# 1 State-crafting and Modes of Governance in the United Arab Emirates

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**Abstract**

This chapter engages with stateness as a means to assert national belonging vis-à-vis the predominant presence of foreign migrants in the UAE. Through a process of meiosis, the UAE state subsists and thrives in relation to the political 'other' it constructs and belittles. In this vein, we tackle how today's Emirati citizens reproduce – peculiar, rather than exceptional – exclusionary forms of stateness within the unorthodoxly postcolonial context of "Trucial Sheikhdoms", where local rulers in the 19th century signed treaties with the British to protect the coast from alleged piracy. We develop a threefold analysis of the governmental strategies that generate exclusionary modes of organizing political society. First, we address how the UAE has historically made symbols that are reminiscent of Iran invisible in this coastal region, rather than dismantling Iran's material survival. Second, we examine the UAE government's attempts at stifling the emergence of alternative political subjectivities, by comparing these repression measures towards citizens to other states in the region. Third, we discuss migrant-founded charity initiatives, which mostly focus on intra-community assistance. We illustrate how this phenomenon is caused by deliberate governmental strategies, rather than by the specific societal structure of the UAE or an a priori philanthropic tendency of such migrant communities.

## Introduction

This chapter examines the state as an exclusionary mode of organizing society in the UAE, a federation of seven Emirates – Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al-Qaiwain, Fujairah, Ajman

and Ra's al-Khaimah – located on the Eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula.[1] It engages with the continual crafting of the state as a way to assert national belonging vis-à-vis the predominant presence of foreign migrants in the UAE and the small number of Emirati nationals – approximately 1.8 million, while 9.4 million foreign residents make up 90% of the local workforce (Whitley 1993: 44; Lori 2011: 316). It investigates the symbolic belittlement of the *political other* in the UAE society in the meiotic process of fabricating the "Emirati self" and of marking the peculiarity of the state. Meiosis, meaning "lessening" in ancient Greek, is a figure of speech that expresses understatement. We use it here to express that the Emirati state, through a meiotic process subsists insofar as it builds on the belittlement of alternative political and social subjectivities while constructing its own homogenous polity. Through this lens, the chapter tackles how today's Emirati modalities of governance reproduce – peculiar rather than exceptional[2] – exclusionary forms of stateness within the unorthodoxly postcolonial context of "Trucial Sheikhdoms" such as the UAE, where local rulers in the 19th century signed treaties with the British to protect the coast from alleged piracy after the Franco-British rivalry (1798–1810) and the Portuguese influence (Al-Otabi 1989).

Specifically, the current policies of marginalization in the UAE are today's historical vectors of "imperial debris" (Stoler 2013) produced by the unorthodox form of postcoloniality in the Arab Gulf that differ in significant ways from the (at least discursively) normative process of political liberation from foreign rule. In this case, in 1968 the agreements by which the United Kingdom had governed the seven emirates of the "Trucial States" were rescinded, with the British announcing a withdrawal by the end of the decade to be replaced by bilateral agreements (Al-Otabi 1989: 167). Historians report contradictory accounts regarding why the British established a long-term presence in the Gulf to begin with. In one version, historians contend that the British

mainly intended to keep open an important mail and commercial route against incessant piracy by the local Qawasim tribe (Lorimer 1915 in Al-Otabi 1989). In another, the Qawasim were depicted as proto-nationalists, interested in creating a single nation and concerned with preserving trade routes and challenging the East India Company in the Gulf, with the Gulf waterway having been peaceful before British interference (Al-Qasimi 1986).

Drawing on theories of autocratic politics according to which paranoia is not simply "an individual mental state, but it is also a condition of modern societies and politics" (Rozic 2015: 78), we illustrate how everyday governance dictates where the threats to national cohesion and viability reside and how the nation can tackle such "external" risks. We therefore inquire the everyday realms in which the UAE state federation employs exclusionary modes of governance in a bid to construct an original Emirati monolithic polity. As in other nation-states, the official polity seeks to assimilate "the history of the state to that of the nation" (White 2011). As theorized by German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the late 18th-century founder of idealism, *Urvolk* indicates that the "primitive people" or the "original inhabitants" are the archetype of the nation. By nuancing this in its own contextual peculiarity, we here employ the concept of *Urvolk* to shed light on the factors that, parading palingenetic efforts of going back to a "pure" origin, want to reify the UAE as an entity created and developed by local Arab indigeneity. This contextualized idea of *Urvolk* underpins the current Emiratization campaign in the employment and volunteering sectors[3]; motivates chronic governmental concerns to disguise the originally hybrid character of ethnic subjecthood in the UAE; and highlights the impossibility of political heterogeneity within Emirati polity.

Considering the political history of nation-building in the southern societies of the Arabian-Persian[4] Gulf, we examine Emirati production of everyday stateness by developing a threefold

analysis of two informal and one formal (enacted through law) governmental strategies that generate paranoid modes of governance. First, we address how the UAE has historically made symbols that recall Iran in this coastal region invisible rather than dismantling Iran's material survival. Second, we examine the UAE government's attempts at stifling the emergence of alternative political subjectivities through depriving regime opponents from obtaining citizenship by comparing these repression measures against citizens to other states in the region. Third, we discuss migrant-founded charity initiatives, which mostly focus on intra-community assistance. We illustrate how this phenomenon is caused by deliberate, although informal, governmental strategies rather than by the specific societal structure of the UAE or a philanthropic tendency of such migrant communities.

The three case studies – in which the state can no longer be conceived of independently from its relationships with multiple other actors – have the explanatory power to show how the modern Emirati state involves a process of emanation: it emanates from the heterogenous assemblage of power holders who have marked some political subjectivities as unwanted and others as the dominant polity. As has occurred in other imperial settings (cf. Stoler 2013: 3), these unorthodox "imperial debris" genealogically produce the governing grammar of the present state, where monolithic (and therefore post-tribal) stateness better encapsulates the UAE as a fully, fully fledged political actor within the global political sphere.

On the one hand, the following case studies will echo Mitchell's perspective (1991), according to which state power is manifested through complex assemblages of actors who have historically rejected, reproduced, and transformed local modalities of governance. On the other hand, the monolithic stateness emerges as paradoxical *versus* such unorthodox "imperial debris." In other words, if Mitchell's theory (1991: 98) emphasized that alternative political subjectivities and

their ways of opposing the state are formed *within* the latter's organizational terrain, our case studies illustrate how the state per se cannot be the end of the story. As with modernity at large (in the context of which any analysis of colonialism and modern political orders must proceed – cf. Mitchell 2000), it emerges as a relational category of analysis, which can only be defined *in relation to* what it does not want to contain and what it does not want to tolerate in the effort to construct the (ahistorical) purity of the Emirati polity.

