

## Introduction

The making of citizens is an evolving challenge. Compared to times past, we live in a more mature international system, one in which national identities are largely given, war is less common, and the global economy is significantly more competitive. It is less likely that citizens will have to fight for their countries *en masse* on the battlefield, and more likely that they will have to do so in market economies. Yet much of our knowledge about the making of citizens does not address the challenge of cultivating citizens for globalized market eras – what I call the *making of citizens, 2.0*. This is so despite rapidly growing real-world interest in these issues.

That gap in our knowledge provides the primary rationale for this book. In it, I offer a detailed empirical study of how state leaders are adapting their citizen-building strategies to fit contemporary global realities. But the book isn't just about the *why* and the *how* of contemporary citizen-building; it's also about the outcomes that leaders are achieving in their efforts to reshape citizens, and the reasons for those outcomes. What kinds of citizens do state leaders want to cultivate, and what kinds of citizens are they actually getting as they experiment with differing strategies? And why? What explains the success and failure of such efforts at “pro-globalization,” and often simultaneously “pro-market,” social engineering efforts?

The book draws from experiences from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), but it addresses questions and lends insights into challenges that are increasingly universal. Why the UAE? As I will discuss in Chapter 1, although the UAE is in some ways unusual, it has much to offer comparative social scientists. It is a valuable microcosm for the *making of citizens, 2.0*, where the issues at stake are cast into sharp relief. Having moved through

the early stages of state-building after its founding in 1971 – during which time its leaders understandably focused on “first-order” needs such as instilling a national identity and providing for citizens’ basic welfare – it now confronts widely shared “second-order” citizen-building challenges. Indeed, like many state leaders, those in the UAE are worried about their country’s economic competitiveness and the size of its welfare state. These pressures are felt keenly as oil reserves run down, the prospect of a post-petroleum age grows ever more real, and public-sector employment is harder to sustain. In response, UAE leaders have undertaken a number of ambitious social engineering initiatives to adapt citizens to these new realities. What are they achieving? And what can we learn from their efforts to re-engineer and better motivate citizens for a globalized market era?

#### FINDINGS

This book tells the story of an ambitious state-led social engineering project. Like the nineteenth-century Parisian elites in Eugen Weber’s *Peasants into Frenchmen*, who sought to create French citizens out of peasants with a limited sense of national identity, the UAE’s leaders hope to convert their citizens – many of whom are of Bedouin descent – into a new kind of citizen, one who is more modern in the eyes of rulers, more globalization-ready, and better prepared for a post-petroleum era. It is a vision of the citizen as loyal entrepreneurial bourgeois – innovative, achievement-oriented, conscientious, civil, tolerant, hard-working, risk-taking, business-starting, community-serving, and patriotic, one who embodies the classic “bourgeois virtues,” within authoritarian constraints. Put another way, ruling elites aim to fashion the young into more self-reliant, achievement-oriented adults who will demand less from the state in terms of social welfare, while showing greater willingness to volunteer in their communities and contribute to market-driven economies. In short, they want more *entrepreneurial* citizens, broadly conceived.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, they also hope to maintain the authoritarian status quo, preserving citizens’ loyalty.

From the perspective of leaders, it is a major challenge – their very own “king’s dilemma” (Huntington 1968) – and it is made even trickier by the

<sup>1</sup> Citizenship theorists have also used terms such as “neoliberal” and “pro-market” to capture similar, if somewhat narrower, visions of the citizen (Kymlicka and Norman 1994).

rentier character of the UAE, as I will show in Chapter 2. To what extent can leaders fashion more entrepreneurial citizens? The neoliberal structural changes often suggested to “incentivize” the growth of such citizens – like cutting public-sector jobs and salaries, and taking away benefits – are viewed as politically risky, as they are everywhere, and even more so in the wake of the Arab uprisings. Such reforms would also cause significant social strain, as they already have in places forced to undertake them, notably Russia in the 1990s and contemporary Greece.

Under these constraints, UAE leaders have opted for a “softer” social engineering approach. Influenced by their own experiences living and studying in the West, this strategy focuses on shaping hearts and minds from a young age, *encouraging* and *teaching* citizens to be more entrepreneurial rather than *forcing* them into these roles through structural changes. Thus, rather than play with fire at the structural level, ruling elites prefer to focus on reshaping the person, the actor, the agent operating within that structure – the citizen. As a result, the social engineering campaign is, at its core, an intrinsically political effort to reshape citizens and their perceptions of the social contract in ways that are ultimately familiar to scholars of nationalism and identity formation.

