middle East" in *Return Migration and Regional Economic Problems* ed. Russell King (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 245.

⁴⁵⁶ Tinker, 1974, 1976, 1977; Saha, 170; Gupta, 1967 quoted in Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 264.

⁴⁵⁷ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 264.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 257, 264.

of colonial policy on migration as we will soon investigate).⁴⁵⁹ Most went to, and eventually settled in, prosperous Western countries (England, Canada and the US) to work as doctors, scientists, engineers, nurses, technicians and teachers.⁴⁶⁰ At the same time, there were some skilled Indians (notably Keralites) that also travelled to the Gulf. In the 1930s, when British oil companies first began to scour the Gulf for oil, villagers from Kambu (Kerala) responded early to employment opportunities: they worked as technical engineers, clerical workers, nurses, along with few doctors and lawyers.⁴⁶¹ The reason Kambu supplied many skilled workers to the Gulf was because the village had a high concentration of Christians and as a result, their British contacts and English education helped them to learn of employment prospects abroad.⁴⁶² Consequently, an estimated 1,400 Indians had travelled to the Gulf for work by 1948.⁴⁶³ This soon reached to 40,000 by the very early 1970s – a small figure compared to what was in store only a few short years later.⁴⁶⁴ While skilled emigration from India continues, the stream is relatively quite small⁴⁶⁵ and is spectacularly overshadowed by unskilled Gulf migration⁴⁶⁶ in the wake of the 1973-4 oil price hike when oil profits in the Middle Eastern oil-producing countries ushered in a new pattern of labour migration from Kerala that involved a different type of person and purpose: temporary *unskilled and semi-skilled workers*, a recent phenomenon

⁴⁵⁹ Research of scholarly journals, the government of India's archives and the Act in general have, unfortunately, not revealed any information on the history and political contexts surrounding the 1922 Emigration Act. The silence in these areas shows a huge problem.

⁴⁶⁰ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 257, 264.

⁴⁶¹ Kurien, "A Socio-Cultural Perspective on Migration and Economic Development: Middle Eastern Migration from Kerala, India," 205.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 204-5.

⁴⁶³ Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 90.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 257.

⁴⁶⁶ Kannan and Hari, "Kerala's Gulf Connection: Emigration, Remittances and their Macroeconomic Impact 1972-2000," 34.

in the Indian context.⁴⁶⁷ Explaining why these opportunities were “grasped more readily by *Keralites*⁴⁶⁸ than by persons from other parts of India”⁴⁶⁹ requires an exploration of Kerala’s socio-demographic, economic and political histories.

Kerala’s long political history of progressive governments since 1957 resulted in remarkable gains in social welfare than any other state in India. Heavy investment in education, for example, has left nearly every person literate and educated, while the same measures in the health sector has resulted the lowest infant mortality and highest life expectancy rates in the country.⁴⁷⁰ These outcomes are a consequence of Kerala spending 46% more on health care and 36% more on education than the nation-wide average.⁴⁷¹ Beyond this, Kerala has also introduced a minimum wage and “transferred land from the rich to the poor.”⁴⁷² In general, it is true that if you are poor in India, it is better to be poor in Kerala. The achievements were remarkable enough in the developing world at the time that they were noted by the United Nations in 1975. “[S]tarved for success stories”⁴⁷³ in the global south, the organization dubbed them the ‘Kerala model’ – a beacon of hope suggesting that ‘development’ is, after all, possible.

But these achievements were also accompanied with critical failures. Throughout the 1970s – 2000s, the state suffered from high levels of unemployment (particularly of *educated* unemployment among the youth),⁴⁷⁴ very low per capita income, extremely low

⁴⁶⁷ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 264-5.

⁴⁶⁸ Emphasis is my own.

⁴⁶⁹ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 265.

⁴⁷⁰ Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects,” 239; Kerala State Planning Board, “Economic Review 2010,” last accessed April 2, 2012, <http://spb.kerala.gov.in/index.php/economic-review/er-2010.html>

⁴⁷¹ DeParle, “Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support ‘Model’ State in India.”

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Jeromi, “What Ails Kerala’s Economy: A Sectoral Exploration,” 1584.

growth in the agricultural, industrial and financial sectors, along with the highest emigration⁴⁷⁵ and suicide rates in the country⁴⁷⁶. With an annual per capita income of \$675 in 2007, compared to the all-India amount of \$730, Kerala “is poor, even to India’s standards.”⁴⁷⁷ In fact, state income against national income has been historically poor (Table 1). This, quite simply, is called the ‘Kerala paradox’ – a place with high human development indicators, yet coupled with flagging structural and socio-economic foundations. As Nair points out, Kerala is “forward looking and advanced in its social sectors and...stagnant in its materially productive [agricultural, industrial and financial] sectors.”⁴⁷⁸ A brief examination of each of these sectors’ performances will throw light on their connections to Kerala’s labour migration history, particularly with Dubai.

Table 1: Annual Average Growth of State Income and National Income (%)⁴⁷⁹

Period	Kerala NSDP	India GDP
1980-1 to 2000-1 (average)	4.4	5.8
1980-1 to 1990-1	3.2	5.8
1992-3 to 2000-1	6.3	6.3

Agriculture

As the most densely populated state in India, and sitting on a mere 1.18%⁴⁸⁰ of India’s total area, Kerala is, quite plainly, “a land scarce economy.”⁴⁸¹ This has shaped two important consequences. First, an ever-growing demand for land for non-agricultural

⁴⁷⁵ Nair, “Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India),” 30; Jeromi, “What Ails Kerala’s Economy: A Sectoral Exploration,” 1584-1600.

⁴⁷⁶ DeParle, “Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support ‘Model’ State in India.”

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects,” 217.

⁴⁷⁹ Jeromi, “What Ails Kerala’s Economy: A Sectoral Exploration,” p. 1585.

⁴⁸⁰ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 261.

⁴⁸¹ Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects,” 217.

purposes (residential, commercial and infrastructure) has not only decreased the amount of *cultivable* land, but has also pushed land prices to astronomical levels.⁴⁸² In large part attributed to the influx of large-scale Gulf remittances into Kerala's economy, it has led to higher prices for land, material and services, impacted household income, investment, consumption, and savings which will be examined in Chapter 6. However, our immediate concern is Kerala's agricultural sector with respect to its growth, production and what this means for emigration.

Kerala's agricultural performance is nothing short of dismal. For the most part, agricultural growth stagnated throughout the 1970s and mid-1980s, followed by a slight improvement in the second half of the 1980s, only to slump again during the 1990s.⁴⁸³ This is attributed to the fact that for the past four decades, Kerala dramatically restructured its cropping pattern from food crops (rice and tapioca) in favour of commercial crops (rubber, coconut coffee and tea),⁴⁸⁴ to the extent that food crops now constitute for only 11.86% of the total cultivated area between 2009-10.⁴⁸⁵ Like other important food grains, the production of rice, for example, has become so small that Kerala now depends on neighboring states to supply nearly 75% of all rice consumption.⁴⁸⁶ The shift was due to a higher profitability of commercial crops since they enjoyed better export prospects, held higher value in terms of land prices and did not

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Kannan and Pushpangadan 1988, Thomas 1999 quoted in Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1586.

⁴⁸⁴ Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1586; Kerala State Planning Board, "Economic Review 2010," last accessed April 2, 2012, <http://www.spb.kerala.gov.in/%7Espbuser/old/html/Economic%20Review%202010/CHAPTER%20-%204.pdf>

⁴⁸⁵ Kerala State Planning Board, "Economic Review 2010," last accessed April 2, 2012, <http://www.spb.kerala.gov.in/%7Espbuser/old/html/Economic%20Review%202010/CHAPTER%20-%204.pdf>

⁴⁸⁶ Kannan, 2000 quoted in Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1586.

need frequent care (labour).⁴⁸⁷ Despite all of this, Kerala's agricultural sector fell from grace when it endorsed neoliberal policies designed to open up its economy for liberalization and privatization – a sharp move away from its relatively closed past – ultimately hindering Kerala's agricultural performance.⁴⁸⁸

These beams of neoliberal intelligence ushered in the elimination of quantitative restrictions on food imports, thereby impacting trends in Kerala's agricultural prices and food production.⁴⁸⁹ By the late 1990s and early 2000s, trends in agricultural prices dwindled drastically for both food types, though this was more so the case for coconut and rubber:⁴⁹⁰ the government of Kerala estimated that it lost more than USD 890 million between 1999-2000 and USD 1.47 billion between 2001-10.⁴⁹¹ Due to the liberalized regime, the cultivation of commercial crops suffered severe consequences from mass imports of rubber and edible oils.⁴⁹² Unable to effectively compete with international markets, Kerala's commercial crops have also dwindled in size in recent years, forcing Kerala to rely increasingly more on food imports.⁴⁹³ Demand for agricultural labour also declined as cash crops required less labour and with other sources of employment languishing, already high unemployment rates swelled to the tune of 25% by the mid-1990s!⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁷ Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1586.

⁴⁸⁸ Nair, "Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects," 221.

⁴⁸⁹ Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1587.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Government of Kerala, Finance Department, "White Paper on State Finances," Thiruvananthapuram, 2001 quoted in Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1587.

⁴⁹² Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1587.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Mathew, 1997 quoted in Nair, P. R. Gopinathan. "Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects," 218.

Industries

Industrial investment and development in Kerala have been weak, even by India's standards,⁴⁹⁵ thanks to low productivity, low investment and low employment generation. With falling growth rates of state enterprises (from 3.49% in the 1980s to 3.07% in 1998) and poor worker participation in such enterprises (growth rate of 2.98% in 1980s to 1.99% in 1998), things look bleak.⁴⁹⁶ This is particularly true for Kerala's traditional industries (such as handloom, handicrafts and coir) and for its small-scale industries (SSIs)⁴⁹⁷ and State-Level Public Sector Units (SLPSUs).

In Kerala, small-scale industries not only greatly outnumber medium and large-scale industries, they have also grown the fastest: as of 2001, the state had 240,000 SSIs (employing 1.1 million people) as opposed to almost 19,000 in 1980.⁴⁹⁸ But Kerala's average production per unit amounted to just over \$10,000 in 2001, far less than the national average of \$42,000.⁴⁹⁹ Since SSIs typically enjoy low levels of investment, overall industrial production and investment levels are low. Between 1990 and 2001, Kerala's share of production rose from a meager 1.5% to 1.7%.⁵⁰⁰ Jeromi reports this is due to fewer actual SSIs in Kerala than reported by the government,⁵⁰¹ one-third are either non-existent or grossly impaired/sick, and the large volume of SSIs is largely a consequence of high levels of unemployment "due to which more people are attracted to

⁴⁹⁵ Nair, "Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects," 218.

⁴⁹⁶ Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1588.

⁴⁹⁷ Jeromi warns us that Kerala's SSI sector is known as a dark 'island' since reliable or authentic data pertaining to this sector is not available. More so, data received from Kerala's State Planning Board is largely unreliable since information is acquired from voluntary reporting. Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1599.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1588.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1588-9.

⁵⁰¹ Jeromi remarks that the government of Kerala seeks to encourage the number of SSIs in the state. Why this is the case is not clear. Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1588.

the sector to ‘start something’ with government support and easy credit from banks without undertaking any real activity.”⁵⁰² Though Kerala was recently able to attract knowledge intensive industries like information technology (IT), software development and telecommunications (employing 5,000 people), software exports against other Indian states are small: \$31 million in 2000 while Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka reported \$621 million and \$2.1 billion respectively.⁵⁰³

The performance of Kerala’s SLPSUs is no less depressing. In 2002, the total number of SLPSUs in India was slightly more than 1,000 - Kerala’s share of them is 10% - more than any other state.⁵⁰⁴ While employing 12,000 people, grants/subsidies and equity capital in recent years have been relatively stable and state loans have declined by \$32 million between 1998 and 2001.⁵⁰⁵ All of Kerala’s SLPSUs have incurred heavy accumulated losses of over \$352 million.⁵⁰⁶ Though Kerala’s SSIs and SLPSUs produce essential goods and services, they are not doing *well*.

The lagging industrial sector is a result of poor investment and dismal levels of foreign direct investment (FDI). Regarding the former, between 1991-2002, Kerala had 513 investment proposals – only 1.1% in comparison to the national total and about 75 were actualized.⁵⁰⁷ Proposed employment during this period was only 1%, illustrating the reality of very low job creation over a span of 11 years.⁵⁰⁸ FDI did not fare any better. Kerala does not stand close to attracting FDI as its neighbors: Tamil Nadu and Karnataka

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 1588, 1599.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 1589.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 1590.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

received 8.4% and 7.8% of total FDI in India between 1991-2002, Kerala only 0.6%.⁵⁰⁹

While a lack of investment and FDI are contributors to Kerala's slow industrial sector, other important elements cited by scholars include high cost of and scarcity of land, lack of infrastructure, chronic power shortages and high cost of production (i.e wages).⁵¹⁰

Financial sector

With more than 50 commercial banks and 4,227 branches throughout Kerala, the financial sector has not managed to overcome two severe limitations: a low credit-deposit ratio (CDR) which has lagged for more than three decades, and that commercial banks have been more interested in deposit mobilization than on credit expansion, crippling Kerala's economy.

Apart from six occasions since 1969, Kerala's CDR has been worse than that of the national average and the gap between them has been *widening* particularly since the early 1990s.⁵¹¹ Until 1991, Kerala's and India's CDRs were in tune with each other but by 2002, Kerala's CDR was lower than the national average by 20%.⁵¹² Against its southern neighbors, Kerala also does not fair well. Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu well exceeded Kerala's 2001 credit-deposit ratio of 43%: their CDRs were 59%, 63% and 90% respectively.⁵¹³

It is also important to examine the type and volume of bank deposits made in Kerala and the amount of credit that was extended. Deposits to commercial banks

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 1591.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ibid., 1592.

increased significantly: from \$34 million in 1969 to \$11.4 billion in 2002.⁵¹⁴ The share of Non-Resident Deposits (NRDs – deposits from Keralites working abroad) also increased: in 1990 they represented 27% of total state deposits, 36% in 1995 and 45% in 2002⁵¹⁵ - largely a result of Keralites sending money from the Gulf.⁵¹⁶ While deposits have skyrocketed, credit has not: the share of credit advanced by commercial banks was 2.9% in 1969 which slightly increased to 3.2% in 2002 - particularly stunning considering that Kerala had over 11 billion in bank deposits in the same year.⁵¹⁷ Two conclusions can be made: in comparison to the national level, Kerala's share of advances were much lower than deposits, and growth of deposits has always been larger than growth in advances.⁵¹⁸

Banks have also poorly invested in Kerala (ie. government bonds, securities, equities), and far less so than the national average and much less than its southern neighbors.⁵¹⁹ Banks investments in the state have not compensated for Kerala's low level of credit advances. Bank deposits "are not fully ploughed back into the economy in the form of advances and investments"⁵²⁰ and it is likely that banks in Kerala are using the deposits to invest into, and make advances to, other states.⁵²¹

A number of reasons have been highlighted of why Kerala has a low CDR and why banks seldom extend credit. The Reserve Bank of India in 1993 pointed to Kerala's lack of clear plan for its economic future,⁵²² while other critics include its poor capacity to absorb credit in productive sectors, poor infrastructure and a recent diversion for

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 1590.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 1591.

⁵¹⁶ Nair, "Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects," 219.

⁵¹⁷ Jeromi, "What Ails Kerala's Economy: A Sectoral Exploration," 1590.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 1591.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 1592, 1599.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 1592.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid., 1592-3.

constructing homes instead of industries.⁵²³ Banks scorn Kerala for encouraging an investment climate that is not friendly to private capital, while frequent labour unrest has also been cited as intimidating potential investors.⁵²⁴ Against this context, private financiers have thrived in Kerala, indicating “that the formal banking system is not able to meet the credit requirements of a section of society that needs credit for retail trade, personal consumption, medical expenditure and social functions.”⁵²⁵

What does all of this have to do with emigration from Kerala? It would seem that the dreary economic outlook creates perfect conditions for people to go elsewhere for work. But, this is only one factor that contributes to a larger picture, as will soon be clear. For the moment, let us just say that in light of Kerala’s faltering agricultural, industrial and financial sectors, *emigration* has, in recent times, become Kerala’s most prosperous industry.⁵²⁶ In 2007, Kerala received USD 5 billion in remittances – representing more than 20% of its GDP!⁵²⁷ From this figure, slightly more than 1 billion in remittances (or one-fifth of the total) has come from Keralites working in Dubai!⁵²⁸

Here, theories of migration, such as the push-pull theory and neoclassical economic theory, might be considered relevant. However, as this thesis will argue, other theories play a far more important role in shaping our understanding of why migration from Kerala took off in the first place. Before this thesis explores the historical dimension

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 1593.

⁵²⁶ Richard Black, Claudia Natali and Jessica Skinner, “Migration and Inequality,” *Equity & Development: World Migration Report 2006*, Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex, Second draft: 20 January, 2005. Last accessed April 2, 2012, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2006/Resources/477383-1118673432908/Migration_and_Inequality.pdf

⁵²⁷ DeParle, “Border Crossings: Jobs Abroad Support ‘Model’ State in India.”

⁵²⁸ This figure has been compiled as a result of my own research. Please see the appendix for a detailed explanation.

of emigration from Kerala to Dubai, like dates, volume of migrants, their profiles and of Kerala's and India's migration policies, it is first important to examine the Dubai connection. Why was so much emigration from Kerala strongly destined for Dubai? Just as our examination of Kerala's economic and political landscape provided us with a contextual background of the root causes for migration, we must do the same for Dubai.

Dubai: dressed in the emperors' new clothes⁵²⁹

If there were a recent historical instance, a place rising, serendipitously and from desperate poverty to fabulous wealth, Dubai would be it. For the past four decades, Dubai has been seamlessly transformed from a small and poor fishing and pearling village into a glittering and behemoth city-state – competing with the likes of Monte Carlo, Paris, London, New York and Singapore. Dubai is the Middle East region's uncontested financial, commercial and recreational hub⁵³⁰ - attracting \$3 billion in foreign direct investment in 2008⁵³¹ and more than 6 million tourists by 2008.⁵³² Realistically, the city depends on people with deep pockets to fill the five-star hotels, buy the 20 million dollar homes, make speculative investments and, above all, to inform their friends about opportunity in Dubai. Although Dubai aggressively takes on the “nothing is impossible” motto to a new level, the Dubai of today is vastly different than the one only fifty short years ago. To appreciate Dubai's ‘claim to fame’, we must provide a brief description of the city before and after it discovered oil (its black gold), and how this has attracted migrant labour from abroad.

⁵²⁹ In this part of the thesis, I am exclusively focusing on Dubai before the 2008 global financial crash. Chapter 5 deals with this event and how it affected Dubai and its migration relationship with Kerala.

⁵³⁰ Davis, “Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai,” 55.

⁵³¹ Davidson, “Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream,” 10.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 9.

Pre-oil Dubai

The story of Dubai begins, ironically, with a great migration.⁵³³

Until the late 1940s, the West had very little knowledge about the lands that occupied the interior of the Arabian Peninsula (present-day Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE).⁵³⁴ With the North Pole and Antarctica already crossed and conquered, this isolated part of the globe was ‘earth’s final frontier’: a place yet to be discovered.⁵³⁵ Before the UAE formed a federation in 1971, its lands did not belong to any particular state but were instead tribal territories that were ruled by sheikhs who did not have any of the hereditary claims to power that today’s rulers enjoy.⁵³⁶ Instead, all one had to do was prove “that he was braver, wiser, or more generous than any rival.”⁵³⁷ The sheikdoms (or kingdoms) constantly shifted in size and shape as a result of tribal conflicts and they were unorganized in the sense that there were no armies, bureaucracies, diplomatic relations with other states and, above all, no central authority.⁵³⁸ With respect to Dubai, when the British first set foot they saw nothing more than a sleepy, dusty, pearling and fishing village with as few as 1,000 inhabitants living in thatched or mud huts.⁵³⁹ Yet, in a few short years, a tribal clash was brewing not too far away that would set Dubai on a path of rapid growth.⁵⁴⁰

Since the turn of the nineteenth century, Dubai was part of the Bani Yas, a powerful tribe that ruled over the UAE and whose territory stretched all the way from

⁵³³ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, viii.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.* 13.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 16-7.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

Abu Dhabi (the tribal capital) to Qatar.⁵⁴¹ Abu Dhabi, therefore, had always traditionally ruled over Dubai.⁵⁴² Two branches of the Bani Yas were important: the al-Nayan family (the Al Bu Falah branch) the current ruling family of Abu Dhabi, and the al-Maktoum family (part of the Al Bu Falasah branch), the current ruling family of Dubai.⁵⁴³ What split these two families was a murder.

In 1833, the tribal leader of Abu Dhabi was killed by his brother to gain power and 8000 al-Maktoums fled north, eventually settling in Dubai after many weeks' journey, far enough from al-Nayan rule to govern for themselves.⁵⁴⁴ As Krane observes, "the clan's decision to gamble on Dubai was the first recorded evidence of the Maktoum family's knack for bold decisions."⁵⁴⁵ Thus, the Maktoums became Dubai's first wave of migrants and marked the beginning of a long, profitable and stable dynasty.⁵⁴⁶

Though one may marvel at Dubai's current economic stature, the 'forward thinking' widely seen as its motor could be traced back to 1900 when Sheikh Maktoum bin Hasher, Dubai's then leader, pushed Dubai into becoming a small international free port.⁵⁴⁷ The Sheikh slashed fees, terminated the customs duty and licenses for vessels, and offered the new merchant migrants free land with a promise to keep government out of their business in an effort to attract entrepreneurs and their savings.⁵⁴⁸ It worked: "a free port was born."⁵⁴⁹ In a few years, Dubai had more berthed vessels than Abu Dhabi

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁴⁸ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 22; Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*, 68.

⁵⁴⁹ Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*, 68.

and Sharjah.⁵⁵⁰ It also benefited early on when Iran raised taxes in southern port cities of Lengeh and Bushehr in 1900 - many Iranians were lured to Dubai which was the “the most business-friendly port in the lower Gulf”⁵⁵¹ In the following year, five hundred Persians settled in Dubai.⁵⁵² The Iranian migration to Dubai represents the city’s second wave of immigrants.⁵⁵³ More Iranians came: in the 1970s to escape a 40 percent import tariff on some goods and in the 1980s, the Iranian revolution.⁵⁵⁴ Today, more than 40,000 Iranians are nationals of Dubai - most are very wealthy entrepreneurs.⁵⁵⁵

But, these commercial gains did not necessarily improve everyday life during the first half of the twentieth century. Dubai was poor. Its pearling industry, once its primary source of revenue (commanding 95 percent of the economy) completely collapsed with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929.⁵⁵⁶ This, coupled with competition of cultured pearls from Japan, sent Dubai’s ability to make a livelihood into a tailspin.⁵⁵⁷ In fact, it was from this time until the end of the Second World War that Dubai suffered most: businesses in the souk went bankrupt, Indian merchants travelled back home, schools shutdown, and a devastating famine in the 1930s and 1940s made it common for people to starve to death.⁵⁵⁸

Yet, from the 1950s and onwards, Dubai availed its free-port status when Nehru’s protectionist policies took effect and consequently opened up lucrative re-export

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 22.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁵⁵ Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*, 76.