## Historical Background

In the Gulf region, each tribe was historically an independent political institution subject to internal rivalries. As al-Otabi (1989: 38) observed, with the rise of the *tawhidi* movement inspired by the religious reformer Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab during the second half of the 18th century, all tribal units were unified under one banner, something the Arabian Peninsula had not seen since the end of the Caliphate. Two centuries later, despite being separated into multiple independent states, the Arab Gulf monarchies tend to promote Arab Bedouin heritage while neglecting the contribution of non-Arab communities, be they Persian, Baluch, African, or Indian, to the history of the Gulf (AlMutawa 2016: 22). Since the 1970s, foreign workers have migrated to the UAE, especially from the Indian sub-continent and the poorest regions of the Arab world (Whitley 1993: 30), enabling the construction boom of the Emirates like Dubai and expanding the UAE-based migrant communities. Today, Indians make up its largest noncitizen population (Vora 2013). Members of these migrant communities are generally unable to become legal citizens of the UAE and remain classified as temporary guest workers even into the second or third generation. However, naturalization laws for foreign migrants have been reformed in

January 2021, establishing that investors, professionals, "special talents," and their families can acquire the Emirati nationality and passport.[5] Yet, the right to citizenship remains conditional. The UAE government has been fostering an anti-Iranian narrative in official geopolitics, singularly overshadowing the significance of Iranians and Emiratis of Iranian descent in the UAE's heritage, economy and art. Historians narrate that over the 11th century, Arabs from Oman founded the city of Hormuz in southern Persia. Between the 14th and 15th century, the Arab-Persian Kingdom of Hormuz stretched on both sides of the Gulf, including Persian-speaking Jolfar (today known as Ras al-Khaimah, one of the seven Emirates). Until today, a sizeable community of Persian-speaking fishermen have been living in Ras al-Khaimah. Indeed, it was between the 16th and 18th century that large numbers of ethnic and linguistically identified "Arabs" migrated to the northern Gulf shores. They would live in ethnically, religiously, and linguistically mixed port cities, and thrive on trade, alleged piracy, and pearl fishery. From 1850 to the 1930s, Arab rulers left the northern shores, as Tehran reclaimed its authority over that littoral. Persian authorities enforced fiscal policies that were unpopular among Arab and Persian traders. Many of them gradually resettled on the southern Gulf shores. The rise of southern Gulf port cities (such as al-Manama) and the decline of their northern counterparts (such as Bushehr, Bandar Abbas) gave rise to a counter-migration wave from Persia to the Arabian Peninsula (Potter 2014).

In 1936, when the Iranian government enforced a veiling ban that became unpopular among Arab and Persian Sunni Muslims, a new emigration wave was prompted toward the Gulf's southern shores. Today's configuration of the Emirati-Iranian relationship suggests that in pre-Iranian revolution, Persian nationalism played a role in alienating non-Persian communities, especially under the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979). On the southern shores of the Gulf, before the

discovery of oil in 1958 in Abu Dhabi and 1966 in Dubai, Arab rulers were often financially supported by non-Arab merchants (Moghadam 2013: 250–251) while turning the erstwhile Trucial States into developed city-states. During the 1960s, when oil was discovered in the UAE, Arab rulers came from the desert uplands of the Arabian Peninsula, feeling they were no longer in need of multi-ethnic traders. This allowed them to begin articulating a monolithic Arab national identity, of which the UAE's modern governmentality presently conveys the effects of an assemblage of power vectors that promote – and not only implement – biopolitical control over the (imagined) homogenous Emirati polity.

In 1971, the UAE gained independence from the British protectorate, enacting a citizenship law the year after that naturalized many Iranian residents[6] (the 1972/17 National Law, counting 46 articles).[7] After the 1979 Iranian revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the UAE's easy immigration policies allowed many Iranian traders to resettle in the UAE and evade US sanctions. Prior to the 1960s, emigration from Iran was not regulated by rigid bureaucracy (Nadjmabadi 2010: 23). Although there are no official statistics, the Iranian authorities claim that 400,000–500,000 Iranians live in the UAE today,[8] mostly in Dubai, while the Emirati government puts the figure as low as 100,000.[9] Moreover, only a minority of these naturalized Iranians are from a Muslim Sunni background, sometimes being of Baluch origins or, however, coming from southern Iranian cities where a Sunni demography is more sizeable. In addition to ethnicity, therefore, religious belonging further challenges the desired homogeneity of the Emirati polity.

National and international media rarely mention the national economic divide, as it is considered a social taboo engendering schisms between the seven Emirates. For instance, holding most of the UAE's oil and gas reserves, Abu Dhabi accounted for an average of 55.9% of the state's

gross domestic product (GDP) from 2004 to 2014. In the same time span, Dubai contributed 28.6%, Sharjah 4.7%, and the small northern Emirates of Ajman 1%, Ras al-Khaimah 1.7%, Fujairah 0.6%, and Umm al-Quwain 0.2% (Roberts 2017: 551). While the UAE state certainly cannot represent the cultural, economic, and political specificity of each Emirate, its modes of governance mainly emanate from the economically privileged Dubai and Abu Dhabi, yet project the Emirati self onto the whole national territory. Against this hybrid demography and history, while we do not endeavor to assess the individual's desire to conform to the citizen ideal-type fantasized by the nation-state, we intend to focus on the way the "micro politics of the everyday state" (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001) coalesces with the articulated behavioral politics of its own citizens vis-à-vis ethnicity, political rivalry, and state-crafting; citizenship as a safeguarded privilege and loyalty reward; and as the vertical impediment of inter-group service provision, horizontal solidarity, and a non-institutional pre-emptive measure to maintain socio-political order.

## Iran in the UAE: A Symbolical Removal

Since its independence, the UAE has undergone rapid transformations, from rural and tribal communities to modern nation-states. Such transformations have raised governmental concerns related to authenticity, heritage, and social memory (El-Aswad 2011). In this section, we argue that the removal of Iranian culture and economy in the UAE is symbolic rather than material. In fact, Iranians still run several businesses, with their contribution to the UAE economy tacitly accepted and even treasured. Nonetheless, symbolical removals, implemented through official governmental declarations and national media accounts, are meant to reify the UAE as a monoethnic and monocultural state and to maneuver the UAE history of state-building. In this

regard, scholars have already noticed how the creation of false historical memory is often a manifestation of social paranoia (Rozic 2015: 88) and paranoid exclusion the most effective strategy for national identity (Nasser 2014). In cultural production sites, the Bedouin heritage is emphasized to the exclusion of other ethnic, cultural, and religious elements. For example, as Lienhardt recounted (2001 in Potter, 2014), in the Dubai Museum, mannequins depicting shopkeepers in the *suq* (local market) are clearly Arab, whereas in 1950s Dubai and Abu Dhabi, they were mainly Indians and Persians. Moreover, "museum exhibits and displays in most Gulf cities feature images of distinctly non-African individuals performing tasks that historically were performed by Africans" (Hopper 2014: 344).