To mold citizens along these new and futuristic lines, leaders have turned to education reform, public symbolism, spectacle, and other time-honored mechanisms of state-led social engineering. In some provocative ways, these recall efforts to mold the New Soviet Man in the former Soviet Union, yet in different ideological directions. On the one hand, state initiatives seek to engineer a “revolution from above,” a particular vision of enlightenment embraced by UAE leaders. Such social engineering initiatives aim to expand knowledge, promote individuality, and foster creativity and critical thinking, precisely in the pro-globalization, outward-oriented ways that many critics both inside and outside of the region have long recommended. Indeed, these goals embody important liberal ideals of character (Macedo 1990). As I show in Chapter 3, although these initiatives have their limits in an authoritarian context, ruling elites are nevertheless paying more than mere lip service to the idea of nurturing a “creative Arab renaissance” (UNDP 2003, IV), thus challenging stereotypes about authoritarian social engineering. Moreover, to help bring about these changes, UAE leaders have enlisted top global talent, displaying a determination to learn from others in the quest for globalization-ready citizens rivaling that of Japan’s Meiji-era reformers, who famously sought to modernize Japan in the late nineteenth century.

Yet, at the same time, leaders hope to maintain control over their enlightenment by influencing not only “minds” but also “hearts” – instilling not just knowledge and skills but attitudes and values in line with a future that is at once globalized, liberal, and authoritarian. As I show in Chapter 4, official symbolism and propaganda, glittering state-sponsored spectacles, and new civics curricula promote not only liberal but also neoliberal ideals of character. These cast work as personally fulfilling, celebrate business initiative, promote a civic spirit through volunteering and tolerance, and valorize self-reliance, while avoiding any mention of civil liberties. Citizens must have the right frames of mind to thrive and compete, leaders believe, a willingness to contribute to economic and social development as well the capability – the software, not just the hardware. In the international community, these kinds of efforts to build a “new Arab citizen,” one who is better educated and equipped to compete in the global economy – and, so the thinking goes, less susceptible to radicalism – have been heralded as a way forward for the troubled region (UNDP 2003; World Bank 2007; Nasr 2009; Faour and Muasher 2011).<sup>2</sup>

And perhaps they are. However political systems evolve, there is very little doubt that the Middle East needs opportunities, inclusiveness, and jobs, especially for its dramatically growing youth population, more than a quarter of whom are unemployed. In addition to top-level political and economic reform, the region may well need a stronger “knowledge society” (UNDP 2003) marked by greater achievement motivation, productive risk-taking, and civic responsibility, supported by education systems emphasizing creativity and problem-solving over rote memorization. This is not to “blame” or “essentialize” culture or society; it is to recognize significant obstacles to human flourishing that have a variety of causes, and seek to address them *despite* the persistence of authoritarianism, oil rents, and other contributing factors. In the final chapter, I take up the deeper question of citizen-building in “imperfect” contexts. The bottom line is that social engineering aimed at positive human flourishing is anywhere – and even in authoritarian conditions – a dream worth investigating. As E.H. Carr (1939, 4) wrote about the role of utopianism,

<sup>2</sup> For more critical perspectives, see Mazawi and Sultana (2010) and Abi-Mershed (2010) on education in the Middle East as a “battleground” for conflicting geopolitical projects. As Fida Adely (2012, 87) has noted, in much of the contemporary Middle East, “proper education is considered critical to preventing religious extremism among young people over religious public spaces, religious teaching, and preaching in mosques and in Islamic centers.” Alterman (2009) also provides a useful review of Nasr (2009).

“The wish is father to the thought.” In this book, I move from the wish to the thought, investigating both the opportunities and the risks presented by such “pro-globalization” social engineering in the largely authoritarian Middle East.

No state can completely control society. But neither can society completely escape the attention and control of the state. The *outcomes* of state-led social engineering are thus inherently uncertain. They may be, and probably are often, mixed, falling somewhere between “success” and “failure” from the state’s perspective. Understanding them requires an approach that can accommodate nuance and complexity. In Chapter 1, I develop an updated conceptual framework for the study of state-led social engineering and the making of citizens, which disaggregates *national*, *civil*, *political*, and *economic* dimensions of the state–citizen relationship. That framework structures the investigation of both social engineering goals and outcomes, allowing in-depth treatments of the type of citizen leaders *wish* to cultivate and the type of citizen they are *actually* cultivating.

