



National Security and the Management of Migrant Labor: A Case Study of the United Arab Emirates*

Noora Lori

Johns Hopkins University

This article examines the main institutional developments that have accompanied the economic and political changes in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the past twenty years. In particular, the different agencies of the UAE's Ministry of Interior have taken active roles in responding to the demographic changes and in developing preemptive policing strategies that include community policing, extensive surveillance networks, and increasingly individualized and standardized forms of identification. The paper assesses how that institutional growth has shaped the way the UAE has come to manage its guest worker program over time. It explains how the security apparatus is deployed by the state for managing the criminal and cultural impact of expatriates on the national body politic.

On 20 January 2010, Mr. Mahmoud al Mabhouh, a founder of the Hamas military wing, was found dead in his room at the Al Bustan Rotana in Dubai, hours after arriving in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Within a matter of weeks, the Dubai police released the names, pictures and passport copies of the 26 assassins and produced dramatic footage of the hourly breakdown of the incident (Issa, 2010). But perhaps more striking than the assassins' careful

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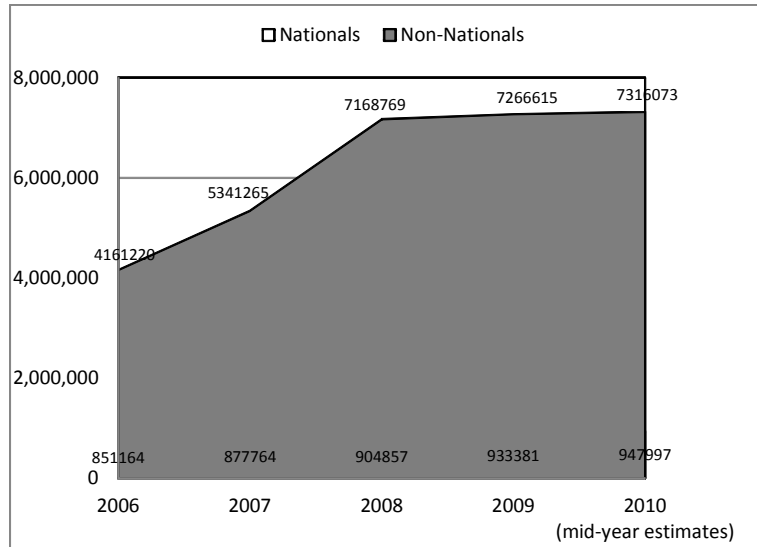
coordination of the operation, was the ability of Dubai's security forces to track the movement of these individuals through both public and private spaces in such detail. This extensive security and surveillance network—which is as (if not even more) robust in Abu Dhabi— is one manifestation of the mix of openness and security that characterizes the UAE's strategy for managing and regulating permanent flows of transient populations.

Especially since 9/11, national security systems are adapting to increasingly focus their attention on non-state networks and individuals. In addition to greater border controls and efforts to standardize identification and travel documents, the private security industry and national security systems are constantly developing new technologies in surveillance and internal policing strategies to track and 'preempt' threats. The nebulous nature of non-state threats to national security has prompted these governments to increasingly dissolve the distinctions between 'external' and 'internal' security. Indeed, decision-makers in both democratic and non-democratic states are increasingly blurring the barriers between the jurisdictions of internal security agencies (police forces, criminal investigations) and external security forces (military, foreign intelligence) in order to coordinate efforts for seeding out threats to national security. Migrant populations – ranging from transient guest workers to undocumented workers to second generation immigrants and even naturalized citizens – are all facing heightened scrutiny. This has led governments to adopt a wide variety of institutional responses, ranging from attempts to deport or denaturalize citizens, to spying on particular migrant communities, to the use of local police departments in enforcing immigration cases without due process, to placing higher and higher barriers to legal migration or asylum-seeking. Whether achieved through the introduction of new legislation, the establishment of new agencies, or even ongoing attempts to amend or repeal established inclusionary migration and naturalization policies, all of these efforts point to a growing global trend. More and more executive branches of governments are using calculations of national security as the dominant means of managing and differentiating between the populations in their territories.¹

The following research explains how one country, the UAE, has succeeded at institutionally implementing this securitization of migration and naturalization policy since the 1990s. In a global context increasingly hostile to transient populations, the UAE continues to have one of the highest concentrations of expatriates in the world, with non-citizens now comprising 88.53 percent of the population (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011) (see

¹ For detailed summaries of global trends in national security and immigration enforcement, see Brotherton and Kretsedemas (2008) and De Genova and Peutz (2010).

FIGURE 1
 DEMOGRAPHIC IMBALANCE OF NATIONAL AND NON-NATIONAL POPULATION, 2006-2010



SOURCE: National Bureau of Statistics

Figure 1).² This research presents the main strategies and institutional developments adopted by the UAE state in its efforts to maintain its *kafala* guest worker program while adapting to shifting demographics and national security concerns. The *kafala* is the guest worker system found across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. It organizes foreign labor into a sponsorship system in which the individual guest worker is sponsored by a local company or individual citizen who serves as a sponsor or *kafeel* during a contractually-fixed period of time.³ This research examines the institutional

² According to the most recent figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics in Abu Dhabi, the population in the UAE surged to 8.26 million in 2010, up 65 percent in four years. This growth is due to the influx of foreign workers as the numbers of Emirati nationals grew only from 851,164 in 2006 to 947,997 in the first half of 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

³ For a rich account of the *kafala* system, including its connection to a larger global political economy, practical and instrumental aspects, as well as how it is cultural practice and not just a legal arrangement, see Gardner (2010), Longva (1999).

