A New Roadmap to Life:
Media, Culture, and Modernity in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

Critical to the vision of a *new* United Arab Emirates is an educated, skilled workforce that fuels the intelligent growth needed in a knowledge-based economy. As the country begins developing its version of that economy, the mediated, transparent environment fundamental to this process will carry with it new visions of (and possibilities for) living life. If peaceful change is to be achieved, a transitional generation faces the conundrum of adapting the best that modernity can offer while retaining the best of tradition. As have others, this study suggests two things: that (1) media literacy, growing in part from education, is correlated with urbanization and a changing infrastructure, and that (2) media in all its forms is inseparable from the outcome of this drive to modernization.

Introduction

A simple way to look at culture is as a roadmap to life that facilitates the capacity to survive and adapt to an environment. Passing along shared traditions, myths, legends, ceremonies, and rituals, among other things, culture helps create shared realities. This reality is created, shaped, modified, and preserved through communication. At some moment in time, ancient forms of associations, politics, and entertainment conducted by storytelling through speech were overlaid with reading and writing, the habits of print literacy. Today that storytelling has become intertwined with electronic habits that require a newer literacy. Today's technology and what it implies have been called the 8th day of creation, and demands for "growth" and a modern economy impose the need for using that technology. A knowledge-driven economy with its use of (and dependence upon) modern media both interacts with and changes culture.

The United Arab Emirates is an example of this interaction. The United Arab Emirates has been transformed from an impoverished collection of sand-blown principalities to a modern economic powerhouse with a top-twenty standard of living in three mere decades. Today's Emiratis live life large. At all levels, their paternalistic governments support them with no-cost public education, low-cost medicine, high-paying jobs, short working hours, marriage grants, enormous pension contributions, and inexpensive housing. Inspired by the benevolent leadership of the late Sheikh Zayed, the country has blossomed in the desert. In doing so, it has moved from petrodollar dependence to a diversified economy with destination tourism a major force, more than a dozen free trade zones, and a state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure. Dubai's speculative building boom with freehold

ownership for foreigners has created a get-rich quick mentality. The country also has become a transportation hub with modern airports and efficient container ports and increasingly serves as communications gathering place for Arabic-language media who wish to return from their self-imposed diaspora. To attract media enterprises, the country has adopted public policy to minimize restrictions and has a Constitution offering protection for free expression in most of its forms (Reuters, 7 November 2000; see also, Trabelsi, 2001). The singular goal of these several initiatives is to eliminate the drag on progress that the lack of raw materials has made for other area countries (Selber & Ghanem, 2004).

The UAE's economic vision is that of an Arab/Islamic incarnation of Alvin Toffler's third wave. In riding the developmental swell, leadership has recognized the need to make more of its Emirati human assets, a resource of which there is now abundance. Though a knowledge-based economy is the dreamed of "third star on the right" guiding Emirati development, that star is twined. It raises hopes. It also illuminates societal fault lines. As mediated knowledge fans the flames of enlightenment, this knowledge also provides scripts of possible, alternative lives. They promote the scripts of those possible lives in entertainment programming and even in news stories. Thus, the electronic media in all forms help create a modern moment. That is because the mediated world which brings knowledge is also characterized by a new role for imagination powered by media. (See Appadurai, 1991). Such potential lives are beamed into the United Arab Emirates from a vast external world through satellite and cable television, the Internet, and print media including magazines and newspapers and books.

Society and Culture

The people's will articulated in civic society greatly impacts what happens in all facets of life (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Geremek, 1992; Diamond, 1994; Bryant, 1995). That is because complex networks of economic, social, and cultural practices based on friendship, family, the market, and voluntary association help shape daily life (Wapner, 1995). Such civic forces are in flux in the United Arab Emirates, which remains in many ways a "to be" society in which kith and kinship and extended family networks wield enormous power over "possible" lives to be led. In this context, the many marketplaces of ideas transmitted by the modern media system inhabiting a 3rd wave economy now butt heads with other more familiar and comfortable visions of family and living. (See for example, Essoulami, 2001; Za'Za', 8 January 2002.) That is because a closed society and a transparent modern economy are mutually exclusive. Forecasters believe that there will soon be two worlds, defined simply by closed or open access to information.