The transnational space connecting the Iranian coastal region and the Arab countries has been shaped by border migration and local trade activities (Nadjmabadi 2010:19). Historically, even when Iranian migrants could afford to travel back, migrants continued to commute across the Arab-Persian Gulf, having become accustomed to this mobile lifestyle. One of anthropologist Afsaneh Nadjmabadi's interlocutors (2010: 30) emblematically affirmed: "If we aren't able to go over there regularly, we'll fall ill." In this history of "syncretic border culture" (Baud and Van Schendel 1997: 234), Arab nationals and naturalized Iranians have historically served as *kafil*, a local guarantor for temporary guest workers, to secure cheap labor for their ventures or to financially benefit from the fees charged to migrants to produce their documentation (Nadjmabadi 2010: 24).

The broader aim of this section is to shed light on the hybrid nature of the Gulf's history, which is currently the subject of a simplified polarized narrative (Shi'a/Iranian versus Sunni/Arab), which often underlies media wars. Among the Iranians who were granted citizenship since UAE's independence in 1971, there are important Emirati families with Persian family ties and

connections. For example, during the rise and rule of the Qawasim Shaikhly clan (from 18th to 19th century), the ruling family of the Emirates of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah, the area was inhabited by *hawala* (those who "wander," who "transform"), namely Arabs who had moved to Persia centuries ago and returned to the Arab shores of the Gulf at a later stage but never formed a unified state, according to the standard narrative that refers to an ideal-type Arab role model (Potter 2014: 300). The ethnic origin of these noble local families is a thorny issue in a context where the Qawasim's rise was built on trade and supposedly piracy between the Persian and the Arabian littorals. Examining the legacy of Arabian-Persian cultural and economic bonds remains a taboo in the Gulf's Arabic-speaking media, and sometimes people will even attack the alleged Iranian roots of a political rival. In June 2016, in an interview[10] with the Emirati TV station ash-Sharjah, Sultan Bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi, the ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah, highlighted the "Persian origin" of the tribe of Yemen's former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, to point out the historical continuity of the latter's alliance with Iran against the UAE. Relationships with Iran have often played a role in domestic disputes, such as between two crown princes in Ras al-Khaimah in the early 2000s.[11]

Again, using Iranian origins as a token of disempowerment and loss of local reputation, in October 2017, Sara al-Amiri[12] was appointed state minister for advanced sciences in the UAE. A widely followed UAE-focused Twitter account highlighted the Iranian roots of the new minister and how the Iranian press celebrated her appointment, in a clear attempt to question Amiri's allegiance to the state. "How could we liberate the islands occupied by Iran and appoint the Iranian Sara al-Amiri as minister for advanced sciences? Is our country incapable of finding an alternative among its citizens?" read one tweet.[13] Similar thoughts had circulated in 2009 in the

form of text messages upon the appointment of three ministers of Iranian descent, including Anwar Mohammed Gargash, the current minister of state for foreign affairs.

On the Persian side of the Gulf, Iranian Arabic-speaking media at times attack Tehran's political rivals in the UAE by emphasizing the Iranian origins of these Emirati citizens,[14] especially when the latter employ an Arab nationalist rhetoric. At the same time, there are claims about the Arabness of Iran's regional allies,[15] who are instead represented as Persian[16] in some of the Arab Gulf media.

## Taboos and Polarized Narratives

On the official website of the UAE National Day[17] called "The Spirit of the Union," one can read phrases like "It is the Spirit of the Union that celebrates our culture and heritage, and yet shapes our future." Likewise, a popular saying of Sheikh Zayed ben Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the UAE nation and "architect of modern state policy" (Roberts 2017: 559), is "A nation without past is a nation without present, or future." The concept of *nation* here aims to encompass multiple identities belonging to different tribes and locations (El-Aswad 2011). Yet, this diversity is absorbed into the rhetoric of a new nation that is authentic (*asil*) vis-à-vis the non-Emirati people (Ibid.). The national script of belonging, therefore, traces a clear-cut line of separation between local citizens, who reproduce the everyday effects of exclusionary stateness, and migrants. It puts the naturalized in an uncomfortable position,[18] at times absorbed into the nation and at others marked as being originally foreign.

In official documents, there is no discrimination against migrants on the grounds of ethnicity in the UAE. The treatment of Iranian migrants followed the geopolitical history of Arab-Iranian relationships as much as the treatment of Arab migrants in Iran (Nadjmabadi 2010: 30). For

example, Iranians were particularly scapegoated in the UAE throughout the 1960s, during Nasserist Pan-Arabism. Today, on the one hand, some segments of the Iranian migrant communities feel more comfortable in the UAE than in Iran. For instance, some Iranian universities are more selective and less financially accessible than some UAE-based Iranian academic institutions, and migrant families often prefer sending their children to the latter (Moghadam 2013: 255). On the other hand, Iranians remain discriminated subjects in the UAE, and therefore tend to embrace a politic of invisibility in the public space. As Iranian scholar Amin Moghadam significantly affirmed in the interview Glioti conducted in June 2018:

> There's more than one reason behind the politics of invisibility of the Iranian community in the UAE. On the one hand, the government discourages self-identifying practices; on the other, it's the community itself that tends to disguise its own presence. For instance, 3rd and 4th Iranian generations no longer celebrate Nowruz – the Persian New Year – in the UAE, even though there is no explicit law banning it. You just do what makes you feel more comfortable in a nation state.

If control and cultural assimilation are initially imposed by force, over time the population – and not only national citizens – start internalizing them by giving up "cultural citizenship" (Rosaldo 2013), that is, the right to *be* different and *exhibit* difference. This is how Foucault (1975) used to conceive the panopticon: not only the gaze exercises power, but also an automatization of power through conformity takes place. Indeed, the post-UAE independence (1971) assimilation process went too far, inducing Iranian migrants to deny their Persian origins, refuse to speak Persian, or mingle with other Iranians in the public space (Moghadam 2013: 254). In addition, the endemic hierarchy within the Iranian community has significantly emerged to mark peripheral Iranians. The *khodmuni* are the oldest generation Iranians in the UAE who consider themselves the most

entitled to "Emiratiness." Moreover, it is significant that, in 1972, Article 17 of the Citizenship and Passport Law offered Emirati citizenship to those Iranians who were already living in the British-protected Trucial States prior to 1925 or before the UAE's independence in 1971. In the years after, the burgeoning oil-driven Dubai economy led an increasing number of Iranians to migrate to the UAE from major Iranian cities. The naturalization process had, however, been largely halted at that time, resulting in a deepening of the divide between Iranian expatriates and Emirati citizens of Iranian descent. This is the result of the UAE nation-building peculiarity, which tacitly requires the abandonment of ambiguous identities for the sake of a monolithic national history. Against this backdrop, diasporic hierarchies amongst migrant groups and diverse polities emerged in the UAE nation-state.

