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Executive Summary

This IMPACT-se report examines 220 textbooks from the United Arab Emirates' national curriculum, between 2016 and 2021. While the curriculum is mandated in government schools, private institutions are also required to teach Islamic education, social studies and Arabic as a second language. More future research in arts and sciences, will address such subjects as English, biology, mathematics, business, and technology.

Main Findings

- The Emirati curriculum teaches that prosperity and national pride are closely associated with peace and tolerance. Engagement and cooperation with non-nationals and the world are lauded.
- Textbooks offer a realistic approach to peace and security, teach patriotism, anti-radicalism, commitment to defending the homeland, and cooperating with allies; peacemaking is by far the priority.
- Language and moral education programs encourage cultural diversity, curiosity and happiness. Students prepare for a highly competitive world; they are taught positive thinking and well-being.
- The large Islamic education program emphasizes tolerance, coexistence, and friendly relations with all non-Muslims and ethnicities.
- The curriculum only partially fosters gender equality through a spirit of partnership in the public sphere; it supports active women's participation in all walks of life. In the home, especially, men and women should follow traditional Islamic family values. They should avoid imitating each other.
- View of a changing Middle East, away from blaming foreigners to taking local responsibility. Support for the Palestinian cause continues but no longer seen as key to solving the broader range of regional challenges. Radicalism and hate are the chief threat.
- Iranian expansionism is a threat; the Gulf islands' territorial dispute is taught. The [Turkish-]Ottoman record is harshly criticized.
- Relations with the West are central and friendly. A mixed history encourages trust and engagement, but also self-reliance. China, Russia, and India are important partners. Moderate and pragmatic Arab countries are close allies; attitude toward Qatar is business-like.
- The Abraham Accords are taught within Islamic education. Anti-Israeli material has been moderated. But Israel is not displayed in maps.
- Apart from unbiased information, international standards for peace and tolerance are generally met. The research did not find antisemitism, hate or incitement.
The textbooks portray China as an open and tolerant society for religious and ethnic minorities. Historical slavery in the Middle East is not addressed. Holocaust and Jewish history should be taught. And maps must show Israel.

Other historical relations, especially with Western colonialism, appear to be accurate and perceptive.

Future Vision

National visions of prosperity through hard work, education and long-term planning are encouraged. The curriculum instills an awareness of international competition, particularly in education and teaches a can-do attitude.

Students learn the connection between prosperity and peace; social responsibility is important. Imagination and curiosity toward other cultures and civilizations are encouraged. Being positive and experiencing happiness are fundamental values necessary to lead a rich, fulfilling, and healthy life.

From an early age, students learn the connection between peace and prosperity. Attitudes toward peacemaking are realistic. Conflict resolution skills are taught, along with security issues.

The curriculum emphasizes loyalty to the homeland and martyrdom in its defense. National identity is imprinted with references to the leadership, history, people, location, and a sense of destiny. Identities range from the various emirates and families that form the UAE federation; gender; ethnicity; expatriates; state leadership; institutions; and national symbols—to pan-Arab Gulf (Khaleeji); pan-Arab; regional; and global identities.

Between democracy and shura (Islamic consultation), the curriculum emphasizes a practical and open society.

Tolerance and Diversity

The curriculum conveys the advantages of relating to foreigners. Diversity is taught through various literary means. There is a natural curiosity exhibited toward what is far away and mysterious.

An expansive Islamic education curriculum emphasizes peace and tolerance; it is ill-disposed to radicalism and terrorism. Students are taught to resist and actively debunk claims that Islam is a violent religion and will never become a religion of terror.

Freedom of religion and faith is a core issue. The curriculum encourages family ties with non-Muslims. Tolerance (and even love)¹ should be directed to all non-Muslims.²

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National pride is closely associated with tolerance. The history of the ancient Christian community in the UAE is mentioned. Meetings of Muslim clerics with the Pope are emphasized.

**Gender**

The Emirati curriculum's attitude toward gender anticipates the integration of women into the economy and public life; it thus advocates equality and a spirit of partnership between men and women publicly, with an emphasis on protecting family values according to Islam and Emirati tradition. This last point contains specific gender roles for males and females; an acceptance of (Islamic) polygamy, and the rejection of non-traditional gender roles, such as "immodest behavior in public" and imitation of the other sex.  

**The UAE in the Middle East**

The curriculum’s authors seem determined to educate for peace and stability. Only defensive wars are justified. The Emirati curriculum embraces a realistic pro-peace paradigm. Students learn about the chaotic situation of the Middle East and are expected to help in leading the region to a better future, but when necessary be ready to defend the homeland. Problems are understood as innate to the region itself, not from the schemes of faraway enemies.

Apart from Qatar, the curriculum views neighboring Arab countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Morocco—as close friends. In particular, Saudi Arabia is a leading partner in peace and war. Egypt, too, is an important ally. The UAE consistently supports the independence and territorial integrity of its neighbors such as Iraq; the curriculum discusses participation in Yemen's civil war in support of the Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia and other allies.

The conflict with Iran regarding the Three Gulf Islands—the Tunbs (Greater and Lesser) and Abu Musa—is told from the UAE perspective, through a measured and well-researched narrative. Students learn that the proper name for the Gulf is the "Arabian Gulf," and the region faces a threat from Iranian expansionism.

Turkey is not directly criticized, but the current curriculum disparages the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans are portrayed as colonialists, weakening the Arab world with crushing poverty with responsibility for many atrocities. Descriptions of Qatar are neutral and business-like.

The Abraham Accords with Israel are incorporated into the *Islamic Education* textbooks. Highlighted is the endorsement of the treaty by leading Islamic UAE organizations. The new

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2 Ibid., p. 50.
textbooks widen the scope of Israel's recognition. Though less significant, solidarity with other Arab countries regarding the Palestinian cause remains strong, even if the Palestinian question is no longer described as "the foundation of the conflicts and struggles in the Middle East, and the key to the solution" of that region's problems. A poem by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish serves to encourage children—particularly girls—to dream and fulfill their dreams.

The curriculum does not teach the Holocaust or the long history of Jews (and minorities) in the region. Israel remains invisible in all textbook maps. The attitude toward Jews as a minority corresponds with the positive attitude exhibited toward other non-Muslims.

**International Affairs**

Relations with the West—mainly the US, Britain and France—are important; but trust is not unlimited. American culture serves both as a source of inspiration and a threat to local culture. French culture is viewed more benevolently. Relations with Britain remain important. Economic and technological ties with the West are important, but not more so than the country's independence.

The historical relations with India are highly valued and occupy more coverage than in previous editions. Relations with China are stressed somewhat less emphatically in the curriculum. Muslim and other religious persecution in that country is still ignored. Russia is treated as a major strategic partner.

**Standards for Peace and Tolerance**

The Emirati curriculum generally meets international standards for peace and tolerance. Textbooks are free of hate and incitement against others. The curriculum teaches students to value the principle of respect for other cultures and encourages curiosity and dialogue. It praises love, affection, and family ties with non-Muslims. Gestures of interfaith, particularly with Christianity, are evident along with noticeable expressions of tolerance toward Judaism. Tolerance extends beyond Jews and Christians to any non-Muslims—even polytheists.

The curriculum teaches respect for the individual Other and supports the ideal of multiple races, faiths and nationalities living side-by-side in the Emirates. It invests much effort in the principle of peacemaking—not shying away from teaching about wars—and their resolution. The attention given to the vast peaceful heritage of the Islamic faith is a departure from what is often observed in other local curricula.

The UAE has a realistic view of the Middle East. Education for peacemaking and moderation should not be misunderstood; if necessary to defend the nation, Emirati youth are taught to be ready to join the army and sacrifice their lives in martyrdom (*shahada*). The use of such Islamic

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5 *National Education*, Grade 6, Vol. 2, 2016–17, p. 74. (Quoted passage removed from the curriculum.)
terms in the context of national defense should be reevaluated.\(^6\) Purely religious concepts are often part of the terminology associated with political conflicts; this may lead to misunderstandings on the part of students.

The textbooks generally provide information in an unbiased manner, but they are not always successful. The depiction of Ottoman history is unbalanced. Students will benefit by learning an accurate and complete history of slavery and minorities in the Middle East. The People's Republic of China is surprisingly described as a tolerant, multicultural society, which respects religions. As an emerging superpower, partially relying on the UAE for energy resources, students will benefit from an accurate and realistic depiction of the PRC, especially regarding minority religious rights. Israel's cartographic presence is virtually non-existent; the question of Holocaust avoidance and the story of Jewish presence in the region leave much room for improvement.

Despite such lapses, with the reduction of biased material, an emphasis on moral education and the inclusion of the Abrahamic Accords, a serious effort is being made to teach information that leads to peace, particularly within the framework of Islamic education.

The curriculum does not fully meet the international standards of gender identity and representation. It does meet such standards to the extent that women are considered equal to men and encouraged to become prominent members of society. Textbooks refrain "from language, content, and imagery that depicts limiting and/or exclusionary gender roles." Viewed from a different perspective, the Emirati curriculum is keen on protecting family values according to Islamic sharia and the Emirati tradition. In short, men are more equal in the home environment. Women must obey their husbands. Specific gender roles for males and females allow polygamy, restrict certain interreligious marriages, and reject non-traditional gender roles and imitation of the other sex. Thus, according to UNESCO's Western-centered values of gender behavior, the Emirati curriculum falls short. As to sexual orientation, the Emirati curriculum is also "free of language, content, and imagery that promulgate violence or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

The principle of sound prosperity and cooperation is often revealed as the most important element in IMPACT-se's system of evaluating curricula. In that sense, the Emirati curriculum offers a rare and notable model of an education system that is on the path toward achieving this goal.

\(^6\) *Social Studies and National Education*, Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 46.
Preface

The collection and research of most of the textbooks for this IMPACT-se report on the United Arab Emirates curriculum occurred during the celebration of that nation's fiftieth anniversary of its independence. This auspicious time of jubilee signifies the culmination of an ongoing curriculum reform that has been taking place in recent years. In 2016 the UAE launched a significant program focused on moral education; recent editions promote a vision for the Emirates during the next half-century, revolving around peace and prosperity.

Securing peace and prosperity centers on educating for successful and responsible participation in an extremely competitive global economy. This curriculum tries hard to teach students how to balance competitiveness with compassion and adhere to traditional mores, with the goal of a happy life that draws upon shared values, love, and respect.

Seen as a whole, the curriculum appears to be in a period of transformation aimed at preparing the Emirati young generation for such a vision. It invites students to feel pride and take courage from the achievements of the UAE in its first fifty years and to draw upon lessons from the three-hundred-year history of the Coastal Emirates.

Such historical experience has apparently enabled the Emiratis to fashion a truly moderate perspective of Islam. Clearly it is at odds with any notion of political Islam, or Islamism, rooted in revival movements which have, from the eighteenth century on, tried to reform the Islamic world out of a self-perception of failure, corruption, and decline. This sentiment—justified or not—convinced such "reformers" that (radical) "Islam is the solution" for this weakness. Hence, they saw in Islam a tool for securing power. This power was considered necessary to bring justice first, by destroying existing Islamic authorities, and later, defeating the technologically advanced Europeans, who willy-nilly penetrated, and then controlled the abode of Islam.

But the experience of the Emiratis—as plainly reflected in the curriculum—is different. Local leadership was generally not deemed to be corrupt and oppressive. Engagement with the European powers, mainly the British, involved a few skirmishes and required some give and take, but was generally benign. The Emiratis not only benefitted from Pax Britannica, they eventually thrived. They even tried to remain a British protectorate, accepting independence only as a second choice.

Thus, resentment, the main motivation behind radical Islam, appears to be generally absent from the Emirati curriculum. And so are dreams of revenge, conquests, and hegemony. Much experience has been accumulated in engagement with the world. Tribal structures held fast, and Islam was practiced seriously but with no frenzy. Islam was not a solution to compensate for weakness. It was—and remains—"the right thing to do."
This does not mean that all Emirati citizens object to political Islam. Part of the motivation behind this curriculum and the stress on anti-radicalism may be related to activities of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Iranian and Turkish support of Islamist radicals amounts to a regional problem that could threaten the stability of the Emirati federation. Both countries harbor imperial ambitions. To offset such challenges, the Emirati curriculum maintains its adherence to Islam and pursuit of peace while prioritizing tolerant engagement; but it pragmatically also underscores a commitment to the defense of the country.

The strong pro-peace-and-tolerance message coming out of this curriculum constitutes the best tool for combating radicalism and violence while building a viable future for the Emirates.

A political culture of free dialogue and debate requires balanced, fact-based education to explore the world's complexities, past, present and future.

The Emirati curriculum earns high marks for its pursuit of peace and tolerance. It should be equally unrelenting to provide students with unbiased information in all fields.

Eldad J. Pardo, PhD
Director of Research
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IMPACT-se's research of a single curriculum often involves analysis of thousands of pages of textbooks, measured against UNESCO-based standards of peace and tolerance.

To accomplish this feat we call upon our IMPACT-se team, especially Asher Spekterman for his Arabic translations, unparalleled quality control and analysis and Itam Shalev for his scholarly translations and insights.

Supporting them, our thanks and gratitude go to a plethora of capable researchers. Kudos to: Amos Doron, Elitzur Gluck, Alon Gur, Itay Halevi, Eitan Ishai, Shir Kremer, Sharon Mor, Matan Peer, Dina Tsamir, Or Lev-Tzion, and Hagai Yehoshafat.

This corpus of 220 UAE textbooks magically appeared (although COO Arik Agassi might disagree on the magic part); keeping the research on track was just another trick up his sleeve.

Mentioned last, but leading from the front is CEO Marcus Sheff, keeping the ship afloat, the crew happy and the passengers dry.
Introduction

The United Arab Emirates has rapidly transformed itself over the past decades, making it an important regional actor exerting global significance, punctuated by economic dynamism, political influence, and military prowess. During the same period, much of the Arab Middle East embarked in the opposite direction. Country after country rebelled, imploded, fell prey to foreign invasions or to violence and destruction inflicted by radical Islamist movements or local proxies controlled by aggressive neighbors. Against this background, and with the US and Europe fatigued of policing the region, functioning Arab countries often find themselves in precarious circumstances; complete reliance on others for security is no longer feasible. In the midst of this environment, the energetic and focused UAE has become a central pillar in an emerging alliance of countries attempting to stem the tide of radicalism and bring the region back to a measure of stability, and beyond that to prosperity.

In the United Arab Emirates, education is regarded as a key factor in coping with and building on this transformation, safeguarding the necessary human and cultural development, but also ensuring that the UAE might equally contribute to this larger economic and cultural world of which it has become a part.

The current research, which examines 220 textbooks from the UAE national curriculum, represents IMPACT-se’s second effort to review Emirati education. Our first preliminary report, published in September 2020, focused on the 2016 UAE Moral Education program launched across the country’s seven emirates, at the time described by education experts as a "remarkable development." The report of Grades 1–12, encompasses a wide range of the UAE curriculum in subject matters such as Islamic education, national and social education, Arab literature, history and moral education. While the report is not exhaustive, the researched corpus nevertheless provides a good grasp of this transforming curriculum, between 2016 and 2021. More future research in arts and sciences, will address such subjects as English, biology, mathematics, business and technology.

Education and State Cohesion in the UAE

State cohesion based on shared identity and genuine equal rights for all inhabitants does not exist in the Middle East. All of the region's countries—democratic or not—are "unable to define,

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project, and maintain a national identity that is both inclusive and representative.” These countries accommodate a variety of ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural subgroups, but their "national identities" do not sufficiently embody all of their inhabitants. This cross-regional failure entails a host of problems ranging from authoritarianism, diminished well-being, and economic hurdles as well as discrimination and violence.

The Gulf States—particularly the United Arab Emirates—are a special case in this scenario. In many Middle Eastern countries zealous nationalist and Islamist regimes oppressed or threw out religious or ethnic minorities, many of them "sources of initiative and wealth." In the UAE, however, the doors have been kept open for foreigners. Only 12 percent of the 9.8 million population consists of local Khaleeji Arab citizens; the rest are non-citizens. Beside the country—from its vast oil resources—providing the capital necessary to accommodate so many non-nationals, this considered open-door policy is perhaps the leading cause for the UAE’s economic success and moderate behavior. With seemingly little apprehension from the presence of the huge non-native population, this tiny Gulf nation vigorously competes to attract more talent, most recently with the newly launched "UAE Strategy for Talent Attraction and Retention," a program aimed at attracting highly qualified professionals to settle in the Emirates.

Two other causes for the UAE's success are historical and cultural. The engagement with the British and other Western powers allowed the country to comfortably secure a semi-independent status, leading to complete independence in 1971. Tribal culture, shared language and religion, and a federalist structure also contribute to stability and development.

