

Panel III: Transnational Identity and Migration

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Paper Title: *Migrant Workers in Qatar: An Analysis of the Social, Economic and Political Structures that make Qatar a Major Destination for Migrant Workers*

Abstract: Every year, an estimated three million people migrate to the Arabian Gulf, mostly from Asian countries, to pursue work. The Gulf States are characterized by varying degrees of dependence on foreign workers, stemming from the rapid development of the petrochemical industry and the rise of urbanization and industrialization. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries-Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and The United Arab Emirates have large migrant populations, which in some of these countries comprise of the majority of the workforce. Qatar is one such Gulf State whose workforce is mainly comprised of migrant labor. It is a country that has seen an extraordinary increase in economic development and urbanization in the past decade alone. Migrant workers are essential to the thriving economies of GCC countries and every year migrant workers flock to the Gulf region because of the employment opportunities and prospect of a better life. However the realities of life for migrant workers are not as elaborate as the skyscrapers they build, and the wealth does not trickle down. While Qatar is arguably the most progressive country in the Middle East and has liberalized both socially and economically there is still progress to be made in terms of migrant worker rights and living conditions.