⁵⁵⁶ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 26.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 28-9.

opportunities in textiles, gold and electronics, luring many South Asians to return.⁵⁵⁹ Numerous Indian merchants thrived in Dubai, especially after receiving exclusive brand-specific licenses from the ruling family when many multinational companies looked for Gulf agents to serve as local retailers and re-exporters – Gajaria became the sole importer of JVC to Dubai, Bhatia brought Sony and Chambria delivered Jumbo.⁵⁶⁰ However, while Dubai was able to attract foreign merchants in the first half of the twentieth century due to political stability and free trade, Sheikh Maktoum knew that if Dubai was to continue as “the most trade-friendly environment in the lower Gulf,”⁵⁶¹ he would have to gamble on massive physical infrastructural projects, especially in communications and transport, and in sophisticated financial infrastructure “to maintain the confidence of merchants.”⁵⁶² In the pre-oil years, Dubai borrowed heavily from neighboring Gulf states for drilling operations that brought the city fresh water in 1959, its first bridge, a paved road, street lighting and an airport all in the early 1960s.⁵⁶³ Its free port grew in the ensuing years, especially after the discovery of oil, as will soon be articulated.

In the hope of rescuing his people from the pearl bust and the ensuing poverty, Sheikh Saeed signed a seventy-five year oil exploration contract with the British in 1937 for an annual royalty of \$10,000.⁵⁶⁴ The economic benefits that oil could bring to Dubai could be the godsend that they needed. After all, Iraq hit oil in 1927, Bahrain in 1932 and Saudi Arabia in 1938.⁵⁶⁵ Abu Dhabi was swimming in the oil business in 1958 and finally

⁵⁵⁹ Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*, 69-71, 89.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 91-2.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 92. 95.

⁵⁶⁴ Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 31-6 quoted in Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 36.

⁵⁶⁵ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 36.

in Dubai in 1966 but after some assessment, it only had 4 percent of the UAE's oil while Abu Dhabi had nearly the rest (90 percent).⁵⁶⁶

By 1975, oil earnings were worth 66 percent of Dubai's GDP which slipped to 50 percent by 1985.⁵⁶⁷ Ten years later, it shrunk to 18 percent; in 2000 it stood at 10 percent and fell to 3 percent by 2006.⁵⁶⁸ But memories of the pearling bust deterred Dubai from relying on a single industry for income.⁵⁶⁹ If Dubai were to secure a post-oil future, it would have to move away from depending on oil as its primary source of revenue. And, this is just what it did.

Post-oil Dubai

Unlike Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia, the discovery of oil in Dubai, and the subsequent windfall of profits particularly after the 1973-4 oil price hike, was used by Sheikh Rashid and his son, Muhammed, to diversify the economy – they were not going to allow Dubai plummet into another depression. With small oil reserves, Dubai's royals were desperate to create a secure post-oil future by building on its previous commercial success and developing other non-oil related sectors, particularly financial and recreational⁵⁷⁰ - it was the first Gulf economy to use petrodollars in this fashion. What resulted was the largest construction boom in the history of the region. Today, more than an astounding 95 percent of Dubai's GDP comes from the non-oil sector.⁵⁷¹ How did it

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 47, 49, 83.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁷⁰ Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*, 99.

⁵⁷¹ Davidson, "Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream," 10.

manage to do this and how did this affect international migration to Dubai? Welcome to the Dubai business model.

Although there were glimmers of infrastructural modernization before Dubai hit oil in 1966, its business model really took off in the mid-1990s with a number of key events.⁵⁷² Dubai established “free zones” (all under the umbrella of the Jebel Ali industrial zone) where foreign companies could enjoy full ownership and no taxes,⁵⁷³ carved out ‘specialized clusters’ that group similar companies into small ‘cities within a city’, a strategy which the *Financial Times* dubbed “the heart of Dubai’s development strategy,”⁵⁷⁴ which included Internet City whose inhabitants included Microsoft and Dell, a Media City with the BBC and Reuters and an International Financial Centre operating in dollars and under English common law.⁵⁷⁵ Other cities included branches of foreign universities and health clinics, both in collaboration with Harvard.⁵⁷⁶

Dubai also established a luxury international tourist industry at the cost of 10 percent of its GDP in the 1990s.⁵⁷⁷ The Jumeirah International Group, created in 1997 to establish a string of iconic resorts, such as the Burj al-Arab which is presently the world’s only seven-star hotel and floats on an artificial island.⁵⁷⁸ Today, Dubai’s shores are lined with hundreds of glitzy hotels, fine restaurants and endless amusements for rich expatriates such as the world’s largest shopping centre, Dubailand (a theme park twice the size of Disney World),⁵⁷⁹ lush golf courses in the desert, indoor ski hills and a queue of future endeavors that include replicas of the Taj Mahal, the pyramids and the Hanging

⁵⁷² Ibid., 9.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Khalaf, “Stock Exchanges,” *Financial Times* quoted in Davis, “Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai,” 63.

⁵⁷⁵ Davidson, “Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream,” 9; Mike Davis, “Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai,” 62-3.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Davidson, “Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream,” 9.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Davis, “Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai,” 50.

Gardens of Babylon, to name a few.⁵⁸⁰ In 2006, the tourism industry made up almost 25% of its economy and \$8 billion in profits.⁵⁸¹ Backed by international music and sporting events, two annual shopping festivals and a successful airline (Emirates), Dubai predicted (before the 2008 financial crash) that it would attract at least 10 million tourists by 2012⁵⁸² and \$15 billion in revenue. By 2015, it aims to attract 15 million tourists and \$23 billion in revenue.⁵⁸³

The third scheme of Dubai's business model was establishing a high-end real estate sector, created also in the 1990s, in an effort to attract lucrative investment.⁵⁸⁴ In 2002, Sheikh Muhammed overturned a law that made Dubai the first place in the Gulf where foreigners could buy property, though renewable for 99 year leases.⁵⁸⁵ To further alleviate investors concerns, Sheikh Muhammed agreed that foreigners could fully own property in Dubai, but it would be up to him to decide where.⁵⁸⁶ He also allowed them to hold residency visas instead of being exclusive to those that hold proof of employment.⁵⁸⁷ Real estate entered into its golden years, the city turned into a mega construction site and for Sheikh Muhammed, he was ready to push architectural boundaries and pay any expense to create his 'imagineered'⁵⁸⁸ dream world.

Two separate artificial archipelagos in the shape of palms were immediately constructed off of Dubai's coast that now house multi-million dollar villas, apartments and five-star hotels. The re-routing of sea currents and destruction of flora and fauna all

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 50-1.

⁵⁸¹ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 118.

⁵⁸² Davidson, "Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream," 9.

⁵⁸³ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 118.

⁵⁸⁴ Davidson, "Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream," 9.

⁵⁸⁵ Davidson, "Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream," 9; Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 121.

⁵⁸⁶ Davidson, "Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream," 9.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Davis, "Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai," 51.

seemed to be minor details. Dubai could not build fast enough. When both palms sold out in 2004, construction began to build additional palm islands, one in the shape of a world (complete with each country, though Israel was visibly absent).⁵⁸⁹ Demand soared. To further capitalize on Dubai's real estate boom, construction began on the Burj Dubai: the world's tallest structure accommodating a mixture of residential, commercial and hotel units.⁵⁹⁰ So confident was Dubai in its economic future that mega real estate projects were announced each week.⁵⁹¹ By the summer of 2008, 30,000 new homes were built, the hotels were full, restaurants were buzzing and the free zones booming.⁵⁹² However, the financial crash made the ruling elite realize that they too were not immune. This event and its effects on international migration are explored in chapter 5.

For Dubai's citizens, foreign investors and rich globetrotters, Dubai is a paradise unlike any other. Its neoliberal playground values are what capitalists and the economics department at the University of Chicago can only dream of: a haven of free enterprise outside the clutches of income, corporate or property taxes, trade unions or opposition parties.⁵⁹³ And, Dubai's government works hard to keep it that way.

Amid Dubai's unprecedented growth, and apart from its monumental architecture, flashy homes and artificial islands, rest a minimum of three unflattering truths that are kept hidden by the ruling royal family from the global public: the first two involve organized crime specializing in money laundering and human trafficking. It is no secret

⁵⁸⁹ Davidson, "Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream," 9.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Davis, "Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai," 60.

Dubai's tax base is very small. It levies taxes from hotel occupancies, restaurant meals, liquor sales and a 5% tax on goods that are not destined for the free zones. It also collects fees from road tolls, permits and regressive renter's tax of office and apartment space. The bulk of its budget comes from profits made by some of its largest (state-run) companies: Nakheel Properties, Emirate, the Dubai Taxi Service and from its glass and aluminum plants. Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 138.

Dubai is a hotspot for money laundering, while its pathetic stance on ‘policing’ has led to it becoming one of the most lucrative transit locations (next to Israel and Greece) for trafficked women and children from Africa into Europe and West Asia (and vice-versa).⁵⁹⁴ The city is a cesspool for worldly billionaires that fuel Dubai’s Red Light District that is disturbingly “essential to keeping the five-star hotels full.”⁵⁹⁵ Although both of these realities deserve a more seasoned analysis, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. I focus here on the third unflattering truth: the million unskilled and semi-skilled labour migrants that have come to Dubai over the past decades to build the city in the most horrible of working conditions. Somehow, the very existence of these people have been largely disregarded and overlooked by the media, the ruling royal family, citizens and tourists. They are humiliated, abused and neglected on a daily basis but garner little attention. With migrant workers accounting for an astonishing 70 percent of the UAE’s total population in 2010,⁵⁹⁶ they are indeed the invisible majority.⁵⁹⁷

Sheikh Muhammed could have drawn as many futuristic plans for Dubai as he wanted, but in the end, there was no one to build. Having rewarding jobs in government (high pay and benefits),⁵⁹⁸ Dubai’s 225,000 nationals were not only unwilling to take employment as unskilled and semi-skilled workers (in construction and in the service industries), but they also were too few in numbers to construct the Sheikh’s dream city.⁵⁹⁹ When Arab labour from neighboring countries also proved deficient, Dubai realized that

⁵⁹⁴ For more information about the horror of contemporary human trafficking, I urge you to read *The Natashas: The New Global Sex Trade* by Victor Malarek (Toronto: Penguin, 2003).

⁵⁹⁵ Lonely Planet, *Dubai: City Guide* (London, 2004), 9; William Ridgeway, “Dubai, Dubai – The Scandal and Vice,” Social Affairs Unit, 4 April 2005 quoted in Davis, “Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai,” 63-4.

⁵⁹⁶ Nasra M. Shah, “Building State Capacities for Managing Contract Worker Mobility: The Asia-GCC Context” (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2010), 5. Last accessed April 2, 2012, http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/WMR2010_contract_worker_asiagcc.pdf

⁵⁹⁷ Davis, “Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai,” 64.

⁵⁹⁸ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 241.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

it had to recruit from abroad.⁶⁰⁰ This marked a shift in the volume and source of workers that the Gulf was to receive.⁶⁰¹

Phases of Gulf migration

Before 1975, migratory movements between Arab countries dominated Gulf migration in the form of workers and refugees (ie. Palestinians after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War).⁶⁰² Since then, migration patterns had shifted. Although American and British personnel, Iranian laborers and traders, and Indian clerical and manual workers (as a result of their close historical ties to the region, particularly during British occupied India) had been arriving to the region since the 1930s, they were out-shadowed by Arab migrants, particularly during the beginning of the oil era that started in Saud Arabia - most of the workers initially coming from Egypt, Jordan and Oman.⁶⁰³ By 1970, almost 85 percent of the Gulf's 880,000 expatriate workforce originated from Arab states.⁶⁰⁴

In the early 1970s, Arab migration to Gulf countries increased rapidly due to the quadrupling of oil price that created a large demand for labour, mostly for construction and in the service industry.⁶⁰⁵ As a result, massive labour migrations to the Gulf from Arab states ensued. By 1975, there were 1.8 million expatriate workers in the Gulf, 80% of whom originated from Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, and

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 240.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 239.

⁶⁰² Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 239; Andrzej Kapiszewski, "Arab Versus Asian Migrant Workers in the Gulf GCC Countries," United Nations Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, United Nations Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Beirut, 15-17 May 2006. UN/POP/EGM/2006/02 (22 May, 2006): 6. Last accessed April 2, 2012, http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/EGM_Ittmig_Arab/P02_Kapiszewski.pdf

⁶⁰³ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 239; Kapiszewski, "Arab Versus Asian Migrant Workers in the Gulf GCC Countries," 6.

⁶⁰⁴ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 239.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

Palestinians.⁶⁰⁶ The remaining migrants were mostly from Asian countries (about 360,000) and a few thousand were of European and American origin.⁶⁰⁷

However, the years since 1976 witnessed a change in migration patterns across the Gulf, and the UAE was no different. Migration was now characterized by large in-flows of workers from non-Arab countries.⁶⁰⁸ Though there continued to be significant in-flows of migrants from non-GCC Arab countries during this period, employers sought additional non-skilled and semi-skilled workers from abroad – and they all originated from Asia.⁶⁰⁹ By 1975, 95 percent of all Asian migrant workers in the Gulf came from Pakistan and India⁶¹⁰ and in 1980, the UAE was home to nearly half (45.6 percent) of the Gulf's total Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations.⁶¹¹ This happened for a number of reasons.

Though Gulf states for years welcomed Arab labour due to their religious, cultural and linguistic compatibilities, they became increasingly worried about potential threats imposed by non-GCC Arab workers including the abolition of their monarchies, an attitude that labour ought to circulate freely between Middle Eastern countries, and the belief that oil wealth ought to be shared with other Arab countries.⁶¹² All of this was rejected by the oil-producing Gulf states.⁶¹³ Asians, on the other hand, did not represent any of the threats and they were also preferred for other reasons.

Employers could exploit Asian workers for lower pay than their Arab counterparts: by 1989 they received less than one-third of the pay than Arab workers,

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 240.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 242.

⁶¹¹ Robinson, "Bridging the Gulf," 246.

⁶¹² Kapiszewski, "Arab Versus Asian Migrant Workers in the Gulf GCC Countries," 6-7.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

they were also easier to lay off and expel, considered more “obedient”, and Asian governments helped make emigration to the Gulf more accessible by establishing recruitment agencies that were ready to provide a continuous supply of labour power.⁶¹⁴ Many Asians workers were also Muslim, thereby putting Gulf Arabs more at ease with the new migrants.⁶¹⁵ In general, Arab expatriates in the GCC states represented 72 percent of the total migrant population, this decreased to 56 percent by 1985, 32 percent in 1996 and 31 percent by 2004.⁶¹⁶ The UAE also followed this trend: by 2004, 13 percent of its foreign population originated from other Arab countries.⁶¹⁷ Although it is hard to say when migrant workers first came to Dubai due to a complete absence of data, we do know that people of Indian, Pakistani and Filipino origin were already working in hotels before 1980.⁶¹⁸ Labour from non-Arab countries continues to dominate the Gulf migration landscape today.

In conclusion, and in order to place our discussion on the Kerala and Dubai into context, we have come to detect that certain political, economic and social dimensions in both places are raw ingredients that help encourage a migration stream. The poor agricultural, industrial and financial climate in Kerala, along with its high unemployment rates and the great demand for workers in Dubai certainly motivated linkages between these two places to take shape. Migration policies also prove to be important, which we will now examine.

⁶¹⁴ Stalker, *The Work of Strangers*, 242; Kapiszewski, “Arab Versus Asian Migrant Workers in the Gulf GCC Countries,” 7; Robinson, “Bridging the Gulf,” 245.

⁶¹⁵ Kapiszewski, “Arab Versus Asian Migrant Workers in the Gulf GCC Countries,” 7.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7, 9.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶¹⁸ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism*, 77.

The Kerala-Dubai migration corridor: A love story

During the early 1970s to mid 1990s, Kerala, India, Dubai and the UAE generally encouraged labour migration and the governments of the UAE and India introduced laws and policies for its facilitation. The government of Kerala has no formal policies or legislation to facilitate emigration or to protect its citizens from exploitative recruiting agencies or from any other abuse encountered in the UAE and Dubai. Emigration from Kerala was (and currently is) an unregulated process. This section first demonstrates how all governments involved encouraged the Kerala-Dubai migration stream by exploring a series of events that took place between 1973 to the mid 1990s. This includes, the proliferation of passport offices and relaxation of passport laws in India, India's suspension of the 1922 Emigration Act, the UAE's Federal Law 8 of 1980, India's 1983 Emigration Act, the enlargement of India's emigration clearance not required (ECNR) and emigration clearance requirement suspended (ECSR) categories, the effects of the 1990-1 Iraq-Kuwait War, and Kerala's establishment of NORKA (department for Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs) in 1996. I argue that international migration does not just randomly occur: they are the results of calculated decisions that are affected by specific patterns (such as economic and political developments in Kerala and Dubai) and by migration policies/laws in both places that have linked them together. Thus, I echo arguments posed by Sassen and Zolberg, and apply them to show how we can better understand the Kerala-Dubai migration stream. But first, I profile the socio-economic, demographic and religious composition of emigrants from Kerala.

Labour mobility in Kerala

Emigration from Kerala is selective: it is gendered, classed, localised and largely based on religious divisions.⁶¹⁹ Data from the 2007 Kerala Migration Survey concluded that emigration is overwhelmingly male (85.6 percent), unmarried (56.1 percent), young (average was 27 years for males and 23 years for females), poorly educated (56 percent received a primary education or less)⁶²⁰, unskilled (73 percent),⁶²¹ literate (70 percent at in 1984),⁶²² Muslim (78 percent in 1984⁶²³ and almost 50 percent in 2007⁶²⁴) and are largely destined for Gulf countries.⁶²⁵ The final two elements deserve particular attention.

The level of Muslims as a proportion of total emigrants is astounding, particularly since they account for only 20 percent of Kerala's total population (Hindus represent 60 percent of Kerala's total population and 33 percent of all emigrants, while Christians account for 20 percent of Kerala's population and 19 percent of emigrants).⁶²⁶ Therefore, the majority of all emigrants from Kerala are Muslim, yet they are a minority religion. While emigration from Kerala is widespread, it is more prevalent in coastal areas and where the Muslim population is large (in the central and northern districts) than in inland areas and where the Muslim population is small.⁶²⁷ In 1980 the proportion of emigrants reached 1556 and 1450 per 100,000 people in two coastal districts (Trichur and

⁶¹⁹ Robinson, "Bridging the Gulf," 249; Raghuram, "Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story," 317; Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)"; Kurien, "A Socio-Cultural Perspective on Migration and Economic Development: Middle Eastern Migration from Kerala, India"; Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007."

⁶²⁰ Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007," 23-6.

⁶²¹ Government of Kerala 1987; Gulati and Mody 1983; Banerjee et al. 1997; Zachariah et al. 1999, 2000 quoted in Kurien A, "A Socio-Cultural Perspective on Migration and Economic Development: Middle Eastern Migration from Kerala, India," 191.

⁶²² Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)," 25.

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007," 15-6.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁶²⁶ Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)," 23; Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007," 15-6.

⁶²⁷ Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007," 14-5; Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 265-6.

Malappuram) whereas emigration from two inland and hilly districts (Wyanad and Idukki) reached 45 and 30 respectively per 100,000 people.⁶²⁸ This has remained relatively unchanged in more recent times. In 2007, Malappuram district accounted for the highest proportion of emigrants (18 percent), followed by Kannur (14 percent – also a northern and coastal district).⁶²⁹ Idukki and Wayanad, both inland districts, continue to send the least emigrants (0.1 percent and 0.8 percent).⁶³⁰

Also of interest is that 98 percent of all Muslim emigrants from Kerala travel to the Gulf countries.⁶³¹ The majority of emigrants in 2007 went to the UAE (42 percent), followed by Saudi Arabia (24 percent).⁶³² The same trend was also observed in 2003 (37 percent and 27 percent respectively).⁶³³ More Muslims undertake international migration than internal migration, while the opposite is true for Hindus and Christians: the ratio is estimated to be 5:1 for Muslims, 2:1 for Hindus and 2:1 for Christians.⁶³⁴ This is due to the close historical and religious ties that the Muslim community has with the Middle East and the general religious hostility that Muslims encounter in Kerala.

It is also the not-so-extremely rich and the not-so-extremely poor that emigrate from Kerala. In 1990, the households that most actively participated in the emigration process came from poor families (owning a few assets like cattle) and from small to medium landowning families (having between 1 to 5 acres of land).⁶³⁵ Those that did not emigrate were households that owned more than 5 acres of land (large landowning

⁶²⁸ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 265.

⁶²⁹ Zachariah et al., “Kerala Migration Survey 2007,” 14.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Ibid., 17.

⁶³² Ibid., 13.

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁶³⁵ Sekhar (1993, p. 95) quoted in Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 267.

families) or landless, homeless families (those with no assets).⁶³⁶ Banks require collateral and this marginalizes the extremely poor from emigrating. Thus, the poorest in Kerala have not participated in migration to any noticeable extent⁶³⁷ and thus supports Sassen's argument that the poorest are not necessarily the ones that participate in the migration process.

The migration process: Policies

From the early 1970s until the mid 1990s, India's, Kerala's, Dubai's and the UAE's primary concern was to facilitate emigration and immigration. This was achieved by implementing of a number of measures. I first begin with India.

Raghuram describes "[t]he recognition that India had much to gain from migration became increasingly clear from the mid-1970s."⁶³⁸ This represented a change in India's foreign policy, particularly after the years and decades following independence when its government was largely concerned with self-sufficiency, non-alignment and anti-imperialism.⁶³⁹ The central government distanced itself from the millions of Indian migrants abroad politically and instead urged them to assimilate in their country of destination, as articulated by Nehru.⁶⁴⁰ Although India issued little policy response regarding emigration, a number of concerned citizens and Indian scholars alike expressed concerns about the emigration of its skilled workers, particularly during the early 1970s, and what this meant for India's developmental future.⁶⁴¹ Skilled migration was perceived

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 267.

⁶³⁸ Raghuram, "Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story," 313.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 310.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 310-1.

as a loss (brain drain) and there was little policy initiative or interest by the Indian government to control it.⁶⁴² By the 1980s and 1990s, India took notice of the “brain bank” abroad and of a “brain gain” in the twenty-first century when skilled Indians returned.⁶⁴³ The government was more concerned of skilled than of unskilled emigration to the Gulf.⁶⁴⁴ In fact, unskilled workers “have been considered more of a responsibility than pride for India.”⁶⁴⁵ Apart from India’s attitude toward the departure of its lesser-skilled citizens, the 1922 Indian Emigration Act further facilitated Indian labour emigration: a peculiar piece of legislation.

This was no small Act: it was the only political measure that set the legal framework for international migration for the next fifty-two years. Emigration from 1922-76 only permitted for the departure of *skilled* workers, contrary of what ‘development’ ought to look like.⁶⁴⁶ Why the emigration of only skilled workers? This is unknown. My own speculation points to the fact that the Act was established under British India and, therefore, Britain and its colonies had much to gain from the departure of skilled workers (nurses, doctors, engineers and those with the technological know-how). In any case, the 1922 Emigration Act served as a pivotal instrument in India’s emigration history.

When the oil-producing countries of the Gulf opened their borders in the early 1970s to allow for large flows of unskilled workers, Indians found themselves restricted from leaving. The government, therefore, suspended the 1922 Emigration Act in 1976 to allow for such movements, perhaps in part, as Raghuram argued earlier, that India took notice of emigration’s ‘potential’ (as an attractive source of foreign exchange earnings) only for

⁶⁴² Ibid., 311.

⁶⁴³ Khadria, “India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf,” 99.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 105.

⁶⁴⁶ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 273.

the first time during the 1970s. This marked the first time when unskilled workers were officially permitted by the state to leave, with exception of Ceylon and Malaya.

Emigration for the next seven years operated in a complete policy and regulatory void and, in an attempt to further encourage emigration, India increased the number of passport offices in the country from five in 1975 to twenty-three by 1998.⁶⁴⁷

This favorable attitude of facilitating emigration also extended itself to the UAE government: foreign workers experienced little difficulty regarding the duration and conditions of employment. From the early to late 1970s, the UAE did not have any specifications regarding the length of stay for foreign workers, they were not required to have a job offer before entering, they were permitted to renew their employment contract, change jobs and move freely in the country.⁶⁴⁸ All of this changed in 1979.