development, change and adaptation of the different agencies of the UAE's Ministry of Interior, at both the federal and Dubai Emirate levels, in their efforts to respond to the changing demographic make-up of the UAE from the 1990s. The findings are based upon 46 interviews (conducted between February 2010 and December 2010) with long-term Arab expatriates, state officials (including the Naturalization and Residency Departments and Police forces), and members of the private security sector (consultant companies, surveillance equipment and installation companies).⁴

This research focuses on two out of the seven emirates of the UAE. It examines the institutional developments of the federal government in Abu Dhabi and the Emirate of Dubai, where the Ministry of Interior was responding to the highest concentrations of non-nationals in the 1990s. The security agencies of these two emirates have been at the forefront of developing strategies for managing demographic changes, and Abu Dhabi and Dubai continue to have the largest populations in the country. However, it should be noted that over the past two decades the distribution of non-nationals has been changing (especially in the Emirate of Sharjah). Unfortunately, there are no official figures demonstrating the geographic breakdown of nationals and non-nationals by emirate. The resident data obtained from the Ministry of Interior is classified by place of visa issuance or cancellation, therefore the net migration rates by emirate do not reflect the actual geographic distribution of the population. The National Bureau of Statistics is undertaking efforts to find an alternative methodology to estimate these changes, but official figures of nationals and non-nationals are currently only available as composite figures.

Social Origins of Institutional Change: Construction Boom and Demographic Imbalance

The construction boom of the 1990s led to incredible demographic changes in the composition and size of the UAE's population at an unprecedented speed. Due primarily to the importation of foreign workers, the population of the country almost doubled in a span of 10 years, surging from 1,809,000 in 1990 to 3,033,000 in 2000 (UN World Population Prospects, 2010). Massive inward migration has continued to be the key means for rapid economic development, resulting in expatriates outnumbering nationals significantly. Today, non-citizens comprise 91.3 percent of the employed labor force (Ministry of Economy, 2007).

⁴ The names of interviewees have been withheld to protect their identity.

Along with the rise in the ratio of foreign workers, the influx of construction workers led to a rising asymmetry in the male to female ratio. It also led to a shift away from Arab expatriates towards non-Arab workers. In the 1970s the vast majority of migrants to the Gulf region were from Arab sending countries like Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Palestine. However, the second oil price hike in 1979 and the subsequent rise in government revenue led the Gulf states to implement more developmental initiatives and increase the importation of foreign labor from other regions. This led to a decline in the percentage of Arab migrant workers and an increase in the flow of Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and other Asian workers. This replacement of Arab expatriates with Asians continued as a dominant demographic trend in the 1990s. As Colton writes, this preference for Southeast Asians over Arab workers became much more direct following the Gulf War, and was due to a perception that Palestinians and Yemenis had sided with Iraq in this war (2010:35). However, some of the secondary literature also suggests that this demographic change in the Gulf was just as much the result of an active policy to preempt the political challenge of pan-Arab organizing. For example, Rahman notes that this trend was likely “the result of the policies of the Gulf countries that favored South Asian workers (they were believed to be politically “safer” than their Arab counterparts)” (2010: 10). The general shift away from Arab expatriates could have also very well been economically driven by the private sector as the reservation wage of Arab expatriates is higher than that of South Asian expatriates. It is most likely that this demographic shift resulted out of a combination of factors and the collusion of powerful interests arising in both the private and public sectors. Regardless of whether it was the result of an active strategy or not, at this point it is clear that non-Arab expatriates now overwhelmingly outnumber Arab expatriates (Figure 1). Note that this shift is particularly important for determining the relationship between the demographic trends and the government’s barriers against naturalization because the legal naturalization policy since the inception of the UAE (according to Federal Law No. 17 of 1972 of Nationality and Passports) was and continues to be a possibility—with a multitude of other restrictions and conditions—only for those “of Arab culture” (Federal law no. 17, Article 2 (a)).

These demographic changes in the 1990s left a lasting impact on the social fabric of the UAE, creating a situation that is being referred to by official and unofficial sources as a “demographic imbalance.” Indeed, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has recently issued a resolution specifying the functions of a new government agency called the Federal Demographic Council (Cabinet Federal Decree (3) of 2010) for the precise purpose of redressing this problem. The goal of the council is to restore the “demographic balance” in the country, with lawmakers from the Federal National Council calling the

imbalance a “threat to national security” (Salama, 2010). The different agencies of the security apparatus of the UAE grew alongside, and as a means of managing and adapting to, the extensive demographic changes of the 1990s. Given the concentration of demographic changes in the Emirate of Dubai, the Dubai Police has taken an extremely active role in defining the new security challenges associated with those changes.

Policing Imbalance: “Family Social Security” and a New Policing Strategy

Since the 1990s the Dubai Police has published a series of studies that define the range of threats associated with having guest workers, the majority of which call upon the federal Ministry of Interior to establish specialized task forces (usually under the purview of the Criminal Investigation Division (CID)) to deal with the new challenges of a growing transient expatriate population (Table 1). These studies can be broadly grouped into two categories. The first category tends to focus on specific kinds of criminal activities that are associated with open borders, especially drug trafficking. The second category of studies focus on threats that are both criminal and cultural – specifically, the possible impact that the large expatriate presence would have on the safety and cultural integrity of the citizenry. Together, these studies construct the concept of “family social security” as a new national security realm that emerges as a result of the demographic imbalance.