Since ancient times, the Gulf region was a hub of international trade between East and West. Sumerians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Persians, Indians, Africans and Arabs were all part of the cultural interaction which blossomed in the Gulf. In the sixteenth century, local Arab tribes alternatively struggled and cooperated with the Ottomans and Iranian Safavids, as well as Europeans—most significantly the Portuguese—who later arrived in ships.

But local tribes such as the Al-Qasimi clan of Ras al-Khaima, also developed impressive maritime power, and in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were in control of seas

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12 Ibid.
in the lower Gulf and in much of the Indian Ocean. Trade consisted of mainly fishing and pearling but also involved slaves and spices. These local groups attacked British and Indian ships in the open seas, earning the coastal waters the moniker: "Pirate Coast." The term "pirate" probably should be understood in its historical context. For the Qasimis, and many modern scholars, it was really "tactical maritime warfare and a legitimate source of revenue," signifying a menace to the vital interests of the British Empire and its Omani allies.

The Omanis, who in the second half of the eighteenth century became the dominant economic and naval force in the western Indian Ocean and the Gulf, similarly suffered from pressures exerted by the British, the French and Wahhabis, but, unlike the Qasimis, managed to find an accommodation with the British. In 1819 the British navy defeated the Qasimis, securing the Gulf region as a sphere of Western (mostly British) influence until 1971.

**Western Influence**

Overall, British hegemony in the region (1820–1971) and its corollary role as a leading power and protector were not coercive. Most scholars agree that Britain largely conformed to expectations of local elites regarding a protector's duties and rights. In 1835, a maritime truce was signed, and most of the current-day Emirates officially became part of the Trucial Coast ([Trucial States] Al-Sāḥil al-Muṭaṣāliḥ), a name given to the six initial (UAE) tribes in the Gulf who had signed treaties with Great Britain. This period of stability and trust had a positive impact on the region's environment as well as on political culture. The British kept the sheikhdoms' independence, "as long as they preserve law and order and maintain a system of administration that will satisfy or at any rate be tolerated by their subjects." This involved the well-established practice of slavery in Iran and throughout Arabia. The British fiercely fought against African slave trafficking on the open seas mostly until the 1890s, a policy in line with

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18 Also known as Trucial States of the Coast of Oman (Al-Imārāt Al-Muṭaṣāliḥa) or the Trucial Sheikdoms (Al-Mashyakah Al-Muṭaṣāliḥa). These consisted of Abu Dhabi (1820–1971), Ajman (1820–1971), Dubai (1835–1971), Ras Al Khaimah (1820–1972), Sharjah (1820–1971), and Umm Al Quwain (1820–1971); Fujairah (1952–71), only joined the Trucial States in the mid-twentieth century.
19 According to a British Gulf Resident, 1931 (quoted in Onley, "Britain"), p.11.
their "good intentions and imperial interests." Even then, they were hard pressed to reconcile their "conflicting commitments to antislavery and free markets." The (British) Persian Gulf Residency interfered only marginally to protect slaves in trouble or block inland trade of indigenous people (such as the Iranian Baluchis). The sheikdoms thus benefitted from security and peace, entrusted Britain with the management of their foreign affairs, and "acquiesced in considerable British influence for their domestic and commercial affairs."24

When in 1968 Britain decided to depart the Gulf, thus ending "Pax Britannica," the Trucial States found themselves on their own. They tried to convince the British to stay on but apparently their offer was not even considered.25 Despite the obvious disappointment felt by the Emirati rulers, the long period of foreign guardianship, which allowed for the development of local administration, helped to foster a culture of cooperation and peace. Thus, the collective emirates succeeded in achieving peaceful independence, though unwanted and unexpected.26 In December 1971, after three years of negotiations, a new polity of six emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah) emerged as the independent United Arab Emirates. After some hesitation, Qatar and Bahrain opted to stay out of the new federation, while Ras Al-Khaima joined two months later (in February 1972) as the seventh emirate.

Britain, for its part, initiated the idea of a federation, lobbied for it and assisted in devising solid security arrangements to offset any threats from regional or even global antagonists.27 For its efforts, Britain lost most of its influence in the region and the US—with its then two regional allies Saudi Arabia and Iran—became the dominant force.

But independence was not necessarily good news for all dwellers of the Gulf.

As a result of these new political realities, travel between nations became more difficult for Gulf residents. Increased focus on security in the Gulf resulted in more scrutiny and documentation for the inhabitants of the region. Suddenly, people had to have passports and work permits. Citizenship became an issue throughout the region. A

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22 Ibid., p. 77; Suzanne Miers, Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2003), p. 16.
25 Ibid., p. 253. Labor party politics and general change in attitude seem to have been the immediate reason for the withdrawal, even though historical strategic and financial forces were at play; David B. Roberts, "British National Interest in the Gulf: Rediscovering a Role?" International Affairs, 90, no. 3 (2014): p. 668.
Kuwaiti "citizen," for example, would have extensive rights to medical care, education, and other social guarantees that a noncitizen would not enjoy. Many people became, by happenstance, citizens of the new nations where they happened to be living when the new states were formed, despite the fact that their immediate families might be spread out all over the Gulf.28

Arguably learning from lessons of the past, the United Arab Emirates adopted a positive attitude toward peace and harmony in the region. The federalist nation-state emerged not as a result of a bitter struggle for independence, but rather as a pragmatic decision agreed-upon voluntarily by the various emirates. Another lesson may relate to the centuries-old pearling industry which suddenly disappeared due to fluctuations of the global economy. The main blow occurred in the 1930s with the combination of the world depression and increased competition from Japanese cultured pearls.29 When the British left in the 1970s, all traces of local pearling disappeared.30

Pearling and trading were not only a source of income but also a way of life. In times of plenty, pearlers were reluctant to invest their hard-earned profits—even in extremely safe alternative businesses. Some came to regret that later, when global markets were depressed.31 This is another example of the intimate centuries-old relationship between the Gulf—especially what is now the UAE—and the global environment.

The Path to a Curriculum

Looking at the path leading to the UAE curriculum, one has the impression that the Emiratis have applied historical lessons in a holistic manner, gaining impetus from both positive and detrimental influences and events. While assuming a leadership role in maintaining peace and harmony with both global and regional powers, the UAE has perhaps been in the forefront among Gulf nations in combating Islamist radicalism, judged by the Emiratis as wrong-headed and self-defeating. And if in the past, the Trucial States may have felt abandoned by the protection offered by British forces, the UAE’s current armed forces have reached a level of proficiency able to cooperate with allies, and defend against both real and potential enemies, regionally and globally.32

31 Davidson, The United Arab, p. 7.
Some experts have used the metaphor "Little Sparta" to describe the UAE's prowess and martial spirit. But military and economic efforts have not been enough to offset the growing radicalism in the region. The UAE struggled from the 2000s to shield itself from radical Islamism, mainly through legal and cultural campaigns. In 2011, legal measures were taken against the Muslim Brotherhood, culminating in declaring it a terrorist organization. In 2014, a Muslim Council of Elders was founded in Abu Dhabi under the chairmanship of Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar to promote interfaith and tolerance. This was followed by a law against discrimination and hatred in 2015 and a Ministry of Tolerance Program in 2016. Muhammed bin Zayed, Abu Dhabi's crown prince and the UAE's de-facto ruler, visited the Vatican in September 2016 and meeting with Pope Francis; the Pope reciprocated with a visit to Abu Dhabi in 2019. Following this period of events, the UAE established an International Institute for Tolerance in 2017 and declared 2019 to be the "Year of Tolerance."

Likewise, the UAE's enthusiastic participation in the Abraham Accords with Israel suggests that the country opted for a vigorous collaboration with countries facing similar challenges. Despite huge oil and gas resources, the not-so-distant memory of losing its primary economic resource in pearling appears to have guided the Emirati nation to pursue a policy of diversification and specialization. The Gulf nation has proved to be fully capable of departing from a traditional past, while potentially leaping into an uncertain future—geopolitically, economically, and culturally. As in the past, however, it continues to rely on a cheap labor force from abroad and on its location as a potential hub of global trade routes.

UAE Education System

The United Arab Emirates curriculum corresponds with the "meteoric economic rise" of a small, backwater desert nation of 279,000 people in 1971, into a rich, vibrant economic center.
of more than nine million today."\(^{38}\)

The UAE has compulsory education for Grades 1–12. Students begin with elementary or basic education (Grades 1–5), continue with lower secondary (intermediate—Grades 6–9) and then must complete their upper secondary education (Grades10–12) before receiving the General Secondary Education Certificate. Admission for college-level education requires taking the Emirates Standardized Test (EmSAT). Public school education is provided free of charge.\(^{39}\)

The national curriculum of the UAE, monitored in this report, is taught in government schools. The language of instruction in these schools is Arabic for all subjects.\(^{40}\) The curricula offered by private institutions are varied but all schools are required to teach Islamic education, social studies and Arabic as a second language. While all schools are licensed by the UAE’s Ministry of Education (MoE) and mostly teach an assortment of British, American and Indian curricula, the southern emirates administer education locally. In Abu Dhabi, there are fourteen private curricula supervised by the Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK),\(^{41}\) while the seventeen private sector curricula in Dubai are supervised by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA). In Sharjah, private education is regulated and licensed by the Private Education Authority (SPEA); in the northern emirates accreditation and licensing for all schools is administered by the MoE.\(^{42}\)

The large number of expatriates corresponds to their numbers in private schools; Emiratis accounted for only 17 percent of private school students in 2015–16. In Dubai, some 90 percent of all students attended private schools during that school year.\(^{43}\)


\(^{39}\) Kamal and Trines, "Education."

\(^{40}\) Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), https://www.adek.gov.ae/.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.


\(^{43}\) Kamal and Trines, "Education." Among other emirates, the most recent (2014) numbers of all students attending private schools is Abu Dhabi, 64%; Sharjah, 78%; Ajman , 70%; Umm Al Quwain, 41%; Ras Al Khaimah, 40%; and Fujairah, 28%.
Home and Shared Destiny

National Identity: Roots, Federalism and Culture

The UAE curriculum emphasizes loyalty to the homeland and martyrdom in its defense and leadership—all to buttress national identity, which it associates with the Emirati future vision. Beyond the obvious features that normally comprise a nation's identity—including history, peoplehood, location and a sense of destiny—there are other ways to view identity, all relevant to consider in any blueprint of a nation's future. These range from the various emirates and families that form the UAE federation as well as gender, ethnicity, expats, state leadership, institutions, and national symbols—to the pan-Arab Gulf (Khaleeji) and pan-Arab, regional, and global identities.

"Serving the homeland is not a job, serving the homeland is a whole life"
Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid


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Peace, Prosperity, Defense, Patriotism and Anti-Radicalism

The UAE flag symbolizes a great many concepts; learning about them enables students to better understand the extent of UAE policies in the real world.

Green: symbolizes development and prosperity, green environment, and cultural renaissance in the country.

White: symbolizes good works and giving, and the nation's path to support security and peace in the world.

Black: symbolizes the power and strength of the nation's sons, and their rejection of injustice and extremism.

Red: symbolizes the sacrifices of the earlier generation who founded the Federation, and the sacrifices of the nation's martyrs in an effort to protect its achievements and gains.

_Social Studies and National Education, Grade 7_, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 94.

Sacrifice and martyrdom on patriotic grounds to defend the homeland is revered.
Salem Suhail Khamis is considered the first martyr in the history of the United Arab Emirates. He was one of the servicemen of the Ras Al Khaimah Police, assigned to guard the island of Greater Tunb, which belongs to the Emirate of Ras al-Khaimah. He was martyred by the Iranian army forces during the attack leading to the occupation of the Greater Tunb Island at dawn on November 30, 1971 (two days before the establishment of the United Arab Emirates). He was the first of the martyrs who watered the soil of the homeland with their pure blood. His grave is witness to the injustice of the aggressor invaders. His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates proclaimed each November 30 to be Martyr Day, being the date of the martyrdom of Salem Suhail, the first Emirati martyr.


The following map-coloring exercise reflects the pan-Gulf Arab identity (Khaleeji) lauded in the Emirati curriculum. Regional experts explain that "the Arabic word khaleej is literally translated as "Gulf" but goes beyond a geographic meaning to convey a common pan-Gulf Arab identity that sets the people of the region apart from the rest of the Middle East."45 Arab dwellers living on the Iranian side of the Gulf comprise areas that were at one time part of the Coastal Emirates as well as other places where Arabs resided.

First-grade students learn about security at the outset of their education. In a writing exercise, one of the words is "soldiers." In the following image all words begin with the Arabic letter jim and junud (soldiers):

![Image of map-coloring exercise](image)

[Counterclockwise from bottom right:] Soldiers; Mountain; Trees; Stars

Arabic Language, Grade 1, Vol. 1, 2020–21, p. 82.

Also in first grade, students learn to write words such as radar and wars are shown a sword, and a knife, and also learn to write: "martyrs."46

Leadership

United Arab Emirates Founder: Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan

Founder's Vision of Space


UAE president, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan

أوجّه كلمة شكرٍ لصاحب السمو الشيخ خليفة بن زايد آل نهيان رئيس الدولة - خفّظة

الله - لما يحقق لنا من تطورَ اقتصاديًّا أسهم في توفير الحياة الكريمه لشعبه.

Thanks to the President . . .

The Emirati leadership provides guidance to the students. To conclude the discussion about tolerance in the UAE, students are introduced to this quote, explaining that it is a basic Emirati value, embodying the nation’s successful future.

"The Emirates and Tolerance are two sides of the same coin; a basic value for our nation and a warranty for the future of our country’s growth."

His Highness, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, State’s Vice-President, Prime Minister, and the Governor of Dubai, Allah bless him.


Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice-President, Prime Minister, and the Governor of Dubai with Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan the Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces. The text includes a long thank you letter by Sheikh Rashed to Muhammad bin Zayed for his great contributions to the Emirates.

Thank You, Muhammad Bin Zayed!

Khaleeji Identity

The Khaleeji identity is part of the Emirati identity.


[Red on map B:] The Arabs of the Eastern Coast
[Green on map B:] The Arabs and springs of the Bushehr area
[Yellow on map B:] The Arabian Gulf

Arab Homeland: Cradle of Three Religions

The Arab Homeland consists of holy sites cherished by all three Abrahamic religions: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Geography reflects centrality and openness in the world.

The Importance of the Arab Homeland’s Location:

The Arab Homeland is characterized by a unique and important geographical and strategic location for its great extension in the two continents of Asia and Africa... positioned among the continents of the ancient world (Asia, Africa, and Europe), which made it a crossroad for the global transportation routes.

The Arab Homeland is considered the cradle of the three heavenly religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism; it accommodates the religious sanctuaries on its land, and it is the destination of pilgrims’ caravans from around the world.

Vision and Prosperity

Vision 2021 Emirati Students among the World’s Best

A major goal of Vision 2021 is to improve the education system in the UAE, facilitating Emirati students to become leaders in international indices.

Future Visions:

Vision 2021

The United Arab Emirates strives to create a high-level educational system. The coming years will witness a comprehensive change in learning and teaching mechanisms. Our national agenda aims at placing our students among the best students in the world in knowledge and reading and knowledge and skills assessment tests in reading, math and science, in addition to raising the percentage of high school graduates in line with global rates. The aim of this agenda is to make all our schools distinguished by leaders and teachers all certified in accordance with international standards. Our students should master the Arabic language.

Social Studies and National Education: My Early Life—Sultan bin Muhammed al-Qasimi (Book Viewing and Analysis), Grade 12, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 46.

From an early age, students learn the connection between stability and prosperity. Here is an example from an Arabic Language textbook for eighth-graders. After reading the hadith (traditions, records, relating to the Prophet's words and deeds), students are asked to compose a paragraph explaining the connection between peaceful societies and economic success.

There is a strong relation between the spread of security and stability (peaceful society) and excellent industry, originality and innovation (economic security); and the other way around. Explain that.

National Pride and Tourism

As part of a vocabulary exercise, students read that Dubai has become the best tourist destination in the world, and credits this achievement to the Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, Muhammad bin Rashid.

Tourism suggests opening to the world. It also raises a perspective of peace—tourism is typically the first industry to suffer from war and crises. Also, prosperity is envisaged through free competition in an industry dedicated to making people from around the world happy.

Tourist Destination

Thanks to the efforts of Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid, Dubai has become the most preferred tourist destination in the world.


In a special educational program entitled "Moral Education," students are invited to think about the vision of their country. The curriculum emphasizes the important pillar of "equality" but leaves open the question of whether the UAE has developed in terms of equality during the last decades.
Equality is one of the key pillars on which the UAE was founded. Do you think that Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (May Allah have mercy upon his soul) would be pleased with the way the UAE has developed in terms of equality in the last thirty years? Give reasons for your answer?