Bias against Emiratis of Iranian descent – mostly known as *'ajam*, a racial pejorative in the Emirati context – continues to be widespread in Emirati society. Emirati women's online forums[19] have tackled discrimination, encouraging locals to overcome prejudices and marry their daughters to *'ajami* suitors. Other forums feature "handbooks"[20] on how to identify *'ajam* from the way they speak or from their physical appearance, in a further confirmation that *'ajam* normally prefer keeping a low profile.

## Hybrid History and Identity

Unlike public statements in the Arabic-speaking media, the UAE's language, architecture, art, and economy all bear witness to Iranian presence. Between the late 18th and the early 19th century, Iranian migrants built the most affluent houses in Dubai, in what was then known as the Bastakiyya neighborhood (Potter 2014: 9). This is clear from the Persian architectural features, most notably the ventilation systems centered on wind towers (*barjeel* in Arabic, *badgir* in

Persian). The name *Bastakiyya* has subsequently been Arabized into "Fahidi" and is now home to a touristic site. This architectural past is usually pre-packaged for visitors as part of a homogenous Emirati Arab cultural heritage without any reference to non-Arab contributions.[21] Iranians are also well represented in the Emirati art scene, especially in the neighborhoods of Deira, al-Quoz, and in the Dubai Festival City where art galleries that are significantly influenced by the latest developments in Iran's art scene are located. Despite geopolitical rivalries, Iranian artists are not allowed to stand out as anti-Tehran dissident voices that might cause harm to mutual economic interests. In the aftermath of the 2009 unrest in Iran, the Emirati authorities went as far as censoring politically charged Iranian artworks.[22] Quite significantly, therefore, Iranian artists in the UAE are not allowed to express political dissent against the Iranian government and develop as an opponent community (Moghadam 2013: 259–261). Thereby, this intent is preventing the emergence of an environment where a diversification of historical memory can burgeon.

The economic weight of the Iranian community in the UAE does not, however, go unnoticed. In 2014, Iranian officials put investments abroad at roughly $700 billion, of which $200 billion in the UAE only.[23] In 2016, the UAE was still Iran's largest non-oil commercial partner and source of imported goods, which amounted to $23.7 billion. In the same year, more than 62% of the Gulf Cooperation Council's imports from Iran were destined for the Emirates.[24] The economic relevance of the Iranian community in Dubai became even clearer after the sanctions enforced by US President Donald Trump, as most community members maintained their business activities in the Emirate, as stated by Moghadam in the interview (June, 2018).

Although Iranian investors have started looking elsewhere in the region,[25] it is worth remembering that the Iranian government has relied on Dubai as a major hub to evade US

sanctions for decades. US products were re-exported to Iran via Dubai and front firms for companies controlled by Tehran have long found a safe haven in the UAE.[26] Nonetheless, due to the UAE's adhesion to the US anti-Iran sanctions, it is now nearly impossible to obtain a visa in the UAE and open a new bank account (Moghadam 2013: 257).

## Dissent on Governmental Practices of Removal

The UAE's history as a co-existence of multi-ethnic communities living in a "network of small and large ports connected by the sea" (Alaedini 2017: 139) has historically been silenced in this continual process of crafting rather than going back to the *Urvolk* state. As a result, as frequently happens in nation-states, a dominant ethnic group emerges at the expense of the contemporary and historical roles of others (Potter 2014). However, the citizens' participation in the local making of political order is never seamless. Indeed, some Emiratis have explicitly criticized this local form of nation-building, challenging the official representation of their heritage as homogenous. Rana AlMutawa, a PhD candidate at Oxford University, has analyzed how Emirati history is officially portrayed as Arab Bedouin while neglecting non-Arab components. In the Gulf region, Arab states currently promote a narrative of homogeneity to create an "imagined community" (Anderson 2006) that bonds citizens to one another. Simultaneously, they promote a "narrow and rigid sense of identity that excludes a large part of the nation's socio- and ethno-historic DNA" (AlMutawa 2016: 24). Cultural homogeneity is promoted because local diversity is perceived as a factor that endangers the public sentiment of loyalty to the state. In this regard, Emirati scholar Ali Khalifa stated that "political loyalty to one's tribe has not as yet given way to loyalty to the state as an abstract political concept" (AlMutawa 2016: 22).

By a similar token, Sultan Souud al-Qasimi, a reformist intellectual and member of Sharjah's ruling family, repeatedly championed inclusiveness in Emirati society, relating to the contribution of non-Arab Emiratis to the country's growth[27] and the daring proposal of naturalizing some long-term expatriates.[28] Illustrators, such as Haidar Mohammad, launched *Sha'biat* in 2006, which is a UAE leading cartoon broadcasted on the *Sama Dubai* channel.[29] The series' main character, Shambee, is an Emirati of Iranian descent. In one episode, he comically seeks to prove his Arab credentials by modifying his name and reciting Bedouin poetry.[30] Dubai's cultural diversity is therefore embodied in *Sha'biat*'s characters. In this context, the symbolic removal of the Iranian presence is functional to claiming authenticity: "Being Arab as opposed to Persian and necessitated by […] the postcolonial state-building projects of the Gulf" (Al-Dailami 2014: 301).

While the Iranian presence in the UAE is everything but gone, the rhetoric used in channels through which state entities convey their messages tend to belittle Iranian origins and depict them as a potential source of spurious Emirati identities. The official polity's discourse, however, speaks as if Iranian traces should not be there as part of the "Emirati self," while the material presence of Iran in the UAE is still there and often capitalized upon. The case of the UAE state-crafting as a politics of public dissimulation, where Iran seems to be no longer there in any form while concealing the material history of the present, is reminiscent of what Lisa Wedeen theorized as the politics of "as if" (1998). Such a dissimulation is aimed at exclusion: it, in fact, enables the UAE state to campaign for the homogeneity of a compliant and pure Emirati polity by denying and belittling the *political other*. We will now show how some modes of governance instead implement institutional exclusion by intervening on citizenship.