This thesis argues that it was precisely in 1979 when we can point to the first instance of UAE nationalism, better known as ‘Emiratization’ that took flight in 1996, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Two important events during this time occurred. First, the central government issued a policy that “prohibited all foreign workers from changing jobs unless they first left the country of employment for a minimum of one year.”⁶⁴⁹

Thousands of Keralites as a result returned home. We can perceive this as an effort by the UAE to systematically expel foreign expatriates; other Gulf countries issued identical policies.⁶⁵⁰ In 1982, 48 percent of Keralites were forced to leave and the proportion of Keralites in the UAE staying for more than five years was reduced from 50 to 33

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., 285.

⁶⁴⁸ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 275; Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects,” 211.

⁶⁴⁹ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 275-6.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., 276.

percent.⁶⁵¹ Thus, we notice the UAE shifted from an attitude of promoting migration of foreign labour during the early 1970s to showing signs of discouragement by 1979. All of a sudden, the Gulf Eldorado appeared less glistening.

In 1980, the UAE introduced its only law that regulates labour relations within the country, Federal Law 8. Although few and minor amendments have been made in recent years, no provisions have been made to protect foreign workers from abuse (i.e. non-payment of wages, confiscation of passports, poor working conditions) nor does it prescribe certain freedoms (right to associate, strike and unionize). In the UAE's effort to "regulate labour relations" between the employee and employer, Federal Law 8 does not specifically indicate that it includes provisions for foreign workers in its mandate. In fact, it goes to great pains to note that domestic workers and agricultural workers, whom are always migrant labourers, are exempt from the provisions and 'protections' of the law.⁶⁵²

Other forms of migrant labour, specifically construction workers, service staff in hotels and restaurants receive ambiguous understanding if they receive protection under the same law, as they are not mentioned. The implication is such that the UAE *legally* refrained itself from any responsibility towards its expatriates – a reality that has had significant consequence with respect to the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding between itself and the Indian government which will be explored in the next chapter.

This ambiguousness was clarified in 2007 when the UAE government amended Federal Law 8 from one that just "governs labour relations" to one that also "reaffirms

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² United Arab Emirates, Federal Law 8, Chapter 2, Article 3, p. 3. Last accessed April 2, 2012, http://www.deg.gov.ae/SiteCollectionImages/Content/pubdocs/UAE_Labour_Law_eng.pdf; Zachariah et al., "The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates," 163.

the protection of the UAE nationals and expatriates alike.”⁶⁵³ Yet, it is largely toothless with respect to the latter half.

Under Federal Law 8, UAE nationals are the only people permitted to sponsor migrant workers: it is the only means of entry.⁶⁵⁴ Thus, recruitment of all unskilled and semi-skilled labour, especially construction workers, enter the UAE by way of the sponsorship system.⁶⁵⁵ In general, recruitment begins in home countries either by recruitment agencies, scouts from Emirati companies or “manpower supply agencies” – UAE companies that sponsor workers only to subcontract them to other employers.⁶⁵⁶ In the case of India and Kerala, all these dimensions are present.

The sponsorship system provides considerable opportunity for employers to exploit foreign workers. Agencies such as the BBC and Human Rights Watch, along with scholars like Zachariah, Prakash, Rajan and Nair have widely reported on situations where sponsors sell visas to foreign workers at extraordinary rates, even though some have no intention of hiring them.⁶⁵⁷ In this case, the migrant suddenly becomes an *illegal* worker even though he entered the UAE through legal channels and any disobedience can result in deportation.⁶⁵⁸ Employers commonly withhold passports and the ability of returning home lies with the employers’ ‘good graces’,⁶⁵⁹ wages are often delayed for months and reports indicate migrants can earn much less than promised (Human Rights

⁶⁵³ United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Labour, “The Protection of the Rights of Workers in the United Arab Emirates: Annual Report 2007,” 8. Last accessed April 2, 2012, http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session3/AE/UPR_UAE_ANNEX2_E.pdf

⁶⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Building Towers, Cheating Workers: Exploitation of Migrant Construction Workers in the United Arab Emirates,” 26.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Zachariah et al., “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates,” 167.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

Watch reports of a construction worker in Dubai who was to receive \$5.50/hour but instead earned \$0.80/hour).⁶⁶⁰ Migrants routinely work in abysmal conditions - 880 migrant construction died from work-related injuries in the UAE in 2004, 460 were from India.⁶⁶¹ Extreme levels of stress, poor wages and working conditions have resulted in 84 Indians in Dubai committing suicide in 2005 alone.⁶⁶²

Yet, Federal Law 8 does (interestingly) include certain requirements of the employer should he wish to hire a foreign worker. Article 18 stipulates that at no time shall the employer accept from the labourer “any commission or material reward in return for employment, or charge him for any expenses thereby incurred.”⁶⁶³ The term “expenses” remains vague, but it can refer to the cost of visas, return airfare for all migrant workers and medical expenses (only for workers injured on the job - employers are not required to provide medical care or insurance for any other reason/occasion)⁶⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch documents these realities in detail.⁶⁶⁵

In India, I did not come across any example wherein the migrant did not have to pay for the cost of his visa, airline ticket or medical expenses. Typically, the cost of attaining a working visa from a recruitment agency for the UAE can reach upwards of \$2,000 through the sponsorship system and fetch much higher rates through illegal channels.⁶⁶⁶ For the Indian migrant, this is particularly a large sum of money considering that, in the case of construction workers, wages equal to a petty \$106-250 per month!⁶⁶⁷

The worker must then work for a *minimum* of two years just to pay for his visa. Debt

⁶⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Building Towers, Cheating Workers,” 47.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 40-1.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 46.

⁶⁶³ United Arab Emirates, Federal Law 8, Chapter 2, Article 18.

⁶⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Building Towers, Cheating Workers,” 49.

⁶⁶⁵ See Human Rights Watch, “Building Towers, Cheating Workers.”

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁶⁷ These are 2006 figures. Ibid., 56.

bondage is thus a serious reality for the migrant and the UAE does not address this issue.

Although Federal Law 8 stipulates penalties for any person that violates the law (maximum fine of \$2778 or imprisonment for up to six months), employers are rarely, if ever, penalized.⁶⁶⁸ Therefore, Federal Law 8 amounts to nothing more than a paper shark.

India during this time was in no place to protect its migrant population from exploitation since it had yet to introduce a new emigration policy to replace the 1922 Emigration Act. Not only did the legislative void allow for such abuses to happen, but it also allowed for the proliferation of *illegal* recruitment agencies - luring thousands⁶⁶⁹ of Indians to emigrate without proper documentation (passports, visas, employment contract, emigration clearance) and for hefty prices.⁶⁷⁰ Of all recruiting agencies in India, 90 percent were operating illegally by the early 1980s!⁶⁷¹

In an effort to finally protect emigrants from the exploitation of employers and illegal recruitment agencies, India introduced a new Emigration Act in 1983, thus placing emigration into some form of regulation after seven long years.⁶⁷² It provided two important stipulations: the registration of all recruiting agencies and made it compulsory for the Protectors of Emigrants to review employment contracts to ensure that provisions have been made for wages, travel, living and working conditions.⁶⁷³ Yet this Act, like the UAE's 1980 Federal Law 8, is also toothless. The exploitation of migrant workers continues to this day and it did not weed out illegal recruitment agencies: by the end of

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 49-50.

⁶⁶⁹ The author does not specify how many "thousands" of people migrated through illegal channels. Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 273.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

the 1980s, it is estimated they accounted for 80 percent of the total market.⁶⁷⁴

As the UAE was consistently expelling undocumented workers since 1979, the government of India, in response, relaxed the Emigration Act of 1983 in the following years to enlarge “the list of ECNR [emigration clearance not required] categories and the granting of ECRS [emigration clearance requirement suspended] liberally.”⁶⁷⁵ In fact, Nair states that “[i]n order to facilitate smooth emigration of Indians, the central government has increasingly exempted categories of migrants from the emigration clearance requirement.”⁶⁷⁶ Therefore, India once again took measures to facilitate international migration. It is here that the role of remittances plays an important role in determining Indian emigration policy, largely due to the fact they are an attractive source of foreign exchange earnings. This feature will be further explored in chapter 6. However, the importance of the ECNR and ECRS categories and its relationship to Indian and Keralite emigration to the Gulf and Dubai need review.

Under the 1983 Emigration Act, all citizens who wish to leave India for work must receive authorization, or an *emigration clearance*, from the Protector of Emigrants (the central government). As per the 1983 Emigration Act, Indian passports were once either divided into *Emigration Clearance Required* (ECR) or *Emigration Clearance Requirement Suspended* (ECRS).⁶⁷⁷ Today the matter is different because this now includes a third category that was not adopted in the 1983 Act, *Emigration Clearance Not Required* (ECNR). Any Indian wanting to work in certain Gulf, Middle Eastern and

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid. It is unknown the share of illegal recruitment agencies in India in modern times.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 285.

⁶⁷⁶ Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects,” 212.

⁶⁷⁷ As of October 2007, India has abolished the Emigration Clearance Suspended category. Information provided by the Government of India. http://passport.gov.in/cpv/column_guidelines.htm (retrieved June 10, 2011).

Asian countries⁶⁷⁸ must be granted permission for exit and thus fall under the ECR category. If a citizen is recruited by a recruitment agency or directly from an employer, then the recruitment agent and Protector of emigrants must confirm that a minimum wage and satisfactory employment conditions have been met, that the worker is “fit” for the prescribed job, the emigrant will be working for the same employer as promised and that a female under the age of 30 is not travelling to ECR countries all in order to attain emigration clearance.⁶⁷⁹ Of course, we know that some of these conditions are quite meaningless since minimum wages are not provided (at least not in the UAE) and even when certain stipulations are included for emigration clearance, such as sufficient working conditions (though India does not address what that may be), there is no guarantee that they will be met by the employer upon arrival. Emigration clearance for any other country besides the seventeen mentioned for employment is not required.

Emigration Clearance Requirement Suspended (ECRS), as noted by the 1983 Emigration Act, includes all categories of people that travel abroad for any reason other than for work, this includes tourists, pilgrims and dependents. Emigration Clearance Not Required (ECNR), on the other hand, is more complicated: its origins are unclear and it is not mentioned in the 1983 Emigration Act. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs acknowledges that this category of emigration clearance was informally established

⁶⁷⁸ Countries with Emigration Clearance Required include Afghanistan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kuwait, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Emigration to Iraq is currently banned unless authorized by the Indian Embassy in Baghdad. “ECR Countries,” accessed June 10, 2011, <http://www.immihelp.com/nri/ecnr-emmigration-check-not-required-stamp.html>

⁶⁷⁹ Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, <http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?id1=100&id=m6&idp=100&mainid=73> (retrieved on June 10, 2011).

“with a view to *facilitating* the movement of ... workers.”⁶⁸⁰ Indeed, the ECNR category did implicitly exist: any country that was not part of the 17 countries that required emigration clearance, did not require clearance. However, *overtime* the ECNR category expanded its list of people that did not need clearance in order to *facilitate* emigration even further.

Some short time after the Emigration Act was introduced in 1983, people applying to go abroad for work, either through recruiting agencies or directly with the employer, were suddenly allowed to fall under the ECNR category.⁶⁸¹ Today, the eligibility of people that are included in the ECNR category is wide. In fact, it includes 13 different “types” of emigrants. Although the evolution of the ECNR category remains unclear, people wishing to emigrate to the 17 ECR countries is made easier by the following key elements: if one is an income-tax payer, holds a professional degree, those possessing vocational diplomas, people having educational matriculation and above⁶⁸², nurses, spouses and dependent children and anyone over the age of 50.⁶⁸³ Essentially, the emigration door is open to educated and middle class citizens. Emigration from Kerala to Dubai (at least *legal* emigration) does not include the poor or even the poorest of the poor: one needs financial and educational capital. As a result, the volume of emigrants under ECNR increased significantly since the mid 1980s.⁶⁸⁴

We also know that immediately after the 1983 Emigration Act was legislated,

⁶⁸⁰ Emphasis is my own. Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, “Pre Departure Information Manual For Workers on Temporary Contractual Employment to the United Arab Emirates (UAE),” 2. http://moia.gov.in/writereaddata/pdf/pr_dep_uae.pdf (retrieved on June 11, 2011).

⁶⁸¹ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 274.

⁶⁸² According to Rediff, people who completed class 12 from school were eligible for ECNR as of 2004. “Indians with class XII eligible for ECNR,” *Rediff*, June 12, 2004, accessed June 11, 2011, <http://in.rediff.com/news/2004/jun/11/passport.htm>

⁶⁸³ Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

<http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?ID1=109&id=m6&idp=104&mainid=73> (retrieved on June 11, 2011).

⁶⁸⁴ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 274.

there was an increase in the volume of emigrants that left India with an emigration clearance requirement *suspended* (Table 2).⁶⁸⁵ This occurred for two reasons. The first includes my own suspicion while the other is based on fact. As we remember, the ECNR category under the 1983 Emigration Act did not exist; only ECR and ECRS. Therefore, emigrants left for work abroad under the latter category in order to facilitate travel. Nair asserts that recruiting agents encouraged people to travel for work to the Middle East as tourists, dependents and pilgrims under ECRS as it was easier to arrange legal papers.⁶⁸⁶ Thus, the number of *suspensions* granted by the Protector of Emigrants also increased.

Due to the expansion of the ECNR and the ECRS categories, emigration from Kerala grew rapidly, particularly during the mid to late 1980s.⁶⁸⁷ And, although the Protector of Emigrants and recruiting agents are not willing to comment on this element, Nair suggests “an indirect indication of the growth in the volume of emigration is given by the number of passports issued in Kerala”⁶⁸⁸ (Table 3). Perhaps the gravest consequence of the ECNR category results in the fact that we only have partial coverage of labour outflows from India due to clearance exemption.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ Zachariah et al., “Gulf Migration Study,” 17.

Table 2: Emigration clearances and suspensions of emigration clearance requirement 1988-94⁶⁹⁰

	Emigration clearance to Middle East ('000)	Suspension of Emigration clearance requirement ('000)
1988	170	352
1989	126	276
1990	142	251
1991	192	237
1992	417	195
1993	438	153
1994	366	128

Note: emigration clearance figures include ECNR from 4 October 1991.
Source: Government of India, Ministry of Labour, 1995.

Table 3: Number of passports issued from the passport offices in Kerala, 1985/6-1993/4⁶⁹¹

	Passport applicants received	Passports issued
1985-6	153,608	165,239
1986-7	127,710	129,639
1987-8	170,795	149,078
1988-9	260,423	207,681
1989-90	286,205	317,398
1990-1	225,513	238,862
1991-2	567,807	275,761
1992-3	N/A	N/A
1993-4	441,249	593,069

Note: the excess of passports issued over applications received is due to clearance of pending applications of the previous year.
Source: Government of Kerala, 1995.

⁶⁹⁰ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 259.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 275.

With respect to the number of Indians granted emigration clearances, we have data by major emigrant states from 1984-2005 (Table 4) and data regarding the number of Indian workers granted emigration clearance by destination for the years between 1990-8 (Table 7). We notice in Table 4 that the number of emigration clearances granted for Indians increased from 206,000 in 1984 to 548,853 in 2005. On a number of occasions, those figures either decreased slightly or took a major hit – only to rebound with more force the following year. For example, between 1984-1986, we notice a steady decline in the number of emigration clearance granted by the Indian government and once again in 1989. However, between 1991-2, there was more than a 100 percent increase in the amount of clearances granted (most likely a result of returned migrants returning to the Gulf after the Iraq-Kuwait war), and remained stable until the mid 1990s. However, the number of emigration clearances declined drastically from 416,424 in 1997 to 199,552 in 1999 (largely due to “Emiratization” policies which will be explored in the next chapter). By the beginning of the new millennium, emigration clearances increased each year, resulting to over half a million in 2005.

When we look at the number of emigration clearances granted per state, we also witness an interesting dynamic. First, there was more emigration clearances granted to Keralites than to any other state, except in 2004 by Tamil Nadu. From 1993-6, the number of emigration clearances from Kerala remained stable in the mid one hundred thousand level but began to slightly decrease by 1997, ultimately spiraling by almost 60 percent by 1998 due to “Emiratization”. The trend continued until 2005 when emigration clearances were almost at 1993 levels. Interestingly, emigration clearances from Kerala jumped by more than 100 percent between 2004-5 (from 63,512 to 125,075). Table 5

shows us the distribution of emigrants by major country of destination. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been the traditional migrant receiving countries: the former remained the top migrant receiving country from 1990 to 1997, only to be upstaged by the latter in 1998 (134,740 migrants versus 105,239).

We can make three distinct conclusions based on the 1983 Indian Emigration Act and with respect to the ECR, ECNR and ECRS categories. First, India does not control the emigration of its highly skilled workers while unskilled emigration is “controlled only to the extent that they fall under the purview of the Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) category.”⁶⁹² Whereas the Indian government has rules and regulations regarding entry, citizenship and preventing foreigners into the country which are documented in the Constitution, the 1955 Citizenship Act and 1967 Passport Act, the Indian government does not have a comprehensive policy for unskilled or skilled emigration for employment: a systematic legal framework is absent.⁶⁹³ Finally, we can determine that India’s role is that of facilitator: to find work for the maximum number of citizens – a significant development concern whether for domestic or international employment.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹² Khadria, “India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf,” 102.

⁶⁹³ Ibid., 101.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

Table 4: Indian workers granted emigration clearance (1984-1992)⁶⁹⁵ and by major Indian states (1993-2005)⁶⁹⁶

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
India	206,000	163,000	114,000	125,000	170,000	126,000	144,000	202,000	417,000

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Kerala	155,208	154,407	165,629	167,325	156,102	91,720	60,445	69,630	61,548	81,950	92,044	63,512	125,075
Tamil Nadu	70,313	70,525	65,737	64,991	63,672	69,793	47,402	63,878	61,649	79,165	89,464	108,964	117,050
A. Pradesh	35,578	34,508	30,284	29,995	38,278	30,599	18,983	29,999	37,331	38,417	65,971	72,580	48,498
Maharashtra	35,248	32,178	26,312	25,214	25,146	24,657	9,871	13,346	22,713	25,477	29,350	28,670	29,289
Karnataka	34,380	32,266	33,496	33,761	40,396	11,535	5,287	10,927	10,095	14,061	22,641	19,237	75,384
Rajasthan	25,243	27,418	28,374	18,221	28,242	19,824	9,809	10,170	14,993	23,254	37,693	35,108	21,899
Punjab	14,212	12,445	11,852	11,751	12,414	26,876	15,167	10,025	12,422	19,638	24,963	25,302	24,088
Others	68,156	61,638	53,650	62,956	52,174	80,160	32,588	35,207	57,913	85,701	104,330	121,587	107,570
Total	438,338	425,385	415,334	414,214	416,424	355,164	199,552	243,182	278,664	367,663	466,456	474,960	548,853

Source: Binod Khandria. Various Annual Reports of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, as cited in Rajan (2003, ESCAP) for data till 1999; GOI, MOIA, *Annual Reports* 2004-5, 2005-6, for 2000-05.

Note: The figures in blue represent sharp increases in the number of emigration clearances granted.

⁶⁹⁵ Zachariah et al., "Gulf Migration Study," 18.

⁶⁹⁶ Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 95.

Table 5: Number of Workers Granted Emigration Clearance by Destination (1990-8)⁶⁹⁷

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Bahrain	6,782	8,640	16,458	15,622	13,806	11,235	16,647	17,944	16,997
Kuwait	10,77	7,044	19,782	26,981	24,324	144,39	14,580	13,170	22,462
Oman	34,267	22,333	40,900	29,056	25,142	22,338	30,113	29,994	20,774
S. Arabia	79,473	130,928	265,180	269,639	265,875	256,782	214,068	214,420	105,239
UAE	11,962	15,446	60,493	77,066	75,762	79,674	112,644	110,945	134,740
Singapore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,298
Others	10,004	13,508	13,971	19,978	20,476	30,866	26,162	29,951	33,654
Total	143,565	197,889	416,784	438,338	425,385	415,334	414,214	416,424	355,164

Note: Blue indicates a large increase in the number of emigration clearances.

Purple shows us that more Indians migrated to the UAE for work than any other country for the first time in 1998.

⁶⁹⁷ Zachariah et al., "Gulf Migration Study," 20.

Following the 1983 Emigration Act and the subsequent expansion of the emigration clearance categories, the next important event that posed consequence to Indian emigration was the 1990-1 Iraq-Kuwait War. Before the war, it is estimated that there were 1,016,000 Indian migrants in the Gulf in 1987 (Table 6)⁶⁹⁸ and over 1.3 million Indians were in the UAE in 1990 (Table 7). We also notice in Table 8 that between 1991-2 (after the Gulf War), the number of annual flows of Indian workers to the Middle East increased by a large proportion. Kuwaiti levels increased by 280 percent, Saudi Arabia witnessed a 200 percent rise while UAE levels surged by almost 400 percent! In total, the annual outflow of Indian workers to the Middle East after the Gulf War increased from 190,003 in 1991 to 416,784 by 1992, amounting to a 220 percent rise! Thus, Indian emigration to the Gulf after the war resulted in stronger emigration flows. However, what is also apparent from Table 8 is that the war did not cause a dip in annual emigration flows during that time: emigration flows from 1989-91 remained somewhat stable and even matured.

What was the impact that the Gulf War had with respect to the migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai? First, it was during this time that Indian policymakers had awakened “about the vulnerability of its workers in the Gulf, and the importance of their remittances to the economy.”⁶⁹⁹ This was particularly the case for Kerala. Though the war did not directly affect migration between Kerala and Dubai, it did make the Kerala government realize that it did not have a strong policy in place nor ability to reabsorb and rehabilitate returned migrants.

The Gulf War for Kerala was nothing short of a nightmare. Kerala received the

⁶⁹⁸ The exact amount of Indians in the Gulf in 1990 is unknown.

⁶⁹⁹ Khadria, “India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf,” 99.

war with a sense of profound distress because it had the “potentiality of posing fundamental problems.”⁷⁰⁰ Issues of remittances and the reabsorption of migrants were of severe concern. In a matter of five months during the onset of the war in 1990 (between August to December), it is estimated 80,000 Keralites fled Kuwait to return back home and resulted in the first large-scale return migration since the 1970s migration boom.⁷⁰¹ As a result, fear erupted in Kerala that this would add to the already high levels of unemployment, render between 5,000 to 7,000 households destitute, result in unfinished homes, children deprived of their schooling, and incur higher levels of homelessness.⁷⁰² Adverse impacts were also directed towards the banking sector and trade with other states.⁷⁰³ It was considered that a massive scale reabsorption of returned migrants was impossible unless the Kerala’s economy rapidly grew and designed certain interventions to make use of its new labour and capital.⁷⁰⁴ However, we know by our analysis of Kerala’s economy in the beginning of this chapter that its economic performance did not improve.

Fortunately for the Kerala government, the Gulf War “quickly” ended and 91 percent of all returned migrants from Kuwait soon left once again to the Gulf for work.⁷⁰⁵ At the same time, the returnees were not too keen on staying in Kerala either: they were convinced that little relief or aid could be expected from the state government “and that

⁷⁰⁰ Saith, 1992, p. 114 quoted in Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 279.

⁷⁰¹ Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects,” 213; Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 279.

⁷⁰² Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 279.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ Saith, 1992, p. 127 quoted in Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 279.