As part of a lesson on "social investment," students are taught that the UAE's future vision incorporates investment with social responsibility. Here, they learn about the UAE Centennial Plan which helps them imagine the next five decades. The lesson focuses on a fast-changing world where students can thrive with the proper knowledge and skills.

The UAE Centennial 2071 Plan

The UAE Centennial 2071 plan aims at investment in the UAE. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, said of the plans: "We have established a clear strategy for 2021; the UAE Centennial goes beyond that, with a five-decade vision for future generations that provides the government with a clear roadmap for long-term development . . . We must plant the seeds today for future generations to grow and prosper tomorrow. The world is rapidly changing, and we must equip our youth with the new tools, knowledge and skills needed to thrive in an ever-evolving environment.

Within this vision, students learn about different types of government and private investments. The textbook explains that the UAE government is investing in education reforms to schools and universities as part of its national plan. More interesting perhaps is the attention given to personal well-being and the education for positive thinking and "balanced life" (a theme of "the individual and society"). One of the components of a balanced life is positive thinking and gratitude for what one has. Positive thinking will allow students to initiate and want to change and resolve conflicts peacefully. Elsewhere in the curriculum there is much material about compassion and charity.
Being Positive

The UAE government has a Ministry of State for Happiness and among its main goals are to promote a culture of happiness and positivity for all Emiratis, and develop an environment where Emiratis create their own happiness and spread positivity through their communities. Being happy and positive are fundamental values in leading a rich and fulfilling life. Being positive in life, centers around the idea that you look for the good in any situation. Thinking positively is linked to success in life and a healthy life.

The first place to begin is how we think and how we approach life. Being grateful, for example, can change the way that you see things in life, particularly the small things that can be taken for granted. Being grateful for the house you live in, all the things your parents do for you, or a friend helping you understand some difficult homework are all things you can do which can help you change how you approach life in a more positive way.


Democracy and Shura

The UAE political framework is founded on shura-based democratic principles which impart very specific connotations to Emirati political thinking. While the pillar of the legal system is shura (an Islamic political construct meaning consultation), the curriculum emphasizes the importance of having a practical, open society that functions in an equally practical world. The text makes no claim that the UAE is—or ought to be—a Western democracy, but encourages students to be vigilant and observe the various issues and events in society that may impact their political lives and rights.

Sheikh Zayed's understanding of democracy and shura [Islamic principle of consultation] indicates that these concepts were not strange to his practice as a ruler, in which he has been accustomed to communicating with his nation's people, great or small, as he had said: 'Democracy in the UAE is not just a pretty word. It is neither just text in the constitution; it is a practical reality, both for the state's high echelons of power and at the peoples' level.'

Tolerance and Diversity

The vision of a prosperous global hub correlates with the curriculum’s teachings on diversity and a peaceful society as part of the UAE’s national identity. The presence of non-nationals is considered an advantage—leading to a tolerant global perspective. The following excerpt offers the example from history that immigration of capable people unleashed prosperity:

The commercial traffic recovered in Dubai port, which gradually became the alternative trade port after the fall of Lanja [now Bandar Lengeh]. Most of Lanja’s merchants preferred to immigrate to Dubai, which experienced a remarkable recovery in 1903. The city of Dubai began to welcome people from different ethnicities, and especially the labor force of Indians and Iranians. The city saw rising prices, and evolved into the most bustling and dynamic location, with the highest standard of living.

_Social Studies and National Education: Historical Depth of Federal Thought in the UAE (Book Viewing and Analysis), Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2021–22_, p. 46.

The Emirati understanding of diversity is conveyed through various literary means. The following analysis of the regional mythological figure, Sinbad the Sailor (One Thousand and One Nights) displays a desire to reach out and communicate with Others, wherever they may be found. Such a message, embedded in an eighth-grade Arabic language course, speaks volumes about the culture of the curriculum—to evoke in students a universal desire to know the Other and understand that beneath the differences between human beings of diverse cultures—all are essentially the same.

Perhaps you will share my opinion that inside each one of us hides such a Sinbad, wishing to go out and travel all around the world, to discover it and get to know the other peoples with their colors, forms and ways of living. We wish that this journey will lead us
to realize that we are not alone on this earth, for there are others besides us, different from us that will encounter us. Our similarities and dissimilarities will reveal to us the secrets of life and record its stories, which it tells us in all languages and tongues: we are as different from each other as we are the same.


Curiosity toward what is far away and mysterious is taught through appropriate images depicting legends and myths of numerous cultures.

![Image of Dragon and Tiger](image1.jpg)


Another Arabic textbook offers a window into Japanese culture with gorgeous images of the Sakura cherry blossoms.

![Image of Sakura Blossoms](image2.jpg)

In March of every year, Japan becomes a magical country covered in eye-catching pink, when the Sakura flowers blossom in most cities . . .

Tolerance is a central element of the UAE curriculum. A groundbreaking moral education program emphasizes its significance to students.

Lesson 4

**TOLERANCE**

**Educational Outcomes**

Explaining the main traits of empathy, respect and tolerance.

Learning the situations in which the students have a positive position, and whether they failed in displaying empathy, respect and tolerance toward others.

Look at the stars the teacher will stick on your book in the classroom (red, gold, silver, green, blue, and purple). What is the color of your star? Form a group with your classmates having the same color star. Clearly, some of your classmates have remained out of these groups.

How do you think these [excluded] students feel? How did you behave toward them as a group?


**Islamic Education, Peace and Tolerance**

The Islamic education program reflects the strict sharia-based Islam that is practiced in the UAE. Within this framework, education for peace and tolerance must be based on faith. Textbooks also exhibit peaceful messaging that reflects the spirit of the faith, played out in such concepts as:
"dialogue is the foundation of a peaceful coexistence." Thus, the Abraham Accords and peace treaty with Israel is studied in three different grades within the framework of Islamic education.

The curriculum is ill-disposed to radicalism and terrorism; it offers students various routes to confront this challenge. Theologically, students are taught, radicalism is untenable because it contradicts the essence of the Islamic worldview, which is based on moderation and the middle road (wasatiyya). Radicalism alienates people from the faith and spreads terror and violence since "extremists consider it permissible to shed any person's blood—even those closest to them." Students are taught to resist and actively debunk claims that Islam is a violent religion, and that it will never be a religion of terror. This appears to be an effective approach to teach tolerance since the best way to learn something is to explain or teach it.

Textbooks emphasize that Islam must treat other religions with tolerance. Freedom of religious belief and faith is a core issue. Tolerating others is conducive to cooperation, amity and rejection of violence and conflicts; all should strive to live a good and happy life. Free choice is mandated by Islam. Acceptance of non-Muslims applies in the UAE and abroad. Muslims should answer the greetings of non-Muslims, especially Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. If the enemy inclines toward peace, trust in Allah to make peace. Diplomatic relations with non-Muslims are encouraged by Islam.

Regarding the subject of attitudes toward Jews, a few anecdotes are provided describing how Prophet Muhammad and Caliph Omar acted kindly to Jews. In one instance, The Prophet visited a sick Jewish boy; at another time he accepted an invitation by Jews to dine. Judging a disagreement, Omar ruled in favor of a Jew and against a Muslim. In another textbook the Prophet stands during a funeral procession of a Jew, stressing that the deceased was a human being as well.

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50 Islamic Education, Grade 12, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 36.
53 Ibid., p. 30.
54(31).
58 Islamic Education, Grade 12, Vol. 3, 2020–21, p. 34.
59 Ibid.
An important topic in the Islamic education program is the Medina Document (in the textbook, *wathīqa*) which the curriculum cites as the first constitution in history. The Document's ideal of communities and clans living equally and in harmony is taught throughout middle and high school grades and affirms "the right to be helped against those who unlawfully assaulted them, whether Muslims or non-Muslims from within the state or from outside it." A current and relevant issue for the UAE that derives from an understanding of the Document is the absolute necessity to treat non-Muslim workers fairly. In a more religious context, the well-known quotation from the Medina Document, "The Jews have their own religion, and the Muslims have theirs" is provided in the context of accepting the legitimacy of other religions.

"The Jews have their own religion and the Muslims have theirs." [From Medina Document]

The following image from a sixth-grade textbook is meant to illustrate the UAE's diversity:

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I Leave my Mark:
I am proud to be a peace-loving Muslim, who is tolerant when dealing with others, and I work hard to spread goodness to all corners of my country, by works of charity and development.


*Islamic Education* textbooks display examples of the obligation to treat non-Muslim workers and minority members in fairness.

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**The Concept of Fairness:**
Fairness means: to give to others their right, just as you would like to receive from them your right. You do not consider their strength or weakness, their knowledgeability or ignorance, or their faithfulness or lack thereof.

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Fairness at work: means to execute work perfectly, and do whatever it takes to increase work quality. At the same time, treating workers fairly means to appreciate their achievements, protect their rights and care for their conditions regardless of work or productivity.


In the same textbook an anecdote from early Islam concerns a Jew who was framed for supposedly stealing a shield from a Muslim warrior. The Jew was almost convicted, but thirteen Qur'anic verses were then revealed to the Prophet proving his innocence, leading to the Jew's acquittal. 

A section describing "Portrayals of Tolerance in the Holy Qur'an," has the following interpretation for surah Al-Mā'idah 5:5:

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Islam established rules that strengthen the relationship between Muslims and People of the Book [such as Christians and Jews]; it allows Muslims to eat their food and marry their women. This consists of a call for strengthening bonds of affection with them. This is the highest level of religious tolerance: the Muslim’s wife and life partner and mother of his children can be a member of the People of the Book. Hence, her family members become uncles, aunts and grandparents of his children.


Based on another Qur'anic verse, an *Islamic Education* textbook handles the question of family ties with non-Muslims. Even parents who practice polytheism and encourage their children to follow suit should nevertheless be respected by their children. In the language of the Qur'an, one should "not obey them and yet treat them well in this world" (surah Luqman 31:15). Such tolerance should be directed to all non-Muslims.66 Students learn that the UAE "houses over 200 nationalities and churches and temples of Sikhs and Hindus—more than all other GCC countries combined."67

Beyond faith, what counts are deeds, namely what "brings joy, comfort and peace to those around you."68

In an Islamic Education exercise, students are tasked to assign the relevant principles of intellectual tolerance such as: kindness, non-discrimination, rejection of violence, Religious tolerance, and even love—of *all religions*, within nine different Qur'anic verses.
I Deduce

From the following principles the indications of intellectual tolerance contained in each Qur'anic verse:

Doing good to others / Being merciful, kind and gentle / Justice in dealing with others and preserving their rights / Balance, moderation and taking the middle way / Places of worship of all religions are respected and should be protected and preserved / Islam does not coerce anyone to convert to it / Humans are honored regardless of their color, sex, religion or thought / Tolerance and forgiveness turn enmity into love / Having dialogue with those dissenting in a friendly manner and the rejection of violence.


A Typical Chapter on Islamic Tolerance

An Islamic Education textbook for sixth grade devotes a whole chapter to tolerance, as a core value of Islam and a central part of the Emirati identity. A close reading reveals the significance a multi-cultural country like the UAE places on tolerance skills. Tolerance is broadly applied: Those tourists or guest workers, who are non-Muslim, non-Arab and non-citizens living in the UAE, should be treated kindly and with respect. This sentiment is copiously expressed throughout the curriculum in various examples and images.
In its general sense, tolerance means kindness, peace, mercy, non-violence, dealing gently with others, accepting the fact that they are different from us, and not coercing them to do anything.

Islam directed us to be tolerant towards all people in all fields of life in order to establish a cohesive and interconnected society. Even though the Holy Qur’an did not explicitly use the word “tolerance,” it included other words that are closely associated with it and translate it into required Islamic principles. Likewise, in noble hadiths, the Messenger of Allah, encouraged us to adopt it. There are many verses in the Holy Qur’an that order us to do good deeds towards all people. Allah, said:

Wa `Alisinu `Inna Allāha Yuḥībbu Al-Muḥsinīn”

(And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good.) [Al-Baqarah: 195].

And the Messenger of Allah, ordered us to deal well with all people; he, said:

“The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand people are safe, and the believer is the one from whom people’s lives and wealth are safe.” [Narrated by Al-Nasa’i].
Colorful images and every-day examples of tolerance are featured, with references to all religions, ethnicities, nationalities and languages, extending to every income stratum—from the most wealthy ruling class to the least wealthy immigrant laborer. Highlighted are service workers and non-Muslims neighbors, regardless of religion. What follows are numerous examples from the textbooks in both Arabic and English:
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لاعنانا الإسلام للتحلى بقيم التسامح مع الناس جميعًا على اختلاف ديناتهم وأعراقهم وجنسياتهم ولغاتهم، وللتسامح ضررًا عدًا، أمرنا بها القرآن الكريم، وحننا عليها الرسول ﷺ، ومنه ما نلي:

1. الزرق واللبن فيتعامل مع الناس، ورسولاً ﷺ كان زجًا مع الناس في القول والعامل، قال تعالى: «فَيَسْتَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ تُبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةً تُبْتَغُونَ فِيهَا» [العنوان 159].

2. الإحسان إلى الحيران منهما كان دينهم: وكون بアジアهم وتعزيزهم، ومساء عليها، إذا احتاجوا، وحباً لهم إذا مرضوا، وعدهم مساعدتهم يقول أو فعل، قال ﷺ: (من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليحسن إلى جاره) [رواة البخاري].

3. الإحسان إلى من بمثقله: وذلك بالحسن وتقديره، واعتقاده حكمة كاملة، وخدم الإسلام له بالقول أو الغيال، وعدم تكليفه بما يتوافق فردة. قال ﷺ: «إِنَّهُمْ كَمَا يَفْعَلُونَ كَمَا يُعْطَى» [النساء 3]. فمن كان أخوهًا تحت يده، فلا يعطقه بما يطلب، ولا تكلمهما ما يطلبهما، فإن كالفصول فأعطوه» [رواة البخاري].

4. التسامح في اليوم والشهر، ويتجلغذ ذلك بالبيب في المعاملة، وترك الجدل والخصام. عن حضرمة أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: "رحم الله رجلا سماحًا إذا توأ، وإذا افترى، وإذا أفتراض" [رواة البخاري].

5. الإحسان إلى غير المسلمين، والبر بمثل الزرق بجميعهم، وسدد حافظة فضتهم، وإطماع جانعم، ودين القول لهم، والدعاء لهم بالهداية والسعادة، وصياغة أمواتهم وأعراضهم، وحفظ جميع شرفهم، وإعانتهم على دفع القلغم عنهم. قال تعالى: "لا تتركوا الله عن الذين لم يؤمنوا في الدنيا، ولا يفجرون القلغم عندك، إن الله عبداً فتлерف تعلو أركان النصر، إليهم فإنه إذ ينعيك التمثال» [المتجرة 8].
Manifestations of tolerance:

Islam calls us to exhibit the values of tolerance towards all people of different religions, ethnicities, nationalities and languages. Tolerance has several manifestations which the Holy Qur’an and the Prophet ﷺ, directed us to exhibit, including the following:

1. Being kind and gentle in dealings with people. Our Messenger ﷺ, was merciful in his sayings and dealings with people. Allah ﷻ, said:

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\text{"فَبَلَّمُ رَحْمَتَ مِنِّي أَنَّهُمْ وَلَوَكُتْ فَقَلُوا عَلَيْ أَلْقَابٍ لَا فَضْلُوا مِنْ حَرْبٍ أَفْضَفَ عَنْهُمْ وَأَجْعَلْهُمْ فَرْجًا."
\]

“Fabimā Raḥmatin Mina Allāhi Linta Lahum Wa Law Kunta Fażżān Ghalīṣa Al-Qalbi Lānfaḍḍa Min Ḥawlika Fā’ju ’Anhum Wa Astaghfir Lahum”

(So by mercy from Allah, O Mohammad, you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude in speech and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them) [Ali ’Imrān: 159].
5. Doing good deeds to neighbors regardless of their religion, by respecting and appreciating them, helping them if they need help, visiting them if they are sick and not hurting them through words or deeds. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“He who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment should do good to his neighbor” [Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

6. Doing good deeds to those who serve us, by respecting and appreciating them, giving them their rights in full and not hurting them through words or deeds. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Your servants are your brothers, and Allah has put them under your command. So whoever has a brother under his command should feed him of what he eats and dress him of what he wears. Do not ask them to do things beyond their capacity, and if you do so, then help them.” [Narrated by Al-Bukhari].