## Revocation and Stripping of Citizenship as Repressive Measures

It is no surprise that certain rights are exclusively reserved for citizens even in the so-called fragile states, where the social contract is not so effective. In the Gulf region, citizens are not legally permitted to hold dual nationality; in many cases, a loss of citizenship here will most likely result in temporary or perhaps permanent statelessness (Babar 2017: 543).[31] While most literature has discussed the binaries of citizenship and statelessness in the Gulf and the related social membership in the nation-state (Whitley 1993; Beaugrand 2011; 2014; Lori 2017), we are rather interested in capturing what citizenship and stripping of citizenship mean as a behavioral pattern of public politics, which is institutionalized through national law.

Among the Gulf countries, there are variations between Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE on the one hand, and Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar on the other. While the first three have been actively engaging in revocation of citizenship since 2012, the latter three have chosen other routes to fight endemic political opponents (Babar 2017: 543). While stripping the citizenship of both local citizens (*isqat*) and naturalized migrants (*sahb*) is by no means an entirely new practice in the Gulf states, there has been a significant rise in the frequency of its use across the region since 2011 (Babar 2017: 526). In November 2011, five Emirati citizens – referred to in international media as the "UAE Five" – were convicted for insulting the Emirati ruling family. The five were deprived of their citizenship and exiled, travelling out of the country on Comoros Islands passports and ending up in Thailand (Babar 2017: 530). Generally, neither documentation nor a decree was given to them, making the state decision difficult to contest (Amnesty International 2016). Some of those who have had their citizenship revoked were of Iranian origin, but were eventually able to take back their Iranian citizenship.[32] Hosting large numbers of foreign workers, the UAE has long managed to skirt issues of civil rights, political rights, and citizenship (Whitley 1993: 30).

## Purchasing and Granting Citizenship

As we have discussed regarding ethnicity and Iranian origins, citizenship is similarly used as a token of ethical and political (dis)empowerment and a guarantee of the cohesion, homogeneity, and viability of the Emirati polity. The sale of Comorian citizenship to Emirati *bidouns*[33] represents an interesting case. In 2018, the number of Comorian passport holders in the Emirates was estimated at 40,000.[34] The UAE started a scheme to buy Comorian citizenship to its *bidouns* in 2009. The Comorian authorities seized on the opportunity to inject cash into the country where local poverty rates are high, while the Emirati authorities were not willing to allow *bidouns* to access the benefits that come with citizenship.[35]

With the Gulf boycott of Qatar in June 2017, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain subsequently advanced the demand that Qatar immediately cease naturalizing citizens from other regional countries. Qatar is frequently accused of interfering in the national security of its neighbors by providing nationality to their citizens (Babar 2017: 540). In that case, Qatar not only ignored such demands, but amended its nationality law to provide citizenship to the children of Qatari women married to Bahrainis, Saudis, Emiratis, and others (Babar 2017: 541). Indeed, migration, as much as citizenship, has increasingly been securitized in an alleged bid to defeat potential security threats (Babar 2017: 527–530). Jawad Fairuz, a Bahraini who became stateless, affirmed that "The possession of citizenship should not be understood as privilege or reward for allegiance, and its revocation should not be wielded as a weapon of control and oppression" (Amnesty International 2016: 8). In December 2011, Emirati political opponents were deprived of citizenship with the allegation of belonging to the *da'wa li-l-islah* (the "call to reform"), the Emirati branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*), in the framework of the phenomenon of "homegrown terrorism." A small segment of Emirati society close to the Muslim

Brotherhood[36] have often denounced the inhuman character of this governmental measure, which implements this exceptional policy to arbitrarily punish its own citizens. Sheikhs like ‘Ali al-Hamadi[37] have often voiced their dissent by pointing out that any professional, public, and personal identity are stripped off with the withdrawal of Emirati citizenship. Those affected have at times emphasized that there is no legal ground for this action. Some dissident regional commentators started to speak of *shu‘ur diya‘ al-hawiye*, a feeling of identity loss,[38] which was behind the implementation of tough measures on citizenship. Among the criticism coming from the Gulf region itself, Qatari media emphasized the “risk of placing nationalized individuals at the mercy of security slavery” (*wada‘ fi’at al-mutajannasin tahta rahmat al-‘ubuda al-tama li’l jihaz al-amni*).[39]

Local debates are heated, not only as to the stripping of the Emirati citizenship. The criteria and priorities to grant citizenship also constitute a contentious issue in the regional media. In this regard, Arab nationalists have launched appeals for granting Emirati citizenship to Iranian Ahwazi Arabs, who, in their view, should be given priority over Iranians of Persian descent. Ahwazi Arabs are originally from the resource-rich Khuzestan province in Southwestern Iran. For example, in a TV interview[40] on the Saudi *Rotana al-Khalijiah* in May 2012, Mahmoud al-Ahwazi, a leader from the Ahwaz Arab People’s Democratic-Popular Front, lamented that most of the Iranians who had obtained Emirati citizenship were allegedly ethnic Persians. Some local commentators, such as an-Na‘imi, do not prioritize specific ethnicities, but rather defend the need to naturalize those who play in the UAE clubs for the sake of national football.[41] Others call for wariness toward citizenship claims, as the integrity of the state and the social structures should come as a primary interest, and evidence is provided by those who, through claiming citizenship, have then threatened the state and distorted its image.[42]

The relationship between "citizen" and "non-citizen" has great significance for understanding the construction of class, gender, city, and state in the Gulf (Khalaf, ash-Shehabi & Hanieh 2015). Since the Arab Uprisings of 2011, state repression toward government opposition has been stepped up to the extent that the UAE now has one of the highest rates of political prisoners per capita anywhere in the world (Coates Ulrichsen 2016). Nevertheless, the stripping of citizenship as a punishment tool is not particular to the Arab Gulf, as the United Kingdom adopts similar measures.[43] In the UAE context, holding local citizenship is not tolerated when the former becomes an endemic act of civil disobedience. Echoing Beaugrand's considerations (2014: 5) on the "manufacturing of aliens [*Biduns*] within" in Kuwait, the UAE government "otherizes" dissidents from the Emirati polity. Against this backdrop, heterogenous patterns of citizenship are not accepted, as long as the latter is conceived of and employed as a guarantee of consent and compliance with the Emirati *Urvolk*'s continual construction. Therein, compliance and consent are the *sine qua non* condition for the preservation of the citizen-state social contract. We will now show how the UAE migrant-state social contract is implemented by asserting vertical control over horizontal linkages.