⁷⁰⁵ Government of Kerala, 1994, p. 14 quoted in Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 279.

even special assistance was not only impossible, but unethical in the context of constrained government resources and mounting unemployment.”⁷⁰⁶ Essentially, the impact of the Gulf War on Kerala was exaggerated: none of the nightmarish scenarios materialized in any significant manner. In fact, if there was any impact on consumption levels, land prices, remittance flows (estimated loss was between 1 to 1.5 percent of Kerala’s net domestic product)⁷⁰⁷ and construction activities as Nair points out, they were at best short-lived – the Kerala economy was soon “back on its earlier track.”⁷⁰⁸

Yet, the Gulf crisis did not encourage the Kerala government to ameliorate economic policies with respect to its migrant population abroad (i.e. measures for rehabilitation),⁷⁰⁹ nor did it become more sensitive to migration issues in general: it did not implement a policy to regulate emigration from the state nor does it keep records of the number of emigrants and return migrant abroad.⁷¹⁰ Overall, what we defer from the Gulf War and its relationship with Kerala is that it

underscored the need for a well thought out and clearly defined migration policy covering all phases of the process and providing for the appropriate measures for absorbing shocks created by unforeseen and sudden political developments abroad.⁷¹¹

Therefore, not only has the Gulf War made the Kerala government realize that it was unable to provide for the welfare of returned migrants and for regulating emigration flows, but that it directly shaped, influenced and perpetuated the Kerala-Dubai migration

⁷⁰⁶ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 279.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., 279-80.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., 287-8.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., 287.

stream due to the policy void and of a secure economic sector. As migrants returned home they found that there were certain domestic forces, such as a failing domestic economy and an absence of rehabilitation measures, that put them into motion once again – many thus returned to the Gulf. Therefore, the migration links between Kerala and other destinations, particularly with Dubai, became stronger.

The levels of emigrants in Gulf countries and in the UAE speak for themselves. Table 6 reveals that since 1948, the levels of Indians in the UAE and select Middle Eastern countries have increased over time. For example, there were 1,400 Indians in the UAE in 1948 to more than 2 million in 2010. We can also infer from this table that the UAE has hosted the largest Indian migrant population since 2006 (over 2.12 million to more than 2.18 by 2010). In present times, the number of Indians in the Gulf has soared to 4.8 million - a dramatic rise from 1948 levels! Table 7 reveals that the estimated number of international migrants in the UAE quickly increased in four decades: from just over 2 thousand in 1960 to 3.29 million by 2010. Table 9 indicates that the annual outflow of Indians to the UAE increased each year: 55,099 in 2000 to over 194,000 in 2005. These figures also remained strong for the total outflow: 243,182 in 2000 to 548,853 in 2005.

Our analysis has thus far demonstrated that the governments of India and the UAE generally encouraged international labour migration between Kerala and Dubai by the implementation of certain policy measures. In India's case, we have seen that the government facilitated emigration by rapidly increasing the number of passport offices, suspending the 1922 Emigration Act and enlarging the ECNR and ECRS categories. With respect to the government of Kerala, emigration from the state remains completely

unregulated and policy on the subject remains absent. However, a closer examination on the government of Kerala's attitude toward the emigration of its workers to the UAE and the Gulf in general is important for it provides a more thorough explanation (other than a poor economy) as to why emigration remains strong.

An analysis of Kerala's policy on the migration process, whether it is on the initial movements of labour emigration or return migration, reveals "a series of unfulfilled promises and pronouncements."⁷¹² This included a plan to launch an extensive welfare scheme in 1983 in order to help migrants' households provide for their children's education, settling income tax disputes and reducing the cost of train and air fares; forming an investment company in 1984 to invest remittances into industrial activities; a declaration by the government in 1986 to increase the number of small and medium size industries to provide better employment opportunities for return migrants; and in the latter 1980s, a fund that would finance activities related to the processes of migration (though no specifications were made).⁷¹³ None of these projects materialized.⁷¹⁴ By the early nineties, Kerala stopped making promises for migrant welfare and plans for the utilization of remittances altogether.⁷¹⁵ Kerala clearly neglected the welfare of its emigrant population – even in the wake of the establishment of the Department for Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs (NORKA) in 1996 whose largest achievement was launching "an accident and death insurance scheme for non-resident Keralites."⁷¹⁶

Apart from NORKA's "achievement", Kerala has not secured any other provision

⁷¹² Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 285.

⁷¹³ Ibid., 286.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Nair, "Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects," 223.

for its migrant population. This includes financial assistance, providing pre-migration training so migrants may have some knowledge of what to expect in their place of destination, providing counseling and skill upgrading for returned migrants, effectively streamlining remittances for productive activities, collecting information on the stock of migrants abroad, the number of return migrants, their characteristics, economic status, difficulties they face when working abroad and the amount of remittances it receives and from which countries (for instance, we do not know the amount of remittances Kerala receives from the UAE and what proportion originates from Dubai).⁷¹⁷

We notice that Kerala has traditionally taken a step back when it comes to the concerns and welfare of its migrant population. It is thus fair to argue that the government of Kerala offers nothing short of neglect: there is a complete absence of policy regarding emigration by the government of Kerala.⁷¹⁸ This position is also applied to the central government: the question of even issuing a policy of whether or not to encourage emigration has yet to be addressed by both levels of government - emigration has thus largely occurred in a complete policy void.⁷¹⁹

Conclusion

We have observed that the origins of the migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai has involved numerous dynamics and interactions between both places that motivated people to leave one place for another. We undertook an analysis of the place of origin and destination in detail, as Sassen asks of us, and observed key socio-economic

⁷¹⁷ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 285.

⁷¹⁸ Nair, "Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects," 223.

⁷¹⁹ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 286.

and political developments in the UAE, Dubai, India and Kerala from a historical perspective and within larger economic and political structures in which they reside. We also explored migration policies, as Zolberg asks of us, in order to better understand migration flows between both places. What, therefore, can we conclude of the Kerala-Dubai migration stream from the early 1970s to mid 1990s?

I argue that each economic, sociological, political and historical *development* that this chapter observed in the UAE, Dubai, India and Kerala has formed *links* between the place of origin and destination that, ultimately, motivated a labour migration to occur. This includes the discovery of oil in Dubai and the subsequent construction boom, the high demand for Asian labour (when Arab labour was deemed to be too politically threatening), the relative easy immigration into the UAE for work due to a lack of mobility constraints before 1979, the close historical relationship between the UAE and Kerala (but most notably with its Muslim population), extremely poor economic conditions in Kerala (high unemployment, low per capita income, and failing agricultural, industrial and financial sectors), a realization by the government of Kerala that it was not prepared to reabsorb and to provide rehabilitation for returned migrants as a result of the 1990-1 Gulf War (nor were returned migrants willing to stay in Kerala because of the lack of these measures, thus spurring circular migration), combined with migration policies from the UAE and India that either encouraged or restricted international migration between both places.

From our analysis, we know that traditionally, the government of India always encouraged the emigration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers since 1976, most notably as a result of its suspension of the 1922 Emigration Act. And, when the UAE

government put measures in place to restrict labour immigration, the government of India continuously made emigration easier by enlarging the ECNR and ECRS categories, expanding the number of passport offices and generally taking a laissez-faire attitude towards the grievances of its emigrant population in the Gulf. While the governments of India and Kerala offered no official position, aims or attitudes towards emigration, Kerala to a larger extent, displayed more signs of neglect towards its emigrant population than India - no measures were put in place to provide for the welfare of returned migrants or to ameliorate the state's economy so as to encourage potential emigrants to stay. Consequently, Dubai appeared to be an attractive option. And, as we have seen, migration flows between India and Kerala to the UAE and Dubai have consistently increased since the construction boom until present day.

The governments of India and Kerala thus encouraged and facilitated labour emigration from the early 1970s to mid 1990s while the UAE went from encouraging labour migration to slowly discouraging it by 1979. And, in the absence of any emigration policy on behalf of the Indian and Kerala governments or display of interest towards its emigrant population, it is not out of reason to conclude that both governments facilitated the trafficking of their own people.

The next chapter continues with our chronological order of events that impacted international labour migration from Kerala to Dubai, namely with the UAE's 1996 "Emiratization" policy and how India and Kerala responded throughout the latter nineties and during the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Table 6: Stock of Indian Migrant Population in the Gulf Countries (1948-2010)⁷²⁰

	1948	1970	1975	1979	1983	1987	1991	2001	2006	2010
S. Arabia	-	-	34,500	100,000	270,000	380,000	600,000	1,500,000	1,261,505	1,452,927
UAE	1,400	40,000	107,500	152,000	250,000	225,000	400,000	950,000	2,171,421	2,185,919
Oman	-	-	38,500	60,000	100,000	184,000	220,000	312,000	314,227	447,824
Kuwait	-	-	32,105	65,000	115,000	100,000	88,000	295,000	330,225	393,210
Qatar	-	-	27,800	30,000	40,000	50,000	75,000	131,000	-	250,649
Bahrain	-	-	17,250	26,000	30,000	77,000	100,000	130,000	156,816	137,402
Total	1,400 (min.)	40,000 (min.)	257,655	433,000	805,000	1,016,000	1,483,000	3,318,000	4,234,194 (min.)	4,867,931

Table 7: Estimated number of International Migrants in UAE, 1960-2010⁷²¹

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
International Migrants (estimated)	2,194	25,981	65,827	312,400	718,479	1,007,837	1,330,324	1,715,980	2,286,174	2,863,027	3,293,264

⁷²⁰ Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 90-1; The 2006 figures are compiled by the University of Sussex and the World Bank, "Bilateral Estimates of Migrant Stocks," last accessed April 3, 2012, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/.../T1EstimatesMigrantStocks.xls>; The 2010 figures are compiled by the University of Sussex and the World Bank, "Bilateral Estimates of Migrant Stocks in 2010," last accessed April 3, 2012, <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:22803131~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:476883,00.html>

⁷²¹ Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, "World Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision," accessed November 12, 2008, <http://esa.un.org/migration/p2k0data.asp>; Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, "World Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision," accessed June 19, 2011, <http://esa.un.org/migration/p2k0data.asp>; UNDESA, 209a in Shah. "Building State Capacities for Managing Contract Worker Mobility: The Asia-GCC Context," 5.

Table 8: Annual outflow of Indian migrants to the Middle East, 1982-1994⁷²²

	1982	1985	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Bahrain	17,069	11,246	8,219	8,520	6,782	8,630	16,548	15,622	10,988
Iraq	35,268	5,855	4,282	5,085	1,650	26	-	-	-
Kuwait	9,764	5,512	9,653	5,679	1,077	7,044	19,782	26,981	20,638
Libya	10,433	2,449	593	632	305	475	-	-	-
Oman	39,792	37,806	18,696	16,574	34,267	22,333	40,900	29,056	21,910
Saudi Arabia	78,297	68,938	85,289	49,710	79,473	130,928	265,180	269,639	235,725
UAE	19,277	21,286	34,029	28,189	11,962	15,446	60,493	77,066	62,227
Others	29,645	9,943	9,348	11,786	6,300	7,121	13,971	19,974	14,937
Total	239,545	163,035	170,019	126,175	141,816	190,003	416,784	438,338	366,425

Note: includes ECNR endorsements from 4 October 1991.

Source: Emigration Division, Ministry of Labour.

Table 9: Annual outflow of Indian migrants to the Middle East and other countries, 2000-2005⁷²³

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
UAE	55,099	53,673	95,034	143,804	175,262	194,412
S. Arabia	58,722	78,048	99,453	121,431	123,522	99,879
Kuwait	31,082	39,751	4,859	54,434	52,064	39,124
Oman	15,155	30,085	41,209	36,816	33,275	40,931
Bahrain	15,909	16,382	20,807	24,778	22,980	30,060
Qatar	n/a	13,829	12,596	14,251	16,325	50,222
Jordan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,576	1,851
Malaysia	4,615	6,131	10,512	26,898	31,464	71,041
Others	62,600	39,865	83,193	44,044	17,492	21,333
Total	243,182	278,664	367,663	466,456	474,960	548,853

Source: compiled from GOI, MOIA, *Annual Reports* 2004-5, 2005-6, and *Overseas Indian*, vol. 1, no. 4, April 2006, p.2, New Delhi.

⁷²² Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 258.

⁷²³ Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 94.

Table 10: Commercial bank deposits in Kerala, 1994-7 (Rs million)⁷²⁴

	Total deposits	Of which are non-resident external (NRE) deposits	NRE deposits as proportion of total deposits
March 1994	149,410	60,146	40.3
March 1995	174,579	68,776	39.4
March 1996	201,713	81,034	40.2
March 1997	233,536	101,781	43.6
September 1997	244,984	109,700	44.8

Source: Canara Bank (1997)

⁷²⁴ Nair, "Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects," 239.

Chapter 5

‘Emiratization’ and Kerala’s and India’s Responses: Mid 1990s to Present

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the evolution of the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship starting from the 1995-6 period to the 2008 global financial crisis. It argues that international labour migration between these two places altered from one that was once encouraged and reinforced by all parties involved (as illustrated in the previous chapter), to one that was strongly discouraged by the government of the UAE through its policy of ‘Emiratization’. It argues that India, in response, continued to reinforce its migration relationship with Dubai, while Kerala continued to pursue its policy of ‘non-intervention’.

The *changed* migration relationship was reflected in key historical, economic and political developments in Kerala, India, Dubai and the UAE since the mid-1990s and in the UAE’s ‘Emiratization’ policy, its effects on labour migration to Dubai from Kerala, and the responses of the governments of Kerala and India. Whereas the previous chapter studied the *linkages* that bounded or encouraged Keralite migrants to Dubai, this chapter explores how the UAE tried to *delink* the migration relationship and how India (and to some extent Kerala), tried to strengthen them once again.

‘Emiratization’: The changed migration relationship

The previous chapter detailed the bleak Keralite economy, how Keralites were more prone to migrate than from other Indian states, the effects of oil discovery in Dubai

(mostly as a means for high foreign exchange earnings and for the city's subsequent economic development), the shift from Arab labour in the UAE to a reliance on Asian labour imports (mostly from India and Pakistan), and a discussion on the Indian, Keralite and Emirati migration policies that were designed to promote migration.

At the same time, I also showed how Indian migrants in the UAE and Keralites in Dubai from 1948 to 1995 increased overtime with few minor dips. For example, from the first half of the 1990s, particularly after the Gulf War, we noticed a surge in the number of emigration clearances granted by the Indian government from just over 200,000 in 1991 to 417,000 by the following year which remained more or less the same until the mid 1990s (Table 1). This chapter explores how emigration clearances granted by the Indian government thereafter dropped markedly by 14.66% in 1998 and further decreased by 43.94% by 1999 (Table 1). The aim here is to describe what happened.

Two very monumental occurrences during the latter half of the 1990s affected labour flows: the first was economic, the second, political. The UAE suffered from a fairly severe recession, with GDP growth slouching from 11% in 1996 to only 1.2% in 1997.⁷²⁵ This decline particularly affected construction, real estate and crude oil production, all of which experienced negative growth between 1996-7 of 3 to 6 percent.⁷²⁶ As a result, government agencies and departments “found it difficult to honour payments relating to major infrastructure and housing projects,”⁷²⁷ numerous businesses collapsed and there was a slump in the demand for apartment buildings and commercial

⁷²⁵ Zachariah et al., “Kerala Migration Survey 2007,” 36.

⁷²⁶ Ibid., 36-7.

⁷²⁷ Zachariah et al., “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates,” 163.

complexes.⁷²⁸ One particularly disturbing aspect of the recession was the large-scale forced return migration of 60,000 Indian workers from the UAE in the latter half of 1996, of which almost 70% (40,000) were from Kerala.⁷²⁹ While, Zachariah et al. suggest that the recession is the fundamental reason for the large decline in employment, and the return of large number of emigrant workers,⁷³⁰ I argue that the matter was considerably more complex.

This thesis argues that in the late 1990s, the UAE succumbed to what Sassen calls a “crisis mentality”⁷³¹ in terms of controlling immigration and one that also echoed common stereotypes and misperceptions of its expatriate population that has, in fact, historically plagued nearly every labour-importing country: racialization, xenophobia, discrimination and “rapid fluctuations from periods of acute demand for foreign workers to mass unemployment blamed on these same workers,”⁷³² which can ultimately result in expulsions. Sassen argues that ‘crisis mentality’ was particularly common to Europe in the past three centuries, now typically associated with US immigration.⁷³³ While the US, for example, is largely concerned with the “quality of immigrants,” modern France, on the other hand, remains uneasy of an apparent “cultural distance” between Africans, Muslims and an understanding of what is “French.”⁷³⁴ Both instances clearly show that the “racialization of immigration populations is a common condition.”⁷³⁵

Why did these attitudes of ‘crisis mentality’ come to fruition in the latter 1990s for

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

⁷²⁹ Prakash, “Gulf Migration and Its Economic Impact: The Kerala Experience,” 3209-3213, 3210.

⁷³⁰ Zachariah et al., “Kerala Migration Survey 2007,” 36.

⁷³¹ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, xiii.

⁷³² Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, xiii. Also stressed in Abbas Al Lawati and Wafa Issa, “Finding jobs for UAE nationals,” *Gulf News*, May 3, 2009, last accessed April 3, 2012,

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/employment/finding-jobs-for-uae-nationals-1.154106>

⁷³³ Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, xiii.

⁷³⁴ Ibid., xvi.

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

the UAE? This was due to the fact that the steady increase of foreign workers in the UAE and their proportion to the total population created great concern and anxiety over the erosion of its national culture.⁷³⁶ Consequently, (but not surprisingly), the government in 1996 issued an immigration policy that was based on the notion of demographic imbalance: commonly referred to as “Emiratization” (also known as “Arabization”) which was designed to systematically curtail the volume of its foreign migrant population and to make entry for work more difficult through a series of measures.⁷³⁷ More specifically, the principle objective of “Emiratization” was to do two things: increase the number of nationals in all types of employment (but particularly in the less-skilled category)⁷³⁸ and to reduce the rate of unemployment among nationals.⁷³⁹ Therefore, the government seeks to *emiritize* the workforce by reducing its dependency on foreign workers and to replace them with nationals. How did the UAE try to achieve this? By imposing employee quotas for nationals, tightening visa requirements and increasing fees.⁷⁴⁰

For all the ‘crisis mentality’ that oozed from the UAE’s pores, “Emiratization” was no small task to accomplish. I say this only because more than 80 percent of Dubai’s population is migrant,⁷⁴¹ of which 90% work in the private sector.⁷⁴² With this said, “Emiratization” was to take form in all sectors of the workforce: unskilled, semi-skilled

⁷³⁶ Zachariah, Prakash and Rajan, “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates,” p. 163-4; Anonymous, “Labour rations,” *The Economist*, Sept 2, 2008, http://www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=12039777 (retrieved on October 6, 2008).

⁷³⁷ Zachariah et al., “Kerala Migration Survey 2007,” 43.

⁷³⁸ Anonymous, “Labour rations.”

⁷³⁹ Zachariah et al., “Kerala Migration Survey 2007,” 45.

⁷⁴⁰ Vaishnavi C. Sekhar, “Migration to Gulf at Record High.” *The Times of India*, April 16, 2006, last accessed April 3, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2006-04-16/india/27829979_1_indian-workers-migration-recruitment-agents

⁷⁴¹ Sekhar, “Migration to Gulf at Record High.”

⁷⁴² Anonymous. “Labour rations.”

and skilled professions. However, unskilled (and low-wage) workers were met with more stringent conditions for entry than of those at the higher end of the labour spectrum.⁷⁴³

In general, efforts were made by the public and private sectors to transform the ethnic composition of workplaces, such as the Emirates Telecommunication Corporation (the only company that I am aware of) that has, as of 2000, “emiratized” 50 percent of its workforce.⁷⁴⁴ Whether more unskilled and semi-skilled foreigners were ‘removed’ from this corporation than skilled migrants is unknown. However, we do know that the UAE government took certain measures to encourage nationals to take top semi-skilled jobs (ie. technical and administrative) and in the private industry by ensuring and providing the same benefits that government workers enjoy (ie. pension, disability and retirement).⁷⁴⁵ At the same time, and as part of the effort to not only encourage nationals to take on semi-skilled jobs, but they also encouraged them to take skilled jobs by sending students overseas for higher studies and to have them return to work.⁷⁴⁶ Although the threat of migrant skilled workers losing their jobs was unclear during the onset of “Emiratization”, it definitely took keen interest in 2008 when the UAE government was considering ceasing the issue of employment visas for doctors, engineers etc. and to fill them with nationals, but the outcome of this is largely unknown due to a lack of data.⁷⁴⁷

For unskilled workers, “Emiratization” involved four important measures. First, in 1999, the UAE government placed a ban on visas for all unskilled workers.⁷⁴⁸ Of course this meant that no unskilled migrant (Asian migrants in this case) was permitted entry

⁷⁴³ Zachariah et al., “Gulf Migration Study,” 18.

⁷⁴⁴ Zachariah et al., “The Impact of Immigration Policy on Indian Contract Migrants: The Case of the United Arab Emirates,” 170.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ Zachariah et al., “Gulf Migration Study,” 45.

since that year. However, the government lifted the ban by 2002⁷⁴⁹, most likely realizing that economic growth and diversification, particularly in Dubai, is not achievable without migrant workers particularly after September 11, 2001 when billions of dollars were pulled (particularly by the Saudis) from the US economy and invested in Dubai (more on this later). Secondly, from 1999 the UAE government decided not to allow private sector employees aged 60 or above to enter for work, though certain professionals such as doctors, economists, financial experts, accountants, teachers, legal advisors and even professional coaches were exempted.⁷⁵⁰ The third move was to only allow unskilled workers with a minimum of a high school certificate (this explains why many migrants from Kerala are educated), and the final measure to “emiratize” the unskilled workforce was to make unskilled workers more expensive for hire by increasing the cost of work visas for employers.⁷⁵¹ The logic behind this plan was that so long as there existed a large pool of unskilled labour in the world (and available at low wages), the private sector would be less willing to invest in modern technologies.⁷⁵² Therefore, in conjunction with the UAE’s ban on visas for unskilled workers, the point was to have the private sector experience a shortage of such labour in order for it to invest in labour saving technology.⁷⁵³ Not only this, but the UAE government also increased the cost of work visas that employers were required by law to pay for unskilled workers to USD 817, a large figure by any measure, particularly for the Dubai construction industry which hires thousands of expatriates each year.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., 18, 46.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁵² Ibid.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid. 47.

What is the significance of all of this in the migration landscape between Kerala and Dubai? First, it is important to realize that “Emiratization” was the first major systemic effort by the UAE government to push migrants from its borders since 1979. Secondly, it posed a unique dynamic regarding Dubai’s economic reality (that is, can it feasibly grow at the rapid rate that Sheikh Mohammed would like to without migrant labour?). Not only this, but the threat that “Emiratization” posed for countries of origin, like India, meant that the migration relationship between them would not be what it once was, in one fashion or the other. The doors were fast closing and migration levels were certainly going to be affected. How India and Kerala responded to “Emiratization” will soon be explored, but the task now is to examine “Emiratization’s” effectiveness in achieving its goals.

Even through all of these measures, “Emiratization” had not been successful, at least not in the lower end of the labour market. The best way to demonstrate this is to show the flow of Indian migrants to the UAE from 1996 *in numbers*. Since there is no accurate data on the total number of foreigners in the UAE⁷⁵⁵ nor of the number of Indians and Keralites in the UAE and Dubai respectively, I must rely on the number of emigration clearances that was granted by the Indian government for work in the Emirates. Granted, emigration clearances only paint a portion of the migration landscape and we cannot assume that all who are granted emigration clearance actually go.