Geography, history, culture, language, and the seven Emirate-based monarchies remain keystones of a millennium-old routine of life. The building blocks of this life require that individuals serve families, families serve society, and the individual serves both (Patai, 1983; Nawar, 2000). For most, the family and tribal structure are the fundamental metaphors. Traditionally, the freedoms that matter have been those that the ruler offered his tribal "family" or those that the head of the household offered his wife(s) and children.

One critical element in those things that matter is Islam, which permeates all of society as it serves as *the* normative force (Patai, 1983; Lewis, 1990). Until most recent economic developments, Muslims have felt little particular need for secularism. Even today, the mere recognition that secular transparency is valuable in mundane economic corners remains grudging. That is because conservative Muslims envision the West imposing an

entire system of political and social values from such small beginnings (Ringle, 2001). They use this forecast of small, step-by-step change as a way to inject fear into even the most moderate of their numbers.

Media and Culture

New ways of communication, education, and media literacy have grown in lockstep (Lerner, 1958). Partly because the UAE had not been a reading society and partly because the consumer base for advertising in a market economy took time to develop, newspapers took root slowly in the UAE. From modest beginnings in the late 1960s, the print industry has grown to include six Arabic language and four English language daily newspapers and more than 160 magazines and journals. Most have on-line versions. The broadcast media, much like their print counterparts, have shallow roots also dating from the late 1960s (Babbili and Hussain, 1994 p. 304). From few options television choices have now exploded, arriving over the air, via satellite or cable, and offering a menu of viewing alternatives from across the Gulf and around the world.

The United Arab Emirates also has worked hard to develop suitable physical and psychic space for new media. Emirates Internet and Multimedia (EIM), the country's sole Internet service provider, put the current number of Internet subscribers at more than 210,000 and the number of users at more than a million in 2004, making the United Arab Emirates one of the most wired nations in the entire on-line world (International Business Newsletter, October, 2003).

The United Arab Emirates, particularly the Emirate of Dubai, has attempted to draw technologically based business to its dunes, creating enterprise zones built on the duty-free model. Media City and Internet City have had some notable success in drawing media businesses and Internet related business to their gleaming glass buildings. Drawing these businesses to the sands is one part of the economic puzzle. Creating business models that work within regulatory frameworks and the context of Islamic society for far-flung enterprises such as e-business, traditional media, and tax-free distribution centers remains the other, more vital puzzle piece (Arabiata, 2002; Quinn, Walters, & Whiteoak, 2003).

Media and Culture

Because of the country's recent development, Emiratis can live in a media rich environment if they so desire. They can interact on the Internet, see the entertainment and news programming of their choice, or view magazines and newspapers filled with worldly consumer delights. But this bringing the world at large into Emirati homes has been the subject of debate, particularly in the context of preserving the local culture.

The Internet, in particular, has had its detractors in Gulf Arab states (Reuters, 1998; see also, Lee 2001; Associated Press, 12 May 1997; Trabelsi, 1998; Human Rights Watch, 1999). Even in liberal Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates, opponents of unfettered access have sounded these same themes to justify an occasional go-slow, paternalistic approach. The gist of this cultural-protection theme rings crystal clear in an argument presented by Saleh Abdulrahman al-'Adhel, the head of the King Abdul-Aziz City for Science and Technology. The Internet presents "an important service in relaying and distributing information," he has said, "but also has a negative side that conflicts with our faith and our Arab Muslim traditions" (Associated Press, 12 May 1997). Such worries about potentially offensive material delayed the introduction of the Internet in all Gulf Arab states.