## The UAE Strategy on Community Services: Only in-Group Givers Allowed?

An example of how this migrant-state social contract works out along vertical lines is provided by philanthropic practices and charities, which are on the rise in the UAE. Significantly, the Islamic principle of giving alms (*zakat*) and the overall involvement in charitable acts (*sadaqa*) are widespread and promoted through the valuation of altruism (El-Aswad 2015: 2–5). In this context, we aim to assess neither whether migrant groups in the UAE establish or challenge

dominance over each other through helping nor the ways in which such outgroup acts of giving can be defined prosocial. We rather examine how assistance provision is patterned in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the way the government informally seems to stifle out-group assistance provision. Indeed, services and relief items have a political nature which, in turn, shapes the institutional and power relationships that warrant or hamper their provision. Moreover, while the UAE, like the Gulf States in general, have been represented as exceptional because of their great wealth based on oil export and the low percentage of natives vis-à-vis foreign migrants in the local demography, "when it comes to the impact of immigration on nationalism, they are very much like any other society where citizenship and migration are largely considered in terms of access to welfare-state benefits" (Beaugrand 2014: 15). Likewise, the UAE is not exceptional in criminalizing irregular migration (Lori 2011).

Most of the literature dealing with service provision and social and political order problematizes the promotion of assistance provision and volunteering as a nation-building strategy for which different demographic groups may be called upon (Schachar 2014) as a creation of identity-based groups (Jawad 2009; Feldman 2012; Carpi 2016), as an assertion or dismantlement of high/low social statuses and dependency/autonomy mechanisms (Nadler 2002; Halabi & Nadler 2010), and as a way of maneuvering political constituencies (Cammett 2014). Contrary to this, we examine how state-crafting and enhancement of a sense of belonging are the very goals of the governmental strategies meant to hamper out-group acts of giving. Service provision, both as a salaried job and as a volunteering act, is not an unproblematic notion. Rather, it is a relational construct the boundaries of which a variety of institutional actors strategically manage and use (Shachar 2014). Likewise, it can create and preserve social order (McClure 2018).

Being classified as a Global South state or non-traditional donor in global North's environments, today the UAE is the third largest aid donor, decreasingly addressing non-Arab recipients, and therefore pushed by Islamic and pan-Arabism principles (Al-Mezaini 2017). Conversely, migrant community-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the UAE can be counted in small numbers, even though the national law allows them to exist on the condition that there are Emirati citizens among their founders and their committee board members. In this section, we investigate how migrant-founded charity initiatives operating in Abu Dhabi are primarily informal and exclusively have an intra-community focus. We argue that this phenomenon is caused by deliberate, yet unofficial, governmental strategies rather than being a specific societal structure of the Emirates that hinders out-group acts of giving, or a peculiar philanthropic tendency of Abu Dhabi-based migrant communities reproducing Foucauldian pastoral power, that is, self-discipline in response to the subtle requirements of the state (Foucault 1988). Based on interviews conducted by Carpi in 2015 in Abu Dhabi, we argue that the act of giving is deliberately *contained* within community boundaries to impede mutual assistance between the Abu Dhabi migrant communities. Despite the governmental effort to enhance inter-community relations – such as social gatherings organized for western migrants and local citizens in some local houses of Ras al-Khaimah called *majalis* ("councils")[44] – the Abu Dhabi government attempts to preserve social order by preventing unconditioned social mingling and limiting unsupervised inter-community interactions. This strategy is unofficially put in place while local governments endeavor to overcome what is called "the structural division in the labor market," as part of the UAE government-launched nationalization or Emiratization (*tawteen* in Arabic) campaign that commenced in 2007,[45] which mandates the inclusion of Emiratis in the job sector through the establishment of a quota, incentives, and a special department that assists Emirati

nationals in job hunting.[46] While out-group acts of giving are hampered, the Emiratization program and more specifically entities such as the Emirates Foundation[47] encourage local citizens to join philanthropic activities and contribute to the enhancement of domestic well-being.

The UAE declared 2017 as the "'Year of Giving," aiming to accomplish charity, social and humanitarian initiatives, and to promote a culture of giving and volunteering among local citizens. The Year of Giving was supported by several strategic initiatives, one of which was to develop a legislative framework for the operation of charities, humanitarian organizations, and NGOs. A key development was the recent publication of Dubai Law No.12 of 2017 (the Dubai Civil Organization Law), a new law regulating NGOs in Dubai. The aims of the Year of Giving were to promote corporate social responsibility in the private sector and to develop a sense of community and social responsibility within the community and therefore strengthen in-group acts of giving. In this framework, acts of giving among Emirati nationals are seen as enacting and developing the value of serving the nation by emphasizing the importance of loyalty and commitment to future generations, the enlargement of the ongoing Emiratization program, and a culture of volunteering to encourage the development of community services. In this framework, the new NGO law is aimed at reinforcing UAE state sovereignty, as explicitly discussed in regional and international media.[48]

The Dubai Community Development Authority with the new law[49] authorized NGOs to practice non-profit activities in the UAE in social, health, educational, cultural, scientific, creative, professional, and humanitarian fields. As per national legislation, foreign founded NGOs are allowed; however, the number of migrant community-based organizations is considerably monoethnic (e.g. the Filipino Christian Evangelical Church[50] and the Somali Social and Cultural

Center[51]), and acts of giving are allowed only in the realm of faith institutions such as The Evangelical Community Church in Abu Dhabi,[52] set up by US migrants and now frequented by different ethnic groups. Nonetheless, old date migrants mostly found community-oriented institutions for in-group members, practically contributing to the ordering of local society via acts of self-detachment. In this regard, it is worthwhile mentioning that the authors of this chapter were invited to leave after visiting for the second time one of the seven Sudanese social clubs in the UAE during the spring of 2015. This kind of centers is indeed thought or performed by the local community as "an intimate space to host their weddings, funerals, and everything in between" and "to be a member you need to be Sudanese or recommended by two existing members,"[53] thus seemingly differing from the cultural purpose of other community-oriented centers in other countries of the region and beyond. Nonetheless, the Indian Cultural Center in Abu Dhabi did not have the same principles, not minding the presence of out-group members. In this context, preliminary interviews with Abu Dhabi-based Filipino and Moroccan informal assistance providers indicate that the government enacts *ad hoc* strategies to limit NGO outreach to in-group members. Salwa[54] is a Moroccan migrant who has been living in the UAE for six years. When she can afford to take a Saturday off, she normally goes to the house where a certain number of Moroccan women meet. This group of women has long since been floating the idea of starting an NGO to assist their own community, but they have been faced with many challenges. "We rarely meet Emirati citizens here in Abu Dhabi. The only ones we know are our boss and her family at the beauty salon. They would never act as trustees or founders of our NGO" (June 2015). Salwa's anecdote shows how a law, which purportedly allows foreigners to undertake formal assistance provision, is instead demanding and has practical impediments to starting an NGO for the Moroccan community. In a different vein, Shirlita, a Filipino nail-polisher, who has

worked in the UAE since 2008, affirmed that, during the 2010 Pakistan floods, she and her Filipino friends, who used to be involved in social work in the past while in Manila, arranged a few packages of clothes and food items to be given to the Pakistani community (October 2015):

> Pakistanis normally gather behind the building where I work. My friend is married to one of them, who told her they were about to send some relief items to Punjab and Sindh the week after […]. We wanted to provide them with further support and show our solidarity. Filipinos and Pakistanis have been building this country's wealth. Eventually we gave up, as my friend said our packages had been rejected on request of a government officer who supervised the square where the Pakistani volunteers gathered before the expedition. My friend's husband reported that they had been told this needed to be a thing from Pakistanis to Pakistanis, with no out-group support allowed.