Therefore, what was the effect of ‘Emiratization’ on Indian emigration levels? To fully appreciate the migration dynamic between Kerala, India and Dubai since 1996, the following attempts to do three things: trace emigration levels from Kerala and from the Indian state in general through an analysis of emigration clearance data, and to study the

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., 39.

number of Indian workers granted emigration clearance by destination, but particularly to the UAE and Dubai. To begin, I recycle two tables that were included in the previous chapter in order to make my point here.

Based on data from Table 1, I divide annual labour outflows from India between 1984-2005 into four phases. During the first phase between 1984 to 1991, we notice that emigration levels were somewhat volatile: the annual volume of emigrants were never constant - each year experienced a drastic increase or decline in numbers from as high as 206,000 in 1984 to as low as 114,000 in 1986. However, unique to this period was that levels of emigration begin and end at almost the same level: 206,000 in 1984 and 202,000 in 1991, averaging 156,000. The second phase covers the period between 1992-1997 when emigration levels reached, for the first time since the oil boom, in the low 400,000 range. Not only this, but annual outflows of workers doubled since the first phase (!), which began immediately after the Gulf War: from 202,000 in 1991 to an astounding 417,000 by the following year. However, the years between 1998 to 2000 witnessed a heavy slump in annual emigration levels, which characterizes the third phase. Figures for 1998 decreased by more than 60,000 emigrants since the previous year (355,164), and then down to 199,552 by 1999 – a 100% drop in two years! The fourth phase, from 2000-2005, witnessed a revival in annual emigration outflows: from 243,182 to an incredible 548,853 in matter of five years!

Table 1: Indian workers granted emigration clearance (1984-1992)⁷⁵⁶ and by major Indian states (1993-2005)⁷⁵⁷

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
India	206,000	163,000	114,000	125,000	170,000	126,000	144,000	202,000	417,000

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Kerala	155,208	154,407	165,629	167,325	156,102	91,720	60,445	69,630	61,548	81,950	92,044	63,512	125,075
Tamil Nadu	70,313	70,525	65,737	64,991	63,672	69,793	47,402	63,878	61,649	79,165	89,464	108,964	117,050
A. Pradesh	35,578	34,508	30,284	29,995	38,278	30,599	18,983	29,999	37,331	38,417	65,971	72,580	48,498
Maharashtra	35,248	32,178	26,312	25,214	25,146	24,657	9,871	13,346	22,713	25,477	29,350	28,670	29,289
Karnataka	34,380	32,266	33,496	33,761	40,396	11,535	5,287	10,927	10,095	14,061	22,641	19,237	75,384
Rajasthan	25,243	27,418	28,374	18,221	28,242	19,824	9,809	10,170	14,993	23,254	37,693	35,108	21,899
Punjab	14,212	12,445	11,852	11,751	12,414	26,876	15,167	10,025	12,422	19,638	24,963	25,302	24,088
Others	68,156	61,638	53,650	62,956	52,174	80,160	32,588	35,207	57,913	85,701	104,330	121,587	107,570
Total	438,338	425,385	415,334	414,214	416,424	355,164	199,552	243,182	278,664	367,663	466,456	474,960	548,853

Source: Binod Khandria. Various Annual Reports of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, as cited in Rajan (2003, ESCAP) for data till 1999; GOI, MOIA, *Annual Reports* 2004-5, 2005-6, for 2000-05.

Note: The figures in blue represent sharp increases in the number of emigration clearances granted.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁵⁷ Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 95.

Table 2: Number of Workers Granted Emigration Clearance by Destination (1990-8)⁷⁵⁸

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Bahrain	6,782	8,640	16,458	15,622	13,806	11,235	16,647	17,944	16,997
Kuwait	10,77	7,044	19,782	26,981	24,324	144,39	14,580	13,170	22,462
Oman	34,267	22,333	40,900	29,056	25,142	22,338	30,113	29,994	20,774
S. Arabia	79,473	130,928	265,180	269,639	265,875	256,782	214,068	214,420	105,239
UAE	11,962	15,446	60,493	77,066	75,762	79,674	112,644	110,945	134,740
Singapore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21,298
Others	10,004	13,508	13,971	19,978	20,476	30,866	26,162	29,951	33,654
Total	143,565	197,889	416,784	438,338	425,385	415,334	414,214	416,424	355,164

Legend: Blue indicates a large increase in the number of emigration clearances.

Purple shows us that more Indians migrated to the UAE for work than any other country for the first time in 1998.

⁷⁵⁸ Zachariah et al., "Gulf Migration Study," 20.

Now, when we look at emigration levels from India during the onset of “Emiratization” that is, from 1996, we notice that total flows slightly increased between 1996-7 from 414,334 to 416,424, but then plummeted to 199,552 by 1999. In hindsight, one could assume that “Emiratization” did, indeed, succeed in refraining people from entering, after all, emigration levels from India did drastically decrease. However, this is a mirage. I know turn your focus to Table 2 which outlines the number of workers granted emigration clearance from India by place of destination. A couple of interesting conclusions emerge from it. From 1990-8, emigration clearances granted for the UAE rose year after year going from only 11,962 in 1991 to over 134,000 in 1998, amounting to more than an 1100% increase (!) and years between 1991-2 and 1995-6 experienced the largest increases. The second conclusion that we can infer is the fact that “Emiratization” did not *decrease* the amount of people entering the UAE for work, but we rather witness an *increase*.

We notice that emigration levels between 1996-7 slightly declined from 112,644 to 110,945 people, only to surge by the following year to just over 134,000. Now, the table also reveals an alarming trend. In 1997, following the UAE’s “Emiratization” policy, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain also imposed more severe restrictions on labour emigration.⁷⁵⁹ The consequence of this shows us that whereas Bahrain lost 1,000 workers in 1998 than the year before, Saudi Arabia lost more than 100,000 emigrants between 1997-8. The question is: where did they go? Although the years between 1997-8 generally saw a decline in the level of Indian labour emigration, we could conclude that where Saudi Arabia lost workers, the UAE compensated for there was a 25,000 increase in labour flows.

⁷⁵⁹ Zachariah et al., “Kerala Migration Survey 2007,” 18.

At the same time, when we look at the level of workers granted emigration clearance to countries for which emigration clearance is required by major Indian states (Table 1) particularly with respect to Kerala since “Emiratization”, we notice a resiliency in numbers. Traditionally, Kerala has always been the largest source of emigrant labour, far surpassing other states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. For example, from 1993-7, annual emigration levels hovered between 150,000 to 160,000 people per annum while other states lagged far behind. However, since 1997 to 2001, emigration levels from Kerala have drastically declined by more than 100% between 1993-9. From 2001-3, Kerala experienced a steady increase in emigration (92,044 in 2003) but it was to plummet once again to just above 60,000 by the following year and as a result, Tamil Nadu claimed status as the top labour exporting state in India. However, this was to change in 2005 when emigration levels from Kerala nearly doubled to 125,075 people - a record high since 1996! The year 2005 also marked the year in which India also sent the largest amount workers abroad to countries for which emigration clearance is required, almost 550,000! Why? What could have contributed to such a surge in emigration flows from Kerala and India?

While the economic reality in Kerala remained unchanged, three other factors accounted for Kerala’s and India’s drastic increase in labour emigration. Clearly, the UAE’s “Emiratization” policy was a monumental attempt to make emigration for work more difficult but, as we saw, emigration levels to the UAE did not decrease since 1996, but those from Kerala and India did. In 1997, in the wake of “Emiratization” the Indian government relaxed its emigration clearance rules once more (since the 1980s as detailed in the previous chapter) to enlarge the emigration clearance not required and emigration

clearance requirement suspended categories in order to facilitate labour mobility.⁷⁶⁰

Countries requiring emigration clearance include certain African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kuwait, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.⁷⁶¹ Emigration to Iraq is currently banned unless authorized by the Indian Embassy in Baghdad.⁷⁶²

Although the government of India did not explain why it decided to take such action, and why in August 2005, the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs stated that the government is not taking any measures to “check the migration of Indian labourers to foreign countries,”⁷⁶³ it is plausible that it had done so to ensure the continual flow of remittances as they were growing each year and thus becoming an important source of foreign exchange (more on this in the following chapter). And, just like during the early 1970s to mid 1990s, Kerala once again had no formal position on “Emiratization”, nor did the state government attempt to formulate a migration policy. However, even with India’s attempt to liberalize emigration rules, national and state-level labour outflows dwindled until 2000 because, ultimately, the UAE would need to grant permission for entry no matter how loose India’s emigration rules were. But, it was not until after 2001 (and with the help of India’s more lax emigration policy) that labour outflows from India and Kerala really began to surge.

⁷⁶⁰ Nair, “Return of Overseas Contract Workers and their Rehabilitation and Development in Kerala (India): A Critical Account of Policies, Performance and Prospects,” 214.

⁷⁶¹ “ECR Countries,” accessed June 10, 2011, <http://www.immihelp.com/nri/ecnr-emmigration-check-not-required-stamp.html>

⁷⁶² Ibid.

⁷⁶³ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, “Unstarred Question No. 1479,” 03/08/05/, accessed July, 2012, <http://meaindia.nic.in/>

The turn of the century

As this thesis has tried to demonstrate, in accordance with Sassen: international migrations exist within larger economic and political structures that set people in motion and which transcend the brute facts of poverty and overpopulation. Here, I describe the events of two economic and geopolitical processes wherein the first was largely responsible for the increase of migration levels to the UAE during the beginning and mid years of the twenty-first century and wherein the second was responsible for maintaining the number of migrants in the UAE during the end of the 2000s: the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US and the 2008 global financial meltdown.

Just as the discovery of oil lifted Dubai out of poverty and into a burgeoning city-state, post 9/11 developments to a large extent lifted Dubai out of the 1996 recession and solidified its status as a global tourist, financial and commercial entrepot. Eerily enough, the catastrophe boosted Dubai's economy and doubled the size and speed of the city's construction frenzy. This was due to the fact that global investment patterns (quite remarkably) were altered to financially benefit Dubai after September 2001 wherein massive volumes of foreign direct investment (FDI) were transferred to the UAE and by extension: Dubai. This development, of course, also came to impact migration flows between Kerala and Dubai.⁷⁶⁴ What happened?

Affected by the mounting Islamophobia in the United States post 9/11, Gulf oil-producing states "no longer considered the United States the safest harbor for their petrodollars."⁷⁶⁵ As a result, it is estimated that fear alone persuaded the Saudis to pull over 300 billion dollars of their trillion-dollar overseas portfolio, a large portion of which

⁷⁶⁴ Davis, "Sand, Fear, and Money in Dubai," 58.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

was speculated of ending up in Dubai's pocketbooks.⁷⁶⁶ This, along with the 2003 Iraq War, generated extraordinary revenues for Dubai's economy as it also became a principle base for American soldiers and for big business, like Cheney's once prized Halliburton oil company.⁷⁶⁷

In simple terms, Dubai's economic growth and diversification into a luxury tourist market (among others), depends on heavy external capital flows (FDI) to fund its colossal projects - it is the city's lifeblood and what keeps it in motion. Davidson and the Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation believe Dubai is the recipient of the bulk of the UAE's FDI: 3 billion in 2007 compared to 2 billion in 2003 and half a billion in 1995.⁷⁶⁸ Yet, there is discrepancy in the figures: if Dubai attracts most of the country's FDI, official data from the World Bank reveals that 14 billion was ploughed into the UAE in 2007, therefore Dubai must have received at least 7 billion – a far way to have come considering that FDI to the UAE was 98 million in 1980.⁷⁶⁹ In fact, for the first time since the oil boom of the 1970s, oil Sheikhs were now investing in the region *en masse*, and no longer at the same level that it once used to in the in the United States.⁷⁷⁰ Together, major investors from Kuwait, Qatar, Iran, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia have been bankrolling Dubai's multi-billion dollar projects, such as Dubailand (the emirates version of Disneyland), while the Saudis pegged a minimum of 7 billion dollars into Dubai's elaborate property developments in 2004 alone (ie. the Palm Islands).⁷⁷¹ Two years later,

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁷ Pratap Chatterjee, "Ports of Profit: Dubai Does Brisk War Business," www.commondreams.org February 25, 2006, last accessed April 3, 2012, <http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0225-29.htm>

⁷⁶⁸ Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*, 135.

⁷⁶⁹ The World Bank, "Foreign Direct Investment, net inflows (BoP, current US\$)" http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD/countries?order=wbapi_data_value_1981%20wbapi_data_value%20wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc&display=default (accessed February 18, 2012).

⁷⁷⁰ Davis, "Sand, Fear, and Money in Dubai," 59.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

in 2006, it was estimated that Dubai's current and future development projects amounted to 100 billion dollars.⁷⁷² And, whereas Dubai's oil revenues in 1980 accounted for more than half of its total GDP, it amounted to less than five percent in 2007.⁷⁷³ This made Dubai's economic growth one of the most rapid at 16 percent per annum.⁷⁷⁴ What did all this mean for international labour migration to Dubai?

Dubai, very simply, realized that "Emiratization" was not compatible with its economic goals: the city needed workers to build the ruling family's dream city. And, as of 2008, there were no signs of any decrease to the construction frenzy in Dubai.⁷⁷⁵ Large investments in infrastructure, tourism, real estate and financial services only suggested that the roughly one million migrant construction workers would only likely increase.⁷⁷⁶ And, once Dubai's structural marvels will be complete, new demand for migrant unskilled and semi-skilled workers will only grow in order to operate and maintain hotels, apartment buildings, offices and the tourist and transport industries since Dubai's nationals are too few and unwilling to take on lower paid and lesser-skilled jobs.⁷⁷⁷ If Dubai is serious about securing a post-oil future, it will only be accomplished on the backs of migrant labour.

Therefore, since 2001 to 2005, we notice in Table 1 an annual increase in the number of international labour migrants from Kerala (61,548 to 125,078) and from India as a whole (278,664 to 548,853). Table 3, in turn, indicates to which countries those

⁷⁷² Adam Nicolson, "Boom Town," *The Guardian*, February 13, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2006/feb/13/unitedarabemirates.travel?INTCMP=SRCH> (last accessed April 3, 2012).

⁷⁷³ Stephen Zacks, "Beyond the Spectacle," www.metropolismag.com, November 21, 2007. <http://www.metropolismag.com/story/20071121/beyond-the-spectacle> (last accessed April 3, 2012).

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁵ Anonymous. "Labour rations."

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

migrants were specifically heading to in the Middle East. For example, we notice the stock of Indian migrants in the UAE have more than doubled in five years: from 950,000 in 2001 to 2.17 million by 2006. Respectively, since it is generally recognized by the Indian Embassy in the UAE, Indian emigration associations and migration scholars like Zachariah, Rajan and Irudaya that Keralites represent at least 50 percent of all Indian emigrants⁷⁷⁸ then, from these figures, we can safely presume without a reasonable doubt that the stock of Keralites from the total Indian population in the UAE must have been in the realm of 475,000 in 2001 and 1.09 million by 2006. In turn, we can safely say that at least half of all Keralites in the UAE are in Dubai due to its overwhelming demand for foreign workers and that it is also well-known that Dubai is a major destination for Keralites and so the number of Keralites in Dubai is likely to be higher than the proportion of Indian migrants as a whole. Therefore, the Keralite migrant population in Dubai must have been a *minimum* of 237,500 in 2001 and a *minimum* of 545,000 in 2006. The figures for 2006 are slightly higher than our calculations presented in the appendix due to discrepancy in the data. Figures for 2010 only marginally increased due to the 2008 financial crisis, which this chapter will soon explore.

However, we also notice a revealing occurrence when we look at Table 3 in conjunction with Table 4: the proportion of Indian emigrants (and thus Keralite emigrants) of total international migrants in the UAE from 1960 to 2010 has escalated over time. Although the years in both tables do not necessarily match up due to a lack of data, they nonetheless retain their value here. From 1970 to 1975, the proportion of Indian migrants in the UAE of total migrants amounted to 61 percent in 1970 and 34 percent in 1975. When we compare 1979 and 1980 levels, we see a further drop: 21

⁷⁷⁸ Zachariah et al., “Kerala Migration Survey 2007,” 43.

percent. However, we see an increase in 2001 when Indian migrants represented 42 percent of all workers in the UAE, climbing to 76 percent by 2006 (by comparing the years 2000-1 and 2005-6 together). Now, what we also come to see here is that from the Indian migrant population in the UAE, Keralites must have accounted for *at least* 21 percent of the total population in 2001 and 38 percent in 2006. These are high figures for any one particular migrant group to hold. Therefore, it is clear that the UAE has historically been a strong country of destination for Keralites and Indians as a whole.

Table 3: Stock of Indian Migrant Population in the Gulf Countries (1948-2010)⁷⁷⁹

	1948	1970	1975	1979	1983	1987	1991	2001	2006	2010
S. Arabia	-	-	34,500	100,000	270,000	380,000	600,000	1,500,000	1,261,505	1,452,927
UAE	1,400	40,000	107,500	152,000	250,000	225,000	400,000	950,000	2,171,421	2,185,919
Oman	-	-	38,500	60,000	100,000	184,000	220,000	312,000	314,227	447,824
Kuwait	-	-	32,105	65,000	115,000	100,000	88,000	295,000	330,225	393,210
Qatar	-	-	27,800	30,000	40,000	50,000	75,000	131,000	-	250,649
Bahrain	-	-	17,250	26,000	30,000	77,000	100,000	130,000	156,816	137,402
Total	1,400 (min.)	40,000 (min.)	257,655	433,000	805,000	1,016,000	1,483,000	3,318,000	4,234,194 (min.)	4,867,931

Table 4: Estimated number of International Migrants in UAE, 1960-2010⁷⁸⁰

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
International Migrants (estimated)	2,194	25,981	65,827	312,400	718,479	1,007,837	1,330,324	1,715,980	2,286,174	2,863,027	3,293,264

⁷⁷⁹ Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 90-1; The 2006 figures are compiled by the University of Sussex and The World Bank, "Bilateral Estimates of Migrant Stocks," last accessed April 3, 2012, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/.../T1EstimatesMigrantStocks.xls>; The 2010 figures are compiled by the University of Sussex and the World Bank, "Bilateral Estimates of Migrant Stocks in 2010," last accessed April 3, 2012, <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:22803131~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:476883,00.html>

⁷⁸⁰ Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, "World Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision," accessed November 12, 2008, <http://esa.un.org/migration/p2k0data.asp>; Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, "World Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision," accessed June 19, 2011, <http://esa.un.org/migration/p2k0data.asp>; UNDESA, 209a quoted in Shah, "Building State Capacities for Managing Contract Worker Mobility: The Asia-GCC Context," 5.

The question now remains: other than further facilitating emigration by relaxing emigration rules in 1997, what else did India and Kerala do to encourage the Dubai-Kerala migration relationship? Concerned for the welfare of its emigrant population in the UAE, the government of India signed a four-year bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Emirati government in December 2006.⁷⁸¹ What it essentially tries to do is two things: weed out illegal recruitment agencies/agents by having the UAE government authenticate labour contracts before any Indian worker is hired⁷⁸² and secondly, to have the UAE government ensure that all labour contracts include the amount of wages the worker is to receive, the duration of contract, conditions of employment and that accommodation and transport facilities are provided by the employer, as defined in Article 5.⁷⁸³ However, even with such provisions, the MoU does not amount to much. This is due to the fact, that under Article 4 all workers will “be given protection under the labour law and regulation in the UAE.”⁷⁸⁴ Now, this may appear fine but, as we saw in the previous chapter, UAE labour law is governed by Federal Law 8, which does not adequately provide for any migrant labour rights nor does it adequately provide for their welfare. Astoundingly, the government of India views the MoU as a good accomplishment.

At the same time, it appears that the UAE’s attitude toward the MoU has since strayed from “taking all necessary steps to safeguard the interests of Indian workers in the

⁷⁸¹ Unfortunately, and like the 1922 Indian Emigration Act, I was unable to unearth more information surrounding the contextual background (historical and political) regarding the MoU, except for a few newspaper articles and documents from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

⁷⁸² Government of India, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, “India to revamp immigration laws,” *Overseas Indian*, July 28, 2006, <http://www.overseasindian.in/2006/jul/news/28gulf3.shtml> (last accessed April 3, 2012).

⁷⁸³ Government of India, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, “Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the Government of India in the field of Manpower,” http://moia.gov.in/pdf/mou_uae.pdf (last accessed April 3, 2012).

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

UAE and to ensure that they get their entitlements”⁷⁸⁵ to being neatly summed up in the country’s 2007 Annual Report when it states that the purpose is to encourage India “to tackle the problems of illegal recruitment agencies and labour abuse among other issues and to regulate the employment of manpower from these countries to the UAE as temporary contractual workers.”⁷⁸⁶ Therefore, the UAE refrains from any responsibility toward its migrant population and moreover, places that responsibility on the Indian government. And, as we also noticed in the previous chapter, migrant abuse remained rampant and the illegal recruitment of workers in India was still prevalent well after the MoU was signed. The MoU, not surprisingly, failed to deliver its promises.

Why, then, did India agree to sign such a meaningless agreement? A possible motivation for the 2006 MoU is due to the fact that both countries were under increasing pressure from the global media, such as the BBC, non-governmental organizations like Human Rights Watch, international organization (especially the UN when the UAE refused to ratify the 2003 UN *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families*), and concerned citizens of the world to (a) in the case of the UAE: end migrant abuse and (b) in India’s case: to not idly watch the continual exploitation of its emigrant population – a late but welcome development. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the Indian and Emirati governments tried to make an (illusory) effort to protect migrant labourers due to mounting external pressure. At the same time, it is also reasonable to believe that India most likely agreed to make the MoU weak in order not to negatively disrupt diplomatic relations with the UAE after all it

⁷⁸⁵ Government of India, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, “India, UAE sign labour welfare pact,” *Overseas Indian*, accessed October 6, 2008, <http://www.overseasindian.in/2006/dec/news/14n2.shtml>

⁷⁸⁶ The United Arab Emirates, The UAE Ministry of Labour, “The Protection of the Rights of Workers in the United Arab Emirates.”

did ban unskilled Indian workers from entering the country from 1999 to 2002. Any sort of disruption would also result in a severe drainage in foreign exchange earnings and remittances – a significant problem since about half of all Indian emigrants travel to the UAE for work, while many originate from Kerala and migrate to Dubai.

The 2008 global financial crash and affect on migration levels

Thus, for the first time in history, the Indian migrant population in the UAE grew by 230 percent in five years (from 2001 to 2006) – the largest increase in history and by extension, so did the Keralite population in Dubai. However, Dubai’s emergence as a world leader in the tourist, commercial and financial markets in the 2000s was soon tested during the wake of the 2008 global recession, proving that it too was not immune to the rubric of global finance. After months of denial, Sheikh Mohammed and his entourage could no longer shake-off Dubai’s economic reality: it had accumulated a debt of at least 80 billion.⁷⁸⁷ While government officials claimed that Dubai’s sovereign wealth of 85 billion would be enough to cover its debt, it was met with much skepticism since international media reported that its funds were either inaccessible or heavily eroded from being tied up in other recession economies, like the US.⁷⁸⁸ Meanwhile, Dubai’s stock markets plummeted, loans dried up, foreign investors cut their losses and ran while, for the first time since the oil boom, cranes stood motionless, construction projects were left incomplete, hotel occupancy rates and real estate prices were slashed while legions of migrant workers were left idle in their camps: the city fell to its knees.⁷⁸⁹ How did all of this affect international labour migration to the region? But more

⁷⁸⁷ Davidson, “Dubai: Foreclosure of a Dream,” 11.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

specifically, how many Keralites emigrated to Dubai during the global recession and how many returned to Kerala from Dubai as a result of the global recession? The brief answer to this is that while labour outflows from Kerala declined from 2008-9, interestingly enough (and against common perceptions), only marginal rates of return migration were recorded.