8. Being tolerant when selling and buying. This is achieved by being gentle in dealings and avoiding arguments and disputes. According to Jabir ﷺ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“May Allah show mercy to a man who adopts a kind attitude when he sells, buys and demands the repayment of loans.” [Narrated by Al-Bukhari].
Being righteous and good towards non-Muslims, by being kind to the weak, meeting the needs of the poor and feeding the hungry among them, talking nicely to them, praying for their right guidance and happiness, safeguarding their wealth and honor, protecting all their rights and helping them defend themselves against oppression. Allah said:

“La Yahnakkumu Allahu `Ani Al-Ladhina Lam Yuqattalakum Fi Ad-Dini Wa Lam Yukhrijakum Min Diyariikum An Tabarrakum Wa Tuqssitū ’Ilayhim ‘Inna Allaha Yuhibbu Al-Muqsiṭṭin”

(Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.) [Al-Mumtaḥanah: 8].

*بالتعاون مع مجموعتي أين كيف أتعامل خلاق التسامح مع كل معني بالنَّاس*:

- جارني غير المسلم:
- معلمي:
- أسرتي:
- عائلة التفافة غير المسلم:
- المناقشين في بلدي:
National pride is closely associated with tolerance. The UAE's global visage should be tolerance and amicable human cohabitation.
The following image illustrates a happy encounter between an Emirati Muslim family and a Western-looking family. The Emirati couple is hosting, according to Arab tradition, while conveying a sense of sovereignty, independence, friendship and magnanimity. Note the personal engagement of the two boys. The traditions and cultures of both families are preserved. The boys greet one another as the guests offer food meant to show respect for the tradition of Islamic Halal.

Here again much stress is placed on respecting all religions, treating one's classmates kindly, and the important dimension of being responsible for one's actions and apologizing when proper. Thus, in everyday conduct, students should assume that there are no class and identity differences. National pride and tolerance are closely associated.

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69 Verbatim translation of the second section: "What is the significance of the authorized and published document during the meeting shown in the photo?"
The Medina Document

The Medina Document is normally thought of as an example of tolerance toward non-Muslims, particularly Jews. After its creation, the Muslim-Jewish wars soon followed, pointing to serious divisions between Jews and Muslims. But in a sixth-grade textbook, students learn about the freedom of religion from the well-known Islamic principle: "The Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs," signifying mutual respect and tolerance.

The following chart and exercise answers are from the teacher’s guide, corresponding to the Medina Document section of the sixth-grade *Islamic Education* textbook. The answers and the directions to the teacher (seen below in red), offer an apt example of how one can enhance moderation through the legitimate orthodox interpretation of religious texts. The extension of freedom of religion for both Muslims and Jews are expressed as a general principle.

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Answers to the Exercise:

I contemplate and conclude: What are the main cultural values of the Document?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Cultural Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are one nation apart from [other] people</td>
<td>Social unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs</td>
<td>Freedom of religion and worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Medina, those who leave and those who stay are safe</td>
<td>Security and stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The peace of the believers is one</td>
<td>The value of peace among peoples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lesson is rich in national and social values; the teacher should utilize since these values are part of the religion and a requirement of [Islamic] sharia, following the example of the Prophet.


Extremism and Terrorism

In a lesson entitled "Islam Opposes Extremism," students are asked about a text linking extremism to terrorism, how they are related, and what methods could be used to eliminate the sources of terrorism.
The question of extremism is a serious matter; it causes a person to become an enemy to his homeland, his community and his family. It threatens the believer in his faith and the earth. The Muslims have suffered the most heinous crimes of terrorism, murder, violation of honor, plundering money, spreading of ignorance, chaos and destruction from these extremists. They have also insulted the religion and distorted the image of Islam.

Therefore, it is imperative to discuss the question of extremism, explain the truth about it, and clarify the position of Islam towards it in order to protect religion and society.

Conclude:
The relationship between extremism and terrorism ..............................................

Suggest:
A way to drain the sources of extremism and terrorism ...............................

*Islamic Education, Grade 12, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 34.*

When Offered Peace or Greetings by Non-Muslims, Answer in Kind

A lesson on tolerance and respect for the faith of others encourages students to greet non-Muslims—especially Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. The textbook also stresses the importance of having diplomatic relations with non-Muslims, citing a Qur’anic verse teaching the practice of peace with enemies who offer to do the same.

*Bin Abbas said, "Return the greeting to whoever it is, Jew, Christian, or Zoroastrian. That is because Allah says: 'When a (courteous) greeting is offered
you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy . . .’"
(Al-Adab Al-Mufrad).
Greeting a non-Muslim:
* Allah said: 'But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do you (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah. For He is One that hears and knows (all things)' (Al-Anfal, 8:61).

_Islamic Education, Grade 12_, Vol. 3, 2020–21, p. 32.

Islam is Generally against Wars

The _Islamic Education_ textbooks teach against wars, except for defensive war. The following examples—in English—have identical counterparts in Arabic:

Wars are justified in cases of defense only.

_Islamic Education, Grade 6_, Vol. 3, 2020–21, p. 46.

Wars are bad and against the faith.

Jihad is not limited to warfare. Here is a text in Arabic followed by the textbook's English version.

We have learned from the founding leader Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may Allah have mercy upon him, that jihad does not mean only war and fighting; true jihad is manifested in man’s daily activities, interactions with people and behavior with his family and children.

Prepare a presentation explaining the civilizational aspect of the meaning of jihad based on the above statement, then present it before your classmates in the classroom.

Gender and Society

The Emirati curriculum's attitude toward gender issues is based on three tenets. The first is progress-oriented, anticipating the integration of women into the economy and public life; the second tenet advocates the implicit ideal of equality and spirit of partnership between men and women; and the third is the emphasis on protecting family values according to Islam and Emirati tradition, an area in which women play a leading role. This last point ascribes specific gender roles to males and females; an acceptance of (Islamic) polygamy; and the rejection of non-traditional gender roles, such as "immodest behavior in public" and imitation of the other sex on religious and cultural grounds.  

As ideals, all three fundamentals are important for the curriculum's authors; realistically, none can be fully achieved. While justice and equality are thought of as cardinal values, roles of women and men nevertheless remain distinct in the Emirati worldview.

Along with family values, Social Studies textbooks give more weight to women's integration in society. Islamic education, however, is more concerned with what is not allowed by the faith in this context, particularly the imitation of opposite sexes.

**Progress-Oriented Attitude: Women's Integration**

The UAE textbooks gauge the traditional roles of women in the Emirates within the context of a changing society; women should assume an evolving public role as the country develops. Social Studies textbooks provide statistics and photos of female participation in various capacities, such as security officers.

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Second: The Woman's Role in Modern Emirati Society:

Thanks to their strong determination endowed by Allah, Emirati women have successfully traversed historic phases rife with challenges and difficulties. After studying and taking part in building the homeland, shoulder to shoulder with her fellow man, and armed with knowledge and strong will, the Emirati woman stepped into the rink of life; she participates in all walks of life; as a doctor in a hospital, or a teacher in a school, or a manager and civil servant in one of the government and local ministries and departments, in public and private institutions, or as a reporter in one of the platforms of media and culture.

There is little doubt that the realities of the Emirati woman today are radically different from that which existed four decades ago. This is thanks to social change in the country (social change—a transformative process in society's structure creating changes in jobs, roles, values and customs).


The textbooks encourage Emirati women to be engaged and successful in all walks of life.

![Image of Emirati Women's Areas of Success]

Emirati Women's Areas of Success

Summarize the different fields in which women reached distinguished achievements in the UAE, using the following photographs.

[Answers provided for:] The Economy; Decision Making.

*Social Studies and National Education: Sustainable Development—Framework and Implementations, the UAE as an Example* (Book Viewing and Analysis), Grade 10, Vol. 2, 2020–21, p. 84.
Female Scholars (Professional)

While learning about Emirati writers, students are introduced to the female writer and scholar Shaikha Muhammad Al-Jaberi. The leading characters in her story, "The Enchanted Pool," are from both genders—a brother and sister.

2 A Story
Lesson 2
From the Emirati Heritage
The Enchanted Pool
Shaikha Muhammad Al-Jaberi


In the following twelfth-grade textbook, more than half of the quoted writers are females of various generations. Here are two examples of such figures from two different generations:

About the Writer:

- Radwa Ashour (1946–2014) was an Egyptian novelist and university professor; she studied English literature at Cairo University and earned her Master's degree in comparative literature in 1972 and a doctorate in African-American literature from Massachusetts University in 1975.
- Her works were translated into English, Spanish, Italian and Indonesian and won numerous awards . . .

About the Writer:
- Jokha Alharthi is a writer and academician from the Sultanate of Oman.


**Gender Equality: Spirit of Partnership**

In the first lesson of a fifth-grade textbook, students learn about the importance of gender equality in the Emirati constitution. Equality between men and women occupies a central focus. The following image illustrates this idea.

"Parliamentary work" is an example of women's involvement in public life.

Empowering Emirati Women in Parliamentary Work:

The National Elections Committee announced the names of the winning candidates in the 2019 elections for the fourth term of the Federal National Council [FNC], after the conclusion of the voting stages on October 5, 2019.

The main significance of the current FNC’s elections was the decision of His Highness President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan to raise the percentage of the Emirati women’s participation in the FNC to 50%, a move that stems from the UAE’s continuous endeavor to empower Emirati women in various fields. Following the President's decision, women's attendance in this term has become particularly large, thus strengthening the leadership position of the UAE in women's empowerment.

Observe the spirit of partnership in the small image below—a boy and a girl running together while holding the national flag:

2019 Federal National Council Elections

National Service participation by young men and women.

The role of women in the security apparatus serves as a manifestation of modern empowerment. The image conveys traditional values too: women stand separately, wear a military hijab as part of the uniform, and appear toward the front, graphically emphasizing women's centrality in society. Apart from the hijab, expressions such as "boundless giving" emphasize the traditional roles of women in Emirati society. Yet, the involvement of women in such cutting edge technological projects within the aerospace sector are significant; females form about a third of the sector's workforce.

1- The participation of women in maintaining security and stability throughout the homeland (police and armed forces).
2- Emirati woman: boundless giving.
Space Sector:
The confidence of Emirati women in the wise leadership [of the UAE] is a source of inspiration for Emirati women in all vital sectors, especially the space sector and the Hope Probe, in which the percentage of females is more than (34%) of the total cadres working in design, innovation and development of technologies and software. This confirms the keenness to support the process of development professionalism and science for Emirati women, and their empowerment, given that an Emirati team of more than (150) engineers and researchers are running the Mars Exploration Project and following up on the progress of the Hope Probe on its mission to reach Mars in 2021, coinciding with the passage of 50 years since the founding of the UAE, travelling on a journey of more than (600) million kilometers.

Women's Empowerment Strategy:
On March 8, 2015, Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak (Mother of the Emirates)—may God protect her, President of the General Women's Union—may God protect her—launched the National Strategy for Empowerment and Entrepreneurship of Women in the United Arab Emirates (2015–2021). The National Strategy provides a framework for the government and private sectors, and civil society institutions to develop action plans and programs that contribute to placing the UAE in the ranks of the most advanced countries in the field of women's empowerment and leadership.

The National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women (2015–2021) Includes Four Basic Priorities:
• Preserving the sustainability of the achievements of Emirati women, and continuing to achieve more gains for them.
• Preserving the social fabric and its cohesion through the complementarity of roles between men and women. To build a strong and cohesive society capable of keeping pace with emerging changes.
• Providing a decent and safe life and social well-being on high-quality foundations for women.


Traditional Family Values: Specific Gender Roles
Progress and partnership are important values, but curriculum teaches that family perspective is paramount. The state should educate women who comprise half of the population.

Women make up one half of society. The woman is the lady of the house. A state that builds itself should not be leaving women, a half of its society, drowning in the darkness of ignorance, prisoners of the shackles of oppression, restricted and paralyzed.

The following example is more straightforward in combining equality with adherence to family values as a national policy. In a lesson about the UAE constitution, students learn two principles together: "equality" and "protecting the family from perversion."

The constitution of the United Arab Emirates guarantees many social and economic directions, to secure its stability. These include:

1 Equality, providing security and peacefulness, and equal employment opportunities.
2 Protecting the family and shielding it from perversion.


Gender Roles

The textbook elaborates on gender emulation: women must be soft in speech and gait, as it is "suitable for the affection of their children and their home." Men must not wear women's jewelry or accessories. Neither gender may wear the others' clothes. ("Decorated silk clothes" are women's clothing.)

Manifestations of Imitation:

Clothing and Attire:

A man should not wear women's clothing nor women's jewelry and accessories. A woman should not wear men's clothes or that which pertains to them.

Walking and Talking:

A young man may not intentionally imitate girls in their gait or speech, or the delicateness with which they were created, as is suitable for the affection of their children and their home. A young woman must also not walk like a man, or speak with deliberate roughness in her voice.
Make Your Ruling:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITUATION</th>
<th>RULE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A woman imitated the voice of a man, to teach her son how to salute.</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A young man likes to wear decorated silk clothing, only at home.</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The textbook explains that true femininity involves delicateness, shyness and affection, and accuses people who emulate other genders as selfish and weak, and diminishing society by not adhering to their societal role.

Feminine conduct equips women to nurse their families and remain composed and harmonious, in a manner reflecting the cohesion of society and increase its strength. Men and women who emulate one another are considered weak and selfish people who care only about themselves and their own desires.

**In the following chart, students must categorize items as feminine or masculine:**

![Chart](image)

**Categorize**

The following items by placing a mark next to it in the appropriate column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>For Men</th>
<th>For Women</th>
<th>For Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

"Recalcitrant" Women and their Fate

Traditional Islamic advice on how to treat women (in a lenient manner) is still being taught in Islamic education. A husband should learn Islamic law as regards the handling of a recalcitrant wife who disobeys him. The text describes three stages of reactions that the husband can implement gradually. In the first stage, the husband must preach to the wife (advise her how to behave). If she still does not obey, he must use psychological punishment by ignoring her on every level (not talking, not acting compassionately, not sharing the bed). If she still does not obey, he is allowed to hit her "lightly"—that is, neither with heavy tools nor on the face, but he is allowed to use a cloth handkerchief and toothpick.

The text appears to echo the notion that while that while women are encouraged to participate in public life, at home, the final word rests with the husband. Women must obey. Disciplinary conduct at home is a private matter aimed at protecting the family. Yet, there is also the message that in public, women should be treated equally.
Treating a Wife's Recalcitrance:

Allah said, 'Those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance—[first] advise them [then if they persist]; forsake them in bed; and [finally] strike them. But if they obey you [once more] seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand' (Al-Nisaa: 34).

The remedy for recalcitrant wives takes place in three stages:

First: A Good Lesson:
If the husband sees clear signs of negligence and averse behavior from his wife, he has to direct her with good advice and guidance according to the need and situation; then he has to remind her of Allah, and his right [as a husband] over her. As the Prophet said: 'If a woman observes her five daily prayers, fasts during the month of Ramadan, guards her chastity and obeys her husband, she enters Paradise through any of the gates she wishes' (Narrated by Ibn Hibban).

In order for the lesson to achieve its goal, the husband must choose the appropriate time and gentle style. He must have the most honorable morals, and be a good example, so that he is keen on his marital duties, before he gives any advice to his wife. If the wife continues her disobedience, the husband moves to the second stage.

Second: Avoiding the Wife in Bed:
The husband turns away from his wife, and does not speak to her or comfort her, so that she realizes that she is no longer a source of solace and tranquility for him. Allah says: 'And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them' (Al-Rum: 21).

This is a psychological punishment that may prompt the wife to review her calculations and correct her behavior, but this treatment should apply only at home, as the Prophet said: 'Do not avoid [her] except inside the home' (Narrated by Abu Dawud), in order to protect their family secrets. If the wife continues to disobey and oversteps the bounds of good companionship, the husband moves to the third stage.

Third: Non-Violent Beating:
It is a disciplinary hitting, the purpose of which is to preserve married life from collapsing, and keeping the companionship. It is not permissible for him to hit his wife with a whip or stick or on her face, rather only with a toothpick, or a light handkerchief, conforming with what has been reported from the Prophet when a man asked him about the right of the wife over her husband. He said: 'You should feed her when you eat, clothe her when you clothe yourself, do not hit her in the face, and do not avoid her except inside the home' (Narrated by Abu Dawud).

The beating is a message to the wife that she has exceeded all limits. As for harming and abusing the wife, it is not permissible, because beating is a preventive measure whose purpose is to save their relationship and their family, so there is no reason to exaggerate or go too far with it. Ibn Hajar [Al-Asqalani] said: 'Hitting them (wives) is not permissible at all; rather it is disliked and forbidden.'

The Challenge of Peace

The curriculum's authors seem determined to educate for peace and stability. As mentioned, the textbooks approach this challenge at home by fostering a national identity that embraces a peaceful vision of prosperity, tolerance and diversity a focus on gender. This section adds the challenges of peace in the world to the discussion.