And what kind of citizen are they actually cultivating? What I find in the UAE case is that shaping citizens for a globalized market era is a complex business. On the one hand, and as shown in Chapter 5, I find evidence that such social engineering has increased patriotism, the willingness to volunteer, and tolerance, and is thus succeeding in some measures of the *national* and *civil* dimensions. Moreover, there is no evidence of greater demands for civil liberties. These outcomes are therefore well aligned with ruling elites’ goals for the *making of citizens*, 2.0. Indeed, increasing tolerance via social engineering is likely to be seen as especially impressive. On the other hand, I find evidence that social engineering is failing and even backfiring in the *political* and *economic* dimensions, heightening a counter-productive culture of entitlement by intensifying young citizens’ belief in their right to a government job, dampening their entrepreneurial spirit, and triggering interest in political participation for self but not others. Overall, the results point to the formation of citizens who are highly nationalistic, yet also highly entitled – what I call *entitled patriots*.

In other words, the “products” of such pro-market, pro-globalization social engineering love their country more, but paradoxically, they are also less willing to make sacrifices for the sake of its development. Love of country is more complicated than it appears. Why did this happen, and what can we learn from these results? Making citizens more “entrepreneurial” is obviously a delicate matter, having attracted only limited

research that might tell us more about possible unintended consequences. In Chapter 6, I show that standard explanations for success and failure in state-led social engineering do not adequately explain the paradox of the entitled patriot. The main reason is that they are too broad-brushed. For example, it is now a truism to observe that elite planners are unlikely to succeed in their efforts to mold society by design because of a certain inherent hubris and lack of local knowledge, an argument put forth most famously in political science by James Scott (1998). Yet this perspective does not explain why UAE social engineers should succeed in some aspects of social engineering, yet fail – and also trigger unintended consequences – in others. It does not explain the *paradox* of the entitled patriot. Likewise, theory surrounding the “king’s dilemma” is also unsatisfactory, since it does not predict the rise of entitled patriots, instead emphasizing the emergence of liberal, democratic citizens as an accidental by-product of authoritarian modernization.

I offer an alternative explanation, rooted in the complex role of nationalism as a citizen motivator and its potential to trigger “crowding out” effects. Nationalism is typically believed to be a strong motivator for citizens in times of war and peace alike. Yet my evidence suggests an important twist on the motivational power of nationalism, depending on *the way* nationalism is understood and put to use. Like many citizen-builders, those in the UAE have sought to use nationalism to motivate citizens to take up new and more challenging roles. Displaying what I call a *new paternalism*, they believe that citizens – if they are going to look beyond easy government jobs, compete successfully in the country’s private sector, start new businesses, solve social problems, volunteer in their communities, and otherwise take up new and more challenging citizenship roles – need to *believe* more in themselves, as well as their nation.

As a result, the social engineering campaign is full of a form of nationalism that is essentially self-esteem boosting, reminding citizens to love and be proud of their country, its rulers, and ultimately themselves. As I show in Chapter 6, although leaders believe such “feel good” nationalism will excite youth and motivate them to contribute, the results for citizen-formation are complex. The strategy does excite citizens, I find, but it does not truly motivate them in the way rulers envisioned. It is thus the *strategy* used to motivate citizens – not a blanket lack of local knowledge, the inevitable effects of the rentier state, or the unavoidable consequences of authoritarian modernization – that appears responsible for social engineering outcomes. By flooding their campaign with this type of

“nationalism-lite,” social engineers are succeeding in making citizens more proud and more nationalistic, yet in ways that are ultimately insubstantial and even counterproductive. Indeed, I find that boosting pride in citizens and their nation is unintentionally intensifying entitlement attitudes, “crowding out” development-friendly mindsets. Such “crowding out” effects on achievement motivation, productive risk-taking, and other development-friendly attitudes are aligned with decades of social science research on the “hidden costs” of praise and other external incentives but have not been linked to broader state efforts to shape and motivate the citizen.

