Preface

The rise of varied forms of cross-border mobility into, out of, and across the Middle East and North Africa has generated both tensions and opportunities for states within the region. Not surprisingly, Arab and non-Arab states alike have developed complex policies that engage with labour emigration and immigration, forced displacement, as well as diasporic mobilisation. One dimension of the politics of migrants, refugees, and diasporas in the Middle East that has received less academic attention concerns the interplay between states’ migration and foreign policymaking. How does cross-border mobility feature in Middle East states’ diplomatic strategies? This book aims to enhance existing scholarly work, which has yet to engage in a sustained manner with the international politics of migration in the Global South, by exploring four dimensions of migration diplomacy in the contemporary Middle East. It examines how emigration-related processes become embedded in governmental practices of establishing and maintaining power; how states engage with migrant and diasporic communities residing in the West; how oil-rich Arab monarchies have extended their support for a number of sending-states’ ruling regimes via cooperation on labour migration; and, finally, how labour and forced migrants may serve as instruments of political leverage. Drawing on multi-sited fieldwork and data collection and employing a range of case studies across the Middle East and North Africa, the book adds to existing understandings of regional migration governance in the Global South. It identifies how the management of cross-border mobility in the Middle East is not primarily driven by legal, moral, or human rights considerations but dictated by state actors’ key concern – political power.