Anti-Radicalism

The curriculum has a strong anti-radicalism message. An *Islamic Education* textbook cites a long list of nine Qur'anic verses clearly stipulating that indiscriminate violence is forbidden. Students are required to fill in a table, and next to each verse explain the principle that makes tolerance a religious obligation. While the introductory passage warns against such killings and may seem innocent and even superfluous, it is not. During the last decades a great many people have been massacred in the name of religion and because of their religious affiliation.

3. To take a life which Allah has forbidden except when explicitly allowed by law:

   Allah has protected innocent lives by investing them with sanctity and forbidding their killing or having injury inflicted upon them; for to deliberately harming a human soul irrespective of its religion, color or race is an offence against Allah Almighty’s creation and all of society. . . .


Religion should not be part of the realm of wars. The curriculum applies an interfaith approach to this. There should not be fighting in the name of God. Radicalism and terrorism are the prime target of a joint Christian-Muslim Declaration, signed by Sheikh Al-Azhar and the Pope in Abu Dhabi. 73

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72 Verbatim meaning is "justly" [*bilhaqq*]
Human Fraternity . .

The Counterterrorism "Reunion" Document

Abu Dhabi Embraces its Signing by Sheikh Al-Azhar and the Catholic Pope

The document embraces:

- The spread of peace and mutual respect instead of violence.
- An invitation to world leaders to immediately stop all wars and conflicts.
- The termination of using religion and ideologies to foment hatred and violence.
- Abstaining from the use of God’s name to justify acts of killing and deportation.
- The divine religions disavow the armed movements and groups labelled "terror[ist]."
- Protecting the lives of people, their faiths, and shrines from the terrorists' crimes.
- Encouraging thinkers, artists, and journalists to rediscover the values of peace.
- Warning against harbingers of a Third World War due to religious extremism.
- A demand to stop oppression and unjust distribution of natural resources.

Realistic Approach within a Pro-Peace Paradigm

The curriculum explores theoretical dimensions of conflicts and wars in the region. The following excerpt from a Moral Education textbook appears at first glance, abstract and general. Yet, all of the discussed causes of conflict—cultural and religious differences, national and ethnic issues, and proxy wars—can be found in the region. This and other discussions in the textbook about conflict resolution suggest that Emirati educators—and those who helped them—at least have some grasp of the chaotic situation of the Middle East, and seem intent on raising a generation that will better cope with the challenges, and hopefully, eventually, lead the region to a better future.

[Note: Items 1–4 (not shown) represent Land Disputes; Wars over Economics/Resources; Ideology and Politics; and Empire Building, respectively.]

5. **Cultural and Religious Differences:** A lack of tolerance for different cultural and religious beliefs can result in tensions between groups that can escalate to violence.

6. **Nationalism and Ethnicity:** Nationalists may want to prove the superiority of their country or race by invading others. Tensions between ethnic groups within a country, especially if there is an imbalance of power, can lead to civil wars. Sometimes ethnic groups may create civil wars to set up their own independent states.

7. **Defense/Pre-Empition:** Conflict might be started in anticipation of a future attack from the other side or to limit their ability to cause damage in case of actual attack.
8. **Proxy Wars**: These are wars that are fought by a country indirectly by supporting a side in another conflict, maybe through financial or military aid, in the belief that it will benefit its own country or harm another enemy.

9. **Revenge**: Conflict might be started on the grounds that it is revenge for a past wrong committed by the other side. This can easily lead to countries engaging in a continuous and indefinite cycle of revenge attacks.

10. **Justice**: Some wars are started to correct a perceived injustice or to secure freedom.


The curriculum employs a realistic approach to peace that covers the meticulous study of just wars and when they are necessary, with WWII as an example. Here is an excerpt:

**The Theory of Just Wars**

Thinking about the circumstances that would morally justify war and what the rules of warfare should be are as old as warfare itself. Early written records of fighting demonstrate that some moral considerations have often been used by warring parties to
limit either the scope or the severity of the conflict, or to discourage unnecessary escalation. Consideration was often given on how to treat prisoners and people not directly involved in combat, such as women and children. Some ways of fighting were considered to be more "honorable" than others, though cultural influences often heavily influenced what was understood to be "honorable."


Moral education also highlights such notable global figures as Mahatma Gandhi and the American pacifist combat medic and war hero, Desmond Doss.74

Islam Demands Peace Among Peoples and Nations

The Islamic education program is decidedly pro-peace. War is necessary for the defense of the homeland only as a last resort; martyrdom is part of the curriculum but only in a defensive context. Consequently, the curriculum maintains that war is ultimately discouraged by Islam.75 A focus on jihad remains only within the realm of peaceful activities. UAE founder, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, taught that "jihad does not mean only war and fighting, it means real struggle in daily life, in human interaction with people, and in one’s behavior with his family and children."76 Students learn the limits of military jihad in terms of rules, such as barring atrocities, and are reminded again that coexistence is preferable.77

Peace and stability should form the central pillar of Muslim and non-Muslim relationships as this is founded in the Qur'an (see example below). This prefaces a chapter dealing with the Battle of Badr (624), the first major battle in Islamic history; the implication is that life in Medina was peaceful, and Muslims were involuntarily driven to war against the polytheists.


Islam considers peace between nations morally right, and beneficial.

**Islam: Wars Justified for Defense Only**

The *Islamic Education* textbooks caution against wars, except for defensive purposes. The following examples—in English—have identical counterparts in Arabic:

**Wars are bad and against the faith.**
Regional Outlook

An interesting development in the curriculum is the gradual emergence of a new regional outlook, one which departs from past conspiracy theories widespread throughout the Middle East and beyond. Thus, problems should be understood as inherent within the region itself, not from the schemes of faraway enemies. It is useful to examine the two versions of the following chart featured in the ninth-grade Social Studies and National Education textbooks. The first version, from the 2017–18 academic year focuses on the **enemies of the Arab Nation** working to impede "joint Arab action," whereas the current volume, from 2021–22, examines the **challenges** facing "joint Arab action," which remains an important goal. It is noteworthy that the new version not only avoids the expression "enemies" (i.e., the West) but the term "Arab Nation" has also been omitted. "Regional threats" and "attempts at thwarting projects" are now treated as obstacles to peace and prosperity.

**Old Paradigm (2017–18):**

The enemies of the Arab Nation carry out their schemes to impede joint Arab action by using the following:
Schemes of the Enemies to Impede Joint Arab Action

1. Drawing artificial borders between the countries and provoking problems around them.
2. Conspiring to harm and thwart Arab projects.
3. Provoking the confessional bigotry and inner problems found in Arab countries.
4. Supporting and taking the side of the Zionist Entity on the land of Palestine.


New Paradigm (2021–22):

Among the main challenges impeding joint Arab action:

**The Main Challenges Facing Joint Arab Action**

1. Provocation of confessional bigotry and the spreading of hate speech, along with internal problems in some Arab countries.
2. Attempts to thwart economic and political Arab projects.
3. Regional Threats to national Arab security.
4. Weakness of information and communication technology-based knowledge and structure impeding an Arab sustainable knowledge economy.

Regional Outreach: Cooperation and Defense

In order to secure the homeland's well-being and critical national interests, the Emirati leadership has often combined regional diplomacy with building a small, yet powerful and active army. The curriculum provides much information about the UAE's involvement in Lebanon and Yemen, ranging from military and financial to diplomatic contributions.

Lebanon

High school students learn of the UAE's involvement in Lebanon and the substantial financial assistance given to various civil enterprises throughout the years, but also directly to support the Lebanese army. The text mainly blames the Lebanese themselves—as fellow Arabs—for their plight.

The Lebanese civil war was quintessential politics. All the parties from right and left and national groups from diverse currents participated in it. The late Sheikh Zayed sought to talk sense to the various participants in the war, and convince them to put their homeland's interests first, and stop the bloodshed and destruction. He made other efforts through contacts with the heads of the relevant Arab states to reach a solution. He said: 'The war in Lebanon is the strangest of wars. It goes against the interests of the Arab Nation. Money and men are wasted for no justification or reason, and it drains Arab power in vain.'

One outcome of the [Arab] Summit's decisions was the participation of the United Arab Emirates in the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) in Lebanon between 1976–1979. Here, we must once again mention the participation of our armed forces in the southern Lebanon demining operation after the withdrawal of 'Israel' in 1982.


Yemen

The curriculum covers Operation Decisive Storm, launched in 2015 in Yemen. It describes the allies of the UAE and its goals, one of which was to push back Iranian influence.

"Decisive Storm"

**Participating Countries**

Saudi Arabia—contributes more than 100 jets and 150 thousand troops and marine units

UAE 30 fighter jets

Kuwait 15 fighter jets

Jordan 6 fighter jets

Bahrain 15 fighter jets

Morocco 6 fighter jets

**Yemen War (Decisive Storm):**

The following objective factors and justifications necessitated the UAE's participation in the Arab coalition to restore the legitimate [government] in the brotherly nation of Yemen and bring back stability and security to Yemen.
1. Protecting Yemen’s Arab identity
2. Defending Islamic holy sites and siding with Saudi Arabia
3. Putting an end to the threat of Iranian expansionism in the region
4. Preventing Iran from destroying Yemen as it did in Iraq and Lebanon
5. Guarding Arab National security
6. Helping brothers and rescuing the Yemeni people

I learn from my country’s beautiful heritage:
The Emirati proverb says: Lament people, do not lament money.

[Caption]: In 2019 our armed forces returned after achieving strategic goals by participating in the Arab coalition, underscoring their support for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in accordance with the interest of brother Yemen.

The Arab World and the GCC

The Arab World

The textbooks extol Arab unity and cooperation as central themes of the UAE's worldview and support the territorial integrity of Arab countries. While the term Arab Homeland is often used, the discourse, instead, revolves around maintaining the viability of independent countries. What is closer to home appears to be more important.

The following image exemplifies circles of identity. Slogans read "The Emirates at the Service of the World," with two images below comparing the suffering of the Syrian refugees with the comfort of the Emiratis. The text emphasizes Islamic and Arab affiliations.

In this lesson I will learn to:

* Describe the problems suffered by the states in the Arab and Muslim worlds.
* Define the role of the UAE in supporting Arab and Muslim worlds.
* Express my belonging to my country and my Arab and Muslim Nation.

Islamic Education, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2020–21, p. 64.
A chart describing activities in the field of renewable energy in Arab countries reveals the priorities of the UAE in the Arab world. After the pioneering Emirati activity, the chart lists Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Morocco in the order of their contributions to renewable energy activities.79

Clearly, Saudi Arabia and neighboring Arab countries (besides Qatar) are closest to the Emiratis. Saudi Arabia is a leading partner in peace (as in East Africa) and war (as in Yemen).

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are fundamental supporters of any effort or movement which seeks to resolve disputes and spread peace, security and stability, in a manner that is in line with the interests of the nations of the region, and which strengthens the regional and global security system."—His Majesty Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed.

*Social Studies, Grade 6, Vol. 3, 2019–20, p. 70.*

The Gulf region and the Arab Peninsula are both home and heartland for the Emiratis.


Egypt is considered an important ally in the curriculum. Muhammad bin Zayed al-Nahyan is quoted as saying that "The prosperity of Egypt is the prosperity of all the Arabs."

Iraq is a good example of an important neighbor as well. A collection of speeches by the late Sheikh Zayed provides much space to the UAE military participation in the war for Kuwait's liberation from Iraqi occupation (1991), but also to its pro-Iraqi positions during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–88), with blame mainly directed at the Iranians.

The text stresses the UAE's opposition to the thirteen-year-long UN economic sanctions levied on Iraq (1990–2003), which is described as unjustified, leading to "the death of more than a million children and the emigration of a great many Iraqis in search of survival and safety."

The lesson to be learned, according to the textbook, is the UAE's commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity (a commitment equal to the one toward Palestinians). The message seems to be that the UAE is still committed to the territorial integrity of Iraq, "whatever the sacrifices in money and souls."

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81 Ibid, p. 64.
82 Ibid.
In his rejection of this situation and going further in weakening this Arab country [i.e., the UN economic sanctions, 1990–2003], the late Sheikh Zayed declared, as if he were still alive in our present day:

'Allah Almighty has given us a lesson for the future that conflict does not benefit us as Arabs. Our strength is in joining forces and developing our peoples and nation; so that future generations will experience power and victory. This is the lesson for us to learn: one should benefit from one's mistakes, change his course and follow the right path. No one wants the division of Iraq. No Arab is careless about the unity of Iraq's land and people. The same is true for the Palestinian people. If the Arabs abandon these two issues, they will abandon themselves; even in one inch or a grain of sand, and whatever the sacrifices in money and souls.'

*Social Studies and National Education: Zayed’s Ethical Approach, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 64.*

Arab solidarity is important in the textbooks, but does not replace the national UAE perspective. Sometimes texts prefer the use of Arab "States" instead of the Arab Homeland. The Palestinian cause remains important regardless of the peace accords with Israel. Stories, information and poems about the Palestinians and Jerusalem are featured. Thus a seventh-grade *Arabic Language* textbook contains an item on the ancient Cotton Market (*Suq al Qattanin*) in Jerusalem, built during the fourteenth century. The text comments that, "the Islamic institutions in Jerusalem are trying to revive it and open its stores so that it will continue to be bustling with life in the heart of Jerusalem and to preserve the Arab and Islamic identity of the city."83 The same literature book also features a poem by nationalistic Palestinian poet Ibrahim Tuqan (1905–41).84

A poem by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008) serves to encourage children—particularly girls—to dream and fulfill their dreams. Such choices are markedly different from the typical Palestinian blame-victimization messages one often sees in Palestinian Authority and many other regional textbooks.

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83 *Arabic Language*, Grade 7, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 84.
84 Ibid., p. 194. The text mistakenly reports that Tuqan passed away in 1948, rather than 1941.
Iran, Turkey and Qatar

Iran

A narrow body of water separates The United Arab Emirates from Iran, a much larger and more powerful neighbor. A conflict with Iran around three strategically important islands—the Tunbs (Greater and Lesser) and Abu Musa—has persisted since 1971, when the Shah of Iran occupied them just before the UAE's independence. Since the 1979 revolution in Iran, the conflict over the islands and other issues worsened. The newly created Islamic Republic adopted an aggressive revolutionary agenda aimed at forcing its will on the region—a move which catapulted the UAE into a strategically opposing camp.

The textbook imparts the islands’ conflict from the UAE point of view. Thus, Iran's occupation is considered illegal and hurts both the UAE and the entire Arab world. Resolutions are never explained in military terms. Students learn that legal and peaceful remedies are always preferred.

While the interpretation of the conflict is one-sided, it is also sophisticated and nuanced. Eleventh-grade students study—in a standard textbook—the full Arabic version of Mattair's research: The Three Occupied UAE Islands: Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. Following is an academic assessment of this unusual school textbook.

Had this been a conventional academic publishing house, it is inconceivable that a serious scholarly treatment (despite the constraints, this book definitely qualifies as such) could have been labeled in such a subjective manner. Clearly, when commissioning this project,
the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) wanted to produce an irrefutable treatise establishing beyond any reasonable doubt that the disputed islands under the microscope here belong by rights to the United Arab Emirates. The result is something of an uneasy marriage between the measured tone of Thomas Mattair's well-researched narrative and the slightly exaggerated conclusions drawn from it to bolster the explicit institutional aims of the project. That said, Mattair's work is an exceptionally useful contribution for scholars of Persian Gulf politics and territorial disputes more generally.\(^8^5\)

The following two excerpts from the textbook's introduction display the UAE's view of the severity of the conflict and the peaceful ways chosen to handle it.\(^8^6\) The island's strategic location and Iran's threats are causing instability in the Gulf:

Because of the islands' strategic location in the Strait of Hormuz and the wide-ranging threats deriving from their occupation by Iran, the security and stability of the Gulf's area will remain fragile in the absence of an effective settlement to this conflict; and the hopes to reach enduring security infrastructure will remain elusive.


The Emirates believe in peace for the sake of growth and in peaceful solutions of conflicts and is committed to a peaceful approach to solve regional problems.

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\(^8^6\) See also *Social Studies and National Education,* Grade 8, Vol. 1, 2021–22, pp. 52–57.
At the same time, the seven Emirates forming the UAE have a rich history and magnificent culture based on peaceful relations and open commercial routes with all their neighbors. The UAE has endeavored to sustain a stable and peaceful environment in the region to encourage economic and social growth in the Arabian Gulf, absolutely refusing all military solutions for any of the region's problems.