India, as earlier suggested, does not carry information regarding emigration levels therefore, I once again rely on Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) passports for understanding the volume of people heading to Gulf countries during the recent credit crisis. In 2008, 850,000 Indians migrated to the Gulf for work through ECR passports, which declined to 610,00 people in 2009 – a 39% drop from the previous year (Table 6).⁷⁹⁰ Notably, of the six Gulf countries, emigration levels to the UAE experienced the sharpest downturn between 2008-9 (from 350,000 workers to 130,000) – a 168% decline, outnumbering Bahrain (-82%), Qatar (-79%) and Oman (-19%).⁷⁹¹ On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are the only Gulf states that actually experienced an *increase* in migrant workers from India during the same years. For example, between 2008-9, the former witnessed an 18.7% jump, while the latter saw a gain of 15.5%.⁷⁹²

⁷⁹⁰ S. Irudaya Rajan, “Global Financial Crisis and Kerala Economy: Emigration and Remittances,” Paper submitted to MISA Project-Phase 2, Manila, 6 May 2010, last accessed April 3, 2012, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/58307554/Global-Financial-Crisis-and-Kerala-Economy>

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

Table 5: Outflow of Workers (Numbers) from India to the Gulf, 2009⁷⁹³

Country	2008	2009	Decrease/Increase, 2008-9	Decrease/Increase, 2008-9
			Number	Percent
United Arab Emirates	349827	130302	-219525	-168.47
Saudi Arabia	228406	281110	+52704	18.75
Bahrain	31924	17541	-14383	-82.00
Kuwait	35562	42091	+6529	15.51
Oman	89659	74963	-14696	-19.6
Qatar	82937	46292	-36645	-79.16
Gulf	818315	592299	-226016	-38.16
Others	30286	17973	-12313	-68.51
% in Gulf	96.43	97.05	+0.62	0.64
Total	848601	610272	-238329	-39.05

These events suggest two conclusions: that the recession did not affect Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as much as it did the UAE, specifically in Dubai⁷⁹⁴ and Saudi Arabia reclaimed its status from the UAE in 2009 as the top country in attracting Indian workers⁷⁹⁵ for the first time since 2002.⁷⁹⁶ Therefore, we have noticed a shift in migration patterns to the Gulf. At the same time, how has the global recession changed migration patterns and dynamics among Indian states?

Data analysis for major migrant exporting Indian states reveals that they all experienced a decline in emigration flows between 2008 and 2009 (Table 6).⁷⁹⁷ However, the decline was most severe for Kerala (61,319) of which at least half must have travelled to Dubai (30,660), followed by Tamil Nadu (49,950).⁷⁹⁸ Yet, we notice that Uttar Pradesh

⁷⁹³ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁶ See Table 9 in Chapter 4.

⁷⁹⁷ Rajan, "Global Financial Crisis and Kerala Economy: Emigration and Remittances," 4.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid.

has overtaken both Kerala and Tamil Nadu in sending the highest number of migrant workers to the Gulf, even during a time of crisis.⁷⁹⁹ Therefore, we can infer: the volume of workers travelling to the Gulf since the global financial crisis has decreased from pre-crisis levels; the drop in migration was most pronounced in the UAE since it was most affected by the crash and as a result; the recession altered migration patterns and dynamics among important migrant-sending states within India.⁸⁰⁰

Table 6: Outflow of Workers (Numbers) from States of India, 2009⁸⁰¹

State	2008	2009	Decrease/Increase, 2008-9	Decrease/Increase, 2008-9
			Number	Percent
Andhra Pradesh	97530	69233	28297	-40.87
Karnataka	22413	18565	3848	-20.73
Kerala	180703	119384	61319	-51.36
Maharashtra	24786	19128	5658	-29.58
Punjab	54469	27291	27178	-99.59
Rajasthan	64601	44744	19857	-44.38
Tamil Nadu	128791	78841	49950	-63.36
Uttar Pradesh	139254	125783	13471	-10.71
Others	136054	107303	28751	-26.79
Total	848601	610272	238329	-39.05

Now, since Gulf migrants are workers on contractual basis and are expected to return to the place of origin once their contract ends, return migration is nothing new. The question, therefore, now remains: how many people from Kerala *returned* home from Dubai as a result of the recent global financial crisis? Though the general prediction from global institutions and agencies on migration in India was one of mass exodus from the

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 3.

capital-rich Gulf states, in reality this did not happen.⁸⁰² Although there are no official estimates on the magnitude of returned migrants from the Gulf, this thesis relies on survey data compiled by Zachariah and Rajan from the Centre for Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram, which reveal startling conclusions.

In 2008, the total number of emigrants from Kerala was estimated to be 2.2 million.⁸⁰³ From that figure, an estimated total of 173,000 Kerala emigrants were said to have returned home to Kerala from the Gulf between October 2008 and June 2009.⁸⁰⁴ Therefore, and again due to a lack of more specific data, we can only assume, all other things being equal, from the 173,000 return migrants from the Gulf, a *minimum* of 86,500 must have returned from the UAE alone and, therefore, a *minimum* of half (or 43,250) must have returned from *Dubai* during the global economic crisis. However, the majority of return migration during this time was not recession related. In fact, 21 to 36 percent of all return migrants came back as a result of the recession, that is: 37,000 to as high as 63,000 persons.⁸⁰⁵ Why such relatively small rates of return migration?

In order to understand these figures, we must explore the data in Table 7 that indicates the reasons for return migration of Keralites from the Gulf in 2009. We first notice that the principle reason for return migration was to job loss due to the financial crisis: 21.4 percent or 37,000 people. Yet, if we include to this figure the 3.3 percent of people that came back because of compulsory repatriation, that would increase the number of returned emigrants to 24.7 percent or 43,000 emigrants. At the same time, if

⁸⁰² Ibid., 5.

⁸⁰³ K. C. Zachariah and S. Irudaya Rajan, "Impact of the Global Recession on Migration and Remittances in Kerala: New Evidences from the Return Migration Survey (RMS) 2009," Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Working Paper 432, June 2010: 6. Last accessed April 3, 2012, www.cds.edu/

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

we also include the 11.5 percent of people that returned because of the non-renewal of job contract/expiry of contract to this figure (a common practice in Gulf states), then the total number of Keralites who returned home as a result of the global recession would be 63,000 people or 36.2 percent. Therefore, the total number of emigrants from Kerala that returned due to the recent financial crisis in 2009 fared between 37,000 to 63,000 from a total of 173,000. The remaining 63.8 percent of returned migrants came back because of low wages or they did not receive their promised wages (16.4 percent), poor working conditions (4.6 percent), poor treatment from the employer (1 percent), poor health (8.2 percent), problems at home (10.9 percent), and others (22.7 percent). Therefore, more emigrants returned to Kerala between October 2008 and June 2009 for reasons other than those related to the global recession. Why? What else can account for the fact that less Keralites returned because of the recession than originally predicted?

Two very important dimensions of Gulf migration from Kerala (and India) are responsible for this outcome.⁸⁰⁶ The first results from financial expenses incurred in the migration process along with “certain peculiarities associated with it.”⁸⁰⁷ For example, the cost of migration to the Gulf in 2008 from Kerala was extremely high: from USD 1199 in order to work in Kuwait to as high as USD 1658 for Saudi Arabia (Table 8).⁸⁰⁸ Consequently, as an effort to cover expenses, prospective migrants resort to selling assets and borrow from family members, friends, banks and moneylenders.⁸⁰⁹ Therefore, the theory is that emigrants that lost their jobs in the Gulf states during the financial crisis

⁸⁰⁶ Rajan, “Global Financial Crisis and Kerala Economy: Emigration and Remittances,” 6.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., 7.

and whom are still in debt would not return “for fear of defaulting on their loans.”⁸¹⁰

Instead, they would prefer to stay and accept any other job, even at lower pay, “and continue to send remittances to repay their debts.”⁸¹¹

Table 7: Reasons for Return of Return Emigrants in Kerala, 2009⁸¹²

Reasons for the return	Percent			Cumulative	
	Male	Female	Total	Percent	Est. number
Lost job due to financial crisis	25.4	0.0	21.4	21.4	37022
Expiry of contract	11.7	10.4	11.5	32.9	56940
Compulsory repatriation	3.9	0.0	3.3	36.2	62631
Low wages or not receiving promised wages	19.1	2.1	16.4	52.7	91085
Poor working conditions	5.5	0.0	4.6	57.3	99052
Harsh behavior of employer	1.2	0.0	1.0	58.2	100759
Ill health	8.6	6.3	8.2	66.5	114986
Problems at home	9.4	18.8	10.9	77.3	133765
Others	15.4	62.5	22.7	100	173032
Total	100	100	100	100	173032

Table 8: Average cost of Emigration for different migration corridors from Kerala to the Gulf, 2008⁸¹³

Migration corridors	Average cost (Rupees)	Average Cost (USD)
Kerala-Bahrain	57172	1270
Kerala-Kuwait	53951	1199
Kerala-Oman	56840	1263
Kerala-Qatar	66316	1474
Kerala-Saudi Arabia	74606	1658
Kerala-UAE	61308	1362

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Ibid., 9.

⁸¹³ Ibid., 7.

Table 9: Channels of migration by emigrants, 2007⁸¹⁴

Channel	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Friends & relatives	74.2	88.52	78.7
Government agency	0.7	0	0.5
Foreign employer	9.2	3.35	7.3
Private recruitment agencies	16.01	8.1	13.5
Total	100	100	100

The second dimension that would explain the relatively low level of return migration for reasons related to the global financial crisis is due to the existence of social networks.⁸¹⁵ Friends and family at the place of destination play significant roles in helping new migrants arrange visas and other matters related to the migration process. Therefore, it comes to no surprise that almost 80 percent of all Indian migrants in 2007 relied on family and friends as an important channel for migration (Table 9), which ensured that the migrant had support in the event of a job-loss.⁸¹⁶ If we remember the migration theories reflected in Chapter 3, then it is clear that network theory is a strong component of the perpetuation of the Kerala-Dubai migration process. Both of these reasons could then largely explain *why* the 2010 stock of Indian migrants in the UAE (2.18 million) remained nearly the same as 2006 levels: 2.17 million (Table 3). In general, it is plausible to argue that the 2008 global recession *maintained* Indian migrant levels in the UAE and by extension: the Keralite population in Dubai.

Overall, we can conclude from the discussion above that while Keralites have been emigrating to the Gulf in general, and to the UAE and Dubai in particular, at much lower levels since the 2008 global economic crisis (30,660 between 2008-9), the burden of migration costs and presence of social networks in the Gulf have *minimized* return

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid.

migration from Dubai to Kerala (43,250 from 2008-9). Therefore, Keralites were not emigrating *en masse*, but they are also not leaving Dubai either.

Conclusion

Part of the purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate how the Kerala-Dubai migration relationship (like all others) are bound in larger economic and geo-political structures that set people in motion. At the same time, it has also attempted to recognize why, when and how economic actors, governments, global media and populations in countries of origin and destination participate in the Kerala-Dubai migration process, but more specifically, how they each contribute to the formation and perpetuation of migration flows.

By doing so, this thesis has come to recognize that the migration stream between Kerala and Dubai has changed from one that was generally encouraged by all governments involved since the early 1970s until the mid 1990s to one that was less encouraged by the UAE government in 1996 since introducing “Emiratization” – an unrealistic and therefore ineffective policy. The immediate impact of this, of course, was reflected in the decline of Indian and Keralite workers that were migrating to the UAE per annum until the turn of the twenty-first century wherein labour outflows from India and Kerala surged, specifically to the UAE after 2001.

While the UAE was trying to *delink* migration ties during the second half of the 1990s with India and other Asian unskilled labour exporting countries as a result of ‘Emiratization’, India, to a considerable effort, tried to *re-link* or even strengthen existing migration ties between both countries by relaxing its emigration clearance rules in 1997

so as to further facilitate emigration and by supporting a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding in 2006 with the UAE which, by no measure, was designed to ensure the safe-passage of migrant workers to the UAE or to adequately provide for basic labour rights. On the other hand, the government of Kerala continued to act in the same fashion as it did since the 1970s: emigration rarely garnered any political attention, and to this day Keralites have yet to receive an official policy on emigration and return migration from their home state. Therefore, it remains fair to say that like the early 1970s to mid 1990s period, the governments of Kerala *and* India have continued to traffic their citizens abroad for work.

At the same time, we have come to notice that the “Emiratization” of Dubai’s economy has not materialized; its rate of development depends on the steady flow of migrant workers from India and Asia at large. As a result, it is by no coincidence that the number of foreign workers in Dubai has increased from 2,194 in 1960 to 3.29 million by 2010 – 2.185 million of whom were from India. Conversely, with a minimum of 1.09 million Keralites in the UAE in 2010, of which half are in Dubai; the migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai remains strong and its progression into the current decade will be interesting the watch unfold indeed.

Chapter 6

Remittances and Labour Emigration

One of the underlying themes expressed in the past chapters has been the role of remittances in encouraging emigration flows and their capacity in determining migration policy from the Indian and Keralite perspectives. The intent of this chapter, therefore, is to explore why remittances are important in the global, national and local contexts, the volume of remittances that have passed from Dubai to Kerala and the extent to which remittances have influenced and perpetuated the migration relationship. This chapter is divided into five sections. It begins by exploring what academics know thus far about remittances (as it is an emerging field) in order to place this chapter into context. The second part discusses important empirical features of global remittances in general and within national and more local spaces in particular, namely in India and Kerala. The third section examines the importance of remittances and how they are used by the governments of India, Kerala and by migrant households. It then moves on to an analysis of how remittances have impacted Kerala's economy and their role in influencing emigration from the state by employing a theoretical perspective. The final part provides a brief conclusion of the findings and maintains that remittances help us to better understand the migration relationship since households predominantly use them as an incentive to leave.

Introduction: The state of remittance knowledge

To date, knowledge on remittances, defined as “financial resource flows that arise from cross-border movements of people,”⁸¹⁷ is very limited. Academics, political economists, economists, governments and international organizations remain puzzled about their nature and consequences in the political, economic and social spheres. In Grabel’s work, “The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know,” she provides a thorough account of the existing remittance literature of what we know and what we still need to know on the relationships between remittances, poverty, inequality, consumption, economic development, the effect of state behavior in developing countries, labour force participation and of the brain drain versus brain gain dilemma.⁸¹⁸ While a comprehensive account of her findings is beyond the scope of this thesis in terms of space and complexity, I include some of her conclusions in the pages that follow in order to shed some light on the role of remittances with respect to the Kerala-Dubai migration stream.

In general, Grabel concludes that there is no consensus among the experts on the impacts of remittances on the elements listed above, with the exception of some empirical research conducted by international organizations, governments and academics. Her conclusions point to the fact that “the political economy effects of remittances are complex, contradictory contingent upon many, many factors that vary from case to case, and so are not amenable to generalizations.”⁸¹⁹ We thus find a rise in important case studies, published only very recently, that show the effects of remittances in certain countries and local communities like Bagasoa’s examination of the Philippine experience,

⁸¹⁷ Kapur, 2004 quoted in Grabel, “The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?” 2.

⁸¹⁸ See Grabel, “The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?”

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 40.

Azad's analysis of Bangladesh and Ballard's study of district Jullundur in Punjab (India) and district Mirpur in Kashmir (Pakistan).⁸²⁰ Grabel equally reveals that one must be wary of any policy measure that promotes remittances as a tool for economic development, a position also echoed by Castles who concludes that remittance-led development is nothing but a 'mirage' since it cannot alone remove structural constraints to social change or economic growth.⁸²¹ In any case, we know for certain that remittances have "grown alongside the growth in migration flows over the last quarter century"⁸²² and have thus emerged as an important feature in the global financial landscape, attracting much attention in recent times. With this in mind, we now turn our attention to a brief examination of global remittance flows.

Global remittances in context

The past 15 years have seen global remittances quadruple in size from \$101 billion in 1995 to an estimated \$440 billion by 2010.⁸²³ They have also become increasingly important sources of revenue for many developing countries (Table 1)⁸²⁴ and mark an increase in temporary migration at the expense of permanent migration with family. With recorded remittances to these parts of the world climbing past the \$325.5

⁸²⁰ See I. F. Bagasao, "Migration and Development: The Philippine Experience"; Abul Kalam Azad, "Migrant Workers' Remittances: A Source for Finance for Micro-Enterprise Development in Bangladesh?"; Roger Ballard, "Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan," all in *Remittances: Development Impact and Future Prospects* eds. Dilip Ratha & Samuel Munzele Maimbo (The World Bank: Washington, 2005).

⁸²¹ Grabel, "The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?" 40; Castles, "Comparing the Experience of Five Major Emigration States," 34.

⁸²² Grabel, "The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?" 2.

⁸²³ The true size of remittances is accepted as being much larger due to unrecorded flows passing through informal and formal channels. The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, x, 19.

⁸²⁴ Ilene Grabel, "Remittances: Political Economy and Development Implications," *International Journal of Political Economy* Vol. 38, no. 4, (Winter 2009-10): 87.

billion mark in 2010 (up by \$18.4 billion above the previous year),⁸²⁵ they have, for many countries, outstripped official development assistance (ODA), foreign direct investment (FDI), private investment (PI), net exports and foreign exchange income (ie. tourism receipts).⁸²⁶ In particular, global remittances for 2009 (\$307 billion) were the second largest source of external finance to the developing world after FDI (\$359 billion),⁸²⁷ they were more than twice as large as ODA (\$120 billion) and more than three times the size of private debt and portfolio equity (\$85 billion).⁸²⁸ See Table 2.

Nevertheless, the bulk of all remittances to the developing world *do not* flow to the *poorest* countries.⁸²⁹ Of the \$305 billion that the developing world received in 2008,⁸³⁰ Grabel detects that the lower middle-income countries received more than half (\$179 billion), while the rest was spread unequally between the upper middle-income countries (\$81 billion) and low-income countries (\$45 billion) that is, only 15%.⁸³¹ The largest recipients have traditionally been India, China and Mexico (in that order). Although Grabel does not mention where these countries fit into the income classification, the World Bank positions India as a lower middle income country and China and Mexico as upper middle income countries.⁸³²

⁸²⁵ The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 19.

⁸²⁶ Grabel, "Remittances: Political Economy and Development Implications," 87, 90.

⁸²⁷ The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 17.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ Grabel, "Remittances: Political Economy and Development Implication," 89.

⁸³⁰ It should be noted that there is a discrepancy between the volume of 2008 remittances received to developing countries between Grabel and the World Bank. While the former suggests 2008 remittance levels to the developing world stood at \$305 billion, the latter states a slightly larger figure of \$324.8 billion. I use Grabel's remittance figure here only to be consistent with her findings of how that money was divided between the low-income, lower middle-income and upper middle-income countries. Grabel, "Remittances: Political Economy and Development Implications," 90.

⁸³¹ Grabel, "Remittances: Political Economy and Development Implications," 90.

⁸³² The World Bank, "Countries and Economies," accessed April 12, 2012, <http://data.worldbank.org/country>

We know that since at least 2000, India has been the top earner of remittances. In 2010, for example, India received \$55 billion, followed closely by China (\$51 billion) and Mexico (\$22.6 billion).⁸³³ Together, these countries alone received 29% of all worldwide remittances. Yet, as a share of GDP, the top earners for 2009 were low-income and poorer countries: Tajikistan (35%), Tonga (28%), Lesotho (25%), Moldova (35%) and Nepal (23%).⁸³⁴

Consequently, remittances for many developing countries are the largest source of international capital inflows and are the primary source of income for many small countries.⁸³⁵ Likewise, they remain an attractive source of foreign exchange and purchasing power.⁸³⁶ Let us explore this feature even further in the national and local context so as to situate the importance of remittances in fueling the Kerala-Dubai migration stream.

Table 1: Inward and Outward Remittance Flows for All Developing Countries in Comparison to the Rest of the World⁸³⁷

US\$ billions	1995	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Inward remittance flows	101.3	131.5	237.0	274.9	317.9	385.0	443.2	416.0	440.1
<i>All developing countries</i>	55.2	81.3	159.3	192.1	226.7	278.5	324.8	307.1	325.5
Outward remittance flows	97.5	108.5	168.0	185.3	213.7	255.2	295.7	282.5	-----
<i>All developing countries</i>	10.4	9.5	28.5	33.0	41.0	52.7	67.3	58.7	

Note: ‘inward remittance flows’ in non-bold figures describes the amount of remittances entering all developing countries while ‘outward remittance flows’ in non-bold figures represents the amount of remittances leaving all developing countries in comparison to the rest of the world.

⁸³³ The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 13.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸³⁵ Grabel, “Remittances: Political Economy and Development Implications,” 89.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁸³⁷ The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 19.

Table 2: Remittance Flows to Developing Countries in US\$ billions⁸³⁸

	1995	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
FDI	95	149	208	276	346	514	593	359	-
Remittances	55	81	159	192	227	278	325	307	325
ODA	57	49	79	108	106	107	128	120	-
Private debt & portfolio equity	83	27	93	165	211	434	157	85	-

Remittances to India and Kerala

Empirical data

An important dimension of Indian labour emigration is the massive remittances sent home by workers living abroad.⁸³⁹ Historically, India has been accumulating very large volumes of remittances since the mid 1970s when mass numbers of Indian labourers began to migrate to the GCC countries for work, soon overtaking remittances coming from developed countries.⁸⁴⁰ Although there are severe restrictions in obtaining accurate and reliable remittance data for India since the national government and its states (except for systemic data collected on Kerala from a handful of scholars due to the state's dependency on such income) do not record such information, the World Bank estimates that remittances to India have grown from \$120 million in 1970, \$2.76 billion in 1980, to \$3.29 billion in 1991, \$12.9 billion in 2000, jumping to \$25.4 billion six years later in 2006 to a whopping \$55 billion by 2010.⁸⁴¹ Likewise, the share of remittances in relation to India's GDP has also grown: from 0.14% in 1970, 0.7% in 1991 2.5% in 2000, 2.8% in

⁸³⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁸³⁹ Remittances are known as Private Transfer Payments in India's Balance of Payments Accounts.

⁸⁴⁰ Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 96.

⁸⁴¹ The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*, 125; The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 13; The World Bank in Rajan, "Global Financial Crisis and Kerala Economy," 5.

2006 and increasing to 4.2% by 2008.⁸⁴² Therefore, we notice that remittances have increasingly played an important contribution to India's economy.

However, it appears that remittances in relation to Kerala's NSDP remain far more significant. The *Kerala Migration Survey* for 2007 calculated that total remittances to Kerala in 1998 were \$2.6 billion, increasing to \$3.5 billion in 2003 and scaling to almost \$5 billion four years later in 2007.⁸⁴³ One-fifth of this sum (\$1.025 billion) was sent exclusively from Dubai.⁸⁴⁴ Total remittances for 1999 (\$2.9 billion) represented 22% of Kerala's NSDP while 2000 levels was larger than Kerala's state budget.⁸⁴⁵ For the year 2007, remittances constituted almost 20 percent of Kerala's NSDP (\$18.8 billion)⁸⁴⁶ and supported its economic output by almost 25 percent.⁸⁴⁷ From these statistics it is no mystery that the Kerala's State Planning Board in 2003 concluded "migration seems to have been the single most dynamic factor in an otherwise slow growth and dreary employment scenario of Kerala."⁸⁴⁸ From this perspective, it is also no mystery Keralites perceive this welcomed and essential money as a 'godsend'. I explore this statement in more detail in the pages below.