The studies focusing on family social security demonstrate how the security forces came to associate the presence of expatriates with ‘threat,’ how that threat came to be defined, and what measures would have to be taken to manage it. One of these studies, entitled “Demographic Indicators and Family Social Security,” provides a lens for understanding how the Dubai police have created this logical extension between the growth in the expatriate population and the need for greater and more specialized security. The study argues that rapid population growth and the higher population density that the UAE has been experiencing requires the Ministry of Interior to increase its scope and services. It then goes on to link this threat explicitly to the growing presence of foreigners (rather than the natural population growth⁵). It argues that, “the problem is not in having foreign workers but it is usually with its percentage to the national residents. The higher the percentage of foreigners, especially from the same nationality, the higher the risk the national residents are

⁵ This refers to growth calculated using the birthrates and deathrates of the population not counting migration.

TABLE 1
DUBAI POLICE STUDIES RELATED TO "SOCIAL" SECURITY, 1990s- 2007

Year	Title
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and Crime (Arabic) • Social Variables and Their Implications on the Family UAE (Arabic) • Strategic Security Planning and Change Management in the Fight Against Terrorism (Arabic) • General Aspects of Organized Crime (Arabic) • Planning to Contain the Tensions Security (Arabic)
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Look at DNA (Arabic) • Indicators for General Security Panel (Arabic) • Juvenile Delinquency in the UAE from an Islamic Perspective (Arabic) • Indicators on Juvenile Delinquency and Efforts to Confront (Arabic) • Planning Time Element in Security Operations Critical (Arabic) • Community Policing Indicators Cohesion [sic] (Arabic) • Security Satellite (Arabic)
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juvenile Delinquency Indicators (English)
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Security from an Islamic Perspective (Arabic) • Security CCTV (Arabic)
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights of the Child in the Emirati Law (Arabic) • Police Planning in Light of the Current Security Challenges (Arabic)
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Component in Planning Police Patrol (Arabic) • Demographic Indicators and Family Social Security (English)
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges Facing the Security Services During the Current Decade (Arabic) • Crime in a Rapidly Changing World (Arabic)
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Declaration on Human Genome and Human Rights (Arabic) • Privatization and Used in the Security Sphere [sic] (Arabic) • Electronic Referral Systems Between Police and the Social Sector (Arabic)
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Warning Systems Effective Mechanism to Address the Potential Security Crises (Arabic) • Develop a Mechanism to Take Investment Decisions and Its Impact on Enhancing the Security of Businessmen (Arabic) • Construction and Management Task Forces (Arabic) • Expulsion of Aliens Between State Sovereignty and Security Duty (Arabic)
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repercussions for the Security Problems of Slums (Arabic)
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalization and Tourism (Arabic) • Early Warning Signs for Youth Violence: Fact, Fiction, or Fad (Arabic)

SOURCE: Dubai Police, General Headquarters, Research and Studies Centre (http://www.dubaipolice.gov.ae/academy_prod/showpage.jsp?objectID=10)

subjected to. Having more than two-thirds of the national residents as foreign workers is quit[e] big" (Police Studies no.92, 1999:2). By specifying that the risk to the national population is greater when the ratio of foreigners increases—especially when they are of the same nationality—the study employs a concept of 'risk' that encompasses both criminal and cultural threats. It also provides a description of new population characteristics like unemployment, illiteracy, women's participation in the labor force, and marital status (in this case referring to the lack thereof—with growing rates of divorce and unaccompanied bachelors). It states, "one can notice that the lower the level of the population characteristics, the higher the rates of crimes" (1999:1). In other words, it argues that the demographic changes associated with having such high concentrations of guest workers leads to the dilution of the population and higher rates in crimes. The study also goes on to "highlight [the] types of crimes probably committed among people having the described demographic feature" (1999:2). The male to female ratio increased substantially because of the large numbers of male construction workers entering the country. This 'biased' or imbalanced male to female ratio makes the national population susceptible to the following crimes: "robbery, drug traffic and addiction, prostitution, raping, child abuse" (1999:2).

This coupling of the (especially male) expatriate presence with a threat to the national population is a theme that recurs in a number of the different studies published by the Dubai Police, especially on issues relating to the security of the family and children. Often, this threat is not directly linked to the expatriates themselves, but rather to the demographic changes that are likely to lead to certain criminal activities that the police force should preempt and control. However, the rationale behind why certain crimes are more likely to occur illustrates that the cultural threat of the expatriates is often conflated with criminal activity. This is exemplified in the way these studies use the issue of juvenile delinquency to demonstrate how the local population would be impacted by the presence of foreigners. For example, the study titled "Juvenile Delinquency Indicators" aims to determine the dimensions, trace the mobility, and identify the causes and factors leading to juvenile delinquency in the UAE in an effort to develop "a control plan...along with the evaluation of the exerted efforts in order to contain the problem" (Police Studies no. 54, 1996:1). The study defines a juvenile delinquent as "one who commits an offence punishable by effective laws if he or she is over seven and under 18 years old, unless he or she is mentally retarded or lacks consciousness or discernment" (1996:1). It states that "the child is born with a mixture of good and bad tendencies. Educational, sociological, economic, psychological and family conditions surrounding him or her help support one of the two sides to surmount the other" (1996:1). It also names a number of general factors that lead to juvenile delinquency, including a "broken home, ill-breeding, a

