

Are we post-west yet? The appeal of the United Arab Emirates as an alternative to Western destinations for high-skilled migrants from the Global South |

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Abstract

While there has been significant discussion in political science about the emergence of a multipolar world where the United States (and the West at large) is no longer the only dominant power, there has been less discussion within migration studies about what a post-West world would look like from a migration perspective. We use the case of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to explore the contours of a post-West world of high-skilled migration, where viable alternatives to “Westward” migration exist for select migrants from the Global South. Drawing upon an original survey of over 1,000 high-skilled migrants from South Asia, the Middle East and Africa currently working in the UAE, as well as interviews with more than 50 high-skilled, multinational migrants, we explore the reasons why these migrants chose to move to the UAE. A significant proportion of our interviewees had moved from a Western country to the UAE or had turned down offers to move to a Western country in the past. We investigate their multifaceted reasons for choosing to stay in the UAE and not move onward to the West. These reasons include the lifestyle benefits, increased sense of safety, and the proximity to their home countries, and religious acceptance they enjoyed in the UAE, relative to what they imagined they would encounter in the West. Their accounts highlight shifting imaginaries of the West in the minds of high-skilled, non-Western migrants with significant mobility capital. Through these accounts, we de-center the West as the sole dream destination of non-Western migrants and offer a glimpse into a potential “post-West” world of migration.

Biography

Anju Mary Paul is a Professor of Social Research and Public Policy at New York University Abu Dhabi. Anju is an international migration scholar with research interests that include emergent migration patterns, particularly to, from, and within Asia and the Middle East, gender and labor, globalization, domestic work, and care policy. She is the award-winning author of *Multinational Maids: Stepwise Migration in a Global Labor Market* (Cambridge University Press 2017) and *Asian Scientists on the Move: Changing Science in a Changing Asia* (Cambridge University Press 2021). She is also the editor of *Local Encounters in a Global City* (Ethos Books 2017).

Mustafa Yavaş (PhD, Yale University) is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Division of Social Science at New York University Abu Dhabi. His scholarship centers on economic and political sociology

with strong interests in work and occupations, immigration, social movements, social networks, and theory. His previous research has been animated by a theoretical interest in boundary processes that cross-cut economic, social, and political settings, including status homophily in social networks, residential segregation by income, collective identity formation in social movements, and political polarization in social media. His current research revolves around the nexus of high-skilled labor, globalization, and quality of (working) life. Focusing on the Turkish case, his book, “White-Collar Blues: The Making of the Transnational Turkish Middle Class,” examines how transnational corporations have shaped middle-class formation in the Global South, including business professionals' quality of working life. In collaboration with Anju Paul, he also examines the changing migration patterns among the Southern high-skilled workers, focusing on their migration to the United Arab Emirates.