A salient feature of remittances is their distribution across Kerala's districts and regions; both vary widely. The largest recipient in 2007 was Malappuram district receiving 19 percent of all remittances to the state.⁸⁴⁹ Kozhikode, the second largest

⁸⁴² The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*, 125; The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, 125; Khadria, "India: Skilled Migration to Developed Countries, Labour Migration to the Gulf," 96; Rajan, "Global Financial Crisis and Kerala Economy," 4-5.

⁸⁴³ Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007," 31.

⁸⁴⁴ Please see appendix for calculations.

⁸⁴⁵ Raghuram, "Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story," 315.

⁸⁴⁶ "Kerala's GDP hits an all-time high" *Rediff*, February 9, 2006.

⁸⁴⁷ DeParle, "Jobs Abroad Support 'Model' State in India."

⁸⁴⁸ Kerala State Planning Board, 2003, p. 27 quoted in Raghuram, "Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story," 315.

⁸⁴⁹ Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007," 31.

recipient, received 12.9 percent and was closely followed by Trissur (12.1 percent) and Thiruvananthapuram (10.2 percent).⁸⁵⁰ Wayanad and Idukki incurred the lowest amount of remittances.⁸⁵¹ Districts where we see a high level of remittances have two characteristics in common: they are coastal and have a high Muslim population. These correlations are not by mere coincidence; they are products of long historical, economic and religious ties to the Gulf region, as we have examined in more detail in chapter four.

With respect to the distribution of remittances by religion, we also remark wide differences but they are also notable in the sense that they have been persistent overtime. For example, almost half of all remittances to Kerala in 2007 were received by Muslim communities (approximately 49.6 percent).⁸⁵² This is particularly interesting since Muslims represent less than a quarter of Kerala's population.⁸⁵³ Hindus, who make up the majority, received just over one-third of total remittances (approximately 34.8 percent) while the Christian population drew in the least with only 15.6 percent.⁸⁵⁴ Remittance results for 1998 and 2003 indicate that they were in tandem with 2007 levels for the Muslim community, while remittances slightly increased overtime for the Hindu community and decreased by almost 10 percentage points over a ten-year period for the Christian community (Table 3).⁸⁵⁵ However, how does all of this compare to remittance inflows from the UAE to Kerala?

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

⁸⁵² Ibid.

⁸⁵³ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., 31-2.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., 32.

Table 3: Total Remittances by Religion in Kerala (%), 1998 - 2007⁸⁵⁶

	1998	2003	2007
Hindus	28.2	29.6	34.8
Christians	24.5	25.3	15.6
Muslims	47.3	45.1	49.6
Total	100	100	100

While no such data exists, the *Gulf Migration Study* conducted by Zachariah, Prakash and Rajan attempted to calculate best estimates based on information collected from the UAE Exchange Centre in Abu Dhabi. The Study confirms that in 2001 the majority of all remittances from the UAE to India flow into Kerala.⁸⁵⁷ In fact, Kerala leads all other states quite considerably, reaping 57.5 percent of all remittances with Tamil Nadu at a far second place with 13.1 percent, Punjab trailing with 8.4 percent, followed by Maharashtra with 5.5 percent, Karnataka with 3.7 percent and the rest of the states ending with more marginal outcomes.⁸⁵⁸ Moreover, the study concludes that during a three-year period from 1998 to 2000, total remittances to Kerala from the UAE increased significantly: from \$621 million in 1998, \$725 million in 1999 and \$779 million by 2000.⁸⁵⁹ We also notice that the volume of remittances from the UAE to Kerala's districts varies widely. For instance, 15.8 percent of remittances from the UAE was received by Thiruvananthapuram, followed by Thrissur with 15.4 percent, Malappuram with 13.8 percent, Kannur with 10 percent and Kollam with 8.9 percent.⁸⁶⁰ The districts with the least remittances from the UAE were Wayand and Idukki with less than 0.4 percent each.⁸⁶¹ Yet, while no data exists on the volume of remittances that are

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ Zachariah et al., "Gulf Migration Study," 31-2.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

sent from Dubai to Kerala, my own calculations (see appendix) suggest that they reached \$1.025 billion in 2006, which translates to one-fifth of Kerala's total remittances for that year alone.⁸⁶²

It is recognized by those that study remittances, from international organizations like the World Bank, to governments, economists and scholars, that figures for remittances are gross underestimates. It is thus generally suggested that in order to have a more accurate picture, one ought to multiply any remittance figure by at least 50 percent. This is the case due to high accounting leakages and undocumented forms of transactions, such as having migrants send goods or money home with friends or by them doing it personally.⁸⁶³ In South Asia, the extent of underreporting remittances is very high because of the way in which money is typically remitted: through the *Hawala* (or *Hundi*) system: an informally organized international network of agents or brokers that operate around the world providing clients with faster and cheaper remittance transfers, even in the most remote destinations.⁸⁶⁴ Normally, commissions through this system fare 1 percent, much lower than the 8 to 20 percent charged by banks.⁸⁶⁵ In fact, the use of the *Hawala* system is so great that the volume of remittances sent to India through this practice can “be as much as ten times the of that sent through official sources.”⁸⁶⁶

Therefore, we must remember that remittance figures only paint a fraction of the reality.

How remittances are used

⁸⁶² Please see appendix for calculations.

⁸⁶³ Athukorala, 1993 quoted in Raghuram, “Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story,” 315.

⁸⁶⁴ Raghuram, “Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story,” 315, 321.

⁸⁶⁵ Ballard. p. 113-4.

⁸⁶⁶ Raghuram, “Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story” p. 315.

Most developing countries around the world suffer from severe shortages of foreign exchange, thus boosting reserves is usually a critical national objective. This is not new. What is new is that migrant remittances have been emerging as an important source for foreign exchange to the point that in some countries it has far exceed income generated from the export of goods and services.⁸⁶⁷ Somalia is but one example. When this is the case, remittances play an important role in national finances and thus provide an opportunity to pursue various state-led objectives, like broad notions of ‘development’.⁸⁶⁸

For India, a boost to foreign exchange reserves provides the government with essential US dollars to purchase goods, while it transfers remittances to recipient households in rupees (after national banks have collected their fees). After long-time worries of ‘brain drains’ (the loss of skilled workers abroad), the Indian government came to instead view migration as a gain when it recognized the contributions of lesser skilled migrants (in the form of remittances) to the national economy.⁸⁶⁹ This observation was particularly clear in 1991 when the Indian Finance Minister was faced with a massive trade deficit due in part by a loss of remittances caused by the Gulf War, dropping in India’s credit rating and causing an exchange rate depreciation.⁸⁷⁰ Such economic conflicts can explain why governments tend to encourage emigration and by extension, remittances, since they tend to act as shock absorbers, as Kapur and the World Bank explain because they provide “critical income support after economic shocks,

⁸⁶⁷ Ballard, “Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan,” 110.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid., 109-110.

⁸⁶⁹ Raghuram, “Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story,” 314.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

natural disasters and civil conflict.”⁸⁷¹ States typically encourage remittances by initiating state-led labour emigration programs and by insisting that it is their patriotic duty to invest their savings back home.⁸⁷² We see all of these measures occurring in India, especially after 1991 when the government “attempted to bolster its finances by offering a number of concessions to non-resident Indians (NRIs) in order to encourage them to invest in India.”⁸⁷³

Apart from these realities, remittances are also attractive for developing countries, India included, since they increase national revenue by taxing this income directly or indirectly (i.e. increasing rates for passports, visas, departure taxes and international telephone calls) and can immensely improve a country’s liquidity by permitting them to pull additional funds into deposits in the formal banking system.⁸⁷⁴ However, who exactly benefits from these remittances is an important question and I shall explore it in a later section. In the meantime, we must move on to examine how remittances are employed on a more local level.

Discussion in the literature about whether remittances affect economic development in the sending country positively or negatively remain inconclusive and Grabel concludes that more studies of individual cases are needed.⁸⁷⁵ What have we learned in this thesis about how the Kerala government uses remittances?

We know that developing countries have for a long time under-invested in human capital, like health care and education, which have sometimes lent itself to the

⁸⁷¹ Kapur, 2004; WB, 2004 quoted in Grabel, “The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?” 23.

⁸⁷² Ballard, “Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan,” 109.

⁸⁷³ Raghuram, “Conceptualising Indian Emigration – The Development Story,” 314.

⁸⁷⁴ Ballard, “Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan,” 109.

⁸⁷⁵ IMF, 2005; Chami et al., 2008; Korovilas, 1999; Ademan and Taylor, 1990 & Solimano, 2003 quoted in Grabel, *The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?* 20.

privatization of such services.⁸⁷⁶ In instances of under-investment, remittances play an important role in providing resources for large segments of the population when such services are out of reach.⁸⁷⁷ Thus, do governments, as Grable asks, “curtail their expenditure on human capital [public expenditures] once their countries begin to receive high and stable levels of remittances?”⁸⁷⁸ Do remittances encourage national and local governments to “ignore their traditional responsibilities because they perceive or hope that remittances will fill various voids in public expenditure?”⁸⁷⁹ These questions have received scant attention to date.⁸⁸⁰ However, certain scholars like Russell, Ecevit and Zachariah argue “the support provided by remittances makes it possible for governments to overlook the problems of unemployment, underdevelopment and inequality that lead to migration.”⁸⁸¹ When these questions reflect reality, and when inflows of large-scale remittances lead to a local withdrawal of productive activities like agriculture, this can ultimately encourage ‘de-development’, as Ballard argues, which is reinforced by further emigration.⁸⁸²

In the case of Kerala, we cannot make any substantial conclusions about whether the government has withdrawn from its traditional responsibilities as a result of remittances since there is a considerable lack of research on the topic. Moreover, any discussion on the relationship between migration, remittances and development are beyond the scope of this thesis: the topic is extremely broad (although this thesis does

⁸⁷⁶ Grabel, “The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?” 19.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁸¹ Russell [1986: p. 687] and Ecevit and Zachariah [1978: p. 37] quoted in Grabel, “The Political Economy of Remittances: What Do We Know? What Do We Need to Know?” 38.

⁸⁸² Ballard, “Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan,” 105.

recognize the important contributions made by Chami et al., Glytsos, Levhari, Lucas and Stark in this field).⁸⁸³ Empirical research in Kerala is essential and any discussion would have to be included in a separate thesis and researched by more seasoned scholars.

However, our own reporting and observations provides *some evidence* that the Kerala government has avoided and neglected its traditional duties because it seems to perceive remittances as a healthy source of income to fund its economic, social and productive sectors. Moreover, its migrants are “highly efficient producers of foreign exchange”⁸⁸⁴ which results in “little incentive for government intervention.”⁸⁸⁵ Yet, what Kerala fails to realize, as Ballard, Castles and Grabel report, is that remittances cannot possibly provide any substantial or long-term means for development; it is a fallacy to think otherwise. Our evidence in the pages that follow confirms this position. While an understanding of how the government of Kerala spends its remittance earnings remains uncertain, what we can do is depict how remittances are used by migrant households and by those from three major religions with high rates of emigration: Islam, Hinduism and Christianity.

The main purpose for migrants to remit money back home is for the subsistence of family members in the form of food, clothing and housing. For example, 86 percent of households’ primary expenditure in 1998 was to meet living costs, which jumped to 94

⁸⁸³ R. Chami, C. Fullenkamo and S. Jahjah, “Are Immigrant Remittance Flows a Source of Capital Development?” IMF Working Paper, International Migration Fund, WP/03/189, 2003; N. P. Glytsos, “The Role of Migrant Remittances in Development: Evidence from Mediterranean Countries,” *International Migration* 40(1), 2002: 5-26; N. P. Glytsos, “Determinants and Effects of Migrant Remittances,” in *International Migration: Trends, Policies and Economic Impact*, ed. Slobodan Djaic. (London: Routledge, 2001); O. Stark and D. Levhari, “On Migration and Risk LDCs,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 31, October, 1982: 191-96; O. Stark and R. E. B. Lucas, “Migration, Remittances and Family,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 36, 1988: 465-81.

⁸⁸⁴ Ballard, “Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan,” 112.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

percent almost ten years later in 2007.⁸⁸⁶ Studies show that after basic needs are satisfied, migrant households have used savings for a variety of other purposes. Data collected for the years, 1984, 1986, 1998 and 2007 shows that the degree of importance for certain expenditures has shifted over time.

In 1984, the majority of savings (27 percent) was spent on the construction and repair of buildings followed by marriage expenses with 23 percent.⁸⁸⁷ Next of importance was the purchase and improvement of land (15 percent), purchase of vehicles (8 percent), investment in business (6 percent), repayment of loans (5 percent), and the purchase of ornaments and jewelry (4 percent).⁸⁸⁸ Just two years later, the purchase, construction and repair of buildings still remained the top priority, carving out 46 percent of all migrant savings followed by the purchase and improvement of land with 15 percent.⁸⁸⁹ By the next decade, data for 1998 reveals that expenditure priorities have shifted. This time, the most important use of household remittance savings were for education (36 percent), repayment of debt (27 percent) and for the construction and repair of buildings, (11 percent).⁸⁹⁰ In 2007, priorities shifted again. After subsistence levels were met, more than 60 percent of migrant households used their savings for education, followed by almost half who used their savings to repay debt.⁸⁹¹ Next in order of importance was to buy or build homes representing 11 percent of households while less than 2 percent used their savings for starting a business.⁸⁹² Perhaps the most intriguing dimension of household expenditures in Kerala over three decades indicate that the purchase of land and

⁸⁸⁶ K. C. Zachariah, E.T Mathew and S. Irudaya Rajan, "Impact of Migration on Kerala's Economy and Society," *International Migration* Vol. 39 (1), 2001: 74.

⁸⁸⁷ Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)," 45.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁹ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 278.

⁸⁹⁰ Zachariah et al., "Impact of Migration on Kerala's Economy and Society," 74.

⁸⁹¹ Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey, 2007," 34.

⁸⁹² Ibid.

(construction of) buildings carried significant weight, amounting to almost 20 percent of household savings in 2007 as well.⁸⁹³

At the same time, people of various religions also utilize remittances in different capacities. For example, Kurien's 2002 study of three villages in Kerala that had large emigration flows to the Persian Gulf – a predominantly Muslim village in northern Kerala (Veni), a Hindu village in southern Kerala (Cherur) and a Syrian Christian village in central Kerala (Kembu) - indicate how this proves to be the case.⁸⁹⁴ Although the study notes similarities in expenditure patterns in all three villages, such as housing construction and bringing back clothing and electronic goods from the Middle East, Kurien noticed significant differences in their consumption, exchange and investment behaviors which were a result of conditioned socio-cultural structures of these communities.⁸⁹⁵

In Kurien's case study of the Mappila Muslim village in Veni, a strong emphasis was made on distributing remittances to as many people in the community as possible and of supporting religious activities.⁸⁹⁶ For instance, due to a strong community atmosphere and solidarity between the villagers, a major emphasis was placed on giving to charity like helping widows and orphans, providing gifts to family, friends and members of the community, supporting local mosques, religious schools or colleges.⁸⁹⁷ However, unlike the Hindu and Christian villages, little money was spent on education

⁸⁹³ Ibid., 33.

⁸⁹⁴ See Kurien, "A Socio-Cultural Perspective on Migration and Economic Development: Middle Eastern Migration from Kerala, India."

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., 190, 195-6.

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid., 196.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid., 199-200.

perhaps in large part due to the fact that Gulf migration enriched the lives of relatively uneducated people and they had, it would seem, no incentive to change this.⁸⁹⁸

In the Hindu village of Cherur, in which the primary migrant group were the Ezhavas, a lower caste, a strong emphasis of remittances earnings were placed on lavish rituals, festivals, ceremonies, gift-giving, entertaining and education in order to upgrade their caste status.⁸⁹⁹ Therefore, Gulf migrants organized elaborate events like marriage ceremonies and religious festivals and gave gifts of gold to climb the caste hierarchy.⁹⁰⁰ Gulf migrants also invested their money by lending to community and family members at higher interest rates (which would be shocking to the Muslim and Christian communities) than those charged by banks since they demand collateral, something that not many people could provide.⁹⁰¹

With respect to the Syrian Christian community of Kembu, money that was sent home was confined for the immediate family, very little was used as a redistributionary activity, unlike the other two cases.⁹⁰² Kurien notes that the largest items of expenditure were on education (large donations were given to professional colleges to secure positions for family members) and on large dowries to secure highly educated sons-in-law.⁹⁰³ At the same time, the Christian community displayed a strong priority to invest income in property or bank deposits, unlike in the Muslim and Hindu villages.⁹⁰⁴ Passing along a substantial inheritance to offspring was considered important.⁹⁰⁵

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid., 200.

⁸⁹⁹ Ibid., 196, 203.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid., 203.

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., 204.

⁹⁰² Ibid., 206.

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Likewise, we should also note that labour emigration to the Middle East from each religious community occurred under unique circumstances. For instance, in the Muslim community of Veni, trade relations with Arab merchants were centuries old which enabled both parties to form a special relationship based on their shared heritage and Islamic identity.⁹⁰⁶ It were the Arab traders who informed the Mappilas of work opportunities in the Gulf which took off in the early 1950s.⁹⁰⁷ Most migrants from Veni worked in the informal sector due to their lack of education and illegal nature of entry (taking passage with Arab merchants).⁹⁰⁸ Kurien notes that around 60 percent of Veni migrants worked in unskilled positions, roughly 15 percent worked in domestic environments, another 15 percent worked in business (petty pavement trade, ownership or management of supermarkets) while others did odd jobs or temporarily filled in for other workers.⁹⁰⁹ It is here where network theory plays a very large role in stimulating future migrations to the region since “[m]ost of the migration from Veni took place as a result of relatives or friends using their contacts with Arabs to arrange for jobs and visas for the prospective migrant.”⁹¹⁰

In the Hindu village of Cherur, labour emigration of Ezhavas to the Gulf occurred in the 1970s when work opportunities in Malaysia and Singapore had been exhausted.⁹¹¹ Most villagers worked as plumbers, masons, mechanics and electricians.⁹¹² In the case of the Syrian Christian community in Kembu, emigration to the Middle East began in the

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid., 197.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid., 197-8.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid., 198.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹¹ Ibid., 202.

⁹¹² Ibid.

1930s when Western oil companies first began to search for oil in the region.⁹¹³ The Christian community's strong emphasis on attaining a good education, typically from English medium colleges, and British contacts helped them learn about well-paying and long-term positions in the Middle East.⁹¹⁴ The first Christian emigrants worked as technical engineers, nurses, doctors, lawyers and clerical workers - generally in semi-professional and professional positions.⁹¹⁵

What can we infer from these conclusions? In examining Ballard's ethnographic study of the uses and consequences of remittances in India's Punjabi district of Jullundur and district Mirpur in the Azad Kashmir region of Pakistan, he says, "[t]he willingness of migrant workers to divert a significant part – often the greater part – of their overseas earnings back home can only be understood as the outcome of a deep-rooted commitment to investment."⁹¹⁶ These migrants are not investing in abstract concepts like "India", "Pakistan" or "Bangladesh" for example, but are instead committed to their communities and families.⁹¹⁷ We see this occurring in the Veni, Cherur and Kembu case studies and without a doubt, across many other migrant communities as well. It is with this note that we now turn our attention to how remittances have affected Kerala's economy and what role they play in promoting emigration.

Impact of remittances on Kerala's economy and emigration

⁹¹³ Ibid., 205.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid., 204-5.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., 205.

⁹¹⁶ Ballard, "Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan," 107.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid.

As discussed in detail in chapter four, remittances to Kerala have not had much positive effect on certain chronic problems like high unemployment, domestic income and growth for productive activities like agriculture and industry.⁹¹⁸

Kerala's unemployment rate, for example, has traditionally been rather high: 11 percent in 1998, climbing to 19 percent in 2003 and decreasing to 12 percent in 2007.⁹¹⁹ The highest remittance receiving districts also have some of the highest unemployment rates in Kerala. In the same year, unemployment in Malapuram and Kozhikode reached 15 percent, 13 percent in Trissur and 12 percent in Thiruvananthapuram.⁹²⁰ The unemployment rate amongst Muslims (15 percent) was also the highest in Kerala compared to the Hindu (12 percent) and Christian (11 percent) populations.⁹²¹ Perhaps most shockingly, we find that one's level of education plays a large role in determining the level of unemployment. In Kerala, the unemployment rate is *highest* among the *educated* population: 25 percent for those with a degree, 23 percent who completed a secondary education and *3 percent* for those that only have a *primary education!*⁹²² High unemployment rates can be attributed to the fact that employment growth has not been sufficient "in any segment of the economy to stem rising unemployment,"⁹²³ such as in agriculture and industry, as we have analyzed in chapter 4.

At the same time, Kerala has experienced a growth in the construction sector, particularly in the construction of residential homes, which is mainly attributed to remittances from abroad.⁹²⁴ Ballard says that this is a typical consequence of places that

⁹¹⁸ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 280.

⁹¹⁹ Zachariah et al., "Kerala Migration Survey 2007," 38.

⁹²⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁹²¹ Ibid.

⁹²² Ibid., 42.

⁹²³ Nair, "Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies," 280.

⁹²⁴ Ibid.

have gained significant volumes of remittances: “they provide an immense boost to the service sector, most particularly in housing construction, but the more productive sectors of the economy, especially agriculture, begin to languish.”⁹²⁵ This is clearly occurring in Kerala. And, as we have explored in chapter 4, a poor domestic economy with low levels of growth can indeed be associated with strong emigration flows.

Indeed, the situation in Kerala thus appears to be rather paradoxical: the large and ever increasing outflow of migrants and inflow of remittances have not led to any perceivable improvement to its economy.⁹²⁶ This lies in the fact that remittances have largely leaked into other Indian states since households, as we have seen, typically use such income to buy land, which represents a transfer of ownership, and the purchase of other large items like vehicles, consumer goods and construction materials, which are products manufactured in other Indian states, not Kerala.⁹²⁷ None of this supports long-term growth. Therefore, we notice remittances spilling over into other Indian states, stimulating their production and employment.⁹²⁸ From this data, we can safely conclude that economic benefits for Kerala’s economy (at the macro-level) has been nil or quite marginal at best.

On the other hand, economic benefits of remittances to Kerala are most noticeable in the short-term and at the household level. However, the impact of remittances has had adverse effects for both migrant and non-migrant households. With respect to the former, remittances have clearly led to improved levels of consumption, investment and savings (ie. housing conditions, income, food, clothing, rent, electricity, water pumps, etc.) that

⁹²⁵ Ballard, “Remittances and Economic Development in India and Pakistan,” 107.

⁹²⁶ Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 281.

⁹²⁷ Ibid.

⁹²⁸ Ibid.

they otherwise would have had more difficulty attaining.⁹²⁹ Yet, the inflow of remittances have also led to a series of increases in the price of land in areas of high emigration, such as in Thiruvananthapuram, as well as higher costs for construction materials, food, consumer goods, rent and transportation due to an increase in demand from migrant households.⁹³⁰ Consequently, non-migrant households have found all of these items out of their reach, thus affecting their welfare, purchasing power and increasing inequality between both groups.⁹³¹ This in itself is not thought provoking, but what I suggest here is that remittances play an important role on households as an incentive to migrate.

Conclusion

An attempt to understand international labour migration is, without a doubt, a complex endeavor. In the absence of important information, an attempt to understand why people from Kerala migrate to Dubai for work can be even more problematic. Yet, what I have tried to convey here is that comprehending migration from a remittance-led perspective can shed some light on the Kerala-Dubai migration stream. Indeed, we have seen that the volume of such income in recent times and their importance to India and Kerala have been immense – improved levels of foreign exchange being one example. Yet, when we move towards a more micro-perspective, we notice highly diverse trends in the distribution of remittances across Kerala's districts as well as the uses of remittances by migrant households over time and by people of different religions. The impact of remittances on Kerala's economy has in general been negative, but their impact as an incentive for households migrate has been rather important.