weak parent-child relationship, deprivation, low IQ, low social and economic standards, heredity, abnormal personality, and delinquent peer groups." It then specifies, "local factors related to our culture that may influence juveniles depending on the immediately surrounding conditions and their predisposition as well" (1996:2). These 'local' factors include, "how to spend leisure time, traveling abroad without sufficient monitoring, housemaids and early sexual experiences, television and videos, lack of school supervision, rapid social changes, multitude and conflict of cultures, class differences, competitive struggle for money, limited impact of social clubs, recreational activities and summer services" (1996:2). Of these 'local' factors, the factors identified as the exposure to a multitude of cultures and the 'housemaids and early sexual experiences' are related explicitly to the presence of the expatriate work force. The study also recalls the rate of females to males as a factor leading to juvenile delinquency. It states that this ratio is equal in "balanced societies" while "in labor-importing countries" the rate of males to females may be "3 or 4 times as great." This "unbalanced rate may be conducive to the commission of more sexual crimes and child sexual abuse" which also leads to juvenile delinquency (1996:2). The study argues that it is important to measure the spatial concentration of juvenile delinquents by nationality in order to develop preventative plans and define ways to control the problem and keep it from spreading. While the formula⁶ that is used to calculate this is included in the publication, the actual figures associated with this distribution of delinquents by nationality were not published.

The Dubai Police reports show how the first step in the institutional development of the security apparatus was to study specific criminal activities and link them to the presence of expatriates (even if the crimes themselves are committed by nationals, as in the case of juvenile delinquency). The Dubai Police Chief, Lieutenant Colonel Dhahi Khalfan, has openly called for restrictions upon expatriates in the UAE, arguing that the population imbalance poses a great threat to the culture, national identity, and domestic security of the UAE. Asked the question of whether he thinks that Arab identity is in danger he responded: "Yes, the foreigner presents his idea, culture and identity on the Gulf society. I will not hide from you a secret as a security man that there are criminal customs and cases that were never found or heard about in our Gulf society, for example... the third sex. These customs and beliefs

⁶ Spatial concentration by nationality of juvenile delinquents=

$$\frac{\text{number of juvenile delinquents of a specific nationality}}{\text{number of juveniles of the same nationality}} \times \frac{\text{number of juvenile delinquents of all nationalities}}{\text{total number of juveniles of all nationalities}}$$

brought to our communities with the number of increasing expats. It may be a normal habit and acceptable in their community, but it has undoubtedly formed a thorny issue in our Gulf society."⁷ In these formulations, the threat posed oscillates between cultural and criminal. The security forces then developed specific mechanisms for managing and preempting that criminal/cultural threat, and redesigned the institutions of the Ministry of Interior for that purpose. The federal Ministry of Interior adopted and implemented a "new policing" strategy spearheaded by the Abu Dhabi police force.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Interior, Shaikh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, a "Strategic Management and Performance Improvement Department" was established to implement the "Visionary and Strategic Institutional Change" plan in 2002. The key goal of the plan was to introduce a "new policing concept" which has shifted the scope and role of the Abu Dhabi police (in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain) from simply the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) and Traffic divisions to a more maximalist, comprehensive idea of security and community and knowledge, creating a force which could manage threats preemptively as well as reactively. This new concept of policing (implemented with the help of 63 international consultants (especially from the United Kingdom) embedded in all levels of the police force) aimed to familiarize itself with the different populations that inhabit the UAE so that the forces would know how to actively prevent crimes and build community relationships. There were 78 different initiatives implemented through this strategic plan, which required an internal assessment of the weaknesses of the force and comprehensive studies and assessments of the external challenges that are posed by changing demographic composition, open borders, and economic growth. The police officials noted that what instigated this initiative was not that crimes were already on the rise. Instead, it was "a reaction to the changing social fabric and social conditions and foresight to try to assess the new risks and the internal capabilities to actually deal with those risks. To control a population where the rate of demographic changes was happening faster than anywhere else in the world" (Interview with key informant, 9 December 2010).

A major component of the strategy for change involved extensive training initiatives for members of the police force, including diplomas (masters and PhD programs received abroad). It also included training the Abu Dhabi police forces with other police forces in locales as varied as the United

⁷ This quote is from an Arabic interview on a Qatari Television show, titled "*Laqum Al Qarar*" (The Decision is Yours). Excerpts of this interview are available in English, "Expatriates are the future threat of the entire Gulf: HE Dahi Khalfan Tamim" (*The Peninsula*, 29 December 2010).



Kingdom, Singapore, Finland and Malaysia; “anywhere that police forces are specialized in an area of law enforcement that was seen as beneficial to the new challenges facing the UAE” (Interview with key informant, 9 December 2010). Moreover, in addition to receiving training in law, strategic studies, political science, public administration, international relations, forensics, crime scene investigations and other technical fields, the program embedded police officers in intensive language and cultural studies (fieldwork or exchange) so that they could come back to the UAE and be the community liaison for the 200 nationalities that are represented in the UAE. Officers were embedded in places like China and Bangladesh living with host families, learning their languages, heritage, and tools of how to understand and communicate with these populations for the purposes of better management. They were also attempting to get a sense of what kind of relationship exists between those populations and their local security forces, to be able to tailor the Abu Dhabi Police Department’s (ADPD) interactions with members of those specific communities that reside in the UAE. There are currently 300 police officers studying in these language and cultural exchanges and another 400 members of the force in bachelor, masters, or PhD programs.

This new concept of policing has led to the establishment of a “community police” force that is “more effective by being more proactive” and by connecting with a community to gain trust and build lasting relationships. In 2009 and 2010, a Human Rights division was also introduced to the Police Department. From the standpoint of institutional development, the plan has been highly successful at implementing a great deal of changes in a very concentrated amount of time and the ADPD has been a forerunner in the majority of excellence categories and rankings that the Abu Dhabi government uses to assess its institutions. What is striking about this “new policing” concept, is that the Strategic Management and Performance Improvement Department of the ADPD recognizes that the UAE is and will continue to be an extremely diverse society and therefore, does not aim to alleviate this heterogeneity but rather to manage it. In other words, what emerges institutionally is a kind of “controlled heterogeneity”—the emphasis is on disaggregating the mass of ‘expats’ into manageable units by national origin, and governing and preempting the expatriate impact by making those units legible.