The United Arab Emirates, sensing an economic opportunity, has been more liberal than others who share the peninsula (Wheeler, 2000; see also Dubai Press Club, 2000). On 10 May 2001, Sheikh Mohammed, Crown Prince of Dubai, speaking in de Tocquevillean terms at the launch of Dubai Media City, said that: "I guarantee freedom of expression to all of you…. Let us do so responsibly, objectively and with accountability and in the spirit of the social and cultural context in which we live…." (*Gulf News*, 11 May 2001; for more information see also Wheeler, 21 January 2001).

Echoing this sentiment, the Federal National Council similarly offered its support for freedom of the expression and stressed the need to support efforts to guard freedom of opinion and expression within the boundaries of the law (Dawood, 2001). What those boundaries are remains unclear because there is no bright line in the sometimes shifting sands. Despite the seductive notion of a sweeping era of globalization, uniform regulation of media is improbable because different societies with different cultures have differing viewpoints and frameworks for exercising control (Whittle, 16 May 1996; Ang, 1997; Sussmann, 2000). Competing viewpoints are drawn from the wellsprings of culture.

"Every culture has the right to express itself," said Milagros De Corral, UNESCO's deputy assistant director speaking in Abu Dhabi on 23 April 2001 before the second International Summit on Internet and Multimedia (*Wired*, 2001). "But when it comes to cultural content, the problem is that the moment you change a character … you can erode something" (*Wired*, 2001).

The debate over the erosion of values has two faces in the United Arab Emirates. Decentralization of information is one face. Deployment of information and communications technology facilitates decentralization of power, creating distributed information available to all, including the women who sometimes live a cloistered existence. Those cloisters a prison do not make, if women have the freedom to soar over them via the Internet. Evidence suggests that women in the United Arab Emirates do so (Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005). The second face, globalization, raises the specter of homogenized and largely Westernized values. Because of these dual concerns, the UAE has carefully considered the spread of technology (Dahan, nd).

Many regulators argue that curbs to freedom of expression on the Internet are needed to protect children from harmful content, preserve religious values, safeguard local cultures, protect national security, thwart terrorists, and silence racists (Balmer, 2002). Many Emiratis believe that the community standards of virtue inherent in Islam and the society into which Islam is inexorably woven must be protected. They advocate a benign paternalism, passionately arguing against access to certain classes of information.

In the United Arab Emirates, few officials will admit that blocking unwelcome political information is among their objectives in imposing Internet regulations. What they will say is that pornography and other anti-cultural material is fair game. The reasoning used is the potential of what the Internet "may do to national, cultural and religious values." Such topics are proselytizing by other religions, un-Islamic information, the potential for affecting women's roles in society, and dilution of local cultural norms (Burkhart and Goodman, 1998 taken from Kettmann, 24 April 2001).

The Qatari ambassador to the United Nations once wrote (in what can only be described as *1984*-esque language) "the high-level moralities in preventing the indecent and corrupt material will undoubtedly nourish morality at the human level. Prohibition, in this

respect, therefore, is not deprivation but enrichment; not suppression but discipline, and not limitation but expansion" (Burkhart and Goodman, 1998; quotation from Sussmann, 2000).

The United Arab Emirates is among the countries which maintain the capacity to provide such enrichment, discipline, and expansion for its citizenry. It actively filters and blocks Internet content and also has the capacity to eavesdrop electronically (Human Rights Watch, June 1999; see also, Bell, 2001). In 2004 a German-based website offering an "escort service" and carrying pictures, profiles, and prices was blocked in Dubai. EIM blocked it because it did not comply with the region's "Islamic values" (Staff Reporter, 9 May 2004).

United Arab Emirates government officials steadfastly maintain that the sole purpose of its blocking policy is to eliminate those pornographic sites. One senior official in the Ministry of Information and Culture told Human Rights Watch in a telephone interview on June 10, 1998: "There is no restriction on the political, social, economic side. Politically, in the U.A.E., we do not hold value for censorship, especially political or censorship of ideas: we don't believe in that. You can access on the Internet any material, from Israel or anywhere. The whole idea (of the proxy system) was to block X-rated materials. You can see the first pages [of sexually explicit sites], but not whatever is after that" (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

Whether it is actually midnight in the garden of good and evil, the Internet has proven to be a powerful instrument in the United Arab Emirates. The Internet evaporates distance while combining text, speech, and pictures in a compelling convergence of communication that potentiates real-time, far-flung, unfiltered information gathering (Pool, 1990, p. 8). In a recent survey, female college students aged in their twenties had taken "advantage of the Internet to play, explore their world, try out different identifies, express themselves through personal web pages, develop relationships with friends and family, and become socialized" (Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005; quotation from Katz p. 213.)

