



Nationalism and brain circulation as a Strategic choice in
reversing brain drain

Remarks By

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**'Reversing the brain drain: strategies for recruitment and
talent management'**

Ahlam Hassan, president assistant for quality assurance, Ahlia University (chair)

Haifa Jamal Al-Lail, president, Effat University

Jaroslav Miller, rector, Palacky University

Franco Vigliotti, dean, EPFL Middle East

Charles Zukoski, provost and vice-president for academic affairs, University at Buffalo

King Abdulaziz University

Tuesday 20th March 13.00 – 14.00.

“Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim”

In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful and Peace with blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad "salla allah alahi wa salam" and his followers and companions.

Excellencies,

Esteemed colleagues,

Distinguish Guests,

Alsalamo Alaikom We Rahmato Allah We Barkatoh and good afternoon to everyone, IT is really great to always come back home and be part of scholarly activities with distinguished Colleagues and staff of King Abdula Aziz University or as we call it the founder’s University☺



First, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to attend this important event and to participate in this important panel with great and distinguished scholars.

Since the 1960, different scholars and authors have given different definition to the term **brain drain**. The term has been used usually to explain the phenomenon of abandonment of a country in favor of another by professionals or people with a high level of education, generally following an offer of better pay or living conditions (Grubel, 1994), as well as improved conditions for conducting one's professional activities. Recently, the profound alteration in the international scenario has led to a high level of mobility of workers and students in search of employment or further training and education. In few words, the term explain the migration flows and population



mobility in the world with concentration on talents regardless what kind of talents scientists, engineers, or artists.

A pressing and frequently debated issue in the world and particularly the MENA region is that of “brain drain”, understood as the loss of highly skilled human capital together with a simultaneous lack of “brain circulation” from the MENA region. It is the flow of talent to and from Middle East and North Africa and the important benefits, which that would entail for the region.

In my remarks today, I will focus on causes and challenges of the brain drain in the lack of brain circulation, suggest some tools that could facilitate the necessary transition from the former phenomenon to the latter; then recommend a proposal that might be considered as a part of a full-scale policy initiative geared towards resolving this longstanding problem that can



have both immediate and long-range consequences for MENA region.

I will start with the causes and challenges, as we all know that the MENA region is facing a twofold challenge: on the one hand, an alarming increase in the skill level of human capital **exiting** the region's economic system, particularly the scientifically- technologically-skilled personnel and artists, resulting in the erosion of national competitiveness within the region or within each country in the region. On the other hand, the policies of the human capital are either uncoordinated within or between the countries that constitute the region or they do not have the ability to attract skilled human capital from the rest of the world. A loss of MENA talent, combined with an inability to attract foreign "brains", heavily penalizes the region and the countries within the region in the context of a globalized



world that increasingly competes on the basis of knowledge and innovation.

What kind of regional and national policies we should adopt?

Governments and the private sectors of the MENA region should adopt strategies that help in reversing the outward flows of talent and policies that can attract highly skilled individuals to the region. Regional decisive policy measures to manage flows and an interdisciplinary approach towards studying the phenomenon and taking effective steps are therefore essential.

In concrete terms, various measures should be implemented in order to curb the brain drain and, instead, favor brain circulation and nationalization. Several countries that are more advanced in promoting brain circulation, and can provide



models from which inspiration may be drawn. In order to reverse the negative phenomenon MENA is undergoing and to promote brain circulation in our region, a decisively ambitious policy, targeted and well-coordinated measures must be adopted. The establishment of a task force charged, in close consultation with the all MENA governments, universities and their private sectors, with the role of formulating a roadmap with concrete proposals whose costs and cost-effectiveness should be determined, and which should be capable of implementation as soon as possible is needed. In particular, this roadmap should recommend measures that could immediately facilitate the attraction of foreign brainpower and encourage the return of MENA talent. University reform, targeted investment in scientific research, substantial collaboration between the public and private sectors are the

prerequisites for the sort of economic growth and aspiration.

This roadmap should involve the dedication and collaboration of three major entities:

First: Government authorities

Second: Private sectors

Third: Universities and research centers

In terms of government and the private sector authorities, the government of each country should collaborate with their private sectors agencies and focus on the implementation of five areas of action:

1. A clear-cut investment policy that promote, attract talent and encourage brain circulation in the area of research should be implemented to help the countries in the MENA region achieve their economic growth.

2. The adoption of models appropriate to encourage study and specialization abroad, and a subsequent return to the region “MENA”.
3. The establishment of public-private partnerships that encourage the nationalization of scientists and artists regardless of their origin and nationalities.
4. The facilitation of entry visa procedures for foreign researchers and talent.

In terms of universities and other public and private research centers, the work to be done is extensive and should form part of an earnest reform of the university system. There are at least nine main areas of action proposed:

1. An overhaul of competitive exams for academic posts.
2. The internationalization of curricula



3. The adoption of study abroad (one semester or one year) and making it as mandatory for the graduates and undergraduate students study plans.
4. The establishment of exchange programs allowing the flow of incoming and outgoing students.
5. The creation of academic centers of excellence
6. A shake-up of research funding
7. The optimization of remuneration packages.
8. Mandatory retirement at age 65 in respect of all managerial roles performed by university academics, with a view to facilitating renewal.

In conclusion, in order to bring about a reversal in trend, and sow the seeds for a systemic transition from a phenomenon of brain drain to brain circulation and nationalization, there is a need for resolve and investment on the part of government



authorities, civil society and business agencies. Regulatory simplification, autonomy, internationalized curricula, centers of excellence, and meritocracy. These are the components for the ecosystem of this era of change, which must necessarily involve public authorities, universities and businesses, but above all, those among the younger generations, since they are the judges and owners of these components and how they will use them to their success.

May I take this opportunity to convey my very best wishes for an effective, successful and productive Conference, thank you for your kind attention.

God bless you all and Assalam Allykum w Rahmat Allah w Barakatuh.