Managing Heterogeneity: Legibility and Surveillance

Another key aspect of this preemptive approach to managing a large and diverse population has been the increasing regulation, identification and cataloguing of expatriate populations. To achieve this, an entirely new and independent federal authority, the Emirates Identity Authority (EIDA), was



established to develop and administer the population register and national ID card project. Its overarching mission is "to contribute to individual and national security through enhancement of personal identity in the UAE, maintenance of an accurate Population Register and provision of innovative e-Services" (<http://www.emiratesid.ae/>). It has created a comprehensive database that contains the individual's name, nationality, signature, fingerprints, eye-scan, birth date, gender, work visa status, labor card, health card, and occupation, as well as all health records, criminal records, and personal records from all of the UAE's ministries. The official categorization of the expatriate workforce that was employed for the ID project provides a sense of the lens through which the state views, catalogues and groups its expatriates. The EIDA officially classified the population into five separate groups for the registration phases. The first group to have access to the national ID card is composed of Emirati citizens, followed by expatriates who are classified into four groups. Group 1 is composed of 'white-collar' professionals and their families. The schedule specifies that these expatriates should be 'holders of higher qualifications (diploma and above) and technical specializations' in specified fields including consultancy, medical services, and law. Group 2 is composed of all residents employed in the private sector at administrative and vocational positions and their families. Group 3 is composed of domestic workers and other residents employed in the private sector "under-taking non-professional jobs" and their families. This group includes housemaids, drivers, fishermen, and taxi drivers. Group 4 is for "all unskilled labor, without exceptions" primarily encompassing construction workers. With few exceptions, Arab and Western expatriates are unlikely to be found in Groups 3 and 4.

Continuing with this documentation and identification of its population, the federal government is aiming to make the UAE the first country in the world to build a universal DNA database of all its residents in the next 10 years, at a rate of one million per year. The DNA profiles are to be stored indefinitely even after expatriates leave the country, and according to the newspaper, *The National*, there have been plans to share some of the information with other governments or Interpol, depending on specific treaties or cooperation agreements. The program is being initiated as a security directive, which means that it will bypass the legislative process entirely (Youssef and Shaheen, 2009). This DNA gathering is used for multiple purposes. It is most commonly used for the evidentiary procedures of criminal investigations, but it also makes the population more legible and can be used to determine 'who belongs to which group.' Indeed, in addition to being part of the procedure for naturalization applications, DNA testing is now being used to trace the lineages of potential Emirati citizens residing outside the country. The federal government has created a special committee (made up of members from the



Ministry of Interior) to locate the children of Emirati men (and foreign mothers) born abroad. The committee has already traveled to Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, to check the authenticity of marriage and birth certificates, and to conduct DNA tests that verify the “heritage” of the applicants. “The most recent trip was conducted as part of a program to strengthen the connection of foreign Emirati children with their native land” (*The National*, 16 January 2010). DNA databases, by design, contain family information. The database thus, at once, disaggregates the population by gathering information about each individual resident, and re-groups the population based on genetic lineages.

As part of a larger preemptive security strategy, this DNA gathering initiative will rank sections of the population based on security assessments of the likely threats those individuals pose. This assessment will be made by the Abu Dhabi police force and members of the DNA program. Dr. Ahmed Marzooqi, the program’s director, explains to *The National*, “we will divide the population into certain groups and we will test them based on priority.” Marzooqi stated that this program will help not only to solve but also to prevent crimes. Once the infrastructure for its implementation is in place, lab technicians will begin swabbing cheeks of the general public starting with minors. “Most criminals start when they are young,” Marzooqi said. “If we can identify them at that age, then we can help in their rehabilitation before the level of their crimes increase” (Youssef and Shaheen, 2009). Like earlier initiatives targeting ‘family social security’ and juvenile delinquents, this project also aims to be a way of identifying, cataloguing and managing likely criminals. The ID system, population register, and DNA database are all initiatives that increase population legibility by creating integrated “profiles” of individuals that are organized into groups and ranked and marked for their priority based on calculations of national security. In addition to requiring agencies that manage the day-to-day workings of these initiatives (such as EIDA and the DNA division of Abu Dhabi Police), this effort must be sustained through ever-growing capacities for surveillance and intelligence-gathering.

The security industry is one of the largest sectors in the UAE, and the federal government spends an exorbitant amount of money on contracts for maintaining the apparatus as well as adopting the latest surveillance technologies. Every year, Abu Dhabi hosts the International Security National Resilience conference, where Col Ishaq al Beshir, the director of operations for the Critical National Infrastructure Authority, announced in 2010 that a Dh33 million (US \$9 m)- security camera system will be installed across the capitol in all critical infrastructure sites (Dajani, 2010). This surveillance capacity is extending beyond camera networks and becoming increasingly diversified and integrated. For example, the Advanced Integrated System, one of the systems being promoted at the recent International Defence Exhibition and