Although sharing these basic common denominators with their Western contemporaries, these females exhibited profound differences. In no small sense, they lived split lives. One foot rested in a highly mediated Westernized environment; the other anchored in traditional Arabic/Islamic culture. For them, the Internet provided a brief respite from the rigid dogma of traditional life–the role of a woman, an overwhelming duty to kith and kin, a fatalistic view of life, and an "other" imposed hierarchal order. For the moments they were on the Internet, these dogmas were washed away. Thus, the Internet created a breathing space in which they could be as anonymous as they chose. Sometimes a new self was reflected in an online persona complete with a pseudonym integrated into an e-mail address. This was also a space in which their parents, most of whom were technologically untutored and untrained in English, found difficult to navigate (Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005).

Besides obvious technological and language hurdles, the Internet's distinctive "vocabulary" has created an expression largely unfamiliar to their parents' generation. Lacking contextual information such as body language, tone of voice, or physical surroundings, Net lingua has subtleties and emotional cues that their parents do not understand. For these students, the Internet with its many acronyms, shorthands, and abbreviations is the embodiment of Zamenhof's Esperanto, separating them from those who lack "Net fluency."

The Internet also has helped them develop new forms of relationships. Internet communications such as Instant Messaging, Chat, and E-mail helped these young women develop (and reinforce) peer-to-peer oriented relationships much less hierarchical than those in either their families or in society at large (Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005). In this context,

these students fabricated their own associations that led to more independent, albeit mediated, lives. These associations had a distinctive Arabic/Islamic incarnation of "Netville." That Netville, implicit in both the *how* and the *why* of their patterns of Internet usage, was liberating. It granted them personal autonomy from outside control and influence (Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005).

Though the Internet–as well as other media–offered advantages, they also limited face-to-face time. When students were involved with the media, they spent less time with the physical community. Of necessity, time allocation lessened the role of family in their lives (Walters, 2002). This generation is less likely to discuss family and community life at the Majlis than any of their parents. The physical Majlis, which developed from Bedouin traditions, was a safe and welcoming place where people could gather to talk or share a special meal. Though many modern houses have such a room for women, these females were less likely to visit them than their mothers. That was because they have turned to other less hierarchical and more personally relevant meeting places. The virtual Majlis on the Internet complemented and expanded offline relations with circles of friends. Some even created their own meeting rooms, motivated by individual interests and a desire to express those interests in a new way (Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005).

Despite these growing generational differences, most GCC governments do not wish to be seen publicly as anti-Internet; thus many countries up and down (and around) the Peninsula such as Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait are working on visible IT initiatives. (Kuwait plans a Technology Village, 2002; L; Bahrain studying telecom deregulation, 2002). Even so, some of the most liberal still cast a wary eye.

"Take a knife, for example. You can use it in the kitchen or you can use it to commit crimes," Sheikh Ali Qurani, director of the Ayatollah Gulpaybahane Computer Center in Iran's holy city of Qom says. "Many things have a double nature and the Internet is one of them," he explained. "You can use it in different ways. The main thing is to use it for the good. And at present our clergy have not said that it is forbidden" (CNN Interactive, 1997). Searching for that good has led many governments to go slow, perhaps because they have understood that creating computer networks can facilitate the means for individuals who act to build a community of rights (Walters, 2001, p. 247).

Government intervention and press restrictions had led some Arab news organizations to move their headquarters from the Arabia Peninsula to other, more media-friendly countries. Yet while this diaspora developed, many who could afford it (and were so inclined) cast their eyes skywards, relying on satellite television containing foreign channels for alternative information and entertainment.