This account suggests that service provision is supervised by the UAE government and is approached as a pre-emptive political order measure. The Pakistani initiative of sending aid to their country of origin was informal as much as the spontaneous act of the Filipino women to support the expedition. Both acts would have undermined local order in a context where societal group-making is monitored and even policed by the state-citizen Emirati polity. The likely prohibition of gatherings in the public sphere and of organizing informal aid expeditions would be enforced against both the Pakistanis and the Filipinos. What seemed to matter to the governmental officer in this anecdote was the imminent occurrence of out-group assistance in the public space. Out-group acts of giving epitomize the projection of national paranoia around multi-migrant political mobilization and social cohesion potentials. Against this backdrop, the *indigenous* Emirati polity increasingly invests in the nationalization of the giving industry and volunteering activities by either tolerating in-group assistance or stifling *tout court* – though not

legally forbidding –foreign-started assistance and out-group philanthropic acts. In this sense, out-group acts of giving are neither encouraged in official public policy as seen nor practically allowed, as the abovementioned anecdotes suggest.

Nonetheless, empirical evidence indicating that out-group assistance and support are stifled should be strengthened with further research efforts, as data collection was part of a different research study that Carpi was conducting in Abu Dhabi in 2015. As such, it would deserve further efforts in the near future, along with the necessity to capture similarities and differences across the seven Emirates which indeed do not share identical political and social histories. We have however included this case study as a greatly significant (although preliminary) proof of exclusionary modes of organizing society toward a *purely* Emirati polity.

## Conclusion

While the ability to uphold sovereignty would make the UAE an orthodox Weberian state, the UAE remains a peculiar form of nation-state, as it has been developing out of an unusual relationship to coloniality, its historical debris, and an official polity that stems from controversial tribal relations. Against this backdrop, the viability of the present crafting of the state imposes the need for a "purified" nation in which tribal differences and *political others* are not possible across the Emirates we have taken into analysis (mainly Abu Dhabi and Dubai). The Emirati citizen, unlike *political others*, is a symbolic subject who needs to aspire to a "fantasy" (Lacan in Hage 1996) of collective homogeneity, while the state-citizen Emirati polity thrives on the attempted attainment of an ideal political membership. The *political other* is feared, paranoidly managed, ethically and symbolically belittled as well as repressed and even criminalized by formal and informal modalities of governance, as our three case studies have

shown; but the *political other* is also needed in order to fabricate the *purity* of the UAE state and a fantasized Emirati self. To capture the *whys* and *hows* of state-crafting, we have first provided a historical background to suggest its peculiar formation trajectory in the UAE.

This chapter, however, was not the place to assess how that varies across the seven Emirates and how local specificities respond to the constructed sameness of the Emirati self. Yet, current international affairs and the struggle for geopolitical influence, to some measure, require an adherence to a transnational understanding of the state despite the different morphologies of state power across the globe. In this sense, fabricating the *pure* state vis-à-vis the *political other* provides the UAE with a political and (though at times challenged) ethical place within the global polity. The original emplacement of political power across the local tribes unfolds today's peculiarity of the UAE modes of governance, oscillating between legalized repression such as the stripping of citizenship, informal containment such as stifling out-group assistance, and performative acts, that is, speaking *as if* (Wedeen 1998) Iran's presence were no longer in the UAE.

We have therefore looked at two informal and one formal mode of organizing Emirati society, which the volatile, as seen, state-citizen interrelationality puts in place through the meiotic process of *not being the political other*, while also belittling the other. In this framework, the state emerges as a relational category of analysis that can only be defined *in relation to* what *does not want to be* and what does not tolerate in the effort to construct the (ahistorical) purity of the Emirati polity.

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[2] The unidimensional character of national identity as illusive and unrealistic has already been discussed in the Middle East literature (Nasser 2004).

[3] This is a general tendency in the Arab Gulf, where nationals replace foreign workers in the governmental and other public sectors (*BBC Monitoring*, "Over 3,000 Foreign Workers Laid Off in Kuwaitization Scheme," August 26, 2018).

[4] We will refer to the Arabian-Persian Gulf to counter the current tendency of embracing exclusively one of the historical narratives. "The 'New Gulf' forced people to take sides and has led to a rise in […] anxiety over identity" (Potter 2014: 14). This statement indicates the political contention that seeks to either Arabize or Persianize the Gulf history.

[5] For a systematic review of the reformed law, see https://www.khaleejtimes.com/news/uae-citizenship-law-full-list-of-announcements-reactions.

[6] The UAE naturalized 1,300 people in 2006, mostly with Iranian origins. For more details, see http://thenewkhalij.news/ar/node/2165.

[7] For more details, see: http://www.gcc-legal.org/LawAsPDF.aspx?opt&country=0&LawID=3147#Section_6586.

[8] This number has been confirmed by the Iranian consulate of Dubai in 2007. However, from 2006 to 2010, the UAE population has grown by 64.5% according to the National Bureau of Statistics in 2011 (Moghadam 2013: 263).

[9] Skype interview with Dr Amin Moghadam, Associate Research Scholar at the Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies at Princeton University, June 15, 2018.

[10] To watch the video interview, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcCxZKXqxfI.

[11] See https://rakuae.wordpress.com/2011/03/28/رأس-الخيمة-داخليا-و-إقليميا/ and in *The Economist*: http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=517582636&Country=United%20Arab%20Emirates.

[12] The tweet can be found at http://urlshort.pw/kH7NXg and on *Watan* https://www.watanserb.com/2017/10/21/سترأس-مجلس-علماء-الإمارات-الإعلام-الإ/.

[13] Tweet mentioned in the *Watan Serb*: https://www.watanserb.com/2017/10/21/سترأس-مجلس-علماء-الإمارات-الإعلام-الإ/.

[14] For instance, see http://www.alalam.ir/news/1731067/وزير-اسمه--قرقاش--.