Conference (IDEX February 2011, Abu Dhabi) by an American company called ATS, is a program that provides security forces with a comprehensive electronic profile of all individuals in a particular geographic scope. It is a program that collates data from any number of electronic sources, including but not limited to, data taken from traffic cameras, smoke detectors, work and school absences, mobile phone texts, internet browsing habits, Facebook posts, tweets and Twitter-following patterns, GPS coordinates from mobile phone usage, and even driving patterns (from Radio Frequency Identification Tagging or RIFD inserted in license plates). While securitization is increasing globally and much of this technology is introduced through private international companies (often with Emirati partners), cutting-edge technologies can be implemented in the UAE before they are in the United States or the United Kingdom due to the UAE's incredible budget for purchasing new technology and the relatively small size of its geographic area and population. Moreover, in addition to its domestic calculations of security, the UAE, like other Gulf states, faces a significant amount of international pressure to control the flows of goods and people circulating through its borders. Separating the West from Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the geopolitical importance of the Gulf to US calculations of security cannot be overlooked. In addition to combatting arms, drug, and human trafficking, the UAE's extensive surveillance capabilities and its willingness to share its intelligence with other governments has made it a critical ally of the US in the "war on terror."⁸

Security and Criminal/Cultural Population Management

The previous sections summarize the main institutional developments that have accompanied the past 20 years of the UAE's economic growth and the demographic impact of its guest worker program. In particular, the different agencies of the UAE's Ministry of Interior have taken active roles in responding to the demographic changes and in developing preemptive policing strategies that include community policing, extensive surveillance networks, and increasingly individualized and standardized forms of identification. By way of conclusion, this section analyses and assesses how that institutional growth has shaped the way the UAE has come to manage its guest worker program over time. In particular, the security apparatus described above is

⁸ In 2006, for example, Bush called the UAE "a committed ally in the war on terror" and "a valued and strategic partner." This was after the UAE security forces gathered and shared intelligence that enabled the US to "shut down a worldwide proliferation network run by A.Q. Khan" (the Pakistani scientist who sold nuclear technology to Iran, North Korea and Libya) (*NBC News*, 10 March 2006).



deployed for managing the criminal and cultural impact of expatriates on the national body politic in three formal and informal ways.

Criminalization of Irregular Migration

The first way that the state deploys the security forces to manage the criminal and cultural impact of expatriates is through the formal enforcement of the *kafala* system. Specifically, the security forces are deployed to ensure that temporary guest workers leave when their contracts expire, and when they do not, they become irregular migrants. Undocumented work and visa overstaying are grounds for the arrest and deportation of “illegals” or “infiltrators.” For example, 173 “illegal immigrants” were arrested in Abu Dhabi over a span of four days in October 2011. Speaking about the round-up to the *Khaleej Times*, Brigadier Al Rashidi stated that “the presence of such offenders in the society is unhealthy. They are the cause of many different crimes and can cause health risks as well” (Hoath, 2011). The treatment of ‘illegal’ migration as a threat to the security and welfare of the national body and the deployment of domestic police forces to enforce immigration (or *kafala*) law is not unique to the UAE. Undocumented migration has become a central preoccupation of policy debates on migration on a global scale – across world regions and regime-types. As De Genova and Peutz explain, the practical effect of this global trend in recent decades “has not only meant that so-called ‘illegal aliens’ are more or less explicitly deemed unsuitable for citizenship and increasingly criminalized but also that the specific deployments of immigration law enforcement have rendered ever greater numbers and ever more diverse categories of migrants subject to arrest, detention, and deportation” (2010:1). Often, it is not simply the migrant-receiving country that is involved in the removal of irregular migrants. Rather, governments are increasingly cooperating to work in tandem bilaterally (e.g., US-Mexico border), regionally (e.g., EU, Mediterranean) and internationally (e.g., inter-Asian networks, International Organization of Migration or IOM) to create juridical and institutional deportation linkages. In the UAE, arrest and deportation is the most common enforcement mechanism for managing expatriates. It is deployed for temporary migrants who overstay their visas or for punishing legal foreign residents convicted of criminal infractions.

Naturalization as National Security

The second way that the state deploys the security apparatus to manage the impact of expatriates over time and maintain the guest worker system is through the treatment of naturalization policy as a national security issue. This second mechanism impacts a smaller proportion of expatriates – the

long-term residents who are relatively integrated into the society and are applying for naturalization. Specifically, the security forces play a central role in assessing and determining whether long-term residents should be given access to citizenship rights. Officially, the population of the UAE is composed of temporary guest workers and national citizens. However, this non-citizen/citizen dichotomy does not reflect the variation in the non-citizen populations residing in the country. The term "expatriate" collapses all of the non-citizen residents, regardless of whether they live in the UAE for mere months or several decades. While the absence of a legal category for permanent residents means that reliable figures for estimating the size of this group are unavailable, there is certainly no shortage of expatriates who have navigated ways of settling in the country over generations. Some of these migrants may, under certain specific conditions, apply for Emirati citizenship.