Thus, content control is difficult once the "jinn" (Arabic genies) are out of the bottle. Those jinn are now out of that bottle and would be hard to put back in. A Reuters report on 20 September 2000 quoted Mohammed Al-Abbar, director general of Dubai's Economic Department, as saying that the increase of satellite access and Internet usage makes censorship more difficult to achieve in the country.

"In today's world censorship doesn't exist," he said. "We can pick up hundreds of channels here plus the Internet. The world is changing. We are already a global city, traveling the world, and we know exactly what is happening around the world and we cannot hope to stop, nor would we want to stop, whatever is happening. So censorship is no longer an issue. We want the same freedom to operate as if a channel was in London, Atlanta or wherever" (Reuters, 20 November 2000).

The media savvy generation aged in their twenties is already practicing what Al-Abbar has preached. In recent studies, the viewing habits of female students showed that they gathered news from Al-Jazeera, Dubai TV, and Abu Dhabi TV, BBC and CNN. They preferred Western entertainment–either feature-length movies or shows on comedy channels such as Paramount, shows like *Friends*, *Who Will Win a Million*, *Mad About You*, *Cup of Coffee*, and the *Secret Life*. Those listed are among the most popular. Others included *Ally McBeal*, *Ricki Lake*, and *Montel*. They also watched a telemundo program called *Rosalinda* and a popular Egyptian serial about a husband with four wives. Some viewed soap operas because the soaps dealt with human relationships, in particular with romance between men and women. They also watched women's issue programming dealing with marriage, divorce, family, children and fashion (Walters, Quinn, and Walters, 2005).

Recognizing the need to capture an audience that is already migrating to Westernized entertainment fare, one Dubai-based television has stepped lively away from standard, mundane Arabic fare and stiff news programming to present "quality" family entertainment. In creating this business model, Channel One Television, a 24-hour, free satellite service has imported programming from Fox, Disney, Columbia and Warner Brothers. Locally originated programming has been eliminated. That is because audience surveys have shown that people want Western content. The movies on tap are films such as *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, and the *Matrix*. Series include *Extreme Makeover*, *American Idol*, *Survivor*, *Friends* and *Frazier*. According to station manager Najla Al Awadi, Channel One will be responsible because the channel will not show any programs that may "offend culturally, religiously, or socially" (Za'Za', 2004). Translated, this means that movies and series on this channel are all screened for nudity and foul language. Even if these shows do not offend directly, they do present strong, empowered role models as examples of life, lifestyle, and living.

Some content that young males and females already watched was not as G rated as Channel One. Much of this television viewing involved programming which they know their parents would disapprove. It was so provocative that they would not view it with (or in the presence of) any family members of the opposite gender. Indeed, some of this programming was so overtly sexual that older siblings believe that younger brothers and sisters should not be exposed to it. One even called such programming a "virus," though she continued to watch it (Jendli & Kelifa, 2004). And, because many modern Emirati houses feature single-person bedrooms tucked away from mom and dad, these youngsters can view these programs in isolation (Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005).

The images they viewed were of lusty, underdressed (by Islamic standards) provocative females undulating their hips to the beat of music in video clips. Featured on Arabic networks such as Rotana TV, which specializes in Arabic music video clips, concerts, festivals and musical programs, these images were brought into their bedrooms via satellite and the Internet (Jendli & Kelifa, 2004). "Standard fare included suggestive dancing, premarital relationships, and even hugging and kissing between males and females" (Za'Za, 2005). Add this to the opportunity to view overt "nothing left to be imagined" erotica of the crotch grabbing, pelvic thrusting, narcissistic displays represented by programming such as Michael Jackson's December 2004 Star Television retrospective, and you have television programming advocating a lifestyle regarded as unwholesome in several cultural contexts. Some strongly believe that Westernized television may be eroding perceptions about what is deemed decent (Za`Za', 2005).