In another textbook, the Iranian takeover of the islands is described in terms of good versus evil, following the death of a policeman from Ras Al Khaimah during the Iranian invasion: "His grave is witness to the injustice of the aggressor invaders." On the face of it, there is apparent ambiguity between the argument that Iran's occupation of the islands forms a security threat while the Emiratis maintain their commitment to peaceful solutions. In an attempt to not overly magnify the threat, the textbook points to the fact that most Emirati, British and American experts are convinced that "Iran is rational . . . and will not ignite an all-out war, so it will not launch an open or naked attack against any GCC country or block the Hormuz Straits." And yet the danger of other types of direct attacks looms large as explained in the text:

In addition, Iran has the appropriate capacities and possibly the intentions to utilize the islands more directly. That includes deploying forces on the scale of a battalion along the Gulf to support a popular uprising or a coup attempt in one of the Arab Gulf countries; or to attack and take over islands or coastal or offshore oil facilities. Iran is also capable of using the islands for secret operations to deploy nonconventional forces across the Gulf, to supply radical groups with weapons across the Gulf, to occupy unprotected islands, as well as to destroy sea and land oil installations, ports, ships and desalination and power plants.


87 Ibid., p. 55.
88 The Three Occupied UAE Islands: Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 28.
Finally, students learn that oil is mostly transported through shipping routes in the Gulf, adjacent to the three islands, then through the Strait of Hormuz, creating a narrow and danger-exposed passageway.\textsuperscript{89}

The Emirati curriculum records a history in which large parts of the Iranian side of the Gulf were controlled by the Coastal Emirates. There is no claim for these territories, but students learn of prolonged conflicts and the collaboration of Safavid Iran with the British and Dutch at the expense of the Arabs.

Since 1600, the Iranian Safavid state was seeking allies to help it to defeat the Portuguese. They concluded treaties with the Al-Qasimi State. The Iranian ruler, called Abbas Shah Isma'il Al-Safavi\textsuperscript{90} acknowledged Kayed bin 'Udwan Al-Qasimi's possession of vast territories located in present-day southwest Iran, in addition to all the Southern Emirati Islands, including the Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa.

\textit{Historical Depth of Federal Thought in the UAE, Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 35.}

The Emiratis have been united against Persian Aggression.

The war between the Coastal Emirates and the Persian State persisted for decades. The major events and hostile foreign interventions united the people of the Coastal Emirates and strengthened their determination to repel the Persian Aggression. [The Persians] continued to build up their military capacities, having access to Dutch and British military knowhow. They formed an enormous fleet of about 5,000 Persian warriors. This fleet later advanced to the city of Khor Fakkan on the eastern seashore of the Coastal Emirates. On April 4, 1736, the city was occupied; the Persians (\textit{al-furs}) headed toward the city of Ras Al-Khaima and were stationed there.

\textit{Historical Depth of Federal Thought in the UAE, Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 37.}

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p. 599.
\textsuperscript{90} This text probably refers to Shah Abbas I (1571–1629).
Students are also taught that the proper name for the Gulf is the "Arabian Gulf," mainly because of the long history of Arabs on its western and eastern shores. Following is an excerpt from a lesson entitled "Our Arabian Gulf."

Main Idea:
The Arabs settled the banks of the Arabian Gulf, on its two shores—the western and the eastern—and its islands. They founded deep-rooted civilizations in ancient times. They established Arab cities and kingdoms, and controlled the global trade routes between East and West through the waters of the Arabian Gulf.

Citing a famous Danish geographer, the Emirati curriculum laments the use of "Persian Gulf" in Western languages.

Danish traveler and scientist Carsten Niebuhr,\(^1\) who visited the Arabian Gulf and neighboring countries in the 18th century, noted that Arab tribes inhabited the eastern coastal shore. These Arabs lived in colonies or emirates on the Iranian coast. They settled on that coast before the Islamic conquest. He pointed out that the eastern coast [of the Gulf] was not subject to the rulers of Iran, and that it is shameful that Western geographers call this Gulf Persian since the Persians did not consider settling on this coast, which had been barren in comparison with the Iranian plateau. He pointed out that the Arabs more or less owned all the littoral areas of the Persian empire, from the estuary of the Euphrates to that of the Indus (the Sind river).


Students are taught to familiarize themselves with areas settled by Arabs across the Gulf.

**Turkey**

The current curriculum contains a more critical view of the Ottoman Empire as compared with earlier editions. Conversely, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk is praised while his secularist drive is ignored. This change may be understood against the background of competition between the two countries and the Ottoman-inspired pro-Muslim Brotherhood Islamism that has become a hallmark of Turkish policies in the region, as well as its support of radical groups in the Arab world. Along these lines a philosophical debate—over the use of politics under the auspices of

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\(^1\) Carsten Niebuhr, (1733–1815) was a German explorer and the sole survivor of the first scientific expedition to Arabia and India (initiated by the King of Denmark). "Carsten Niebuhr: German Traveler," *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Carsten-Niebuhr.
Islam—has risen within the Sunni world. To that end, officially secular Turkey is making use of Islam as a political tool to spread its hegemony; the UAE, for its part, as a state meticulously committed to Islamic sharia, rejects the use of religion as a political tool.

A ninth-grade textbook devotes an entire chapter to the Ottoman Empire's harsh treatment of Arab countries. It teaches students that the Ottomans ruled in an oppressive and illegitimate manner, weakening the Arab world with crushing poverty that ended centuries of prosperity. Ottoman rule represented colonialism and occupation (isti‘mār, ihtilāl) and not a legitimate Islamic conquest (fath). Students also learn that the Ottomans brought European imperialism into the Arab world. A poster about reported Ottoman massacres against Arabs is displayed. (Included: the Ottoman massacre of Shiite Muslims in Karbala.)

Ottoman Massacres
Against the Arabs
The Neglected History
1516: Al-Tal Massacre: Decimation of thousands of Syrians in Aleppo after the Battle of Marj Dabiq [Ottomans vs Mamluks].
1842: Karbala’ Massacre: Killing by Ottomans of thousands of rebels.

1915: Seferberlik [Mobilization] Massacre in Medina: Starvation and deportation of its inhabitants outside the island in order to Turkify it.
1517: The Ten-Thousand Massacre in Egypt: Killing of 10,000 Egyptians in one day at the beginning of the conquest.
1517: The Craftsmen Massacre in Egypt: Moral Liquidation of [craftmen's] legacy by transferring the most skillful literates to Astana.
1916: Marjeh Square Massacre in Damascus: The Ottoman Governor Jamal Pasha executes the leaders of the anti-Ottoman revolution


The following text describes the Ottomans as a colonial power and not as revered Muslim conquerors. Rather it compares them with Western colonialists. The significance of this historiographical argument is that from the Emirati perspective, Islam does legitimize aggression, particularly against other Muslims. Also, by praising the "anti-Ottoman" Ataturk, the authors point to what they consider to be the correct path to build on their historical foundation: that is, through reforms and nationalism. It also places Western colonialism in a different perspective.

3. The Ottoman State on the Scales of History
Historians point out that it is not possible to consider one Muslim nation invading the land of another as fath [positive Islamic conquest], since that contradicts science and history. Whoever speaks of the Ottoman invasion of Arab countries as a fath, their discourse is predicated on religious sentiment and zeal, claiming that the Ottoman dynasty protected Arab countries from Shiite penetration, through its conflict with the Safavid state in Iran.

The four centuries of Ottoman rule of most Arab states were an invasion and an occupation. The Ottomans were invaders and colonizers who occupied Arab countries, no less so than French and British colonialists. They exploited the wealth of the Arabs and left them with weakness and backwardness. The Ottoman sultan was a colonial ruler, and Arab countries under his reign suffered under subjugation to a colonial center. Though some repeat the term 'Ottoman Caliphate,' Turkish sources themselves do not mention a title of 'Ottoman Caliph,' and the only Ottoman sultan who claimed the title of caliph was Abdulhamid [II], when in 1876 he published a constitution and signed it as 'Abdulhamid Caliph of the Muslims.' Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi [Syrian pan-Arabist] challenged this in his book, *Nature of Despotism*, reminding him that the Caliphate is Arab.


A comparison between two editions of the textbook dealing with the Ottomans reveals that the 2017–18 edition described them somewhat positively, relative to the current volume (2021–22) which uses harsh terminology. For example, the "The Ottoman State and the Arab Homeland" (p. 50) became "The Ottomans and their Covetous Ambitions in the Arab Homeland" (p. 100).

Qatar

Qatar is described in a neutral and business-like manner.

State of Qatar

* The Qatari peninsula is located in the center of the western coast of the Arabian Gulf, and is surrounded by some islands. Its coasts are characterized by a multitude of inlets, bays, basins and depressions.
* The Al Thani clan immigrated from Najd [in present day Saudi Arabia] and settled in Doha in 1868. Sheikh Qasim bin Mohammad Al Thani is considered the true founder of the Emirate of Qatar, as he unified its tribes.
* British pressure on the ruler of Qatar persisted, forcing him to sign the Treaty of 1916, under which Qatar fell under a de facto British protectorate. Qatar declared its complete independence in September 1971.


Jews, Israel, Christians

Jews as a Religious Community

As demonstrated in the section on tolerance and diversity, the attitude in the UAE curriculum toward Jews as a minority, corresponds with the generally positive attitude exhibited toward other non-Muslims; there is much emphasis on moderation and mutual respect. The advantage of an open, tolerant society is impressed on students with a sense of moral obligation and theological justification that explains the reasons for such conduct. [The UNESCO standards demands tolerance; but achieving it requires a concrete path forward. The UAE curriculum, to its credit, attempts to do that.] Here are a few examples from Islamic heritage that illustrate the religious grounding of tolerance toward Jews.

A lesson on tolerance features various hadiths explaining how Prophet Muhammad and Caliph Omar acted kindly toward Jews, through which students are to infer the importance of being tolerant toward people from other religions.

Third, infer aspects of tolerating people of different faiths from the following texts:

☆ Anas reported: "A Jewish boy fell sick and the Prophet came to visit him . . ." (Narrated by Bukhari)

☆ Sa'id Bin Al-Musayyib reported: "A Muslim and a Jew came to Omar bin Al-Khattab to adjudicate between them. Omar saw that the right was on the side of the Jew, and he ruled in his favor" (Narrated by Muwaṭṭa Imam Malik).

☆ Anas reported, "A Jewish person invited Allah's Messenger to eat some barley bread with oil that was [or happened to be] rancid and he agreed." (Narrated by Ahmed).

*Islamic Education, Grade 12, Vol. 3, 2020–21, p. 34.*
Another episode, in another textbook, is about the Prophet standing for the funeral procession of a Jew. Yet another textbook recounts the story of a Jew who was framed for supposedly stealing a shield from a Muslim warrior. His innocence was revealed to the Prophet, leading to the Jew's acquittal.

**Negative Portrayals of Jews**

Some potentially negative examples of Jews exist in the Islamic education program. Here is a hadith passage admonishing believers not to resemble the Jews, who may be unclean.


An Islamic education text describes the punishment of the Bani Qurayza Jews for supposedly violating their commitment to support Muhammad.


As for the believers . . . their victory came from Allah, as a result of their effort, patience, steadfastness, and trust in their Lord. As for the polytheists, He responded to their anger, nullified their plotting, and let down their ranks, and they returned disappointed, achieving nothing. As for the Jews of Banu Qurayza who colluded with the polytheists and broke their covenant with the Messenger of Allah, Allah humiliated them. He filled their hearts with horror, drove them out of their fortresses, and they surrendered and received the punishment they deserved. Allah gave the believers their land . . .


The new textbooks widen the scope of the recognition of Israel as a legitimate state in the region. They feature less repetition of negative information about Israel and its history. In some cases, the changes appear closely attached to a new strategic view for the region in which actual challenges replace old, conspiracist platitudes. Still, there is no teaching of the Holocaust or much of the history of Jews in the region; and the fate of Jewish-Arab communities in the twentieth century. There is presence of non-Islamic civilizations elsewhere in the curriculum. In the maps of the region, Israel remains unnamed; changes are needed.

**Normalization is Featured in Islamic Education Textbooks**

The peace treaty with Israel forms part of the Emirati curriculum. Upon the signing of the Abraham Accords, the treaty was hastily incorporated into the *Islamic Education* textbooks. An identical news item is provided in textbooks for Grades 6, 8 and 12—highlighting the endorsement of the treaty by leading Islamic UAE organizations, notably, the Emirates Fatwa Council⁹⁸ and the General Authority for Islamic Affairs and Endowments (GAIAE).⁹⁹

As can be concluded from the general context and the attached exercises in the following examples, the commitment to peace is somewhat more emphatic in lower grades. The twelfth-grader context is one of an opposition to radicalism. In Grade 8, the peace treaty epitomizes national security; to sixth-graders it conveys a vision of future prosperity. Prosperity, or "sustainable development” in the textbook’s wording, points to normal, natural situations, markedly different from framing peace in terms of emergency and national security exigencies.

Note that in all three grades the peace treaty is described with appropriately different emphases, relative to the UAE's commitments to Arab, Islamic and global causes.

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⁹⁸ The Emirati Council for Islamic Legal Opinions (majlis al-imarat lil-ifta’ al-shar'i).
⁹⁹ GAIAE (al-hay'ah al-'amma li-shhu'un al-islamiyyah wal-awqaf).
Within a section on Islam's opposition to extremism, Grade 12 students learn about the official positions of the Emirates Fatwa Council and the GAIAE. The peace treaty is highlighted within the context of helping Arab and Islamic causes, derived from an Islam intent on containing extremism and enhancing a global atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation.

The Emirates Fatwa Council praised the Emirati peace initiative with Israel, which is added to the state’s long record of supporting Arab and Islamic causes, chief among them being the Palestinian cause, and its continuous efforts to support reconciliations and spread peace in various parts of the world.

Dr. Mohammed Matar Alkaabi, head of the General Authority for Islamic Affairs and Endowments [GAIAE], confirmed that the initiative is a historic and cultural decision and that it stems from the values of our noble Islamic religion, which urges building bridges of cooperation and establishing the principles of relations with everyone.

Design a presentation on the position of Islam on extremism, explaining its causes and methods of treatment. Indicate the role of agreements and peace treaties of the UAE with the countries of the world in consolidating the values of tolerance and rejecting extremism in all its forms.

Islamic Education, Grade 12, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 43.

Islamic Education, Grade 8

A nearly identical piece quoting the statements of the Emirates Fatwa Council and the GAIAE is featured in an eighth-grade Islamic Education textbook in the chapter: "The Gift of Security." Here, the peace with Israel is not only part of moderation and combating extremism; a connection is also drawn between the peace (and the UAE’s national security), offered in an Islamic framework. The exercise frames the treaty in terms that extol "security and peace" as Islamic values.
The Emirates Fatwa Council praised the Emirati peace initiative with Israel, which is added to the state’s long record of supporting Arab and Islamic causes, chief among them being the Palestinian cause, and its continuous efforts to support reconciliation and spread peace in various parts of the world.

Dr. Mohammed Matar Alkaabi, head of the General Authority for Islamic Affairs and Endowments [GAIAE], confirmed that the initiative is a historic and cultural decision and that it stems from the values of our noble Islamic religion, which urges building bridges of cooperation and establishing the principles of relations with everyone.

Write an essay entitled "Islam is a Religion of Security and Peace" explaining Islam’s position on the manifestations of violence and terrorism, clarifying the security foundations of societies, and the local and global initiatives of the UAE in consolidating the values of cooperation and peace."


*Islamic Education, Grade 6*

The same official Islamic endorsements of the peace treaty with Israel appear in *Islamic Education* for Grade 6. The difference in the chapter—focusing on the UAE at the service of the world—and the exercise directly connecting among three essentials: (a) security and peace; (b) peace treaties; and (c) sustainable development. In other words, this particular framing of the peace with Israel most embodies the ideals of international standards because it directly connects a vision of sustainable prosperity with security and peace.
The Emirates Fatwa Council praised the Emirati peace initiative with Israel, which is added to the state’s long record of supporting Arab and Islamic causes, chief among them being the Palestinian cause, and its continuous efforts to support reconciliations and spread peace in various parts of the world.

Dr. Mohammed Matar Alkaabi, head of the General Authority for Islamic Affairs Endowments [GAIAE], confirmed that the initiative is a historic and cultural decision and that it stems from the values of our noble Islamic religion, which urges building bridges of cooperation and establishing the principles of relations with everyone.

In collaboration with your colleagues, prepare a picture presentation demonstrating the prominent role of the UAE in achieving security and peace for the peoples of the world, while addressing the importance of peace agreements and their impact on the sustainable development of the world's life resources.

\textit{Islamic Education, Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 75.}

\textbf{History: Criticism is Refined but Lacks Empathy}

The historical narration of the Arab Israeli conflict remains poised against Israel, even though in a number of cases offensive material has been removed. The name "Israel" is typically placed between quotation marks, suggesting that it remains an alien entity having no legitimacy. The UAE's policies over the years, which supported the Arab side of the conflict, are described. Missing is a balanced, intricate and critical teaching of history, which involves raising questions and comprehending the challenges facing all sides, as well as their motivations.