Naturalization in the UAE is extremely difficult. But despite being highly regulated and exclusionary, naturalization does also occur in an ad hoc, case-by-case manner. According to the publicly available Federal Law No. 17 of 1972, naturalization is a possibility for Arab expatriates after 10 years of continuous lawful residence in the UAE, after 30 years of residing legally in the UAE for non-Arab expatriates (with the condition that they are Muslim and proficient in the Arabic language), and in both cases only if they have exhibited good conduct without convictions for offenses involving dishonor or dishonesty. However, interviews with civil servants in the Dubai Naturalization and Residency Administration (DNRD) revealed that, in practice, Arab expatriates from non-GCC countries are eligible for naturalization only after 30 years (as opposed to the stated 10) of continuous residence in the UAE, and GCC citizens are eligible after seven years of continuous residence in the UAE. There were no criteria for non-Arab or non-Muslim expatriates (although these naturalizations do occasionally occur, especially through sovereign intervention). Applicants have to demonstrate that they have been completely integrated and assimilated into Emirati culture, and demonstrate their allegiance to the Emirates through their language, values, culture, and way of comporting themselves (respectful conduct). They have to study and be familiar with the history, and usually have children born in the country. The security forces of the Ministry of Interior are entrusted with assessing these determinations. Moreover, since applications are made and processed through the Emirate-level government before they are forwarded to the federal government, this condition of continuous residence in the UAE without any substantial breaks is conditional upon residing in the same Emirate for that entire period of time (seven years or 30 years). There are also three categories or gradations of this citizenship (*jinsiyya*) that are marked in one's booklet: Emirati by 'rule of law' (*b'hikum al ganoon*) (these are the citizens who can trace their lineages to the original families comprising the citizenry when the

country was founded), citizen by marriage (this is only available for foreign women because Emirati women cannot pass citizenship to their non-Emirati husbands), and citizenship through naturalization. The passport is the document that marks and identifies an individual as an Emirati internationally, but internally, the citizenship (*jinsiyya*) booklet is essential for proving that one is indeed a citizen and eligible to gain access to the welfare services (including higher education) and funds (including marriage and land grants) provided to citizens. If an individual acquires citizenship through naturalization, then he or she has to demonstrate his or her allegiance to the UAE by forfeiting any other passport or ties to another nationality. And if, after having gone through this process, an individual receives Emirati citizenship and renounces it for another passport at any other point in time, then he or she will not be able to get this citizenship back or pass it onto his/her children (Interview with key informant, 12 April 2010).

By all accounts, especially those of the civil servants working in the DNRD, acquiring Emirati citizenship is an exceptionally difficult process. The entire process—from the actual legal criteria for eligibility, to where and how to file the applications, to how factors like allegiance or assimilation are measured—is extremely opaque. Moreover, while in other legal arenas (such as real estate) there are lawyers specialized in assisting private individuals through the process, this is not the case when it comes to naturalization. As one lawyer, explained in a written communication:

“kindly be advised that there are no lawyers in the UAE working in the area of citizenship acquisition as the Department of Immigration and Naturalization has the sole discretion regarding this issue. Thus, applicants are required to personally apply where the aforementioned government authority has the sole discretion of accepting or rejecting applications without explanations as the criteria are only known to them” (Personal communication, 8 April 2010).

According to the DNRD, naturalization does not require a courts system or otherwise involve legal professionals because whether or not an individual is naturalized is not a legal-formal determination. Rather, it is treated as an issue of internal “national security” that requires the execution of a sovereign political decision (*qaraar siyasi*).

A prominent Emirati lawyer and activist interviewed also reiterated this view and expanded upon why (in her opinion) naturalization was not (and should not be) determined by the courts system. She explained that naturalization was not a legal decision that could be determined by a judge, because ultimately it does not hinge on whether an individual has met certain ‘objective’ criteria (such as extended continuous residence). Rather, the single most important factor in determining whether an individual could be a citizen

was their allegiance (*wala*) to the UAE. And that kind of determination is a political one—it must be made by the head of state and internal security forces who are responsible for protecting the sovereignty, integrity, and safety of the national society. Each person has to be individually assessed for his/her loyalty, patriotism, and benefit or threat to the society. She argued that the criteria for selection and evaluation had to be secretive because naturalization was essentially an issue of “national security” (*Amn al dawla*) (Telephone interview with key informant, 10 April 2010). This framing of naturalization as an issue of national security has also been instantiated in the public statements of the Minister of Interior, Shaikh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. In 2008, he was quoted making two public statements in the Arabic newspaper *Emarat Alyoum*: “*Al-Wala’ shart al-tajnees*” (Allegiance is a condition of naturalization) and “*Al-dustur yasmah bi-saheb al-jinsiyya miman la ya’mal bi-istihqaqatiha*” (The constitution allows for the confiscation of citizenship from those who do not abide by its requisites). These statements were made in reference to the ministry’s initiatives to establish a systematic naturalization procedure for the Bedoon.⁹ He explained that there was an imperative need to create a mechanism for the naturalization of the Bedoon because many of them were good people who contribute to the UAE and truly desire being part of Emirati society. However, it is equally necessary to make sure that this naturalization mechanism is not taken advantage of by those who want to profit from the state’s resources without feeling any real allegiance to the nation. Because of this danger, the constitution empowered the government with the right to confiscate citizenship from any individual who does not respect this privilege or act in accordance with its requisites (while not explicitly stated, it appears that this right only applies to those ‘new’ citizens and not those born with Emirati citizenship (*bi hikum al qanoon*) (*Emarat Alyoum*, 2008). These statements clearly linked the protection of naturalization with the need to protect the UAE’s national security, but this internal security is broadly construed to include not only the absence of criminal behavior dissidence, but also the preservation of righteous and respectful Islamic conduct and cultural and linguistic assimilation.