Such vivid imagery is also present in the reading materials that young Emiratis scan. In recent surveys, 20ish females reported looking at magazines for entertainment and information. This information included fashion tips, women's and children's health-care issue and lifestyles for women. Among the top favorites is a weekend insert of the *Gulf News* dealing with beauty, fashion, career and family, featuring mostly Western women wearing cleavage-revealing women's wear and beauty tips for attracting the boys (Walters, Quinn, Walters, 2005).

As an extension of a consumer-oriented life, the shopping mall has carved out a special niche. It is the place where these females fulfill part of the imagined life presented to them in magazines and newspapers and on television. Shopping in the United Arab Emirates is "poetry of place" where people meet and greet and women are free to wander. Shopping here is organized around the rhythms of life. While women of many cultures find shopping an "excuse to sally forth ... beyond the clutches of family," sallying forth is particularly vital in the United Arab Emirates (Underhill, 1999). Here, young men and women will admit trading knowing glances. When not standing on the corner in a harmless Emirati version of watching all the girls and boys go by, tweens, teens, and the 20ish view the fruits of modernity.

Twentish-ish females prefer malls to traditional souqs because modern malls not only are air-conditioned but also have it all–benches for watching, restaurants for eating, colorful displays of plant life, a luxurious feel, and good parking. They are impulse buyers who look for brand names and almost always buy when they go. Most look for 20ish basics such as stylish Western-looking brand name clothing, French perfume, and cosmetics.

When they go mall crawling, they make a day of it. Rarely shopping alone, these 20ish college age females often travel in family groups that include mom and sisters. At other times they travel in groups of two or three friends. Many times they are driven to the mall by the family driver. At the mall, they shop, eat a meal, and go to a movie. The mall has become a place where they can "sit with friends and chitchat," and "spend the whole day" without "worrying about the hot weather." Some even cast an eye at the "good-looking guys from around the UAE." They also like going to a movie in a comfortable place. The mall, then, is a place to have an adventure (Walters, 2004). Up and down the marble sidewalks and in between the plants of the faux downtown, major, modern malls contain the artifacts of flesh wars (see Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005). From revealing tank tops to thong underwear to bras and bikinis, young women (and men) have all forms of modern delights presented before them.

The power of lifestyle imagery at the malls and in the media to create creeping change should not be underestimated. Some observers believe that information and media help fashion behavioral systems that can transform ways of life. This means that some type of secularization accompanies all commercially driven media. As a result, children of the mediated age naturally acquire new wants, desires, and expressions (see Selber & Ghanem, 2004, and Lerner, 1958). These children certainly have.

What Does the Future Hold?

What is happening in today's United Arab Emirates is a 21st century version of the societal shift Stuart Ewen chronicled in *Captains of Consciousness* and *Channels of Desire*. What is being experienced is the convergence of policy, infrastructure, education, literacy, and marketplace. To meet the demands of that marketplace, Emirati government must create a framework to make more productive use of available resources. To do so they must use the

instruments of a knowledge-based economy, including a transparent media environment (Holloway & Dolan, 2002). Whether the resulting "shamal wind" of cultural and economic change ultimately blows ill or good depends upon several factors.

One factor is the reality of the world of ideas enveloping a mass commercial culture. Of necessity, these invoke a spirit of individualism and equality (Arab Liberalism, 2004). If countries such as the United Arab Emirates are to survive and prosper in this environment, the private sector must be empowered to move quickly and nimbly to combine responsibility for old values with the need for intelligent growth. But, spurring that growth is potentially vexing and explosive because knowledge-based jobs require education and informational transparency. The balancing of modernity and tradition will provide unusual stress for a whole generation of young men and women. So, too, will the shift in forms and routines of family life necessary to succeed in market-economy, knowledge-based careers. Add to this the hard, unrelenting demands of real work and the harsh uncertainty of job security in that new economy and change will be painful. (See Ewen & Ewen, 1992.)