Here is an example of the refinement of anti-Israeli wording in the Lebanese context. The name Israel remains between quotation marks but removed were the words "through many Israeli hostile assaults." (Removed text highlighted in the translation).
On Lebanon, the late Sheikh Zayed had a noble moral view. He followed the events for a long time, mostly during the civil war that destroyed Lebanon's economy and social structure for fifteen years, beginning in 1975, [through many Israeli hostile assaults] and occupation by "Israel" of parts of its lands in the south, until this absurd war ended in October 1990. [The late Sheikh Zayed's] positions were manifested in the various phases of the war, and in the participation of a unit from the armed forces, and within the Arab joint action, the [1989] Ta'if Reconciliation Conference, as well as through economic support.


Another removed text is an argument rejecting the demand to recognize Israel. A pragmatic attitude toward relations with Israel is manifested in the leading role played by the UAE in convincing Arab countries to remove their boycott against Egypt following the (1978) Camp David Accords with Egypt and "Israel." However, there is no reference to the context of peace between Israel and Egypt. On the other hand, there is a narration of UAE's support for Egypt in its conflicts with Israel, with much emphasis on its role in the 1970s Oil Embargo and during and after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The UAE position is explained as a heroic gambit, opening a "third front" against Israel, with emphasis on the nation's courageous effort to fully boycott the US (for supporting Israel).

**Less Repetition of Negative Information**

Arab curricula, for decades instinctively supporting the Arab side in the Arab-Israeli conflict, often repeated negative information, arguments and claims regarding Israel and the Jews. While it may be unavoidable at this time to exhibit a completely unbiased history within this new curriculum, there is little doubt of consistent attempts to avoid such negative repetition.

There are concrete examples of such efforts to clean up such past excesses by the curriculum's authors. Part of a speech by an Emirati leader following the 1973 Yom Kippur War was removed: "The only thing that came to his mind was that 'Israel' is the one that started this war, devoting all its efforts to continue with its attacks and impose the reality of bargaining on the occupied territories." And there is the removal of negative anti-Zionist platitudes from a 2016–17 sixth-grade *National Education* textbook which incorporated the trope that Zionism was "founded as an offensive political movement . . . to establish a Jewish state that would extent from the Nile River to the Euphrates." In another new edition of a textbook, aggression

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101 Ibid., p. 83.
102 (65–67).
103 (67).
ascribed to the Zionists (and others) were removed from a short description of the Suez Canal: "the triple British-French-Zionist aggression of 1956, and the Zionist aggression during the June War of 1967 and October War of 1973." A passage from a 2017–18 ninth-grade Social Studies and Education textbook associating Palestine (Israel) with racism and the settler colonialism of South Africa is no longer in current textbooks. Most significant perhaps, is the removal of the expression stating that the Palestinian question constitutes "the foundation of the conflicts and struggles in the Middle East, and the key to the solution" of the region's problems.

There were improvements as well, in Islamic Education textbooks. While the current books still reinforce the propagandist description of Al-Aqsa to encompass the entirety of the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, and still claim that the Dome of the Rock is a "mosque," the word "occupied" was removed, and students are no longer encouraged to pray for the "liberation" of the city [Jerusalem].

Problems Remain Regarding Israel and Jews

It is virtually impossible to understand the history of Israel without an understanding of Jewish history. There are reasons the Holocaust is not taught or anything related to the Jewish historical experience throughout the countries of the Arab world. Unfortunately the UAE is no exception. The Holocaust is not taught in textbooks covering WWII. The destruction of Jewish communities in the region is also not taught. This historical background is necessary to grasp the relationships across the region and particularly the presence of Israel.

The following example displays another glaring omission—necessary to explain longue durée historical developments influencing current realities. The Assyrian spread into the Levant is described but omitted, as are the relations with the ancient Kingdom of Israel, culminating in its destruction in 722 BCE; the same is true for the 701 BCE siege of Jerusalem.

The Assyrian kings worked to expand their empire to other areas, in the direction of Syria, Palestine, Turkey and Iran.

*The Emirates—Our History (1), Grade 7, 2021–22, p. 68.*

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108 National Education, Grade 6, Vol. 2, 2016–17, p. 74. (Quotation removed from the curriculum.)


110 Ibid., pp. 27–31. Comparison was done with the 2017 English edition of the book.

The Emirati curriculum has experienced a rapid change. In Israel's case, one has to consider generations of a rigid approach corresponding to an Arab unity. The fact that "Israel" is still described in parentheses (or quotations) signifies that alienation from the Other still remains.\(^\text{112}\)

A description of Zionism (the Jewish national movement leading to the creation of Israel), is negative. Violent resistance (*muqawama*) is justified.

Likewise, Palestine, which was burdened by the yoke of creating a new 'national home' for the Jews on its lands, has also witnessed strong Arab resistance to Zionist greedy ambitions since the moment of its establishment.

*With the Strength of the Union: His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan—Leader and State, Grade 12, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 80.*

**Still No Israel**

There are some welcome developments in the curriculum's maps. Indicating the existence of Israel directly on an Arab country's map, is not without dilemma. Should Israel be considered—with its large Arab Muslim minority and its even larger population of Jews originating from Arab countries—part of the Arab world? When it comes to heritage, should centuries of Muslim rule over the Land of Israel (Palestine) be ignored? Also, how to draw Israel's borders, while disputed territories and pending diplomatic resolutions exist?

The authors of the map: "World Heritage Sites in the Arab Countries," chose to leave Israel (along with Iran and Turkey) outside the sphere of Arab nations. Interestingly, while not specifically mentioned, a *space symbolizing Israel* occupies this extraordinary map, with the West Bank marked as Palestine. Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock is displayed as well.

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\(^{112}\) *Social Studies and National Education: Zayed’s Ethical Approach, Grade 11, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 65.*
Note that most of the World Heritage Sites marked on the map are not Islamic. The term used for the Arab World is "the Arab States" (and not Arab Homeland). The various Arab Countries are separated from each other with wide spaces, allowing a semblance of unification, but nevertheless, distinct entities.

Another indication of Israel's presence in maps is the following English language world map, used for an exercise to trace migration paths of early humans. The name Israel is clearly marked,
but only after the map is enlarged. Present-day country names were apparently added to help orientation.

The above rare example notwithstanding, Israel is not yet on the maps of the UAE curriculum. In some cases, its presence can only be deduced from the marked boundaries—often provided—or from other information.

A map labeled "Syrian Desert Plateau" indicates a clear demarcation between Israel's borders and other countries of the Levant, with a topographical unit covering the natural features of the "Arab Homeland." Country names are generally marked, but this map does not name Israel, the Palestinian Authority or Lebanon.

Marked as well in the map below are the boundaries of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Jordan; also evident are the Golan Heights and the Israeli-Syrian disengagement zone. The border between Israel and the West Bank is ambiguous as mountainous areas hide parts of the line.

**Social Studies and National Education, Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 84.**

**Syrian Desert Plateau:**
Includes the western parts of Iraq, southern Syria and the eastern parts of Jordan, located to the north of the Nefud desert; and most of its parts consist of volcanic formations, as is the case in the Houran in southern Syria and northern Jordan.
Enlarged section of the map above

[Blue]: Tiberias [Sea of Galilee], Jordan Valley, Dead Sea
[Black]: Sarona Plain [official name, Sharon, avoided], Wadi Arabah, Aqaba [A city in Jordan; not marked in red as other important cities on the map. No other Jordanian cities marked.]
[Brown/White]: Galilee Mountains [wrongly located]
[Red]: Gaza

On a world map, Israel is mostly hidden; the country's location is marked as a Muslim-minority area. The assignment involves famous ninth-century hadith collector, but the Islamic world map appears to be current.

Map of the Islamic World

Imam Muslim [d. 875] was an exemplary faithful youth making the most of his time and money. I shall mark the countries which he visited in search of knowledge of the noble hadith.


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Muslim minority areas, where Islam is freely practiced, are not part of the House of War (dar al-harb), and thus not subjected anymore to the obligation of jihad wars.
Below Israel's territory is included on the enlarged portion of the map above:

In the following political map from the 2019 textbook, there is no country name for the State of Israel. Instead, "Palestine" is inserted on Israel's territory. In yet another contradiction, the 1949 Armistice demarcation border (Green Line, actually purple) is evident, however, symbolizing the political entities on the land (Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas).

Israel is not on the map in the following example either; its territory has the imprint of Palestine. Different colors are assigned to Israeli and the Palestinian territories.

The following map accompanies a text on Arab solidarity during the 1973 Yom Kippur War (October War). The borders of Israel are defined to show the areas it controlled before and after the 1967 war. Unsurprisingly, the name Israel is neither on the map, nor in the text it accompanies. Instead, "Palestine" is on the Israeli territory of the Negev. But, while Israel is not recognized, it is also not defined as an enemy.
A. 1973 October War:
The October War of 1973 represents a defining moment in the life of the Arab Nation, for those were the moments where the Arabs were able to agree on the words of one man, and to achieve one goal, and that is: to free the lands that were occupied in the June War of 1967—the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula and the Syrian Golan Heights, while obstructing global maritime transportation in the Suez Canal. Syria and Egypt were both determined to take back their lands with the help of Arab countries, and at their helm the United Arab Emirates.

Maps defining Israel as Palestine are still common in the curriculum. A map replacing Israel with Palestine, along with the Palestinian flag is featured in unit one's cover page of a Social Studies and National Education textbook.

[Country name in bold on Israel's territory of the Negev]: Palestine.

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Christians in the UAE

An archeological finding forms part of the UAE’s cultural heritage: a cross from an ancient church on Abu Dhabi’s Sir Bani Yas Island. Otherwise, the history of the ancient Christian community in the UAE merits scant attention in the curriculum; the context is that of early Islamic times, suggesting tolerance and religious pluralism.

The Early Islamic Period
(7th–8th centuries AD)
A Plaster Cross
Church Site, Sir Bani Yas Island
(Late 7th century, early 8th century)

The same textbook points to the Aramaic language as an ancient and important pre-Islamic language: "The Aramaic language belongs to a large group of languages that were widely used in Syria, Palestine, and parts of Iraq in the second and first millennium BCE."\(^{115}\) (Aramaic is still used across the region by modern-day Syriac Christians and Kurdish Jews and forms part of Christian, Jewish and Samaritan liturgical texts).

**An Encounter between Muslim and Christian Clerics as an Expression of Coexistence**

The second lesson of a seventh-grade *Islamic Education* textbook: "Coexistence among Humans," displays a meeting of Muslim clerics with the Pope.

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\(^{115}\) *The Emirates—Our History*, Grade 12, 2021–22, p. 72.
Global Outlook

The UAE’s global outlook reflects its self-image as a destination able to attract skilled people from around the world, particularly from developed countries. This favors a positive view of the West, although expertise is welcomed from around the world. Relations with India—a relative neighbor—is also prized.\(^{116}\) (Until 1959, the main currency in the Gulf States, was the Indian rupee.)

Movement of Workers

Look around the UAE and you will see many different people from many different backgrounds. In addition to Emiratis, you will see people from Russia, India, the Philippines, the UK, France, Germany, the US and many other countries, all working and living in the UAE. Many of these people who come to work in the UAE bring with them skills, innovative ideas and expertise which can benefit the businesses they work for and also the country. They also bring a richness of cultural diversity which helps to make the country attractive to investors. The ability of people to move around the world to work, to travel and to receive an education have all been made easier by globalization.

The West: Britain, the US and France

By-and-large, the heritage of British guardianship in the Gulf is considered a good experience for those emirates which formed the Trucial Coast, despite early clashes with the Al-Qasimis and Britain's later abandonment of the Coastal Emirates in 1971. But the curriculum blames the British for past support of Iranian aggression as well as for passive acceptance of various Iranian acts of belligerence. One textbook example explains how the British blocked the Emirati fleets and paved the way for Iran to occupy Emirati territories on the Iranian side of the Gulf. The Iranians are also referred to as Persians (furs), stressing their ethnic "Otherness." The message to students appears to be: When it comes to national security and Iran, trusting foreigners has its limits.

Because Britain imposed guardianship on the Coastal Emirates, The Persians continued to take advantage of the deteriorating situation to extend their penetration into the Emirati territories on the Persian mainland. In 1887, Iran officially declared war on the Al-Qasimi Emirate and sent its fleets to level the city of Lanjah [now Bandar Langeh]. It then succeeded in occupying the city in unequal battles between the Persian and Qasimi armies. Persia also managed to occupy the territories around Lanjah. Britain thus played a direct role in the Persian success in taking over the Emirati islands, since it prevented the Coastal Emirates from conducting any kind of military action against the Persians. Likewise, Britain did not respond to the protests of the Coastal Emirate rulers who demanded the return of the Emirati land occupied by the Persians. Britain attempted to negotiate with the Persians, but they categorically rejected the British proposals.

The British were in fact the ones that paved the way for the Iranian fleets in their attempt to invade the city of Lanjah. Britain imposed a blockade on all emirate territories, encircled their ships and prevented them from drawing near the Iranian coasts.


The British-Emirati relations are covered extensively—most often in a positive manner. Wars of the past are therefore described in rational terms and unemotionally.
British Campaigns on the Strongholds of the Al Qasimi

The Al Qasimi lived through an important period of colonial competition in the Arab Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and they took upon themselves to challenge the British influence that began to penetrate the region. On many occasions, British ships intercepted the Arab fishing boats, and opened fire on them, so the Al Qasimi were prompted to clash with the British ships, and inflicted heavy losses on them. Britain prepared military campaigns to destroy their power and maritime activity . . .


Although the Emirati experience with Western powers has most often been a positive one, the national memory also conveys to students that foreigners often may have their own agenda. This seems to apply not only to the geopolitical realm, but perhaps even more significantly, regarding cultural matters. While committed to cultural openness as part of the effort to build the UAE into an international hub, students are warned of bad cultural influences, particularly from a close ally such as the US.

Cultural Diversity

Many countries have their own cultural histories and traditions. One of the arguments against globalization is that it can threaten culture and tradition. In cinema, for example,
movies from the USA dominate and can present a very Americanized/Western view of issues and events portrayed in the movie. Food, clothing, and fashion might also be produced which does not consider the local traditions and cultures of other countries. The UAE is trying to diversify its economy so that it does not rely on one or two key products for its future wealth and prosperity. In doing so, it must balance the need to diversify and attract investment from overseas with the need to maintain its cultural identity and traditions upon which the UAE was founded, and which have been handed down by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.


The US was also chosen, in this curriculum, as a prime example of economic inequality. While there is recognition of the UAE's extreme wealth, the curriculum discourages students from imitating US values and attempts to impart a vision of social justice.

Income Distribution and Inequality

When looking at figures in this way, we get a different picture. Country X is clearly the richer country but in terms of its income distribution it is very unequal in comparison to country Y.

If we look at countries around the world, we see similar stories. Some countries are rich, but the income in the country is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of people who are extremely wealthy, while most of the population live in poor conditions.

This is the case, for example, in the United States, the world’s richest economy. A study by the Levy Economics Institute* in the US suggested that the top 10% of households in the US accounted for over 70% of the wealth of the country. Figures from 2015 suggest inequality is getting worse in the US with the top 20% owning 84% of the country’s wealth.


Discussion Point

The Walton family in the US, who have derived their wealth from the development of the Walmart supermarket business, collectively own more wealth than over two-fifths (42%) of the entire US population put together. Is this fair? Some would say that building Walmart took many years and lots of hard work and the wealth they have is a deserved reward for that hard work and enterprise. Do you agree?


The UAE is described as a peace-loving society. France appears to be respected in the curriculum. An event from 2005 is mentioned, in which former French President Jacques Chirac described the founding president of the United Arab Emirates (Sheikh Zayed) as a "man of peace and vision."

مصدر: دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة كمجتمع مسلم

وضعت دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة عند تأسيسها، أهمية مركزية على قيمة الحلول السلمية للأختلافات. وفي الكتاب السنوي لدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، الشيخ زايد بن سلطان آل نهيان. يقود الله في رسالة لصاحب السمو الشيخ خليفة بن زايد آل نهيان - حفظه الله - الرئيس الحالي لدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، أضاف: "إن العمل الذي أجازه الشيخ زايد ضخم لقد إعلن تعزيز فضائل التوافق والعقد والحوار في منطقة عربية من الأثمان والخلافات وسطان سببه موضوعًا ارتباطًا وثيقًا بقضية السلام والتنمية في الشرق الأوسط ولكن كي كرس لها حياتهم."

The UAE as a Peaceful Society

At its foundation, the UAE placed central importance on the value of peaceful conflict resolution. In the 2005 UAE Yearbook, in a special tribute to the founding president of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, France’s then President, Jacques Chirac, is said to have described Sheikh Zayed as, "a man of peace and vision." In a message to His Highness, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, current President of the UAE, he added, "The work accomplished by Sheikh Zayed is huge . . . he kept promoting the virtues of compromise, reason and dialogue in a region troubled by crises and conflicts. His name will remain closely associated with the cause of peace and development in the Middle East to which he devoted his life."