Managing Moral/Cultural Transgressions

Finally, the third way that the security forces are deployed to manage the impact of expatriates is through the incomplete criminalization of moral or

⁹ The word “Bedoon” in Arabic literally means “without” and it is used as a general term to refer to different populations in the GCC states that do not have any formal citizenship. The largest (and most publicized) population of Bedoon are found in Kuwait.

cultural transgressions. Unlike criminal infractions or irregular migration, moral or cultural transgressions are not fully criminalized in the UAE because the security forces only intervene to enforce moral/cultural legal codes when they are called upon to do so by a specific member of the public. These moral and cultural codes are instantiated in the different Shari'ah or Islamic law-based (or influenced) laws found in the UAE (as well as in the rest of the Gulf and other Muslim states with varying degrees of enforcement). These laws vary in type and in scope. They include the criminalization of all forms of extra-marital relations, public displays of affection (lesser offense), consuming alcohol without a license (licenses are not obtainable by Muslims), or disrespecting Islam or the nation.¹⁰ The penalties of these infractions can vary depending on the Emirate and whether the individual charged is Muslim or not (Shari'ah applies for all Muslims regardless of national origin). In an effort to make these laws more transparent and educate non-citizens about appropriate forms of moral and cultural conduct, the government of Dubai published a Dubai Code of Conduct in March of 2009 (Table 2). The penalties for these offenses involve the similar enforcement mechanism of fines and/or jail and/or deportation. Despite the continued existence of these laws, the police forces of the UAE do not go out of their way to enforce all infractions. Unlike the *mutaween* (religious police) of Saudi Arabia, there is no morality enforcement squad or police force in the UAE. However, when the police are investigating a related case (e.g., a car accident that involves the consumption of alcohol) or there is a complaint about decency transgressions, they are obliged to investigate the claim and the court system has upheld these laws even if some of them are systematically ignored on a daily basis. The 2010 case of a British couple who were sentenced to one month in prison is illustrative in this regard. The pair was arrested in November of 2009 when an Emirati woman accused them of breaking the country's decency laws by kissing on the lips at a restaurant in the Jumeirah Beach Residence area of Dubai. In cases like these, the police forces are in the position of having to 'manage' the cultural impact of expatriates by enforcing the decency law when the transgression has been politicized. In this case, the police were responding to the demands of a specific citizen, but this is not an isolated incident of enforcing the law for the purposes of placating the desires of one woman. Rather, it is part of the broader constellation of strategies adopted by the police forces for managing the guest worker program by alleviating and managing the tensions between different members of the UAE community whenever those frictions emerge.

¹⁰ Each Emirate has its own decency laws (although general expectations hold throughout the country).

TABLE 2
TABLE OF OFFENCE AND PENALTY ACCORDING TO THE DUBAI CODE OF CONDUCT

Offence	Penalty
Public display of affection	Warning or fine (jail and/or deportation in case of severe breach)
Alcohol consumption outside designated areas	Fine or jail
Buying alcohol without an alcohol license	Fine or jail
Driving under the effect of alcohol or any other drug	Fine, jail and/or deportation-car confiscation
Drug consumption or possession	Fine, jail and deportation
Lack of respect for Islam's customs and symbols	Fine, fail and deportation
Lack of respect for other religion's customs and symbols	Fine or jail
Vulgar language	Fine or jail
Littering and spitting	Warning or fine
Pet fouling public areas	Warning or fine
Damaging public facilities	Fine
Respect for environment	Warning or fine (cf. Federal Law No. 24/1999 on the protection and development of environment)

SOURCE: Dubai Code of Conduct, <http://www.dubaifaqs.com/dubai-code-of-conduct.php>

Because of Dubai's global image as a liberal Muslim state, these interventions in enforcing the decency laws (especially in their application to foreigners), often makes international headlines as a newsworthy event. But these politicized cases¹¹ are often read by the Western media as a clash of civilizations between Islamic austerity and a morally-bankrupt foreign presence.¹²

¹¹ In addition to the kissing case described, other cases receiving attention from Western media outlets include the arrest of an adulterous couple using text messages, an alleged rape case in a five- star hotel, and the arrest of a British couple who were caught having sex on a beach.

¹² For an example of this kind of journalism and analysis, see "Why Dubai's Islamic austerity is a sham" (Butler, 2010).



These crass characterizations of Dubai rarely scratch below the surface to analyze how these cases are illustrative of the UAE state's broader need to navigate the sometimes competing demands between its economic dependence upon expatriates with its equally important need to be responsive to citizen demands. As the police forces have become more and more involved in active policing strategies, they are increasingly pulled into the role of alleviating the tensions and responding to communal struggles to define the UAE's public sphere. These cases are politicized domestically because they are about ways of giving citizens a say about what kind of country the UAE should be, and how their culture and customs should be protected. These cases are not about an Islamization of the State, they are about the kind of political calculations a government has to make in order to maintain and manage an entire economic system (*kafala*) that has been integral for the economic development of the Gulf.

By responding to public demands to instantiate and enforce decency laws, the police forces are lending citizens a voice in defining what the cultural and moral fabric of the UAE's public sphere should be. The inherent limitation of using security forces to manage struggles over the public sphere is that it is not the most flexible of tools at a state's disposal. The institutional culture of security forces is to assess and understand situations in terms of 'threats.' The only way that security forces can be used by the state to help define the public sphere is in the moments of transgression. Criminalizing cultural transgressions cannot create and generate the identity of the Emirates, it can only function as a post-hoc attempt to deal with existential anxieties. No police force, no matter how adept, can preserve a country's heritage. Rather, what all of the GCC states are missing are integrating institutions that assimilate foreigners into the dominant cultural and moral fabric of that society to educate them about acceptable codes of conduct. The reason for the widespread absence of these assimilating state and non-state institutions (such as "citizenship training" programs) across the Gulf is because the *kafala* system was designed as a temporary system for responding to a labor shortage and it was not designed or implemented as a means of encouraging the permanent settlement of guest workers. While the expatriate populations of the Gulf continue to be transient (in varying degrees), GCC governments and populations also know that expatriates continue to be an integral part of the economic, cultural and social life of the Gulf states.

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