Can nationalism be used to motivate citizens more effectively within conditions of globalization, or is nationalism itself fundamentally at odds with those conditions? Is it fair or appropriate to speak of “citizen-building” under authoritarian, rentier, or otherwise problematic political conditions? And what are the broader implications for the *making of citizens, 2.0* – the question of how to build engaged citizens in an era in which national identities are largely given, war is less frequent, and the global economy is more competitive than ever? These are deeper questions that I take up in the final chapter. In it, I use experiments to test alternative social engineering strategies, which use nationalism to motivate citizens in different ways and draw from the work of contemporary theorists of nationalism and citizenship such as Rogers Smith, Liah Greenfeld, and Ian MacMullen.

#### CONTRIBUTIONS

The book makes several contributions. First, many studies of citizen-building and nationalism focus on elite efforts to instill a sense of national identity and related questions of inclusion, particularly in association with gender, class, race, and ethnicity. This book focuses more on state efforts to encourage social and economic orientations aligned with national needs in a global market era – key elements in the *making of citizens, 2.0*. In so doing, it offers an updated conceptual framework for the empirical study of citizen-building, which broadens the notion of the citizen to encompass economic and social attitudes as well as attitudes surrounding national identity. The framework also incorporates not only rights but also responsibilities on the part of citizens, enriching existing schema that have been criticized for ignoring the “responsibilities” side of the citizenship equation. Thus, the book contributes by focusing attention

on important, but under-studied, dimensions of citizenship and state-led political socialization.

Second, the book moves beyond the classic question of how states seek to shape citizens toward identifying the *outcomes* of such efforts and the *reasons* for those outcomes in methodologically innovative and rigorous ways. How do citizens react to top-down efforts to “shape” them? The literature on state-led social engineering has produced conflicting predictions: although numerous scholars view it as a complex and messy process, doomed to fail, examples of apparent success in attempts to shape citizens’ attitudes through social engineering are easily found, as I show in Chapter 1. To move this literature forward, Charles Tilly (1999) called for a shift away from broad-brush judgments of success and failure and toward more targeted investigations of how and why specific outcomes, intended or otherwise, arise as a result of such interventions. This book takes up Tilly’s invitation, building knowledge about what can actually happen when societies attempt to reinvent themselves along pro-globalization, pro-market lines.

In this vein, the book also makes a theoretical contribution by highlighting a novel and counter-intuitive way in which state-led social engineering can backfire, which probes deeper than the conventional wisdom hoisting the blame on a lack of local knowledge on the part of social engineers. I emphasize not the *lack* of knowledge so much as the *presence* of knowledge at the top that is intuitive and theoretically plausible, but ultimately flawed. Specifically, *nationalism* is often viewed as a powerful means of motivating citizens to take risks and achieve, so strong that it can even motivate them to fight and die for their country on the battlefield. Yet, in the context of cultivating citizens for a globalized market era – the *making of citizens, 2.0* – I show that certain types of nationalism can affect citizens in the same way that certain forms of praise can affect individuals, *reducing* rather than enhancing the motivation to achieve at high levels and instilling an inflated sense of status. Although we know that nationalism is a powerful force, one that can be difficult for leaders to control when unleashed, we know little about how it might interact with and potentially crowd out development-friendly mindsets.

Finally, the book contributes to our knowledge of Middle East politics, and Gulf politics in particular. Citizen-building in this region, and particularly the cultivation of citizens and societies better equipped for globalization, receives relatively limited scholarly attention, despite widespread policy interest in these topics from local governments and the

international community.<sup>3</sup> On the Gulf, there is rich, valuable research addressing important issues like natural-resource wealth, rentierism, and the social, political, and economic implications that follow;<sup>4</sup> prospects for democracy and authoritarian resilience;<sup>5</sup> foreign policy;<sup>6</sup> and questions of gender, identity, and citizenship within traditional yet globalizing societies.<sup>7</sup> Yet there is only limited research on state-led social engineering and its implications. And strangely, given its popular image as a rare island of progress in the Middle East,<sup>8</sup> the UAE remains among the least studied countries in the Gulf.<sup>9</sup>

In this light, the UAE effort is intrinsically important. Its rulers are doing a good part of what critics have long demanded is necessary for the revitalization of the region as a whole. For example, the UN's 2003 Arab Human Development Report, written by Arab scholars and heralded by many Western observers, argues that the region needs a "creative Arab renaissance," fueled by "an enlightened Arab knowledge model that encourages cognitive learning, critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity" (UNDP 2003, IV). As violence continues to wrack the Middle East, the book should interest those who support recommendations like these as steps to an alternative future for the Arab world, and wish to see how they are being interpreted by rulers and citizens alike in a country that has the wealth, political will, and stability – rare in the region – to carry them out.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of policy interest, see the Arab Knowledge Reports (2009, 2010, 2014) from the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Crystal (1990), Gause (1994), Chaudhry (1997), Okruhlik (1999), Foley (2010), and Hertog (2010).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Herb (1999), Tétreault (2000), Ehteshami (2003), Lawson (2005), Davidson (2012b), and Matthiesen (2013).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Kamrava (2013) on Qatar, Aarts and Nonneman (2005) on Saudi Arabia, and Ulrichsen (2011) on the GCC.