⁹²⁹ Prakash, "Gulf Migration and Its Economic Impacts – The Kerala Experience," 3211-2.

⁹³⁰ Ibid., 3212.

⁹³¹ Ibid.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: An Ode to Theories of Migration

While undertaking this research, I found that a complete understanding of the Kerala-Dubai migration stream meant that it did not suffice to start our examination in 1973, as I originally intended. Though the modern rise of this migration stream originated there, I found myself going back at least a further 100 years in the UAE's case, and by a few hundred years in Kerala's case. In retrospect, this was only to be expected: as Sassen noted in her story of Western European migrations over two centuries, migrations are fundamentally embedded in larger historical socio-economic and political structures.

Not only this, but our analysis of the Kerala-Dubai migration stream has also demonstrated a number of key arguments; not least that labour migration was a strategic component of the latter's industrialization. The principle thesis put forth, why do people from Kerala migrate to Dubai for work, has brought us to observe that international labour migration between both places was generally encouraged until the mid 1990s, which then shifted to a sense of discouragement. Our analysis also dismantled conventional ideologies about international migration and proved, in tandem with Sassen, that they were not a result of overwhelming poverty, overpopulation and unemployment rates (though not denying they may be raw ingredients), but conversely depicts that the greater majority of those participating in emigration from Kerala to Dubai were not the poorest, and that they were as well an educated, literate and skilled lot. At the same time, migration from Kerala was highly selective: we witnessed that it was classed, gendered, localized (in coastal and midland districts) and ran along religious divides (dominant among the Muslim population). Thus, this thesis shows that only particular people leave

in as much as they travel on very structured paths, thus demystifying the notion that they proceed blindly to any richer country.

The changed migration relationship between Kerala and Dubai was not a sporadic occurrence, but was instead bound in certain calculated processes and interactions between both places. We noticed that before “Emiratization”, both places of origin and destination largely encouraged migration flows, which were deeply rooted in long historical process, most certainly of Muslim emigration to the Gulf. While the more modern migration flows to Dubai were catalyzed by the discovery of oil and subsequent rapid economic growth, they were embedded in very particular migration policies in the UAE and India that *promoted* emigration, including the UAE’s Federal Law 8, India’s proliferation of passport offices, its repeal of the 1922 Emigration Act, introduction of the 1983 Emigration Act and continuous relaxation of its regulations. The Kerala government had no official policy on emigration, which also remained true throughout the post-1996 era. From that time on, we witnessed, what Sassen calls a ‘crisis mentality’, befall the Dubai government thus discouraging labour migration while India, in response, made provisions to make emigration to the Gulf easier, most notably by relaxing its emigration not required category.

Such conclusions were made possible by undertaking an analysis of both Kerala’s and Dubai’s political, economic and social conditions with *precision*, which Sassen asks us to do, particularly in the absence of any research on the migration stream at hand. What this thesis has also uncovered is that each condition *linked* both places together, not least by their policies and institutional agreements to facilitate migration and remittances. We noticed that both places had close historical ties with each other dating back hundreds

of years due to trade and matrimony making future migration more likely, as we have seen when skilled Keralites travelled to the UAE in the 1930s to work for British oil companies. Linkages were also strengthened during the 1990-1 Gulf War when thousands of Keralites were forced to return, impacting future would-be return migrants (ie. during the 2008 global financial crisis) as those from the early 1990s realized that the Kerala government was not capable of their reabsorption and were, therefore, put in the position to migrate once again, proving that the “Kerala Model” of development was less and less radiant. Thus, it is not surprising that Keralites were more prone to emigrate than elsewhere in India and, just as important, that they represented more than half of all emigrants in the Gulf and Dubai, while also sending home billions of dollars per annum in remittances. And, indeed, as we have seen, these migrations to Dubai were, as Sassen also says in her study, historically *patterned and bound in durations and scale*: the volume of Keralites in Dubai, whether the amount increased or decreased, was a reflection of the political, economic and social dimensions of their time.

Likewise, our investigation of *why* people from Kerala travel to Dubai for work has made more clear how traditional and modern theories of migration fit into explaining this question. For indeed, the “why” question must be understood theoretically in as much as it must be understood empirically.

Traditional theories, those by Ravenstein and Lee, do not paint an accurate account of this reality. The “laws of migration” hardly reflect any association with the Kerala-Dubai migration stream, except perhaps that migrants seek a higher income but that argument is of value only when it is placed in larger political, economic and social dimensions that initiate and perpetuate it in the first place. The “push-pull” model is no

better. Keralites, as we have remarked, have not blindly responded to better economic outcomes as reasons for working in Dubai. Their movements were calculated, thought out and were not based solely on individualistic decision-making, an assumption also expressed by neoclassical economic theory. Rather, it was the household that proved to be more important in the decision-making process, thus in harmony with the theory of new economics of labour migration.

While certainly the “push-pull model” has elements of appeal, such as insisting that migration is, in fact, a selective process because migrants respond differently to the push and pull forces at the place of origin and destination as well as what Lee deems as intervening obstacles, I argue that while not untrue, the Kerala-Dubai experience is pegged to larger structural constraints in both places, arguments that Sassen makes. It could very well be that the unemployed Keralite was lured to Dubai in light of a high demand for labour (also echoed by segmented labour market theory), but that is as far as Lee’s sets of positive and negative factors come into use. This alone cannot explain why the Kerala-Dubai migration stream took shape, for why is it that certain districts had higher rates of emigration than others and why were most emigrants Muslim? While his ‘intervening obstacles’ do consider immigration policies as impacting the volume of migration flows, without understanding the 1983 Emigration Act, for example, in wider contexts, and discounting internal stratification in both Kerala and Dubai, then his theory seems of little value to us here as well.

The same inference is made with the neoclassical economic theory. Grounded in the assumption that international wage differentials between countries attract migrants to places that offer higher income, the argument here is that this is not necessarily the case

with our migration stream. This thesis has shown that severe wage discrimination is prolific in Dubai with Western skilled workers receiving the highest pay, followed by Emirati nationals, temporary Arab workers and then Asians, even when doing the same work. Likewise, wages can be so poor that, as we have seen, it has come to be normal to pay Indian construction workers a few dozen cents per hour, if at all. Although I do not deny that unemployed Keralites may indeed find it better to migrate to Dubai to earn some wage than none at all at home, this matter, like other dimensions in earlier theories, are mirrored in larger structures that neoclassical economic theory plainly ignores. Economic disparities have not been enough to generate migration between both places: Keralite migrants in Dubai, as this thesis has demonstrated, have not acted as simple actors that easily responded to economic disparities, the matter is more complex as other theories of migration contend.

The fact that Keralites have been historically sending remittances back home from the Gulf, and by extension Dubai, in large and ongoing sums for consumption, investment and as a force to overcome local developmental constraints, reflects their commitment to their household and community (as exemplified in Kurien's case studies of Veni, Cherur and Kembu), which strongly supports the theory of new economics of labour migration. Most certainly, in the wake of Kerala's bleak economy, including its poor agricultural and industrial performances, difficult access to loans from banks, higher costs of living compared to other Indian states and poor government mechanisms to alleviate such challenges, Keralites have found the need to go elsewhere for work in order to improve their livelihood.

For example, we noticed that the Muslim, Hindu and Christian migrants from Veni, Cherur and Kembu used their remittances to support their families and communities (after subsistence levels were met) through a variety of activities, such as organizing religious festivals and ceremonies, providing loans and charitable contributions to poorer households (ie. widows and orphans), sending household members to better schools and, in the case of the Hindu village, as a means to climb the caste hierarchy. While we also demonstrated in the earlier pages of this chapter that it was not the poorest that took part in emigration, here we must express that emigrants typically came from households with some assets and small landowning families with one to five acres of land – those with more than five acres, less than one or none at all did not participate in any noticeable extent.⁹³² Without any analysis on this particular dimension, I can only infer (and due to our own analyses) that smaller landowning families could lack access to capital or credit markets in Kerala for such things as equipment or fertilizers, which was not the case for those owning more land and certainly eliminates the poorest households from emigrating to Dubai as fees associated with travel are largely out of reach. We also noticed in chapter 4 that banks were largely unwilling to provide loans to Keralites for whatever reason. Therefore, emigration is not a response to high unemployment or extreme poverty, but rather remittances have acted as a strong motivator as income insurance to households under challenging economic circumstances, representing a compelling explanation for emigration.

While theorists of segmented labour market theory argued that migration is strongly associated with extreme labour demand at the place of destination due to labour

⁹³² Sekhar (1993, p. 95) quoted in Nair, “Dynamics of Emigration from Kerala: Factors, Trends, Patterns and Policies,” 267.

supply demographics, structural inflation, hierarchical constraints on motivation and economic dualism - they originally anticipated that foreign workers would represent only a small portion of a country's labour force. This has not happened in Dubai. Today, migrants constitute more than 70 percent of the UAE's population and take on "immigrant" jobs traditionally shunned by natives, thus also closely associated with the theory of cumulative causation's social labeling. But the problem is much larger: Dubai and the UAE as a whole do not have enough nationals to fill the thousands of positions needed for economic development. Thus, labour had to be recruited elsewhere. Initially confined to the construction industry (ie. building roads, bridges, ports and factories), foreign workers are now also responsible for operating and maintaining Dubai's new infrastructure, which has posed a severe political problem to the ruling elite in recent years and to all GCC countries as a whole. Enamored with a "crisis mentality" of replacing foreign workers with nationals through its unrealistic policy of "Emiratization", Dubai has not escaped, as Sassen explains as being fundamental to all industrializing countries, the need to recruit labour from abroad.

Indeed, Dubai's internal stratification, which neoclassical theory ignores, is key to our understanding of why people from Kerala emigrate to Dubai for work which is clearly exemplified by segmented labour market theory. Not only this, but it also argues that labour migration is also a result of formal mechanisms instead of migrants' efforts, also in tandem with institutional theory.

Dubai's ruling elite certainly had an important role institutionalizing labour recruitment. Established as the *kafala* system, requiring any foreign worker or business in the UAE to have a *kafil*, or guarantor (unique only to nationals) who would act as

intermediaries between the foreigner and host country, it is the only means of passage for entering the UAE for work, although still highly exploitative. Our analysis has demonstrated that institutions have come to play an important role in promoting and sustaining migration between Kerala and Dubai not only through the kafala system but also in Kerala where we have seen a proliferation of legal and illegal recruitment agencies since the quadrupling of oil prices, but most particularly after the repeal of India's 1922 Emigration Act in 1976.

Although not denying the significance of institutional arrangements in perpetuating the Kerala-Dubai migration stream, I argue that the role of networks, or network theory, play a more crucial part. For instance, Nair determined in a 1984 that less than 8 percent of Keralites travelled to the Gulf through licensed recruiting agencies and that the greater majority of migrants went abroad with the help of relatives or friends.⁹³³ This also remained true more than twenty years later in 2007: 79 percent while 14 percent went through private recruitment agencies and 7 percent (typically skilled workers) went directly to the Gulf for work through the assistance of a foreign employer.⁹³⁴ Therefore, the role of interpersonal ties between friends and family that have or had experience working in the Gulf, but particularly in Dubai, greatly facilitated the movement of future migrations by providing essential information about job opportunities, working conditions, wages, housing and even assisting them with financial support that they otherwise may have had more difficulty in attaining from other sources or avenues.

And, as the theory of cumulative causation shows us, the expansion of networks can (and has in Kerala's case), perpetuated further migrations. Indeed, this thesis also

⁹³³ Nair, "Asian Migration to the Arab World: Kerala (India)," 32.

⁹³⁴ Rajan, "Global Financial Crisis and Kerala Economy: Emigration and Remittances," 8.

portrayed that this was also particularly true in the earliest account of Keralite migration to the Gulf: trade and matrimony with Muslims and Hindus, and later with skilled Keralite Christians working in the oil industry in the 1930s, were the first links that binned both places together and certainly put in place the foundations for future migrations, especially when the time was right. Likewise, it was also noticed in chapter 5 the importance of networks in keeping foreign workers in Dubai during the global financial crisis as they had support from family and friends even in the event of job-loss which represents one explanation as to why return migration during this time was relatively low.⁹³⁵

However, the role of world systems theory is not as clear. Although it reflects well with respect to the India-UK migration system, it is unlikely Dubai capitalist penetration in Kerala existed and that it had any role in spurring migration between the two places. However, what have been apparent in this thesis with respect to world systems theory are three things that played a role in Keralite emigration: India's concern over the brain drain which was directed towards skilled rather than unskilled emigration; the development of capitalist agriculture in Kerala which disrupted its traditional agrarian society (into planting cash crops) that destroyed the means of subsistence for many households and increasing unemployment rates and; the 1922 Emigration Act - a colonial piece of legislation dismantled in 1976 to allow for the first time the emigration of unskilled workers. While none of these elements played a direct role in contributing to the Kerala-Dubai migration stream, it is nonetheless apparent that such shifts in traditional political and economic structures indirectly contributed to migrations flows

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

between them, as reflected in the swell in the volume of migrants in the mid-to-late 1970s.

At the same time, a greater sense of relative deprivation has a tendency to perpetuate international migration, as expressed by the theory of cumulative causation. Kurien, for example, shows us that the redistribution of income is used for various things as indicated in her study of three Muslim, Hindu and Christian villages in Kerala, but that emigration in particular made non-migrant households aware of what they did not have against migrant households as a result of the large sums of remittances that improved their economic well-being. Fuelled by a rising “me too” syndrome in communities across Kerala, it has come to constitute as another form of motivation for international labour migration and continues in a perpetuating fashion as other households find that they are also deprived of certain goods and services that local labour cannot provide, thus metamorphosing into a “culture of migration” that has become apparent in Kerala.

Indeed, our analysis has demonstrated that we can also apply systems theory to the Kerala-Dubai migration stream as it has displayed a number of its qualities, such as a common migration history that is dated to going back hundreds of years, common migration policies that encourage temporary migration, respecting common migration institutions like the *kafala* system, while also recognizing the presence of network theory and the theory of cumulative causation as initiating and perpetuating migration flows. Consequently, from our analysis, we can now shift from labeling the migration process between Kerala and Dubai as a “stream” to one that more accurately depicts its reality: the Kerala-Dubai *system*.

Framing this thesis from a historical perspective and with precision, as Sassen asks of us, has shown the relative contributions of each theory as helping us better understand why people from Kerala migrate to Dubai for work. However, this thesis argues, in accordance with certain migration scholars like Arango, Collinson and de Haas that there exists no one theory that can accurately paint an honest landscape of the initiation and perpetuation of any migration stream, as has been the case with ours. Yet, we have noticed that the Kerala-Dubai migration system has certainly been motivated by the desire for better economic well-being, to gain access to capital, spread income risks, the development of a “culture of migration”, the presence of migrant networks, institutions for facilitating and promoting migration and of a strong demand for labour at the receiving end. Likewise, larger economic, political and social structures were present as well, and acted as independent forces that affected labour flows between both places.

However, we must not forget the value of Zolberg’s contributions. Apart from our examination of the connections between theory and larger political, economic and social structures that help our understanding of why the Kerala-Dubai migration system took shape, he lets us remember that migration policies, these larger political structures, trump any of the received theories since they control the exit or entry of any labour migration, while also deciding the length of their stay, who is allowed in and based on what criteria. As a result, this thesis has paid as much attention to migration policies at both place of origin and destination as other dimensions.

As this thesis closes, my hope was to not only demonstrate why Keralites have been migrating to Dubai for work in large numbers since the 1970s and the larger political, economic and social contexts within which they exist, but to also humanize the

migrant as not just someone that comes and goes, but as a highly exploited worker responsible for building Dubai's grand projects, a reality that is greatly guarded by the ruling family. At the same time, our analysis of the Kerala-Dubai migration system has ruled out any generalizations or conventional ideologies about international migration. Instead, it has showed us that this migration system is unique, just like any other, because of the political, economic and social contexts in which they reside, and as such, demonstrates that the best way to study them are with precision.

Likewise, it is also important to continue research on the Kerala-Dubai migration system well into the future because it would help develop sensible migration policies and shed light on other migration streams. Additional areas for future research include analyses of the relationship between the remittances sent home from Keralites in Dubai and their developmental impact in Kerala. Such a study does not exist and could thus enrich discussion, as well as an analysis on how the Kerala government uses remittances. While this thesis has tried to calculate credible estimates of the stock of Keralites in Dubai and the volume of remittances they send back home, it remains important to continue to accurately track such data, even given constraints.

Better migration policies between Kerala and Dubai would, at the most basic level, need to ensure the safe travel and well-being of migrants. For the UAE government, this would include a reasonable and guaranteed wage, safe and humane housing conditions, protective and strong labour laws, the provision of labour rights, and the opportunity for citizenship and family reunification. For the government of India, this would also entail safe travel and the well-being of its emigrant population, but to also keep the UAE accountable if, and when, the government mistreats its workers. The

minimum the Keralite government could provide its emigrant population are stronger reabsorption and rehabilitation efforts when they come back, especially during times of global economic and political shocks, such as to the scale of the 1990 Iraq-Kuwait War and the 2008 financial crisis. However, the likelihood of this happening is low as a result of the political, economic and social realities in both India and the UAE that this thesis has described.

Finally, a prediction on the future of the Kerala-Dubai migration system: although thousands of temporary migrant workers lost their jobs in Dubai due to the 2008 financial crisis, I argue that once the recession has lifted, it will resume its strength pre 2008 levels since Sheikh Mohammed will not give up too easily his fantastical designs. For, as Sassen showed us in *Guests and Aliens*, capitalism has a tendency of pushing workers out and drawing them back in.

Appendix

Migration

i. Stock of Indians and Keralites in the UAE - 2006

- 2.17 million Indians in the UAE.
- 1.8 million migrants abroad from Kerala of which 40% emigrated to the UAE = 720,000 Keralites in the UAE.

ii. Stock of Keralites in the municipality of Dubai - 2006

- population of UAE: 5 million (estimated).
- population of municipality of Dubai: 1.42 million.
- 1 million foreign workers in city of Dubai.
- of the 1 million foreign workers, a *minimum* of 50% are from India (500,000).
- a *minimum* of 360,000 are from Kerala (50% of 720,000).

The population of the UAE in 2006 was an estimated 5 million.⁹³⁶ Since the UAE does not report on the population of the municipality of Dubai, I have gathered credible estimates from the United Nations Statistics Division which stated that in 2006 it had 1.33 million residents⁹³⁷ while Mike Davis suggests that the population was 1.5 million.⁹³⁸ Therefore, I take into consideration the *average*: 1.42 million. Davis argues that from that figure 225,000 are nationals and 200,000 are worldly expatriates that own second homes in Dubai.⁹³⁹ Thus, the remaining 995,000 (or 1 million) are foreign workers.

⁹³⁶ The United Arab Emirates, "The United Arab Emirates Yearbook 2006," 6. Retrieved April 11, 2012 <http://www.uaeyearbook.com/Yearbooks/2006/ENG/?page=158>

⁹³⁷ The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division, *World Statistics Pocketbook* Series V No. 31 (New York: United Nations Publication, 2007), 202. Retrieved April 11, 2012 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/Pocketbook%202006.pdf>

⁹³⁸ Mike Davis, "Fear and Money in Dubai," 49.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

Davis also argues that the majority of all foreign labourers in Dubai come from Pakistan and India with “the largest contingent from Kerala.”⁹⁴⁰ Therefore, *at least* 50% of foreign workers in Dubai city originate from India: a *minimum* of 500,000 Indians. Next, we also know that as of 2006, there were 1.8 million migrants abroad from Kerala⁹⁴¹ of which 40% emigrated to the UAE⁹⁴² (720,000 people) and the majority travel to Dubai city for work. Therefore, this thesis can safely assume that at least half of all Keralites in the UAE are in the city of Dubai – a *minimum* of 360,000 people.

Remittances

iii. Remittances from the UAE to India - 2006

- total remittances to India in 2006: \$25 billion.
- total remittances to India from the UAE: \$5.12 billion.
 - from Keralite workers in the UAE: \$2.05 billion (40% of 5.12 billion).
 - from rest of Indians in the UAE: \$3.07 billion (60% of 5.12 billion).

iv. Remittances from Dubai to Kerala - 2006

- *minimum* of \$1.025 billion (50% of 2.05 billion).

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁹⁴¹ Government of Kerala. “Kerala Economic Survey 2007” <http://www.prd.kerala.gov.in/migration.htm>. Last retrieved April 11, 2012. First, to dispel any confusion, the numbers provided are not from any research done by the government of Kerala. Instead, Kerala relied on reports conducted by the Centre of Development Studies (CDS) in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala) about the annual number of emigrants from Kerala. Second, the 2007 Kerala Economic Survey states that between 2003-7, the number of total emigration from Kerala remained relatively the same. In 2004, there were 1.84 million migrants abroad while in 2007 there was a total of 1.85 million. Though it seems that there was a 10,000 difference between 2004 and 2007, in reality the number of emigrants during this period can very well be much higher than reported because these numbers do not take into consideration the number of return migrants. Since the government of Kerala and the CDS did not report the total number of emigrants in 2006, and for the purpose of simplicity, this thesis will maintain that as of 2006 there was an estimate of 1.8 million Keralites abroad.

⁹⁴² Ibid. This thesis has found no documentation regarding the number of emigrants from Kerala to the UAE in 2006. Therefore, this thesis relies on a very likely estimation. The Centre of Development Studies (CDS) in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala) makes two calculations. First, in 2003, CDS reported that 37% of the emigrant population in Kerala (1.8 million) went to the UAE. This figure increased to 42% in 2007. No figures for 2006 were provided. However, the average is 39.5% so this thesis assumes beyond a reasonable doubt that the number of emigrants from Kerala to the UAE was 40% in 2006.

First, in 2006 the World Bank reported that India received USD 25 billion in remittances.⁹⁴³ Second, a comprehensive database provided in partnership between the World Bank and the University of Sussex indicates that in 2006 Indian migrants in the UAE sent home USD 5.12 billion.⁹⁴⁴ This reveals that 20% of India's remittances came from the UAE and accounted for 2.8% of India's GDP.⁹⁴⁵ Interestingly, India receives the highest amount of remittances from its migrants in the UAE – far surpassing Saudi Arabia (\$2.97 billion), the United States (\$2.66 billion) and the United Kingdom (\$1.23 billion).⁹⁴⁶

If the Keralite population in the UAE is 720,000 (40% of a total of 1.8 million Keralites abroad) and with all things being equal Keralites would have had to have sent 40% of the 5.12 billion (2.05 billion) that the government of India received in remittances while rest of the Indian population in the UAE was responsible for sending the remaining 3.07 billion. We know that at least half of the Keralite population in the UAE is in the municipality of Dubai and, therefore, we can assume that at least half of the 2.05 billion that they sent to Kerala originates from there – 1.025 billion.

⁹⁴³ The exact number is 25.426 billion. The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*, 125.

⁹⁴⁴ The database was developed in partnership by the University of Sussex Development Research Centre and with the World Bank, Bilateral Remittance Estimates using Migrants Stocks (millions of US\$),” accessed December 20, 2008, <http://go.worldbank.org/ON5YV3Y480>; Also useful is Dilip Ratha and William Shaw, *South-South Migration and Remittances*, Working Paper No. 102 (Washington: World Bank, 2007).

⁹⁴⁵ The World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2008*, 125.

⁹⁴⁶ University of Sussex and the World Bank, “Bilateral Remittance Estimates using Migrants Stocks (millions of US\$),” accessed December 20, 2008, <http://go.worldbank.org/ON5YV3Y480>

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