Some signs of change already have emerged in the United Arab Emirates. Attitudes about life and work have begun dividing along a generational fault line split by education and urbanization and fueled by new media literacy. Education has come in many forms, from schoolbooks to travel to a mediated environment presenting worlds of possibilities. Educational level, media exposure, and age are correlated to significant differences in what Emiratis want from life and how they describe themselves.

 Females aged under 30 believe that they should enjoy the opportunity to work outside the home more than their older female counterparts do. Females who come from an urban, educated environment consider themselves more ambitious, less religious, more independent, and more capable than do their less educated, rural sisters (Whiteoak, Crawford, & Mapstone, 2004; Walters, 2003). Regardless of gender, the more educated believe that an exciting life, equality and a sense of accomplishment are personally important. Those who are less educated believe that loyalty and harmony are the most important personal qualities. Those who are more educated were also more likely to describe themselves as ambitious, intellectual, and independent compared with those who are not regardless of where they live or how old they are (Swan & Walters, 2004). Lastly, education has begun to serve as a form of birth control. It is one significant factor increasing the age of first marriage (and consequently first birth) from about 17 to 23 for women (Walters, Quinn, & Walters, 2005). Consequently, despite what the government might publicly promote as ideal, the typical family size is rapidly dropping. The women studied come from families of about 8 children; they want families with fewer still (Walters, 2003).

Men are less liberated in many ways and fear change for many reasons. They do not share the enthusiasm for females in the workplace as do women, even though the government is pushing for this (Whiteoak, Crawford, & Mapstone, 2004). More significantly, young men often do not share the same enthusiasm for work–period. That is because current local laws permit men to be silent 51% partners in businesses that ex-pats manage, happily collecting a sizeable income for doing nothing. Some males also worry about men's changing place in society and what being from "two" cultures means for their children (Fakhreddine, 2004).

But, if a new, transparent marketplace of goods and ideas is where the Emirati world is going, fundamental values dear to tribal society are in jeopardy (Ullman, 1997, p. 87). That is because educated human capital almost always creates an effective sense of personal responsibility, a fundamental of a "to be" society. In the process, the growth of an individual

who can sustain his or her own purposes without being oppressed, dominated, or circumscribed by others is promoted (Walters, 2001, pp. 83-85). Such change is almost inexorably tied to the development of a locally adapted market imperative model--a model that might force change (Selber & Ghanem, 2004).

The United Arab Emirates wants it all, but policy makers seem confused about how to get from today to tomorrow. At a 2005 media conference in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammad, Crown Prince of Dubai, issued a clarion call for the media to present a Gulf message. The Crown Prince called for a "message of enlightenment to encourage development, to build men up and to call for modernization…" (Stent, 2005a). Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nayhan, Minister of Information and Culture, chipped in at that same meeting, calling on the media to be risk takers, encouraging "innovative thinking and dialogue" about delicate subjects (Stent, 2005b.) Yet, at another venue at that same meeting Dr. Ali Al Shauibi, senior Dubai police official, accused the media of "promoting ideas which are damaging to the UAE's future." Calling some television channels "scandalous," he called on the press to regulate itself. Chiming in on that same subject, the director of the Al Arabiya channel, Adbul Rahman Al Rashid called for rules and discipline to "control our freedoms" (Sands, 2005). A few months earlier the Ministry of Education had gagged reporters by denying access to information and from quoting any of its officers (Hoath, 24 March 2004).

Such schizophrenia about information, its control, and its value to the marketplace, epitomizes the difficulty of reconciling the old with the new. Leaders are still searching for a practical way because incorporating local standards and practices into a version of modernity has no clear signposts. The United Arab Emirates hopes to leapfrog to the future without pain. But that may be impossible because creating a cycle of virtuous change offers stark choices. If progress is to occur, a transitional generation of the United Arab Emirates faces the conundrum of adapting the best that modernity offers while retaining the best of traditional society. Some argue that the steady advent of technology makes the evolution towards markets and modernity inevitable (Amin, 2004). How (or whether) that is true (or happens) will determine the nation's long-term fate.

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