[15] See http://www.alalam.ir/news/1825404/بالفيديو--حاكم-الشارقة-يفجر-مفاجأة---علي-عبدالله-صالح--فارسي-الأصل--.

[16] For instance, see http://elaph.com/Web/News/2016/6/1091822.html.

[17] See for more details http://ledubai.com/the-spirit-of-the-union.

[18] As said (see p. 6), many of the naturalized were *hawala*, who, by their own identity, challenge the "purification" process promoted and enacted by the UAE state. In this regard, it is worth

mentioning al-Dailami (2014: 300): “Is the term *Hawala* an ethnicity, a narrative, or some other type of identification? Moreover, who is doing the identifying—is it a self-identification or an externally imposed one? Is it relational […]; or is it a categorical one where group membership is determined by a shared attribute such as language, religion, or nationality?”

[19] See https://forum.uaewomen.net/showthread.php/367150-العيم-موضوع-للنقاش.

[20] See http://www.alwasluae.com/vb/archive/index.php/t-134303.html.

[21] An example from local news: https://www.thenational.ae/uae/qasr-al-hosn-where-the-past-has-a-future-1.311710.

[22] For instance, see https://www.economist.com/prospero/2010/07/28/brothers-in-exile.

[23] See the *Financial Tribune*, April 25, 2016: “How Wealthy are Iranian Expats?”: https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-domestic-economy/40146/how-wealthy-are-iranian-expats.

[24] See *Aeideas*, September 13, 2017, “The GCC Complicated Affair with Iran”: http://www.aei.org/publication/the-gccs-complicated-affair-with-iran/.

[25] See the *Financial Tribune*, February 25, 2018: “Qatar, Oman, Becoming Iran’s New Trade Gateways”: https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-business-and-markets/82434/qatar-oman-becoming-irans-new-trade-gateways.

[26] See *The Atlantic*, May 22, 2018: “How Iran Can Evade Sanctions This Time”: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/iran-sanctions-trump-nuclear-turkey/560819/.

[27] For example, see: http://sultanalqassemi.blogspot.com/2009/02/ajamis-of-emirates-celebrated-history.html.

[28] See the *Gulf News*, September 22, 2013, "Give Expats an Opportunity to Earn UAE Citizenship": https://gulfnews.com/opinion/thinkers/give-expats-an-opportunity-to-earn-uae-citizenship-1.1234167.

[29] See videos: https://www.youtube.com/user/ShaabiaUAE/playlists?sort=dd&shelf_id=14&view=50.

[30] For instance, see https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/the-animated-series-shaabiat-al-cartoon-has-attracted-a-lot-of-fans-and-with-good-reason-1.583702.

[31] In more detail, UAE law allows for the revocation of citizenship. Article 15 of Federal Law No. 17 of 1972 states that this may happen if a citizen engages in the military service of a foreign state without authorization from the UAE; acts in the interest of an enemy state; has been willingly naturalized by another state. Article 16, as amended by Federal Law No. 10 of 1975, adds that nationality can be withdrawn if a citizen: commits or attempts to commit an act deemed dangerous to the state's security; is convicted repeatedly for "disgraceful" crimes; uses forgery or fraud to acquire nationality; lives outside the UAE "without excuse" for four consecutive years (source: https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL4073492017ENGLISH.pdf).

[32] For instance, see https://www.middle-east-online.com/الامارات-تسحب-الجنسية-من-6-اشخاص-وتعيد-اليهم-جوازاتهم-الايرانية#off-canvas. An official WAM (Emirati state-run agency) statement once explicitly referred to the fact that some suspects were granted citizenship between 1976 and 1986 as coming from Iran. This group of stateless Emiratis became known as the "UAE Seven."

[33] The *bidouns* – the word is Arabic for "without" – mainly come from families who lived in the Gulf region but were never counted in censuses because of their tribal affiliation, their level of literacy, their ethnic origin, or their access to state officials.

[34] See for details https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/opinion/sunday/united-arab-emirates-comorans-citizenship.html.

[35] For instance, see *The New York Times*, January 5, 2018, "Who Loses when a Country Puts Citizenship Up for Sale?": https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/opinion/sunday/united-arab-emirates-comorans-citizenship.html.

[36] In 1974, the local Muslim Brotherhood group *Islah* was founded in Dubai with help from members from Qatar, Kuwait, and Egypt. It particularly developed in the northern Emirates of Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah, while it remained absent from Abu Dhabi. With the support of the northern Emirs, *Islah* leaders achieved ministerial positions in education, social affairs, justice, Islamic affairs, and *awqaf* ("religious endowments") (Roberts 2017: 552).

[37] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdasnspd55g.

[38] See: http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/313274.html.

[39] See on *Bawabat ash-Sharq al-Iliktruniyya*, December 2, 2017: https://bit.ly/2j8ccyY.

[40] To watch the video, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy7qFVf09uU.

[41] See *al-Bayan*, October 1, 2017: https://www.albayan.ae/opinions/everyweek/2017-10-01-1.3056828.

[42] See https://www.albayan.ae/opinions/articles/2013-10-03-1.1971423.

[43] For example, see in *The New Arab*, March 10, 2016, "Stripping Citizenship and the Politics of Repression": https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/3/10/stripping-citizenship-and-the-politics-of-repression; and the recent Windrush scandal, *The Guardian*, May 4, 2018, "Windrush Scandal: No Passport for Thousands who Moved to Britain": https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/may/04/windrush-scandal-no-passport-for-thousands-who-moved-to-britain.

[44] Informal conversation of Carpi with three Emirati citizens, Abu Dhabi, May 2015.

[45] For more details, see https://bit.ly/2OXYscG.

[46] This measure is coded in the Federal Law No. 8 of 1980 known as the Labor Law: http://www.mohre.gov.ae/en/laws-legislation/labour-law.aspx.

[47] For details, see https://www.emiratesfoundation.ae/ef/.

[48] For instance, see http://gulfbusiness.com/uae-plans-law-regulate-ngos/.

[49] In relation to the requirement for founding members, an association must have at least two UAE nationals among the founding members. For institutions, the law does not specify that the founder(s) must be Emirati, but the Board of Trustees must consist of at least five persons, including one Emirati national.

[50] See http://www.findglocal.com/AE/Abu-Dhabi/300783446922606/Filipino-Christian-Church-Abu-Dhabi.

[51] See https://uaesomalicentre.wordpress.com/.

[52] For more details, see http://eccad.org/about.

[53] "Sudan Expats Still Club Together," *The National*, March 31, 2011: https://www.thenational.ae/uae/sudan-s-expats-still-club-together-1.432428.

[54] Interviewees have been pseudonymized on their request.