<sup>7</sup> See Longva (2005), Al-Rasheed (2013), and Vora (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Vali Nasr, for instance, described the UAE as a rare example of "good news" in the Middle East during the Pew Forum's biannual Faith Angle Conference on religion, politics, and public life (December 8, 2008, transcript accessed on February 13, 2013, at [www.pewforum.org/2008/12/08/america-and-islam-after-bush/](http://www.pewforum.org/2008/12/08/america-and-islam-after-bush/)).

<sup>9</sup> Davidson (2005) is the most thorough, political science-oriented treatment focused only on the UAE in recent years. See, also, Abdulla (1984), Rugh (2007), Almezaini (2012), and Young (2014) for more specialized studies; Herb (2014) compares the UAE to Kuwait. Dubai attracts more attention (Ali 2010; Kanna 2011). Histories are also more widely available. See, for example, Heard-Bey (1982), Taryam (1987), and Van Der Muelen (1997).

## METHODS

This is a multi-method study. It combines palace ethnography, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and experiments to make its key arguments, drawing from over fifteen months of combined fieldwork in the UAE between 2010 and 2014. To explore the generalizability of these arguments, I also collected data in Jordan, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Such a multi-method approach is not common in the existing literature on citizen-building and nationalism, which tends to be more qualitative and historical, and so it is worth elaborating on how the methodological pieces fit together.

To investigate the “view from the top,” for example, I collected ethnographic evidence in palace settings and conducted dozens of interviews with ruling elites in Arabic and English, including several with one of the country’s ruling monarchs. Such rare data provide deeper insights into ruling elites’ ways of thinking than can be gleaned from one-shot interviews, scripted speeches, and carefully crafted websites. Indeed, in this sense, the book offers a valuable look into the “black box” of autocratic reasoning when it comes to state-led social engineering. I also interviewed education reformers, foreign experts, and others involved in the campaign, observed state-sponsored spectacles, and studied public symbolism to build knowledge about the key mechanisms of social engineering. In addition, I collected photographs of installations, artistic exhibits, posters, slogans, and other forms of visual evidence, which are described in the text and vividly illustrate these mechanisms.

To investigate social engineering outcomes and the reasons for those outcomes, I collected additional data through surveys and experiments. To identify outcomes, for instance, I surveyed several thousand UAE youth across the country, and conducted follow-up interviews and focus groups to better understand their perspective. I used a difference-in-differences statistical strategy across treatment and control school types, aiming to test hypotheses about the intended and unintended effects of social engineering more precisely than is typical in the existing literature. Finally, to explore causal mechanisms, I combined qualitative fieldwork with a series of randomized experiments exploring social engineering alternatives.

## PLAN OF THE BOOK

The book adopts a “top to bottom” structure. Chapter 1 presents my concept of the *making of citizens, 2.0*, and situates it in the broader literature

*Plan of the Book*

II

on citizen-building and nationalism. Chapter 2 turns to the UAE, focusing on the goals of the UAE social engineering campaign and its origins. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the “how” of social engineering: Chapter 3 focuses on state efforts to influence “minds,” to foster what leaders see as an enlightenment and knowledge renaissance through education reform and other means, while Chapter 4 examines efforts to “direct” this enlightenment, to influence “hearts” – to ensure that citizens adopt market-friendly, pro-globalization mindsets, yet remain loyal and accepting of the authoritarian status quo. Chapter 5 explores the outcomes of the campaign, focusing on a comparison of youth in treatment and control school types, and Chapter 6 examines the reasons for these outcomes. Chapter 7 considers the generalizability of these findings about how to motivate citizens in the context of a global market era, exploring social engineering alternatives that put nationalism to use in different ways, as well the deeper question of citizen-building in “imperfect” political contexts.