(Source: https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_75VA3rU2sVQC)


Seventh-graders learn that the "Louvre Abu Dhabi" is "a profound cultural project" representing that deep partnership that binds the United Arab Emirates and France in all vital areas. Much attention is given to economic and scientific domains, especially, a space project.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and French President Emmanuel Macron, inaugurated in the capital Abu Dhabi—the Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum on November 11, 2017.

Russia, China and India

Russia

Emirati-Russian relations are viewed as a strategic partnership, focused mainly on economics and space. Agreements, memoranda and treaties on trade and investment are described in early middle school grades as are mutual state visits and the large number of Russian tourists visiting the UAE on a yearly basis. Data on the volume of trade, exports and imports are provided, with a view of fostering significant future development.

In 2018, the number of Russian tourists visiting the United Arab Emirates reached 1.1 million.


China

There is much attention given to the People's Republic of China, centering on its prosperity and economic ties with the UAE. Chinese violations of religious freedom are ignored as are Muslims'
human rights. On a page about demographics, the PRC is described as a tolerant, multicultural society, where religions are respected, including Islam. Secularization policies and oppression of the Muslim Uyghur minority are not addressed. The apparent avoidance of China's human rights violations is troubling with respect to the UNESCO standards of Unbiased Information (See Methodology section).

Taiwan is not considered part of China on maps. China's energy dependency on the UAE is not mentioned, but the Belt and Road Initiative features in the curriculum.

**Did you know?**

China's territory is home to the largest population in the world, and 56 ethnicities coexist harmoniously inside it. The official language is the Han language, and most of the ethnic minorities have their language, food, customs, traditions, and language. China implements a policy of freedom of religious faith. It is home to many religions, including Islam, which entered in the middle 7th century AD.


The same text appears in the 2020–21 edition (p. 43) but with somewhat smaller letters. The textbook still features state visits and stresses cooperation; while there is slightly less overall coverage, "combatting terrorism" was added.

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India

As part of a lesson on India-UAE relations, the textbooks exhibit mutual visits of government leaders, while highlighting India's massive potential for investment.
Emirati Indian relations were crowned with the visit of Muhammad bin Zayed to India, where the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of India agreed to build a strategic partnership, one that would be predicated on mutual respect and active collaboration in a variety of areas: trade, investment, economic growth, energy, impact of climate change, security, and striving for stability in the region. . . . The visit of the Indian Prime Minister [to the UAE], the first to the country in 34 years, serves to prove that a new and comprehensive strategic partnership has been formed between India and the United Arab Emirates, in a world that sees numerous transformations and changing opportunities and challenges.

Conclusion

The United Arab Emirates is a key member in the emerging moderate Middle East regional coalition. Positioning itself as a vibrant member of the global economy, the UAE is developing strategically to secure a stake in the emerging world order. Innately pragmatic, the Emiratis are committed to combating radicalism: they consider it categorically wrong and self-defeating.

The country welcomes immigration from a host of countries and cultures; education for tolerance and peaceful coexistence among different cultures and religions is critical for such a society. The UAE has developed a multi-decade plan for becoming an international hub for trade and knowledge. While committed to Arab solidarity and its alliances with Western powers, the Emiratis are unwavering about their independence. Drawing lessons from the past, the UAE created successful armed forces that can act alone and collaborate with allies, both at home and beyond. In recent years, leadership toward peacemaking has added a new perspective to the country’s national security outlook.

As with the rest of the Gulf region, the UAE faces structural challenges to maintaining its national cohesion and solidarity, foremost among them relating to the issue of equal rights for the entire population. The authors of the Emirati curriculum appear to be aware of such challenges and have earmarked the role of education accordingly. There is much investment toward merging high-quality, forward-looking teaching with education for solidarity, moral values and national cohesion. The unique moral education program, partially covered in this report, sheds light on Emirati culture with a view toward combining traditional customs with openness and a modern scientific approach; large income gaps with social justice; local citizenry with an extremely large immigrant/expat community; women's integration and ambition with traditional family values and adherence to orthodox Islam.

The Islamic Education program is unwavering in its erudite grasp of Islamic sources revealing the tolerant pillars of the faith. The curriculum takes seriously the psychological well-being of students, educating young generations morally and spiritually for a rapidly changing global society. Peaceful coexistence and love among people are not just a moral obligation but also sensible and worthwhile.

Yet, the basic building block of the curriculum is Emirati nationalism, independence, and patriotism. Sacrifice and martyrdom in the defense of the country are honored; awareness of security and military concerns are inculcated into teachings, along with wider perspectives aimed at peace and conflict resolution.

Beyond nationalism, and the individual patriotism of the various emirates that form the UAE, the textbooks emphasize Pan-Gulf Arab identity (Khaleeji) and the binding together of Arabs from both sides of the Gulf; Arab solidarity; Islam; and commitment to the family of nations.
The curriculum instills awareness of international competition, particularly in education. National visions of prosperity through hard work, education and long-term planning are encouraged. The students learn the connection between prosperity and peace; social responsibility is important.

The textbooks teach a *can-do* attitude; imagination and curiosity toward other cultures and civilizations are encouraged.

Islamic education forms an important part of all Emirati curricula and extends to the large private school sector. The interpretation of Islam is sharia-based and traditional, but tolerant. Family values follow traditional religious and cultural norms; gender roles are defined accordingly. Men and women are different, complement each other and should work in harmony for the benefit of the family. The sexes should not imitate one another. The curriculum energetically pushes for women's equality, excellence, freedom, integration in society and success in all walks of life—whether in education, the military, business, science, the arts, and politics.

The students also learn sharia law, which require husbands to discipline rebellious wives; violent beating is not allowed.

Historically, the Gulf region is revealed to have been an ancient cultural hub: a center for global business and transportation. The current regional outlook in the textbooks is that of a complicated and dangerous territory. There is much education for conflict resolution, but students learn of real dangers and conflicts such as the one with Iran over the three Gulf islands and the war in Yemen. Iran is described as expansionist. As for Turkey, the current curriculum takes an unusually harsh view of the Ottoman Empire as compared with earlier editions. Conversely, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk is praised while his secularist ideology is ignored. This change likely may be understood against the background of competition between the two countries and the Ottoman-inspired interventionist Islamism that has become a hallmark of Turkish policies in the region. The philosophical debate within the Sunni world as to the role of faith in politics is not lost here.

Relations with the West—mainly the US, Britain, and France—are considered important; but trust is not unlimited. American culture serves both as a source of inspiration and a threat to local culture. French culture is viewed more benevolently. Economic and technological ties are important, but not more so than the country's independence.

The historical relations with India are valued; there is increased material compared with previous editions. Relations with China are stressed less emphatically in the curriculum (but practically speaking there is a focus on courting China). Muslim persecution in that country is still ignored but praise is now printed in smaller fonts. Russia is treated as a major strategic partner.
The newly established peace treaty with Israel is legitimized by authoritative Islamic organizations and taught within the Islamic education program in three classes (Grades 6, 8, 12). Though less significant, solidarity with other Arab countries regarding the Palestinian cause remains strong, even if the Palestinian question is no longer described as "the foundation of the conflicts and struggles in the Middle East, and the key to the solution" of that region’s problems. There appears to be a genuine and systematic effort to reduce unwarranted negative portrayals of Israel and the Jews. There is no outright antisemitism per se but historical conflicts with Jewish tribes during early Islam are taught. While messaging focused on tolerance toward Jews is widespread throughout the texts, Israel is still not directly referenced on the maps; there are hints to its existence, but baby steps will not long be enough. A strong and powerful bridge must be built for Emirati students to traverse and welcome their new allies wholeheartedly, starting with a minimal education about the Holocaust and Jewish history.

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IMPACT-se's UNESCO-based methodological standards (see section on Methodology) are paramount in evaluating a curriculum like the UAE's. Before issues like peace and tolerance can be addressed, a curriculum must first adhere to the principles of NO HATE and NO INCITEMENT against others; we could find none in the Emirati curriculum. Fairness and tolerance are demanded toward non-Muslims and foreign workers. Radicalism and violence are absolutely rejected. The curriculum teaches students to value the principle of RESPECT for other cultures and encourages curiosity and dialogue. It not only promotes tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," but praises love, affection, and family ties with non-Muslims. People are thus judged not by their religious affiliation, but by good deeds. Gestures of interfaith, particularly with Christianity, are evident along with noticeable expressions of tolerance toward Judaism. But tolerance extends beyond Jews and Christians to any non-Muslims—even polytheists.

Another key standard upon which to evaluate a curriculum involves respect and acceptance of INDIVIDUAL OTHERS. The curriculum supports the ideal of multiple races, faiths and nationalities living side-by-side in the Emirates. It invests much effort in PEACEMAKING—not shying away from teaching about wars—and their resolution. The attention given to the vast peaceful heritage of the Islamic faith is a departure from what is often found in other local curricula.

Nevertheless, the UAE’s view of the Middle East is realistic. Education for peacemaking and moderation should not be misunderstood; if necessary to defend the nation, Emirati youth are taught to be ready to join the army and sacrifice their lives in martyrdom.

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120 National Education, Grade 6, Vol. 2, 2016–17, p. 74. (Quoted passage removed from the curriculum.)
The use of Islamic terms, such as martyrdom (shahada) in the context of national defense should be reevaluated.\textsuperscript{121} Purely religious concepts are often part of the terminology associated with political conflicts; this may lead to misunderstandings on the part of students. Similarly, using military objects to teach the Arabic alphabet to young elementary school students seems counterproductive to a curriculum primarily focused on peace and tolerance.

Of all the ingredients that together comprise an educational curriculum, truth surely must be the most important aspect. Students may learn skills and all of the various things that educational authorities provide for them to become solid and patriotic citizens, but without learning about the world as it is, a foundation for the future cannot be secured. The curriculum’s authors generally provide lessons meant to be offered to students as UNBIASED INFORMATION—but they are not always successful.

For example, the curriculum disparages the Ottomans over whether an Islamic empire conquering Arab lands should be associated with colonialism. But a wider view of historical colonialism and empires is still necessary. The issue of historical slavery (Ottoman, British, and the Gulf) is equally pertinent and required.

While China is described as a tolerant, multicultural society where religions are respected, violations of religious freedom are ignored, as are Muslim human rights such as those of the Uyghur minority. China’s energy dependence on the UAE is not mentioned. But Taiwan is not considered part of China on maps.

Similarly, Israel’s cartographic presence in a curriculum filled with maps is virtually non-existent, with the exception of some shadowy spaces and one nearly invisible showing on a world map. The question of Holocaust avoidance and omission of the long and diversified history of a Jewish presence in the region also leaves much room for improvement. Despite such lapses, however, with the reduction of biased material, an emphasis on moral education, and the inclusion of the Abrahamic Accords, a serious effort is being made in teaching information that leads to peace, particularly within the framework of Islamic education.

The curriculum does not fully meet the international standards of GENDER IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION. It does meet such standards to the extent that women are considered equal to men and encouraged to become prominent members of society and that it refrains "from language, content, and imagery that depicts limiting and/or exclusionary gender roles." From a different perspective, the Emirati curriculum is keen on protecting family values according to Islamic sharia and the Emirati tradition. In short, men are more equal in the home environment. Women must obey their husbands. Specific gender roles for males and females allow polygamy, restrict certain interreligious marriages, and reject non-traditional gender roles such as "immodest behavior in public" and imitation of the other sex. Thus according to UNESCO’s

\textsuperscript{121} Social Studies and National Education, Grade 9, Vol. 1, 2021–22, p. 46.
Western-centered values of gender behavior, the Emirati curriculum falls short. As for SEXUAL ORIENTATION, the Emirati curriculum is "free of language, content, and imagery that promulgates violence or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION is often revealed as the most important element in IMPACT-se's system of evaluating curricula. In that sense, the Emirati curriculum offers a rare and noteworthy model of an education system that is on the path toward achieving this goal.

The UAE curriculum combines personal education with a community that strives for academic and technological excellence. Students are taught to cherish cultural values along with a healthy dose of patriotism. They are given a realistic awareness of dangers, coupled with an understanding of the need for systematic effort to ensure that prosperity can be created and maintained at home through peaceful and voluntary cooperation with others.
Methodology

IMPACT-se applies methodological standards which are based on UNESCO and UN declarations, and international recommendations and documents on education for peace and tolerance (see notes). Our methodology is designed to consider every detail within the textbooks; it does not paraphrase, rely on interpretations, or attempt to illustrate preconceived notions.

The following is an updated, condensed version of the IMPACT-se UNESCO-derived standards for peace and tolerance in school education:

1. **RESPECT**: The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the "Other," his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.\(^{122}\)

2. **INDIVIDUAL OTHER**: The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the "Other" as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.\(^{123}\)

3. **NO HATE**: The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.\(^{124}\)

4. **NO INCITEMENT**: The curriculum should be free of language, content, and imagery that disseminate ideas or theories which justify or promote acts and expressions of violence, incitement to violence, hostility, harm and hatred toward other national, ethnic, racial or religious groups.\(^{125}\)

5. **PEACEMAKING**: The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.\(^{126}\)

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\(^{122}\) As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance Proclaimed and signed by Member States of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

\(^{123}\) The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual, regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See Ibid., Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.


\(^{125}\) As defined in Article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX) on December 21, 1965. See also Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) on December 16, 1966.

\(^{126}\) Based on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 9; and on the
6. **UNBIASED INFORMATION:** Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers’ guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.\(^{127}\)

7. **GENDER IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION:** The curriculum should foster equality, mutual respect, and should aim for equal representation between individuals regardless of their gender identity. It should also refrain from language, content, and imagery that depicts limiting and/or exclusionary gender roles.\(^{128}\)

8. **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** The curriculum should be free of language, content, and imagery that promulgates violence or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.\(^{129}\)

9. **SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION:** The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.\(^{130}\)

Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 5.

\(^{127}\) Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.

\(^{128}\) The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.

\(^{129}\) Based on Resolutions 32/2 (adopted June 30, 2016) and 17/19 (adopted July 14, 2011) of the UN Human Rights Council, and numerous UN General Assembly resolutions expressing concern and condemnation of laws and practices around the world which target individuals based on their gender identity and/or sexual orientation for discrimination, violence, and even extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions—all of which contradict the most basic principles of the UN and have no place in education.

\(^{130}\) Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing “systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance,” see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.
List of Analyzed UAE Textbooks

The following UAE curriculum textbooks were analyzed for the research in this study. The titles both here and referenced in the text have been translated into English to aid the reader. IMPACT-se typically researches all available textbooks used in a curriculum. If new textbooks or previously unavailable books become available after a report's publication, every effort will be made to update reports to include any relevant material. We welcome any comments related to the acquisition of any omitted materials (http://www.impact-se.org/about-us/contact-us/).

**Grade 1:**

15. UAE Phonics (English Language), Grade 1, Vol. 1, 2020–21.

**Grade 2:**

27. UAE Phonics (English Language), Grade 2, Vol. 1, 2020–21.
Grade 3:
32. Bridge to Success (English Language), Grade 3, Vol. 1, 2017–18

Grade 4:
44. Arabic Language (Workbook), Grade 4, Vol. 1, 2020–21.
46. Bridge to Success (English Language), Grade 4, Vol. 1, 2016–17.

Grade 5:
62. Bridge to Success (English Language), Grade 5, Vol. 1, 2016–17

**Grade 6:**

76. *ASP Elite Stream English* (English Language), Grade 6, Vol. 1, 2020–21.

**Grade 7:**

117. The Emirates—Our History (1), Grade 7, 2021–22.

Grade 8:

118. Access Book (English Language), Grade 8, Vol. 1, 2018–19.
123. Bridge to Success (English Language), Grade 8, 2016–17.
139. The Emirates—Our History (1), Grade 8, 2020–21.
140. The Emirates—Our History (1), Grade 8, 2021–22.

Grade 9:

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<td>Bridge to Success (English Language), Grade 10, 2020–21.</td>
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<td>175</td>
<td>Social Studies and National Education: Historical Depth of Federal Thought in the UAE (Book Viewing and Analysis), Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2020–21.</td>
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<td>Social Studies and National Education: Historical Depth of Federal Thought in the UAE (Workbook), Grade 10, Vol. 1, 2020–21.</td>
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Grade 11:


Grade 11:

184. Bridge to Success—Advanced (English Language Workbook), Grade 11, 2018–19.

Grade 12:

203. Bridge to Success—Advanced (English Language), Grade 12, 2020–21.
218. The Emirates—Our History, Grade 12, 2021–22.
220. With the Strength of the Union—His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan—Leader and State, Grade 12, Vol. 1, 2021–22.