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Mobility Competitiveness and Security: Expatriate Perspectives from Qatar

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Introduction: In order to create and sustain a competitive, knowledge-based economy, Qatar must be able to continually attract, retain and integrate expatriate workers. As described in the Qatar National Development Strategy (QNV 2011 p. 105), "for the foreseeable future ... Qatar will not have enough citizens to meet the expanding requirements of a rapidly growing, diversifying and technologically advanced economy." Attracting the right mix of expatriates and retaining the best ones, however, is a major challenge for economy with a highly ambitious post-oil agenda, located in an unstable region, and where over 90% of workers are both foreign and temporary. Yet, little is known as to Qatar's place attractiveness and local security affect the mobility of the country's diverse expatriate population. First, Qatar needs to constantly attract new flows of knowledge and labor needed for economic development and to retain existing pool of skilled foreign workers. This means ensuring that workers view Doha as a comparably more attractive destination than Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Muscat, Riyadh or Singapore. By definition, the expatriate workforce of Qatar is mobile; that is, with the exception of those born in Qatar, each has already migrated at least once. How do expatriates view Qatar in comparison with other centers, and would they move elsewhere for a better offer? Second, Qatar must ensure that the regional instability seen elsewhere does not impact its reputation as a secure and stable oasis in the Middle East. At the same time, most of the middle- and high-income expatriate workers currently employed in Qatar come the Arab world, many of whom are not new arrivals but long-term members of the expatriate community in Qatar. Some come from the region's most insecure and unstable locations, which may affect their mobility. How

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do expatriate residents view the security and stability of Qatar, especially in relation to that of their home countries? Data and Methods: Therefore, SESRI conducted a nationally representative of middle- and high-income expatriates (with a basic salary of greater than 4000 QR per month) to examine the mobility of expatriates currently living in Qatar and the conditions under which they may leave the country. This survey included a randomized choice experiment in which respondents were given sets of hypothetical job offers with varying salaries in a number of regional destinations which are often viewed as competitors for Qatar. They were then asked whether they would choose to take the offer in the new location or stay in Qatar. The survey also included questions related to the security and stability of the respondent's home country and his and her ability to return home. Thus project investigate the relative attractiveness of Qatar in relation to other common expatriate destinations in the Gulf and East Asia in conjunction with salary; second, to examine how expatriate residents view the security and stability of Qatar, especially in relation to that of their home countries. In so doing we come better understand how deeply rooted and locally integrated expatriate workers are in Qatar. Accordingly we discuss legislation relevant to expatriate workers in Qatar and its implications for different resident groups. Preliminary Finding: Results indicate that Qatar is rather competitive among similar regional expatriate destinations, and that as long as salaries are competitive the country can retain Westerner and Asian migrants. Arab migrants respond very little to salary increases or decreases. None of the nationality groups seem overly driven by place attractiveness, and most seem to view living in Doha the same as other regional centers. Arabs expatriates in particular are deeply rooted, driven by security and community, but we found that many from this group are unable to return to their home countries. These results are discussed in the context of recent legislative initiatives in Qatar.